



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Protocol for Staff Dealing with a Student Death

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1.0 Purpose

The death of a student is a sad and distressing event for all concerned and should be dealt with sensitively by the University. Appropriately managing a student's death can support those impacted such as family, next-of-kin, classmates, staff and friends and enable them to adjust to the loss.

This protocol is intended to set out the steps to be followed in the event of the death of a student and lays out the standard University response. However, the actual response in practice may diverge from the protocol depending upon the circumstances and the family's wishes.

The protocol also aims to simplify the process by defining the appropriate flow of information and communication when managing a bereavement. However, ultimately the protocol is at the discretion of the President of the University and the Dean of Students¹.

2.0 Protocol

The circumstances surrounding a student's death can affect how the University responds, however, broadly speaking the following set of circumstances are anticipated:

Student death on campus

- related to a University, Student Union, club, society, sport or other academic activity;
- not related to one of the above (e.g. an accident, natural causes or suspected suicide²); or
- within a campus residence.

Student death off-campus

- related to an academic activity (e.g. INTRA, student placement, study abroad or Erasmus exchange);
- at an event arranged by the University or by the Students Union (e.g. club or society event); or
- not related to the University such as at home, travelling abroad, or in private accommodation.

The protocol for the death of a student is as follows:

¹ The current Dean of Students is claire.bohan@dcu.ie / 01 7005164.

² Please note there are separate *Postvention Guidelines* for the death of a student by suspected suicide.

2.1 Coordination Protocol

The initial news of the death of a student may come at any time of day or night via different communication channels, including through the media. Before activating this protocol it is important to first verify the nature of the death and the personal details of the student.

2.1.1 Initial Call – What to Do

If you receive a call informing you of a sudden student death, ask:


- Time/date/location of incident.
- Have the emergency services been called?
- Name, course, and student number of the student, if possible.
- How the caller became aware of the incident / or knows the deceased.
- Caller's name, position, contact details and any other relevant contact numbers.
- Are any other staff members involved or aware of the incident?

Upon news of a student's death, the Dean of Students should be informed as soon as practically possible. The responsibility for coordinating the overall response of the University rests with the Dean of Students or his/her nominee. As necessary, s/he will liaise with the **President of the University** or his/her nominee, the student's **Dean of Faculty / School, Head of School** or his/her nominee, the **Chairperson of the relevant Programme**, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Principal Supervisor, if a research student, the **Head of Security Services** and the **Director of Communications, Marketing and Events (CME)** or his/her nominee, before putting in place any response.

The Dean of Students will be the case lead and will coordinate the response and call upon relevant individuals within the University for assistance with this response, where appropriate.

The Dean of Students will then inform the following staff (depending on student status):


- University Executive;
- Head of School;
- Chairperson of Programme (if a taught programme);
- Security Services Manager;
- Heads of SS&D;
- Principal Supervisor (if a research programme);
- Director of Registry;
- DCU Reception Desk;
- Managing Director of Campus Residences (if in campus accommodation)
- Relevant University units (depending on the nature of the situation) such as DCU Sport; &
- Office of Student Life (OSL).



As mentioned above, a student's death can occur at any time and under different circumstances. The coordination protocol will encompass certain steps depending on the nature of the death and the wishes of the family. Below is the protocol for a variety of cases, however from time to time, there will be cases that will be dealt with at the discretion of the Dean of Students and/or the President of the University. At a basic level, any student death will be dealt with compassion and empathy for the family and will include activation of a coordination plan, support plan, communication plan and follow-up.

