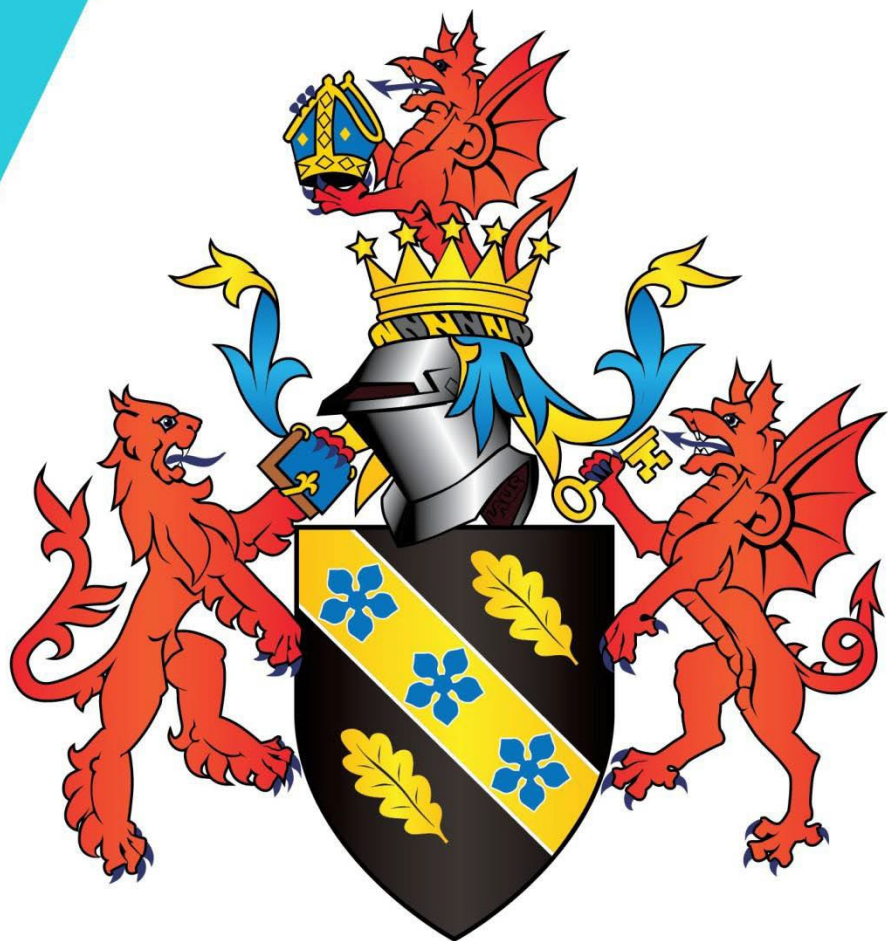




Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David



Student Death Protocol

Student Death Protocol

1. Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to establish guidelines and procedures to be followed in the unfortunate event of a student's death while enrolled at the University. This protocol aims to provide a professional and caring response which maintains sensitivity and confidentiality.

2. Guiding Principles

To enable a sensitive and appropriate approach, the University sets out the following principles as a starting point:

- *Respect and dignity for the memory of the student should be observed at all times and through all actions undertaken relating to the death;*
- *The utmost discretion should be used when receiving and passing on any information about the incident, with rumour and speculation avoided as much as possible;*
- *The wishes of the student's family and/or their formal representative should be taken into account wherever possible;*
- *All relevant authorities – for example the police and the coroner's office – must be fully supported and cooperated with where necessary;*
- *Appropriate support will be provided for students and staff affected by the death.*

3. Student Death

The exact circumstances of a student death can vary widely in each case:

- The death may be of natural causes, such as a heart attack;
- The death may be sudden and unexpected and happen in a very public place, such as an accident on or near campus;
- There may be more than one death involved, for example a road traffic accident;
- The death may be largely expected, and may have already involved some preparation, for example if a student with a pre-existing severe illness dies while in care;
- The death may be the result of a completed suicide;
- The death may involve suspected criminal activity, and therefore involve the police and other authorities, and severely constrain what information can be disseminated;
- The death may happen abroad, in which case relevant embassies and the Foreign Office are very likely to need to be involved;
- The death may have been recorded in some way on security or social media devices, either deliberately or accidentally;
- There may be particular cultural or religious factors involved in the death, and in the way that the family wishes the death to be dealt with.

