Procedure in the event of a student death

Please note:

In the event of a death this document should be circulated to post holders outlined in the responsibility table below so they are aware of what actions they need to take and when.

Overall co-ordination is via the Director of Student Services (or nominee).

PLEASE READ DOCUMENT FULLY

Please note, if the death or incident involves either a former or current member of staff then please call your normal personnel contact and refer to the Death of a Staff Member policy.

The Purpose of the Procedure

From time to time the College is faced with the sad event of a student death. This procedure has the following objectives:

1. coordinating an appropriate level of response from the College;
2. avoiding confusion through the development of clear lines of responsibility
3. mitigating institutional risk by ensuring legalities are observed, and the interests of the College are protected in cases where negligence might be alleged
4. acting with common sense in mind

Factors which may determine level and type of response:

The death of a student is most frequently an unexpected event. The location in which the death occurs will have a significant bearing on the degree of involvement from the College and from staff. Notes at the end of this procedure give additional information on actions to be taken in the event of discovery of a death on College premises.

Document Contents

This document is divided into four parts:

- **Part 1** – Notification of a student death
- **Part 2** – The responsibilities of different College Officers
- **Part 3** – What happens next

Contact Details

Contact details of the key people in this document are available in the full version on the intranet for King’s staff, located here. [https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/about/governance/Internal-Policies/index.aspx](https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/about/governance/Internal-Policies/index.aspx)
### Notification of a student death

**WHO MUST BE INFORMED BY THE "FINDER"?**
One of the following senior personnel should be contacted immediately in the event of a student death: they should then inform the other two (outside office hours contact security who have home numbers for use in emergencies):

| Campus Operations Manager (as appropriate) | The Director of Student Services (the response co-ordinator) | The Director of Administration of the Student’s School (or Global Institutes or Summer School if relevant) |

**WHO MUST IN TURN BE INFORMED through rapid dissemination by the Director of Student Services or one of the above**

| The Principal’s Office (who will inform the Principals’ Central Team) | The Director of Students and Education | The Vice-Principal Education | The Head of School | The Head of Department | The Chaplaincy | The Dean of The College | The Director of Student Administration | The Director of Public Relations | The College Senior Tutor | The Head of the Counselling Service | The Chief Executive of the Students’ Union |

**WHO MAY NEED TO BE INFORMED (depending on circumstances/location)?**

| The Head of Student Information Advice and Guidance | The International Office | The Director of Governance and Legal Affairs Management | The College Safety Officer (only in the case of accidental death) |
The responsibilities of different College Officers

**First Tier Responsibilities:**
The following senior professional services staff will act together as a team, the role of which is to ensure the following:
- that appropriate people in the College and externally are informed of the death;
- that the legalities surrounding the event are being followed;
- that appropriate people are consulted and involved with the further actions that the College may wish or need to make;

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<tr>
<td><strong>Director of Student Services (or nominee)</strong></td>
<td>• confirm the veracity of information and that the next of kin have been informed&lt;br&gt;• notify next of kin if appropriate&lt;br&gt;• notify relevant College officers of student death as above&lt;br&gt;• to act as the overall co-ordinator of actions arising, liaising with the School&lt;br&gt;• liaison with next of kin&lt;br&gt;• Liaison with Police</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Operations Manager (if death is on site)</strong></td>
<td>• notify relevant College officers of student death as above&lt;br&gt;• take steps as outlined in the additional notes on discovery of a death on College premises</td>
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<td><strong>Director of Administration for the student’s School- (After liaising with Director of Student Services)</strong> <em>[Obtain student file to check on any relevant details, i.e. sponsored international student]</em></td>
<td>• notify relevant College officers of student death as above&lt;br&gt;• inform academic staff and dept admin/technical/secretarial staff,&lt;br&gt;• co-ordinate with Head of School informing of fellow students</td>
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**Second Tier Responsibilities:**

These are College staff that may have responsibilities stemming from the death of a student. The aim in all cases should be:
- to ensure that no routine administrative procedure is continued which may cause embarrassment to the College and additional distress to relatives/friends of the deceased;
- to ensure that follow-up enquiries, internal or external, are channelled to someone with first-tier responsibility or someone delegated by that group;
- to put in place support and processes for those affected to adjust and recover from the news of the tragedy;
- to ensure that all concerned have confidence that the College is acting in a responsible, compassionate and sensitive manner;

