

## **STUDENT DEATH PROCEDURES**

**Owner: Head of Student Services**

**Effective Date: February 2025**

### **PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF THE DEATH OF A STUDENT**

#### **1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

- 1.1. These procedures are for BU and student accommodation staff to follow in the event of a student death. Apprentices, and students who have completed their studies but not yet graduated, will be considered as a student for the purposes of this policy.
- 1.2. This policy includes circumstances where the death is a suspected suicide. For additional postvention support and processes following a suspected suicide, please see the University Suicide Prevention [strategy](#).
- 1.3. Thankfully the death of a student is relatively rare. It is still necessary, however, to have procedures in place for dealing with such incidents. The actions required by the University will depend on a number of factors but at all times will:
  - Ensure the appropriate level of response
  - Be carried out in a sensitive and compassionate way, ensuring that there is appropriate support for staff and students who may be affected by the death as well as an appropriate level of engagement with the family of the deceased
  - Provide clear lines of responsibility
  - Ensure that the University complies with any legal obligations that it may have, and ensure that all appropriate documentation is maintained.
- 1.4. Every incident will be different, but a common-sense and calm approach will be applied to ensure that the action taken is appropriate to that particular case. These procedures are therefore provided as guidance rather than prescriptive actions.
- 1.5. Whilst the Chief Operating Officer has overall responsibility for Major Incident Procedures, the Head of Student Services is the overall lead for the action to be taken following a student death, working with Major Incident Group (MIG) members as required/appropriate.
- 1.6. All staff roles named in this document may have one or more nominees.

#### **2. UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 2.1. The degree of University involvement will depend on the circumstances and cause of the student's death. If a student dies on university property, in student accommodation or while engaged in university activity (e.g. placement or sports event) BU will have significantly more involvement than e.g. if a student dies at home following a long illness.
- 2.2. In all cases, consideration will be given to the support which may be required for students and members of staff who are affected by the death.
- 2.3. If a student dies following an incident on university property, including student accommodation, and/or following an accident, crime or suspected notifiable disease, the incident response will be managed via the BU Major Incident Plan and the MIG.

#### **3. INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

- 3.1. To ensure effective incident management, the BU Emergency Management structure will be followed in response to any sudden student death. Any member of staff who learns of a sudden student death must inform the Head of Student Services, who will verify the information received and decide on the next steps. If notification is received out of normal working hours, this should be forwarded to the Welfare Duty Officer (WDO), who will verify the information received and contact their on-call out of hours senior manager
- 3.2. If the Major Incident Plan is not required, the Head of Student Services or on-call senior manager will instruct relevant colleagues, including the WDO, on local actions required.
- 3.3. If the Major Incident Plan is required, the Head of Student Services or on-call colleague will inform the MIG Leader and/or Co-ordinator, who will decide on immediate actions required and who is required to assist, for example Accommodation, Wellbeing, Safeguarding leads or the Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing. The MIG Leader will determine whether any member of staff is required to attend the scene and instruct the most appropriate person accordingly.
- 3.4. The MIG Leader is responsible for managing the BU response to incidents in student accommodation as well as on BU property, and will liaise with the most senior person in that accommodation. Further information, including contact details, is set out in Appendix B26 Operation Manhattan (Halls of Residence checklist).
- 3.5. If the death is caused by, or may be caused by, a suspected communicable disease, the procedure for dealing with communicable diseases (including meningitis and meningococcal disease) will be invoked (Appendix B.17 of the Major Incident Plan) I:\OVC\Public\Business Continuity\Major Incident Plan\Appendices.

#### **4. DISCOVERING A DEATH ON CAMPUS**

- 4.1. Any discovery of a death or serious injury on campus should immediately be notified to the Emergency Services by dialling 222 from an internal phone or 01202 962222 from an external or mobile phone. The 222 operator will contact the Head of Student Services (or WDO out of hours) once the Emergency Services have been called. Anyone finding a seriously injured or deceased student off campus must dial 999.
- 4.2. Care must be taken to secure the surrounding area and ensure that the scene is not disturbed in any way. The Director of Estates or, in their absence, a member of the Estates executive Team, (in hours) or WDO (out of hours) will liaise with the Emergency Services and follow their instructions, unless and until instructed otherwise.
- 4.3. The police will arrange for the removal of the body, and they will formally notify the next of kin. They may wish to interview witnesses and/or seal off parts of the campus if required. No confirmation of any details may be released until the next of kin have been informed by the police, and all BU internal and external communications must be authorised by the Major Incident Group Leader.
- 4.4. The Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing should be informed so that they can ascertain whether the incident is reportable and, if so, decide who is responsible for doing so (e.g. BU or a private accommodation provider) and confirm to the MIG Co-ordinator that this has been done. Reports will usually be made directly to the HSE, who will decide whether any other agencies, such as the local council environmental health team, need to be involved.

#### **5. REPORTS OF A DEATH OCCURRING OFF CAMPUS AND NOT RELATING TO BU BUSINESS**

- 5.1. Occasionally university staff or students may become aware of a student death which has occurred off campus and not in relation to any university business. This could be through comments on social media or press contacts, for example. All reports, whether verified or not, should be referred to the Head of Student Services via the [Safeguarding@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:Safeguarding@bournemouth.ac.uk) email address who will determine what further action should be taken and by whom.