3. Suspected suicide

In the event that a student death is suspected as a suicide, this protocol should be read in conjunction with the Postvention arrangements outlined in the University's Suicide Safer Protocol.

Please note that only the coroner can formally confirm the cause of death as a suicide.

4. Discovery of a body

a. Location

The location in which the death occurs will have a significant influence on the degree to which members of the University are involved in the early stages of dealing with the discovery of the body and notifying the authorities.

The location will probably be one of the following:

- In one of the University residences;
- In a non-residential part of the University estate;
- Off campus whilst engaged in University activity;
- Off campus, whilst living in local accommodation away from their permanent or family residence;
- Off campus in their permanent home or in a public place;
- Whilst abroad, either on University placement or for vacation.

b. If a body is discovered:

- Do not touch or move anything (other than to attempt medical assistance or to confirm that the person is deceased);
- If the location is on campus: inform the University Site Operations and ask them to call the police;
- If the location is off-campus: inform the police by dialling 999 and, separately, inform University Site Operations;
- Once you have notified Operations and/or the Police please follow instructions as directed. Please do not inform anyone else at this stage, either individually or via social media.
- University Site Operations will manage the situation in accordance with their departmental operating and escalation procedure.

UWTSD site operations

(24 hour numbers - Please use the Carmarthen number for campuses not listed below):

Carmarthen: 07767842738

Lampeter: 07976528354

Swansea: 07850321704 or 07540919915

In the event that a body is discovered, the Executive Head of Operational Estates and Facilities will notify the Director of Student Services.

5. Reporting, Notification and Response

a. Immediate Actions:

Any University staff member or student who becomes aware of a student death should report it immediately to Student Services. This can be done by completing a [Cause for Concern form](#) or by directly contacting the [Student Hwb](#). This will be escalated to the Director of Student Services (or their nominated deputy in their absence) via the Wellbeing triage team or the Student Hwb team.

Out of Hours notification can be made by contacting the site Operative Team in Carmarthen on 07767842738 and asking to notify the duty Out of Hours Senior Manager.

Once the notification has been made, Staff and students are asked not to take any further action in order to allow information to be appropriately validated by Student Services.

The University recognises that unofficial channels of communication can move quickly and encourages staff and students to be discrete, and to consider the impact on family and friends of the deceased. If information has already in the public domain it may be appropriate for a Programme Director to contact a cohort of students, acknowledge the University's awareness, explain the process outlined in this policy, and ask students to refrain from using social media.

b. Validation of Information:

The Director of Student Services (DSS) will be responsible for ensuring that the report of the student death is appropriately validated.

Once validated, the DSS will formally notify the following individuals and ensure that any planned communication to the student (or their family) is paused and key operational academic and support staff are informed:

- Chief Operating Officer (COO), who will evaluate the situation and who may decide to instigate Incident Management or the Major Incident Plan [*hyperlink to be added*].
- Pro Vice-Chancellor
- Executive Director of Human Resources
- Director of Academic Experience
- Executive Head of Registry (EHR)
- Executive Head of Finance (EHF)
- Relevant Dean of Institute
- Head of Counselling
- Wellbeing Advice Manager
- Head of Corporate Communications and PR
- Student Hwb Manager
- Students' Union Chief Executive

Additional relevant roles will be notified as required on a case-by-case basis.

c. Response Team

Once a student death has been confirmed, the DSS will establish a student death response team. The Response Team will include: the relevant Dean of Institute, the relevant Academic Programme Director, a representative of the Students' Union, representatives from the University Wellbeing team, the Executive Head of Registry, the Head of Corporate Communications and PR and the Executive Head of HR.

In the event that the COO instigates the Major Incident Plan, the Major Incident Team will be formed in the place of a Student Death Response Team.

The Student Death Response Team will work collaboratively to identify contacts close to the deceased and ensure an integrated and sensitive approach is taken to student and staff communication and support. The Response Team will maintain an appropriate action log and risk register using a designated Microsoft Teams site. The DSS will be responsible for ensuring that the COO and PVC (AE) are updated as required.