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<td><strong>The Director of Student Administration</strong> (liaising with ARC/Academic Centre)</td>
<td>• ensure that the student’s record is immediately updated,</td>
<td>• in consultation with the Department/School and Chaplaincy to arrange and disseminate the availability of counselling professionals for distressed students and staff</td>
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<td>• ensure that all internal administrative enquiries are referred to ensure that no College communications, including invoices, are sent to the deceased’s address</td>
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<td>• ensure that the Library, IT and other registrations in the name of the student are cancelled</td>
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<td><strong>Head of Counselling Service</strong></td>
<td>• identify if the student was known to the Counselling service</td>
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<td>• liaise with the department and Chaplaincy over support being offered to staff and students, including in the breaking of the news</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dean’s Office &amp; College Chaplaincy</strong></td>
<td>• Identify if the student was known to the Chaplaincy</td>
<td>• in conjunction with the Director of Student Services (or nominee) to be responsive to, and consult if necessary with the family and department and School on College inputs to a funeral or</td>
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<td>• provide pastoral support to staff and students – liaising with the student’s department and</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Director of Residential Services</td>
<td>• arrange alternative accommodation if required for those directly influenced by the event.</td>
<td>• liaise with College Safety Officer if appropriate</td>
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<td>Director of Public Relations</td>
<td>• agree immediate statement if enquiries come in, defining facts and limiting what is said to whom&lt;br&gt;• ensure switchboard direct all enquiries to the Director of Public Relations</td>
<td>• handle, or delegate the handling, of all media enquiries&lt;br&gt;• where practicable, if necessary to assist with shielding the relatives from the media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head of Department/Personal Tutors</td>
<td>• assist with informing staff and students connected with the deceased&lt;br&gt;• provide updates on last interactions with the student as requested by the Director of Student Services and/or the Police&lt;br&gt;• help identify students who were close to the deceased and are most vulnerable in the immediate aftermath</td>
<td>• make appropriate contact with, and send a letter of condolence to, the family/partner of the deceased&lt;br&gt;• facilitate appropriate representation by staff and students at a funeral and/or memorial service/event&lt;br&gt;• ensure the continuation of academic work but being sensitive to possible distress of some students&lt;br&gt;• raise awareness of the College’s central support services&lt;br&gt;• contribute to the College’s discussions on funeral arrangements, memorials, and contacts with the family/partner&lt;br&gt;• liaise with Director of Student Services about contact with the family</td>
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The Director of Residential Services

- liaise with College Safety Officer if appropriate

- handle, or delegate the handling, of all media enquiries
- where practicable, if necessary to assist with shielding the relatives from the media

- arrange alternative accommodation if required for those directly influenced by the event.
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<th>Health Centre</th>
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| • identify if the student was registered with the service and communicate any relevant information to the police/coroner via the Director of Student Services  
• liaise with hospital if necessary | • arrange, where appropriate and in consultation with the first-tier group dissemination of information to the College at large | • take any action required by law as the result of a possible death by reason of infectious disease to collaborate if appropriate with the NHS/local authority |

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<tr>
<th>Chief Executive of the Students’ Union</th>
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| • inform the sabbatical officers  
• identify if the student was involved in any KCLSU groups or activities  
• pass any relevant information on to the Director of Student Services  
• ensure KCLSU run social media doesn’t discuss the incident until announcements have been made | • in consultation with those with first-tier responsibilities,  
• write a letter of condolence to the family/partner  
• contribute to the College’s discussion on funeral arrangements, memorials  
• ensure KCLSU registrations and memberships are cancelled | • in consultation with those with first-tier responsibilities,  
• write a letter of condolence to the family/partner in conjunction with the Head of School |

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<tr>
<th>The Principal in consultation with Director of Student Services</th>
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<th>The Principal in consultation with Director of Student Services</th>
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<td>• inform PCT as and when it is seen fit</td>
<td>• write a letter of condolence to the family/partner in conjunction with the Head of School</td>
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<th>Finance Office</th>
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| • ensure there are no immediate letters to be sent to the student  
• provide any recent communication to the Director of Student Services if requested | • consider banking implications, i.e.  
• withholding direct debit request. | |

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<th>Head of Student Funding</th>
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| • prevent any debtor suspension letters/emails being issued  
• notify relevant external agencies – Student | • stop any payments to the student and amend records accordingly  
• refer to Graduate School if student is a | |
**Third Tier responsibilities:**
These are College staff that may have particular responsibilities arising from the death of a student. However these are determined by the nature and location of the death.

