



Procedure for Dealing with Student Tragedies

December 2023



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Purpose and Objectives

This procedure is designed to serve as a model for good practice 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 (December 2023) in accordance with the University Guidance for Dealing with a Student Tragedy 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 trusted contact¹ information and to confirm that the police have informed the trusted contact;
- To ensure that friends and the departmental community are informed swiftly and sensitively;
- To give accurate information and reassurance to the wider community as soon as possible;
- To inform the University Security Services and Student Welfare and Support Services;
- To ensure the press are dealt with appropriately in order to avoid intrusive questioning and rumours.

¹ The “Trusted Contact” is the student’s nominated individual who is willing and able to support the student in an emergency or crisis, and must be informed in the event of a student tragedy.



Immediate Action

1. Contact the Emergency Services: police, ambulance, fire service as required – 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 trusted contact for emergencies is informed. The police or hospital will normally make contact with the trusted contact. The designated contact within the emergency services should ensure that trusted contacts have been informed before any communication is issued.

2. As soon as the emergency services or a medical doctor have confirmed that a tragic event has happened, use the following contact chain to ensure efficient dissemination of information.

Principal <i>(who will then make contact with all individuals in the column to the right →)</i>	Senior Tutor <i>(who will then make contact with all individuals in the cells to the right →)</i>	Academic Registrar <i>(who will then make contact with all individuals in the cells to the right →)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Office Staff • College Advisor
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Doctor (19 Beaumont Street) • Junior Deans • Relevant Common Room Representatives 	
	Domestic Operations Manager <i>(who will then make contact with all individuals in the cells to the right →)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Security Services • Lodge Team • Accommodation Manager, Housekeeping team and Maintenance Manager (if relevant) 	
	Student Welfare and Support Services <i>(who will then make contact with all individuals in the cells to the right →)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Chancellor's Office • Proctors' Office • Relevant Faculty/department 	
	University News Office		
	Bursar Director of Estates Vice Principal		



IN EVERY SITUATION THE FIRST ACTION IS TO CALL THE EMERGENCY SERVICES.

In the event of the Principal being unavailable to initiate the subsequent contact chain, the Vice Principal or Senior Tutor will deputise. In the event of any other individual being the first point of contact for the event, that individual will ensure that the emergency services are called and work back through the columns in the most logical pattern, given the triaging above.

Key Responsibilities

The Principal, (in the absence of the Principal, these tasks should be completed by the Vice-Principal or Senior Tutor).

- The Principal will handle all contact with the trusted contact. Once the police have informed the trusted contact, the Principal will establish official contact.
- The Principal will make contact with the University News and Information Office – 01865 (2)80 528 (office hours), 07738 135 619 (Duty Officer) and Student Welfare and Support Services (primary contact is Jane Harris - director.swss@admin.ox.ac.uk). SWSS will then notify other relevant University colleagues.
- Following consultation with the University News Office, the Principal will send an email to all College members giving a brief statement on events and reminding them to avoid making statements to the press in order to protect the privacy of those affected and avoid prejudicing any investigation. It is essential that the College checks with the police that the trusted contact has been informed before any significant level of detail is disseminated internally or any press statement is released. 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 trusted contact has been informed. However, if there is a likely to be a significant delay, the College should consult with the University News and Information Office about issuing a brief statement. Members 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.
- 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 Operations Manager, (in the absence of the Domestic Operations Manager, these tasks should be completed by the Bursar or Director of Estates)

- The Domestic Operations Manager will make immediate contact with the University Security Services (01865 (2)89 999 for emergencies).
- The Domestic Operations Manager will liaise with the police following any initial contact.
- The Domestic Operations Manager 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 where appropriate.
- They will ensure that alternative provision is made if College facilities or student rooms are affected or are inaccessible.
- They will brief the Porters.
- They will be responsible for providing support to any members of the College staff who have been affected by the tragedy.

Senior Tutor, (in the absence of the Senior Tutor, these tasks should be completed by the Principal or Academic Registrar)

- The Senior Tutor will be responsible for providing support to non-staff members in College for those affected by a tragedy.
- They will inform and liaise with the Junior Deans and relevant Common Room Representatives 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.

Academic Registrar, (in the absence of the Academic Registrar, these tasks should be completed by the Senior Tutor or other Academic Office members)



- The Academic Registrar will ensure that trusted contact information is provided to the police. Should this information not be present on eVision, they will seek to find a relevant contact in the student's file or by any other means that may be appropriate. Should this information not be available or accessible, they will inform the police and seek their guidance.
- The Academic Registrar will inform the College Advisor.
- The Academic Registrar will maintain a detailed record of events for a subsequent review of the handling of the tragedy.