2.2 All Student Deaths

- The Security Services Manager should ensure that the University flag is flown at half-mast on the day of the funeral.
- As soon as the removal and funeral details become known, they should be communicated by the Dean of Students to all those listed above in section 2.1.1.
- If a large number of students from a class group wish to attend the funeral, it may be necessary to hire a bus for this purpose. This can be organised by the Students' Union.
- The Dean of Students should inform the Director of Registry, in writing, that the student has died, and this must be noted on the student record by the Registry in such a way as to ensure that the student is not included in any subsequent communication. In the case of the University learning of the death of a *graduate*, the Alumni Office should also be informed, in writing, to ensure no subsequent mailings or other forms of communication are sent.
- The Dean of Students will establish, through the Finance Office, whether the student Personal Accident insurance policy applies and, if it does, will liaise with the family at the appropriate time.
- The primary consideration in the University's response on these occasions should be the wishes of the family. Therefore, if the family, for example, wishes no comment to be made to the media (even confirming that the deceased was a student here), this wish must be respected.
- The Chairperson or Principal Supervisor, if a research student, should liaise with the Chaplaincy or Dean of Students regarding a Memorial Service, at the appropriate time.
- The Dean of Students will ensure the student's name is entered into the Book of Remembrance by the Chaplains.
- The University will ensure that the student's belongings are returned to the family. This can include items in lockers or laboratories. If the student lived on campus,



this could include inviting a family member to gather the student's belongings from their residence.

- If a student is studying abroad or is an international student, some assistance with repatriation, short-term accommodation, flights, etc. can be provided for the family, if appropriate.
- If a student is studying abroad or is an international student, the University will meet the family at the airport and arrange a meeting room on campus, if required.
- If a student dies on campus, the Security Services Manager will liaise with An Garda Síochána and pass on the family contact details so they can inform the next of kin. Contact with the family will be made by An Garda Síochána in the first instance.
- If advice/support is required for students/staff, see Appendix 1 for list of Student Support Contacts.
- If a fellow student is in distress, see Appendix 2 'Actions Advised in Helping a Student in a Psychological and/or Medical Crisis'.
- If required, we will engage the services of a professional interpreter to communicate with family of international students.

2.3 Emergency/Crisis on Campus

- In a case where a student dies on campus or out of hours, DCU Security or Emergency Services may be the first on the scene. The Security Services Manager will liaise with the Dean of Students to provide practical assistance for any affected students, at the earliest practical time.
- In the case of a death on campus, Security will protect the integrity of the scene and the body until all legal requirements are met.
- Security will contact the Emergency Services and will be the key liaison.
- Security will provide information, local knowledge and space for Emergency Services or An Garda Síochána, as required.
- Security in conjunction with the Dean of Students, Health and Safety Office and the Chief Operations Office, will carry out a review of the incident to ensure that appropriate remediation steps can be implemented in the future.
- It is the role of the police or hospital to inform the next of kin of the death.
- If advice/support is required for students/staff, see Appendix 1 for list of 'Student Support Contacts'.

- If a fellow student is in distress, see Appendix 2 'Actions Advised in Helping a Student in a Psychological and/or Medical Crisis'.

2.4 Communications

For a high-profile student or where there is media interest, the Director of CME will coordinate a university response in conjunction with the Dean of Students and possibly, the family/next of kin. CME will be the first point of contact for the media.

- The Director of CME or their nominee will publish a statement, answer questions from the media, or advise staff on an appropriate response to any media queries, if necessary.
- DCU Reception will be provided with an appropriate response to queries over the phone and informed of funeral arrangements.
- In the case of a statement or handling media enquiries on campus, the Director of CME will make the necessary arrangements.
- In the case where a student dies in a campus residence, the Dean of Students will coordinate the communications plans in conjunction with the Student Residences Manager and the Director of CME.

General Communication:

- **Library** – will ensure no communication is sent to the student or their family regarding outstanding loans or fees. All fees should be cleared.
- **DTS** – will ensure student email and Google accounts are suspended without delay. Any data/records held within the student account should be kept, in case anything is required by the family.
- **Registry** – will ensure the student record is adjusted, and no further communication goes out regarding, for example, exams, fees or grants.
- **Exams / Awards Office** – will make the necessary arrangements regarding communications for exams or for the posting of results.
- **Graduation Office** – depending on the timing of the death, the Head of School will liaise with the Student Awards Manager regarding an [Aegrotat Award](#).
- **Alumni Office** – in the case of a Graduate's death, the graduate's name will be removed from the communications list.
- **International Student** – in the case of an international student, the student's name will be removed from any communication lists.

