

# PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO THE DEATH OF A STUDENT

## Introduction

The death of a student is a serious and unsettling event for the whole of the University community.

It is important that the University reacts to such a sad event in a way that recognises the loss of one of its members and that supports those most affected by the death – family, students, and staff. It is important that the University responds to the death in a way that

- Acknowledges the loss properly
- Deals sensitively with the aftermath
- Supports the bereaved, both on and off campus.

The death of a student can occur in a variety of circumstances and this protocol is intended to cover all of these diverse situations thus ensuring that UCC can respond sensitively, quickly, and appropriately.

There are four stages in the response of the University to a student death:

- Verification of the death, establishing personal details of the deceased, and ensuring notification of deceased's next of kin has taken place
- The immediate communication of the news to the appropriate officers and offices of the university
- The lead up to and the funeral or memorial service
- The provision of ongoing support for friends and classmates of the deceased in the University

## Principles

The primary consideration at all times must be respect for the deceased and their family, which means that the information communicated should be limited to that which is necessary and appropriate.

While it is essential that accurate information about the death be communicated immediately to those who need it, it is also essential that this is done with an awareness of the sensitivity of the information and its impact on the recipients.

In addition to proper communication of information to the relevant sections of the University, there is a need to ensure that all necessary responses occur in the lead up to and during the funeral service/memorial service. There is also need to offer on-going support to fellow students of the deceased.

The University shall strive to be respectful of and sensitive to **any** religious and cultural norms of the deceased and their family. To facilitate this, the Chaplaincy Coordinator will ensure that chaplains have adequate training and information on how all major religious traditions respond to death. On the death of a student, the Chaplaincy Coordinator will determine their religious affiliation (if any) and, where appropriate, make contact with the religious leaders of that church, denomination or faith community to seek advice and offer possible assistance. The Chaplaincy Coordinator will advise the University in such matters so that the University can respond in a sensitive and respectful manner.

### 1. Key Contacts

Information concerning the death of a student may come from a variety of sources. **In the first instance any staff member or students of the University who become aware of the death of a student should inform either the Director of Student Experience, one of the Chaplains or in the case of an international student, the Vice President Global Engagement. Relevant parties should be informed by phone and/or email. Please see contact details below.**

A Chaplain should first verify that the death has taken place using their network. A Chaplain should consult the family of the deceased regarding the way in which the student's death is communicated to the University community.

The Director of Student Experience and Chaplain will then liaise and initiate the required communication and responses as indicated in Section 2 below.

## **2. University Response**

- 2.1 As outlined above, the death of a student should be reported to the Chaplaincy and the Director of Student Experience and in the case of an international student, to the Vice President Global Engagement.
- 2.2 The Chaplaincy will contact the family and ensure the subsequent liaison. In the case of an international student, the contact with the family may be made through the Vice President Global Engagement or by the Chaplaincy depending on the circumstances. The Chaplain will also liaise with the Students' Union.
- 2.3 The Director of Student Experience shall contact the Head of the relevant College, who in turn will contact the Head(s) of the relevant Schools/Departments. Once consent has been received from the family, the Head(s) of the relevant School/Department/Discipline will inform School/Department/Discipline members.
- 2.4 It is important in the distribution of notices that these are made in a timely and appropriate fashion. It would be important in the case of the death of a student whilst living away from their family, that family and friends of the deceased are aware of the death before any public University notice is issued.
- 2.5 In the event of the Head(s) of Schools/Department(s)/Discipline(s) informing students collectively of the death of a student, they should be accompanied by a Student Counsellor, Students' Union Welfare Officer and a Chaplain who will be available to support fellow students of the deceased as required. Outside of term, an appropriate email should be sent to students by the Head of School/Department/Discipline offering the supports available within the University namely: Student Counselling & Development, Chaplaincy and the Students' Union Welfare Officer.
- 2.6 The Head(s) of Schools/Departments/Disciplines will have discretion as regards cancelling lectures and extending assessment deadlines in support of students in consultation with the Deputy President and Registrar.
- 2.7 In the event of a communication to all students informing them of the death of a student, consent of the family should be obtained beforehand. The communication should be written in a sensitive manner and the student number should not be used.
- 2.8 The Director of Student Experience shall ensure that all relevant sections of the University e.g. President's Office, Student Records & Examinations Office, College Office are notified immediately of the student's death in order that no inadvertent communications occur which might cause distress to the students' family. The Student Records & Examinations Officer will bring the death of a student to the notice of the relevant Examination Board(s) [see Figure 1 for full list].
- 2.9 The General Services Officer shall ensure that the University flag is lowered and a notice posted in the Archway where possible on the day of the funeral/memorial