- 5.2. In these circumstances it is important to establish whether a death has genuinely occurred and gain as much information about the facts before taking any further action. It goes without saying that this will be a very difficult time for the student's family and any contact needs to be made sensitively. The Head of Student Services, or in their absence, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead will assume responsibility for liaison with the family.

## **6. THE ROLE OF INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS**

- 6.1. The Major Incident Group Leader will decide who needs to be informed immediately following notification of an incident, usually:

- Head of Student Services (if not already aware) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead
- Faith & Reflection Team
- Head of Residential Services
- MIG Comms Lead (as per rota)
- Director of Estates
- Faculty or Doctoral College Contact, e.g. Director of Operations or ESM

- 6.2. Once the immediate actions have been taken, the following actions are required:

6.2.1. Head of Student Services (or senior manager On-Call):

- Act as point of contact for the police [if not delegated to the WDO]
- Act as the primary contact (family liaison) with the student's next of kin to offer support and assistance, and liaise with other members of the University on their behalf, e.g. return of personal belongings
- Share details of the funeral arrangements once these are known
- Liaise with the relevant faculty or the Doctoral College to ensure that transport is made available for any students who wish to attend the funeral
- Arrange for all student records to be updated and determine whether any refunds are due
- Liaise with internal stakeholders and advise on procedural issues/updates, such as SITS, BluQube, SportBU, Alumni and SUBU Clubs & Societies
- Liaise with MIG Comms Lead on any specific communications
- Inform AskBU staff in case of query
- Ensure that all information required by the police and coroner is collated and submitted as soon as possible.
- Consider the need for a peer review as per the University Suicide Prevention Strategy if applicable, and commission this accordingly.

6.2.2. Faith and Reflection Team:

- Offer immediate support to students or members of staff who have been affected by the incident.

6.2.3. Head of Residential Services:

- Alert ResLife BU Officer (Welfare) to ensure that students are informed of and understand how to access the appropriate support services (note this is not an on-call or professional support role).
- Ensure that alternative accommodation is arranged promptly for those who need it
- Ensure those with PEEPS and other special needs are provided for
- Provide day-to-day liaison with next of kin (via the Head of Student Services if appropriate) regarding accommodation queries
- Ensure that the BU Comms Team is in touch with the private provider's Comms Team if appropriate
- Ensure that accommodation records are updated, and financial accounts are reconciled.

6.2.4. MIG Comms Lead:

- Draft press releases, monitor press and social media activity, and liaise with the media as required
- Assist the Faculty/Doctoral College and Head of Student Services with any specific comms
- If appropriate, liaise with private provider Comms Teams to coordinate an agreed/joint response.

#### 6.2.5. Director of Estates:

- Assess whether any specific action is required to secure or repair buildings, rooms or property and arrange for this to be done (only applies to death on campus).

#### 6.2.6. Faculty or Doctoral College Contact, e.g. Director of Operations or ESM

- Notify programme leader and liaise with the Head of Student Services regarding how and when to notify the student's cohort.
- Arrange further student support as required
- Liaise with Head of Student Services over funeral arrangements, etc.
- Update Faculty or Doctoral College records
- Liaise with next of kin on specific study queries
- Send letter of condolence and arrange for flowers to be sent to funeral or charity donation once details are known
- Process award for aegrotat degree or similar, if appropriate (see Note 2).

#### Notes:

1. The Faculty or Doctoral College contact should be identified and agreed at the earliest opportunity to ensure an agreed point of contact for the Head of Student Services/MIG Lead/Coordinator (and family if appropriate)
2. Please contact the Student Lifecycle team for further information about the award of aegrotat and posthumous awards.

#### 6.2.7. MIG Co-ordinator

- Ensure that all stakeholders have been informed, including the Vice-Chancellor, Board Chairman, OfS and the university's insurers (UMAL)
- Consider whether it's appropriate to liaise with the student's former school or college
- Arrange for a letter of condolence to be sent to the next of kin from the Vice-Chancellor (copy to the MIG Comms Lead)
- Arrange post-incident review and ensure all actions are completed
- Draft summary report for MIG, UET and the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee.

### **7. THE SAMARITANS**

The Samaritans are available to offer support to colleagues following a student death by suicide ('postvention'). They can be contacted on 0808 168 2528. Their communications team can also advise on wording for any press releases or statements (telephone 07943 809162).

### **8. LINKS TO OTHER BU DOCUMENTS**

- 8.1. This document forms part of the BU Major Incident Plan: I:\OVC\Public\Business Continuity\Major Incident Plan
- 8.2. Universities Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023/24

### **9. FLOWCHART**

A flowchart summarises the actions required.

### **10. SAMPLE LETTER OF CONDOLENCE**

A sample letter of condolence and press statement can be found in the WDO Teams folder at <https://livebournemouthac.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/WDOWinterclosurecover/ETxRNFfWqg5liPabL3ctrDgB9loaRa-2udPNH0TrMGSd2A?e=t25hHx>

KAR/SNS  
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