2.5 Large Class and/or Group Support

- The death of a fellow student will come as a shock to classmates and the news will need to be broken in a compassionate manner. If a group email is being sent then liaison with the Dean of Students on the content of the email³ will be required.
- Following this email:
 - Arrange for the class group to be brought together if at all possible and provide hospitality⁴;
 - Ask for a member of Student Support & Development to attend the meeting with you for support and to provide details of student support available in DCU (contact the Dean of Students); &
 - Allow the students to stay together for a period and support each other⁵.
- If the grieving period is at a time of semester, assignments or exams, the Head of School, or the Programme Chairperson, may wish to make alternative arrangements for the class group.
- If deemed necessary, the Chaplaincy can offer a private setting for students to drop in and comfort each other and to offer emotional support. Chaplains can support students if they have their own ideas on remembering their fellow students, such as a vigil or a relevant religious/spiritual gathering. If advice/support is required for students/staff, see Appendix 1 for list of Student Support Contacts.
- If a fellow student is in distress, see Appendix 2 'Actions Advised in Helping a Student in a Psychological and/or Medical Crisis'.
- Support for staff affected by the death can be provided through the School's Business Partner in DCU People or by contacting the Employee Assistance Service, who provide confidential telephone counselling. (Link to be inserted)

2.6 Family Wishes

The primary consideration in the University's response to a student death should be the wishes of the family. Therefore, if the family, for example, wishes absolutely no comment to be made to the media (even confirming that the deceased was a student here), or if they wish that the death of the student is not officially conveyed to anyone in the University, this wish must be adhered to. In the case of a student dying in either suspicious or violent circumstances, particularly on campus, CME will manage media queries, which may include confirming whether the deceased was attending DCU.

³ An email template can be found in Appendix 3, if required.

⁴ Student Support & Development will cover the costs of catering for the group in this instance.

⁵ In the case of the news breaking during class time, the lecturer may wish to stop the class and invite the student group to gather after an hour in a suitable location. In Glasnevin, this could be the Inter Faith Centre, in St Pat's, a corner of the canteen; in All Hallows, in Marmaduke's. The lecturer should then contact the Dean of Students to arrange hospitality and for student support staff to be present.

3.0 Principles

When applying the protocol, the following general principles are to be followed.

Empathy, Sensitivity and Compassion

The death of a student is a sad and distressing event for all concerned and should be dealt with in a sensitive and compassionate manner by the University. Managing a student bereavement in the appropriate manner can support those impacted such as the immediate family, classmates, staff and friends and enable them to adjust to the loss.

Clear and Timely Communication

It is important that the University responds to the news of a student death in an appropriate manner and ensures the correct staff are made aware of the news. This means having clear confirmation that the relevant people have received the communication of the student death. This allows for a streamlined process, an appropriate and timely flow of information and for the family's wishes to be taken into consideration.

4.0 Roles & Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of staff engaging with this protocol are as follows:

4.1 Coordination & Support Lead

The Dean of Students, or his/her nominee, will lead the University response. S/he may nominate other named individuals to assist, where necessary. The issues and/or tasks to be considered are:

- Confirm details of the death and details of the deceased student;
- Inform, as appropriate, the University Executive, Head of School, Chairperson of Programme, Security Services Manager, Head of SS&D, Principal Supervisor (if a research student), Director of Registry, DCU Reception Desk, Managing Director of Campus Residence (if in campus accommodation), and other relevant University units (e.g. DCU Sport);
- Speak with the family at the relevant time and act as the liaison person between the family and the University;
- Inform the Director of Registry for the student record to be amended;
- Have the student removed from the Alumni mailing list (if the student is a graduate);
- Liaise with the Programme Chairperson / Principal Supervisor to arrange support for the class group / research group;
- Contact the Students' Union to arrange a bus to the funeral, if appropriate;
- Communicate details of the funeral, once known, to the staff mentioned above;

- Discuss the student Personal Accident insurance policy with the family at the appropriate time, if relevant;
- Contact the Student Advice Manager to discuss preparing details of support for students who may be impacted academically;
- Liaise with the Head Chaplain to ensure the student is remembered in the Book of Remembrance or at a Memorial Service; &
- Arrange a de-brief 10 days after the funeral with the staff involved, organised by the coordination and support lead.