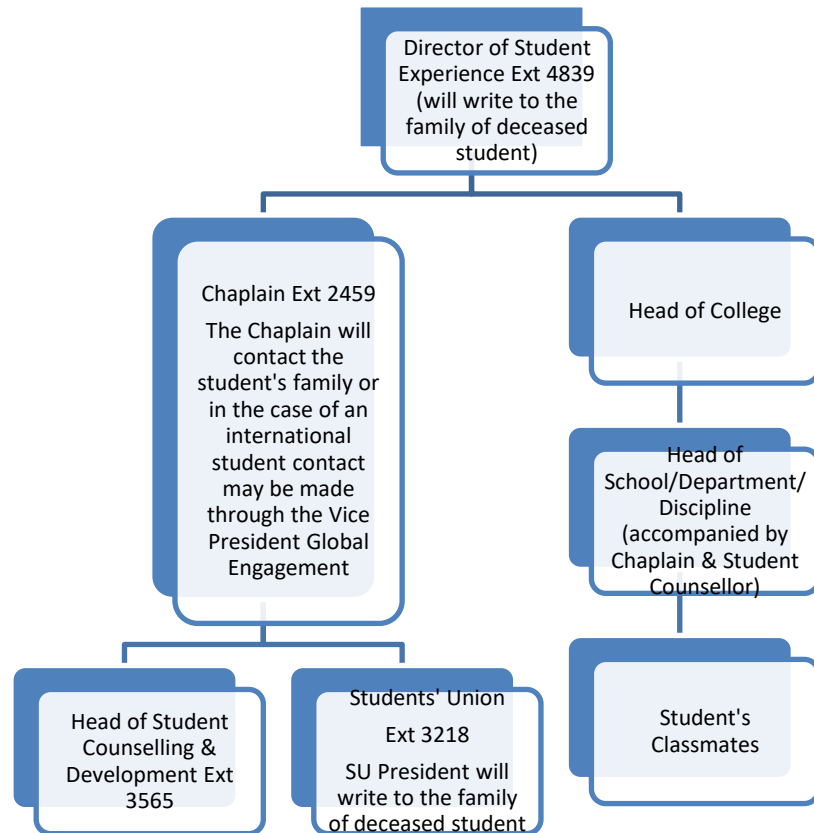
service.

- 2.10 The Chaplaincy Team will liaise with other student support services particularly with Student Counselling & Development and will form an important point of contact with the family and friends of the student, as appropriate.
- 2.11 The Chaplain will ordinarily attend the funeral service, where appropriate, and will have an important role in organising any memorial service at UCC in line with the wishes of the family.
- 2.12 The Director of Student Experience or their nominee will attend the funeral service, where appropriate, as the official representative of the University and be identified to the family and also to officiating clergy at the service. The Head(s) of Schools/Department(s)/Discipline(s) or their representative may choose to be also present.
- 2.13 The President of the Students' Union or their nominee may choose to attend the funeral service as the official representative of the student body, where appropriate, and be identified to the family and also to officiating clergy at the service.
- 2.14 The Director of Student Experience will write to the family, as well as the President of the Students' Union. The Deputy President & Registrar will write to the family expressing the condolences of Academic Council.
- 2.15 An application for consideration for the award of a posthumous degree may be made by the relevant School. In respect of Undergraduate or Taught Masters programmes, please refer to the Procedure for the Award of a Posthumous Degree (Taught Undergraduate or Masters Programme). In respect of a Postgraduate Research award, please refer to the Procedure for the Award of a Posthumous degree (Postgraduate Research). Both procedures are available [here](#)

Director of Student Experience  
May 2023

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**Figure 1: Protocol for Responding to the Death of a Student – Communications**



The Student Experience Office will alert the following Offices of the student's death:

- President's Office Staff
- Campus Accommodation
- College Offices
- Vice President Global Engagement
- Corporate Secretary & Deputy Corporate Secretary
- Chaplaincy Staff
- Dean of Undergraduate & Postgraduate Studies
- Deputy President & Registrar
- Fees Office Staff
- First Year Experience Co-ordinator
- General Services Officer
- Graduate Studies Office
- Head of Access
- Head of Accommodation & Community Life
- Head of Career Services
- Head of Sport & Physical Activity
- Head of Student Counselling & Development
- Head of Student Health
- Library
- Manager of Disability Support
- Marketing & Brand Impact
- Media & Communications Office
- Peer Support
- Student Records & Examinations Office
- Students' Union President & Welfare Officer
- Support Officer for International Students