**STUDENT DEATH PROCEDURES**

**Owner: Director of Student Services**

**Effective Date: January 2023**

**procedures to be Followed in the event of the death of a student**

1. **scope and purpose**
   1. These procedures are for BU and student accommodation staff to follow in the event of a student death. For the purposes of this policy, an incident in externally-managed student accommodation will be treated in the same way as on university property.
   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.
   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. 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.
  2. Whilst the Chief Operating Officer has overall responsibility for Major Incident Procedures, the Director of Student Services is the overall lead for the action to be taken following a student death, working with MIG members as required/appropriate.
  3. All staff roles named in this document may have one or more nominees.

1. **UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT**
   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. 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.
   3. If a student dies following an incident on university property, including student accommodation, and/or following an accident, crime or infectious disease, the incident response will be managed via the BU Major Incident Plan and the Major Incident Group (MIG).
2. **INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**
   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 Welfare Duty Officer (WDO) via the BU Emergency Number 222 (01202 962222). The WDO will ascertain all the available facts and inform the Director of Student Services. The Director of Student Services will inform the Student Services Exec Member of staff on call, MIG Co-ordinator and MIG Leader who will decide whether to invoke the Major Incident Plan.
   2. If the Major Incident Plan is not required, the Director of Student Services and Student Services Exec Member of staff on call will instruct the WDO on any local action required. The WDO may be asked to act as the Main Incident Contact with the Emergency Services. The WDO or Student Services Exec Member of staff on call must submit an incident report detailing all actions taken.
   3. If the Major Incident Plan is required, the MIG Leader will decide who is required to assist and will instruct the WDO, Director of Student Services and/or MIG Co-ordinator on the actions required – for example notifying the Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and whether a meeting of the Major Incident Group is required. The MIG Leader will determine whether any member of staff is required to attend the scene and instruct the most appropriate person accordingly.
   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 B13 Operation Manhattan (Halls of Residence checklist).

* 1. If the death is caused by, or may be caused by, a 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.

1. **DISCOVERING A DEATH ON CAMPUS**
   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 WDO once the Emergency Services have been called. Anyone finding a seriously injured or deceased student off campus must dial 999.
   2. Care must be taken to secure the surrounding area and ensure that the scene is not disturbed in any way. The WDO will liaise with the Emergency Services and follow their instructions, unless and until instructed otherwise.
   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 and all communications must be authorised by the Major Incident Group Leader.

* 1. The Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing should be informed so that they can ascertain whether it is a reportable incident 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.

1. **REPORTS OF A DEATH OCCURING OFF CAMPUS AND NOT RELATING TO BU BUSINESS**
   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 Director of Student Services who will determine what further action should be taken and by whom.
   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 Director of Student Services will assume responsibility for liaison with the family.
2. **THE ROLE OF INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS**
   1. The Major Incident Group Leader will decide who needs to be informed immediately following notification of an incident, usually:

* Director of Student Services or Student Services Exec Member of staff on call
* Faith & Reflection Team
* Head of Residential Services
* Senior Communications Manager
* Director of Estates
* Faculty Contact, e.g. Director of Operations or ESM
  1. Once the immediate actions have been taken, the following actions are required:
     1. Director of Student Services:
* 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 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
* Liaise with Head of Communications 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.
  + 1. Faith and Reflection Team:
* Offer immediate support to students or members of staff who have been affected by the incident
  + 1. Head of Residential Services:
* Alert ReslifeBU 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 Director of Student Services if appropriate) regarding accommodation queries
* Ensure that the BU Comms Team is in touch with the private providers Comms Team if appropriate
* Ensure that accommodation records are updated and financial accounts are reconciled.
  + 1. Senior Communications Manager:
* Draft press releases, monitor press and social media activity, and liaise with the media as required
* Assist the Faculty and Director of Student Services with any specific comms
* If appropriate, liaise with private provider Comms Teams to coordinate an agreed/joint response

* + 1. 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).
  + 1. Faculty Contact, e.g. Director of Operations or ESM
* Notify programme leader and liaise with the Director of Student Services regarding how and when to notify the student’s cohort.
* Arrange further student support as required
* Liaise with Director of Student Services over funeral arrangements, etc.
* Update Faculty 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

Notes:

1. The Faculty contact should be identified and agreed at the earliest opportunity to ensure an agreed point of contact for the Director of Student Services/MIG Lead/Coordinator (and family if appropriate)
2. Academic Services are currently drafting a policy for the award of aegrotat and posthumous awards. Please contact the Student Lifecycle team for further information
   * 1. 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 Senior Communications Manager).
* Arrange post-incident review and ensure all actions are completed.
* Draft summary report for MIG and the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee.

1. **THE SAMARITANS**

The Samaritans are available to offer support to the Director of Student Services, MIG Coordinator and MIG Leader 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).

1. **LINKS TO OTHER BU DOCUMENTS**
   1. This document forms part of the BU Major Incident Plan: I:\OVC\Public\Business Continuity\Major Incident Plan
   2. Universities Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022/23

1. **FLOWCHART**

A flowchart summarises the actions required.

1. **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/ETxRNFfWqg5IiPabL3ctrDgB9loaRa-2udPNH0TrMGSd2A?e=t25hHx