4.2 Communication Lead

The Communication lead should be the Director of CME or their nominee. They will:

- Deal with media enquiries;
- Organise a statement for the media, the University's website and for social media if appropriate;

4.3 Academic Lead

In all cases, any communication with students or Faculty will be carried out according to the family's wishes. The Dean of Students will advise on the appropriate actions to be taken.

- Following the notification by the Dean of Students, the Head of School (or if preferable the Chairperson of the relevant Programme) should inform members of the Programme Board of the death of the student. In the case of a research student, the Dean of Students will liaise with the Dean of Graduate Studies and the student's Principal Supervisor(s), who will inform relevant colleagues ⁶.
- Once the funeral details become available to the Programme Chairperson / Head of School / Principal Supervisor(s), this information should be passed onto the Programme Board and/or any other member of staff who may have known the student, as staff members who are available may wish to attend the funeral. The Chaplaincy can provide guidance to staff, if required, in respect of different religious traditions.
- In consultation with the Dean of Students, and only when the funeral details have been made public, the Chairperson or Head of School or Principal Supervisor(s) should email the relevant student group informing them of the passing of the student and providing funeral details (and a RIP.ie link, if available)⁷. The Dean of Students will advise whether a bus is being provided through the Students' Union.
- Arrange for the class group to come together. See Section on 'Large Class / Group Support', Section 3.5.
- Following the funeral, students and staff may wish to organise a memorial service to celebrate the life of their fellow student. The Chairperson / Head of School /

⁶ An email template can be found in Appendix 4, if required.

⁷ An email template can be found in Appendix 3, if required.

Principal Supervisor(s) should contact the Chaplaincy, or the Dean of Students, who will work with the students on an appropriate memorial service. This will be arranged after a respectful period and at a time that suits the family and students.

- Should the School wish to consider an Aegrotat Award for the deceased student, this can be discussed with the Student Awards Manager in the Registry; &
- Attend a de-brief 10 days after the funeral/memorial/prayer service, organised by the Coordinator and Support Lead.

5.0 Students on Placement

In the case of the death of a student on placement, the following actions should be taken:

5.1 Teaching Placement:

If a student passes while on Teaching Placement, the Dean of Students should be informed at the earliest opportunity. No action should be taken until the Dean of Students has been informed. They will inform the Placement Coordinator and Chairperson of the relevant Programme. The Chairperson will contact the School / Placement Setting to inform them of the death of the student who was on placement. The School / Placement Setting will activate their internal protocols to support their pupils. The School / Placement Setting may wish to return student items to the family of the deceased, this can be arranged through DCU at a suitable time.

5.2 Clinical Placement:

The Chairperson in DCU should contact the Clinical Placement Setting to inform them of the death of the student who was on placement. The Placement Setting will activate their internal protocols as necessary. Should the placement setting wish to return student items to the family of the deceased, this can be arranged through DCU at a suitable time.


5.3 INTRA Placement:

The Dean of Students should be informed at the first available opportunity of the death of a student on placement. They will liaise with the Director of Placement and the Head of INTRA and discuss steps to be taken. No other communication with colleagues should be made until this discussion has taken place.

The Placement Setting will activate their internal protocols as necessary. Should the Placement Setting wish to return student items to the family of the deceased, this can be arranged through DCU at a suitable time.

5.4 Study Abroad / Erasmus:

If an overseas institution/provider contacts DCU International Mobility to inform them of the death of a DCU student, the Director of Placement should be informed. The Director of Placement will inform the Dean of Students immediately. The Dean of Students will



liaise with DCU Security, who will contact An Garda Síochána. They will arrange for the family to be informed. The Dean of Students will liaise with the family at the appropriate time to provide support.