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| **Head of Student Information Advice and Guidance** | • identify if the student had sought advice on any issue recently | • support students who use the advice service who may be affected by the incident and direct them to Counselling and/or the Chaplaincy if required  
  • liaise with consulate/embassy if required  
  • advise campus banks if relevant.  
  • assist with arrangements for arrival of relatives |
| **College Safety Officer** | • identify immediate risks to staff and students if incident was on campus | • assess Health & Safety implications of any incident  
  • follow the reporting procedures required by law  
  • advise on the implementation of immediate closures or changes in practice where necessary |
| **Director of Governance and Legal Affairs Management** | • advise as to any immediate legal issues relating to the incident | • support the monitoring of communication around the incident  
  • support the liaison with the coroner if required |
| **Head of Disability Advisory Service** | • identify if the student was in liaison with the service and report anything relevant | • inform any relevant agencies/support workers |
What happens next

Communication

It is of vital importance that only known facts are communicated in the first instance, especially via email. If other relevant people are identified as being required to know about the incident then they may be added to the contact list, however care must be taken to minimise distribution of initial information to only those that need to be aware for reasons outlines in the table above. Rumour and guesswork must not be allowed to spread.

Informing students

Informing fellow students of their colleague’s death needs to be done sensitively and quickly. This can be done either by calling a special meeting, or, more likely, at the end of a lecture or seminar. The Counselling Service and/or the Chaplains should ideally be present when the news is broken but they can at the very least advise on conducting this type of meeting.

All facts, as far as they are accurately known should be made known, as should the availability of on-going support and a person to contact for further information. Another meeting may need to be called once the results of any post mortem are known.

If students are away on placement and it is impossible to inform them in person then alternative ways of informing them should be considered. Email should be used if necessary but only when all face to face alternatives have been exhausted. It is imperative that students are told swiftly as social media can often shape the message without any control.

Experience has shown that it has also been helpful to have a notice posted in the Department with the news, expressing the Department/Schools sorrow – and giving the contact details of Chaplains and Counselling team (see appendix 3).
**Additional Considerations**

**Funeral**

The funeral is likely to take place during the following week. The responsibility for the funeral rests with the family, and their wishes take priority. Some families prefer a small private ceremony, especially in the event of tragic or suspicious circumstances, and thus it may not be possible for staff or students to attend. Alternatively, the family may be glad if representative staff and students attend, with, where possible, the assistance of the College. Sometimes it may also be advisable for a member of staff, who did not know the deceased, to accompany affected students to the funeral in order to offer support, while at other times someone who did know him/her is appreciated. It is also possible to hold a parallel event in College at the same time as the funeral for those who cannot travel or attend the funeral itself; or indeed at a later date - the Chaplains can advise the Department on what might be suitable, taking into account the beliefs/faiths of all concerned.

**Possessions**

Collection of the possessions of the deceased, including their work, will be a distressing time, particularly for the next-of-kin. The situation will need to be handled sensitively and with respect to the wishes of those directly involved. Liaison will be undertaken with the Residential Services by the Director of Student Services, as appropriate. The family may also wish to have copies of the students’ work and exam scripts. This can be arranged via the Department and Examinations office, however answer papers will not include the questions that were set. Again, Chaplains or Counsellors can be available if required.

**Continuing**

As time passes and when College records have been amended, staff and students may continue to be affected by the death. This may come to light in a number of ways such as exam or coursework grades, in which case the examiners need to be informed, the need to relocate seminar rooms or perhaps a request to rearrange class scheduling altogether. Consideration needs to be given to these requests although some may be impossible to be granted for reasons beyond the control of the department.

**Emergency Contacts / a Death that occurs outside of regular College ‘hours’**

The College has an established procedure for dealing with an emergency outside of normal College hours. Security personnel on all sites have access to Duty Site Services Managers who in turn have access to the contact details of senior members of staff. In the case of the death of a student, appropriate people will be notified. It is therefore important that all senior staff make their line managers aware of any changes to their details and availability particularly during College closure.
It can be quite a shock for staff and students to return to College and discover that someone has not only died, but has been buried – and they missed it. This is when a College memorial service or event can be very helpful for all concerned. The Dean’s Office should be consulted for assistance. Where possible the College will attempt to contact students at the earliest opportunity to inform them that a death has occurred during a vacation and supply a point of contact within the School should they want more information.

