



## Response to a Student Death

From time to time the University will receive the sad news of a student death. Every situation will be unique with different factors that will determine the level of University response; e.g. whether the death was sudden or after a long period of illness, whether the death was on campus or not, whether the death was the result of a communicable disease, accident or criminal activity. Depending on the situation a student death may be deemed to be a Major Incident and may be dealt with under the University's Major Incident process. Regardless, the information and actions in this document will help ensure the University of East London provides an effective and compassionate response to a student death.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure a properly coordinated, timely and appropriate level of response by the University
- Ensure that the University communicates effectively with the family and all public authorities involved in the incident
- Ensure that the University provides appropriate support to those in our community affected by the student death
- Set out the administrative responsibilities in the event of the death of a student

The University response will be based on the following principles:

- The University is committed to responding to the death of a student in a compassionate and respectful manner.
- The University will act in a timely, supportive and sensitive manner.
- The University will seek to collaborate and cooperate with appropriate external agencies to facilitate any investigations or administrative activities related to the death.
- The University will respect the wishes of the family of the deceased and be discrete when dealing with information relating to the student and the incident. Any public statements made for or on behalf of the University will only be released after they have been checked for accuracy and approved by a member of the University Executive Board.

### Scope

This policy and procedure will apply only to those students who were enrolled directly with the University of East London and who were either studying with attendance, or through a distance learning programme. Institutions enrolling students on University of East London programmes through a collaborative partnership will be expected to support students and follow their own local policies. For students on apprenticeships their employer would normally lead the response.

## Procedure

Responding to the death of a student may be challenging for all involved. To help staff act effectively during this time of heightened emotions a 'notification of death protocol' has been developed (See Appendix A) and a series of department checklists have been developed (See Appendix B).

To help effect a professional response to a student death this procedure consists of four parts;

1. Notification of death protocol
2. First response (first 24 hours)
3. Second response (ongoing action)
4. Reflection and Recognition

### **1. Notification Procedure**

Any member of University staff may receive the notification of a student death. It is vital that the person receiving this notification collects as much detail as possible from the notifier, particularly;

- The name of the notifier
- The notifier's relationship to the deceased student
- Contact details for the notifier
- The name and date of birth of the deceased student
- When the student died
- How the student died
- Where the student died
- Whether the deceased student's family know
- Whether the Police have been informed

The staff member receiving this notification should follow the notification procedure (**Appendix A**) and notify the Director of Student and Staff Services and the relevant Dean of School. These senior staff will communicate with each other and lead the University's response.

Should a student death occur on campus the staff member receiving the news should call 999 and request the police and an ambulance. The staff member should then call Security (0208 223 7771) and notify the Director of Student and Academic Services. On site staff will be advised by the Emergency Services as to initial next steps. This is likely to include Security securing the area to ensure that the scene is not disturbed in any way and, if there are witnesses, to make them comfortable and ask them to wait until the Police arrive. If they cannot wait, the witnesses contact details must be taken.

The police will arrange for the removal of the body and they will formally notify the next of kin. No confirmation of any details may be released until the next of kin have been informed by the Police. Staff and students must not share news of the death on social media. Only communications approved by senior managers should be used.

## 2. First response (first 24 hours)

**Appendix B** provides checklists for different University departments to follow in the event of a student death. However, as every situation will be unique it is imperative that the Director of Student & Academic Services or Dean of School consult with the Chief Operating Officer who, depending on the circumstances, may designate the situation as a Major Incident.

The following departments will need to action their own student death checklist, co-ordinated by the Director of Student & Academic Services and/or Dean of School.

On Campus	Off Campus
Security	Communications
Residential Life	Student and Academic Services
External Relations	External Relations
Student and Academic Services	Students' Union
Academic School	Vice Chancellors Office
Students' Union	Director of Student & Academic Services
Vice Chancellors Office	Dean of School
Director of Student & Academic Services	
Dean of School	

- Other staff may be asked to become involved in the University response depending on the circumstances of the death e.g. International Office, Estates & Facilities.
- Other policies may need to be invoked depending on the circumstances of the death e.g. Communicable Diseases policy.

This First response is likely to be very fluid depending on the circumstances of the death, but the priorities will likely include;

- Establishing the facts of the situation
- Supporting Emergency Services (if appropriate)
- Maintaining campus security (if death on campus)
- Gathering information about the student and those who knew them
- Providing appropriate immediate support
- Creating a clear notification and communication plan for the community

The Director of Student & Academic Services and/or Dean of School should convene a case conference to review the events of the first day and plan next step actions for the following day. A notetaker should be appointed to record actions by setting up a specific Microsoft Teams site, or similar, for the student death incident response.

## 3. Second response (next steps)

The case conference actions from the First response should be supplemented by the departmental checklists in Appendix B which have a series of Second response tasks teams need to action. The Director of Student & Academic Services and/or Dean of School will have oversight to ensure all appropriate actions are completed.

This Second response phase will vary depending on the circumstances of the death, but the priority will likely include;

- Implementing the notification and communication plan
- Providing both practical and wellbeing support to students and staff affected
- Amending the students' record
- Establishing contact with the family of the deceased
- Facilitating student and staff attendance at the funeral (subject to family wishes)

Depending on the circumstances of the student death ongoing case conferences may need to be arranged.

#### **4. Reflection and Recognition**

Each team involved in responding to the student death should have a debrief session. Grief and loss have an impact on us all, even if we did not know the deceased well. After every student death response has been completed the Director of Student & Academic Services and/or Dean of School should lead a 'lessons learned' session. As part of the reflection process the University will, where appropriate, liaise with the Coroner's Office and consider the Coroner's findings. This document and the associated checklist should be reviewed, and the lessons learned implemented.

It would be usual after a death for those who knew the deceased to want to recognise their contribution to the University of East London e.g. a memorial, dedication or a posthumous academic award. It is important to remember that the deceased family must be consulted before any of these are actioned. The Director of Student & Academic Services and/or Dean of School are the senior staff who will lead on any posthumous response.

Posthumous awards are given at the discretion of the School and agreed/conferred by Academic Board. The Dean of School will submit a request to Academic Board detailing their recommendations. If the award requested is an Honours degree, it will be an unclassified named award. The school will have taken in to account previous credits completed and confirmed there is sufficient evidence that the student would have achieved the required credit for award.