If the student passes while on a break from their overseas studies in Ireland, DCU International Mobility will inform the Director of Placement who in turn will inform the Dean of Students. DCU Placement will contact the liaison person in the institution overseas, after discussion with the Dean of Students. It may be necessary to arrange for the return of the student's belongings. This should be discussed with the Dean of Students.

If an international DCU student passes away while on Study Abroad, Erasmus/Exchange at DCU, this should be immediately conveyed to the Director of Placement who will inform the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students will arrange with DCU Security for the family to be informed through An Garda Síochána and necessary actions taken.

6.0 Related Documentation

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the following policies / guidelines.

- [Death of a Student Policy](#)
- [DCU Postvention Guidelines - 'How to Respond to a Student Suicide'](#)
- [Medical Incident Management](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress](#)
- [Contact with a Third Parties Policy](#)

7.0 Contact

Any queries regarding this protocol should be directed to Dr. Claire Bohan, Dean of Students, Student Support and Development.


Tel: 01 700 5164

E: claire.bohan@dcu.ie.

8.0 Protocol Review

This protocol will be as and when changes are required.

9.0 Version Control

Protocol Name	Protocol for Staff Dealing with a Student Death		 Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath Dublin City University
Unit Owner	Student Support and Development		
Version Reference	Original Version - V2.0	Reviewed Version – N/a	
Approved by	Executive		
Effective Date	April 29 th 2025		

End.

Appendix 1 - DCU Services Contact Details

DCU Security

For Emergency/Campus Security 24/7 for all campuses, call +353 1 700 5999

Health Centre

Glasnevin Campus

Jessie Byrne	Head of Service	+353 1 700 5766	jessie.byrne@dcu.ie
Frank Quinn	Nurse	+353 1 700 8249	frank.quinn@dcu.ie
TBC	Administrator	+353 1 700 5143	paula.harrison@dcu.ie

St Patrick's Campus

Catriona Murphy	Nurse	+353 1 700 9216	caitriona.r.murphy@dcu.ie
TBC	Administrator	+353 1 700 9215	catherine.glennon@dcu.ie

Counselling & Personal Development Service

Glasnevin Campus

Helena Ahern	Head of Service	+353 1 700 5161	helen.a.ahern@dcu.ie
Ruan Kennedy	Senior Counsellor	+353 1 700 8417	ruan.kennedy@dcu.ie
Nina Sherlock	Senior Administrator	+353 1 700 5165	nina.sherlock@dcu.ie

St Patrick's Campus

Aida Keane	Senior Counsellor	+353 1 700 9218	aida.keane@dcu.ie
Barrie McEntee	Counsellor	+353 1 700 9217	barrie.mcentee@dcu.ie
TBC	Administrator	+353 1 700 9215	catherine.glennon@dcu.ie

Chaplaincy

Glasnevin Campus

Seamus McEntee	Chaplain	+353 1 700 8417	seamus.mcentee@dcu.ie
Eric Hughes	Chaplain	+353 1 700 5977	eric.hughes@dcu.ie

St Patrick's Campus

Ultan Naughton	Chaplain	+353 1 700 9219	ultan.naughton@dcu.ie
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Student Advice & Learning Skills Centre

Glasnevin Campus

Semra Addulahovic Smith	Student Advice Manager	+353 1 700 6281	semra.abdulahovice@dcu.ie
Maree Ralph	Student Advisor	+353 1 700 8270	maree.ralph@dcu.ie
Lee Diston Suzanne O'Connor	Administration Reception	+353 1 700 7165	lee.diston@dcu.ie