**Withdrawal of a terminally ill student from a programme of study.**

In some cases a student who dies whilst enrolled at the College is in fact temporarily withdrawn due to their terminal illness. Many of these students withdraw in the hope that they will be able to return at a later date. Schools/departments are advised to discuss with the student how much contact they would like with the College. This will naturally vary, however normally the majority are pleased to continue to be involved in information mail outs. In some cases it may be more appropriate to establish a point of contact within the students’ family so that individuals can be kept aware of progress. Establish what the best mode of communication might be – emails are particularly helpful as it helps keep contact but allows the family to reply when they have time and avoids staff feeling like they may be intruding. Establish also how much of the information given can be passed on to colleagues or students. If a student does die whilst withdrawn due to serious illness the normal protocols are followed. A letter of condolence is written to the bereaved family from both the school/department and the Principal. Depending on how much of the programme was completed, the student may be given a posthumous award as a record of achievement.

**Case Conference**

In the following weeks a Case Conference will be called to bring together all staff who were close to the incident to assess if there is any learning that the College can take from the incident. The meeting is not to apportion any blame but to identify opportunities to improve the support given to students. Key findings will be sent to the Welfare Committee. A template for the findings is attached in Appendix 4.
Appendix 2

Discovery of a death on College premises

Additional notes on discovery of a death on College premises:

1. The Police must be notified.

2. Nothing should be moved or touched until the Police have arrived and their guidance has been sought.

3. If there is a "violent, unnatural death, or sudden death of which the cause is unknown..." then the Coroner’s Act 1988 imposes on the Coroner a duty (usually delegated to the Police at the scene) to establish; who the deceased was; where, when and how the deceased met their death ; details required for the registration of the death

4. The Police will normally arrange for the removal of the body.

5. The Police (or Hospital) will normally arrange that the next of kin are informed. In the case of an international student the Police will normally contact their counterparts in the students’ country, who will then inform the next of kin. The Director of Student Services (or nominee) must check with the Police whether this has been done and which person(s) have been informed. The College may need to assist the Police by making available information from its student records system.

6. In the unlikely event that the Police do not undertake this duty, responsibility may fall to a Senior College Officer (ie Director of Student Services (or nominee). It is essential that the veracity of the information about the death before making any contact with the next of kin.

7. If there are witnesses whom the Police will wish to interview, they should be taken to a private area removed from the immediate scene as soon as possible and provided with appropriate support.

8. In most cases, the sudden death of a student will become common knowledge to at least a portion of the community within a short space of time. Basic information should be disseminated without delay on a 'need to know' and 'need to support' basis. Failure to communicate can lead to rumour and unnecessary anxiety in the College community.

9. An apparent or alleged suicide is not a suicide until a Coroner says so. It is important that people acting in an official capacity within the College know this and do not pre-empt the Coroner’s verdict in communication.

Based on information provided by AMOSSHE
It is with great sadness that we have to announce the death of XXX

(*X was a 1st/2nd/3rd year YY student*)

A bereavement can often be a very hard thing to deal with, and it can also bring back memories of other events that we have tried to suppress. There are people in College to whom you can speak confidentially if there is anything that you need to discuss.

Welfare & Counselling Services
3rd floor Macadam Building
Tel: 020 7848 1731
Email counselling@kcl.ac.uk

King’s College Chaplaincy
K2.34 King’s Building
Tel: 020 7848 2373
Email chaplaincy@kcl.ac.uk
### Serious Incident Case Conference

**Incident title**

**Incident date:**
**Conference date:**

**Present:**

**Purpose:**
This document is a recording of discussions between staff who were involved in handling the incident and the response to it. It is not in any way a formal investigation into the events that led up to the incident and should not be seen as a definitive factual recording of the events. The purpose is to identify ways in which the College can learn from the incident and make improvements to systems and processes that may aid the handling of future incidents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happened</th>
<th>Is there anything we could have done differently</th>
<th>Immediate / long term actions (Person responsible)</th>
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