

Linacre College

Procedure for dealing with student tragedies

This Procedure is designed to serve as an *aide mémoire* in the event of a tragic event within College. 'Student tragedy' is here defined as any event concerning a student, which both seriously and directly affects the College community. This will include student deaths, but may also concern cases of significant injury. This procedure has been updated (August 2018) in accordance with the [University Guidance for Dealing with a Student Tragedy](#)¹, and, in particular, Annex A of that Guidance.

The main objectives of this Procedure are:

- To respond in an appropriate and timely manner to the tragedy;
- To protect and comfort those College members that are directly affected by the tragedy;
- To provide the Police with contact information for family and partners;
- To ensure that friends and work colleagues are informed swiftly and sensitively;
- To ensure that the Police, external professionals and family have the access and information that they need to deal with the situation;
- To give accurate information and reassurance to the wider College community as soon as possible;
- To deal with the press in order to avoid intrusive questioning and rumours.

Immediate Action

1. **Contact the Emergency Services as needed:** Police, ambulance, fire brigade – by calling 999.

In the event of a discovery of a death on College premises, the Police must be notified. Nothing should be moved or touched until the Police have arrived and advised on next steps. If there are witnesses whom the Police will need to interview, ensure that there is a private area available to them and appropriate support provided. Care is needed to encourage witnesses and/or affected students not to inform any third party until the next-of-kin is informed.

2. As soon as the emergency services or a medical doctor have confirmed that a tragic event has happened, **alert the first person on this list who is available:**

- College Secretary
- Porter
- Junior Dean

¹https://www.linacre.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/university_guidance_for_dealing_with_a_student_tragedy.pdf

3. They will then **make contact with ALL of the following:**

- The Principal
- Domestic Bursar
- Senior Tutor
- College Secretary

Contact details for all of the above are held in the Porter's Lodge Emergency Book and in the Junior Dean Handbook.

Key Responsibilities

The Principal

- The Principal will handle all contact with the next-of-kin. Once the Police have informed the family, the Principal will establish official contact.
- The Principal will handle all enquiries by the Press, and will be the sole College spokesperson. The Principal will liaise with the University News and Information Office – 01865 (2)80 528 (office hours), 07738 135 619 (Duty Officer) .
- All members of College should be reminded at the earliest opportunity that they should not make statements to the Press in order to protect the privacy of those affected and avoid prejudicing any investigation.
- The Principal will send an email to all College members giving a brief statement on events. It is essential that the College checks with the Police that the family has been informed before any significant level of detail is disseminated internally or any press statement is released.²
- The Principal will organise a special (voluntary) assembly as soon as practicably possible to inform the College as a whole of developments and information.

Domestic Bursar

- The Domestic Bursar will liaise with the Police and University Security Services (01865 (2)89 999 for emergencies).³
- The Domestic Bursar will close off any areas of the College as requested by the Police, and ensure that the Press do not gain unauthorised access to the College grounds.
- They will be responsible for ensuring that all external professionals have access to College.
- They will ensure that alternative provision is made if College facilities or student rooms are affected or are inaccessible.

² Depending on the circumstances of the student tragedy, information may rapidly circulate on social media. The College may come under pressure from social media to release a statement. No statement should be made until it is verified that the family have been contacted. However, if there is a likely to be a significant delay, the College should consult with the News and Information Office about issuing a brief statement. Students should be warned about speculating on social media and advised to protect the privacy of the student and the family. Anything said on social media may be used in a potential police investigation. Furthermore, students should be advised that the press may republish social media posts which may be used out-of-context.

³ N.B. According to the University Procedure, if the University Security Services are called, they will, unless requested not to do so, contact the: University News and Information Office, Vice-Chancellor's Office, Proctors' Office, Counselling Service, OUSU, Director of Student Welfare and Support Services, Chair of Health and Safety Management Committee, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education), as appropriate.

- They will brief the Porters and Junior Dean.
- They will be responsible for providing support to any members of the College staff who have been affected by the tragedy.

Senior Tutor

- The Senior Tutor will be responsible for providing support in College for those affected by a tragedy.
- They will liaise with the Common Room Executive in order to identify those most likely to have been affected.
- They will inform the College Doctor (19 Beaumont Street, 01865 240501) and take advice on provision of support.
- They will contact the University Counselling Service (01865 270300) and arrange for professional support for those who need it.
- They will circulate general guidance to College Advisors and arrange for a programme of monitoring so that delayed reactions to the tragedy do not go unnoticed.

College Secretary

- The College Secretary will ensure that next-of-kin information is provided to the Police.
- They will be responsible for passing on a statement of events (prepared by the Principal) to a student's department, supervisor, Proctors' Office, Vice-Chancellor's Office and the University Health and Safety Committee.
- They will maintain a detailed record of events for a subsequent review of the handling of the tragedy.

May 2007; revised October 2010, February 2012, January 2015, February 2018, August 2018