Additional members may be added to the Response Team as required.

d. Closure of the Student Record

Once a death has been validated, the EHR will ensure that the student is marked as deceased on the student record system and the student record is locked in terms of any further standard communication from the University. The EHF will ensure that the student does not feature on any current or future student debt report.

e. Statutory Reporting

The COO will formally notify the Vice-Chancellor of a student death and will also notify the University Secretary (US) who will determine whether a death meets the threshold for statutory reporting. The US will complete the necessary statutory reports as required, in consultation with the trustees.

The US will ensure that the University maintains records related to the student's death in accordance with legal requirements and university policies.

f. Police and/or Coroner Liaison

In the event of a sudden or unexplained death there will likely be a Police investigation and a subsequent report to the Coroner, who may carry out an inquest. Liaison on behalf of the University with the Police and/or the Coroner's office will usually be undertaken by the DSS or their nominated deputy.

Not all deaths will require an inquest, while in other cases the exact cause may be in dispute and may not be resolved even after an inquest.

5. International Students

Should the deceased be an international student, there are a number of additional practical dimensions to be addressed:

- a. Communication with the family may require a translation service;
- b. The appropriate consulate or embassy may need to be involved, the key internal contact in this instance would be the Executive Head of Visa Services and Compliance;
- c. The repatriation of bodies is subject to strict regulation and requires the involvement of a funeral director;
- d. Relevant cultural considerations.

6. Confidentiality

a. Privacy Concerns:

The University will respect the privacy of the deceased student and their family and share information only with individuals who have a legitimate need to know.

Any communication to the student body will only take place after the University is sure that the Police have informed the family, **and** after there is evidence that the student's death is already in the public domain, **or** with the expressed permission of the student's family.

b. Media Relations:

Media inquiries will be directed to the University's Corporate Communications and PR office, and any information released will be in accordance with legal and ethical guidelines.

7. Bereavement Support Services

a. Family Liaison:

In order to offer support to the family and to be able to make arrangements for those members of the University community who wish to attend the funeral (if permitted), it is important to establish a single University contact for the family. Occasionally the family will not want any contact with the University.

Ideally the **family contact** is a member of University staff who knew the student: experience has demonstrated that families appreciate this most. Usually it is best for this to be a senior member of staff in the Institute who has had some teaching or other contact with the student. Sometimes the Dean or a member of Student Services will take on this role.

The key responsibilities of the **family contact** are:

- To establish if there is anything the family requires, for example, help gathering personal possessions or to visit the Institute or another part of the University;
- To clarify funeral arrangements and whether the family would welcome students and staff attending the funeral;
- To be a conduit for any practical information, for example, returning fees or providing a transcript and/or certificate for a posthumous award (see section 10);
- To note the names of any students known to the family; they may know about close friends of the deceased, and vice versa;
- Sometimes the **family contact** may be asked to talk to the family about holding a memorial event; whether they are comfortable about it taking place, they wish to attend and whether there are any particular religious beliefs to take into account.

b. Student Support:

Students will be provided with access to a suite of resources and services to cope with the loss. In the event of adverse impact upon academic performance, appropriate accommodations will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the established extenuating circumstances procedure, as outlined in the [Academic Quality Handbook](#).

Student Services will work in collaboration with the relevant academic programme team to ensure that students are appropriately signposted to internal and external routes for support. Students can self-refer into wellbeing support services using the [Support Request form](#).

Additional support is available via our Student Assistance Programme (SAP) subscription, which includes provision for additional in-person and remote support for student peers in the event of a student death. The DSS will liaise with the SAP provider as required.

Multi-faith support is also available to students via the [University's Chaplaincy arrangements](#).

c. Staff Support:

Information relating to support for any University staff member affected by the death of a student will be provided and circulated via HR. Staff are encouraged to seek support from their line manager in the first instance.

8. Condolence and Memorial

The University may coordinate with the family and relevant university departments to organise a memorial service or an act of remembrance to honour the deceased student.

A letter of condolence from the University will be arranged and sent by the office of the Vice-Chancellor.

9. Posthumous academic awards

The procedure for considering, awarding and conferring a posthumous academic award is detailed in section chapter six of the University's published [Academic Quality Handbook](#) (ref: 6.9).

10. Regular Review:

This protocol will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and may be revised as necessary.