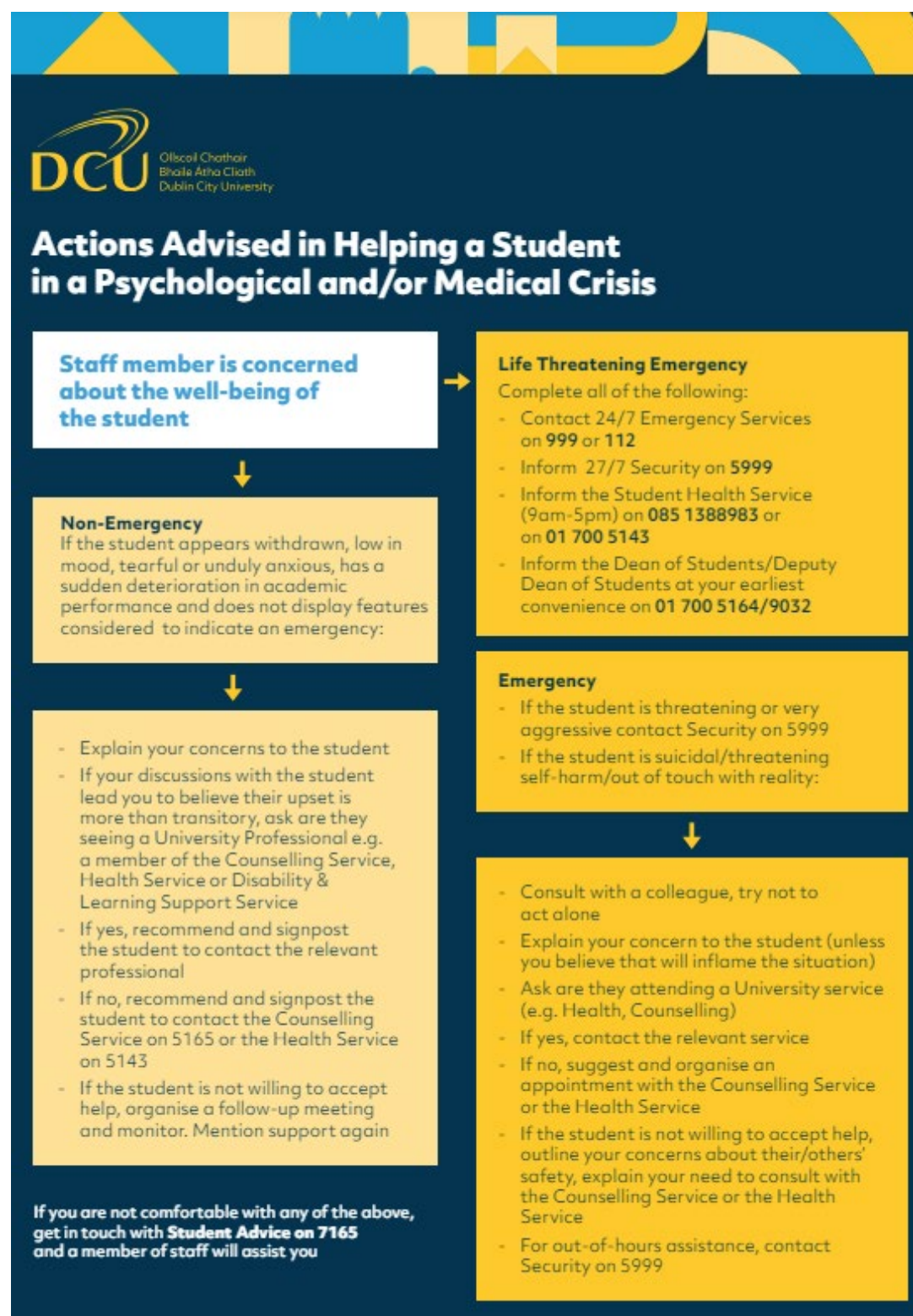
St Patrick's Campus

Caroline Bowe	Senior Student Advisor	+353 1 700 9024	caroline.bowe@dcu.ie
Conor Wilkinson	Student Advisor	+353 1 700 9025	conor.wilkinson@dcu.ie
Ziye Yang	Administration Reception	+353 1 700 9018	ziye.yang@dcu.ie

Financial Assistance Service

Celine Geraghty	Financial Administrator	+353 1 700 6055	celine.geraghty@dcu.ie
Suzanne O'Connor	Administrative Support	+353 1 700 6168	suzanne.b.oconnor@dcu.ie

Appendix 2 - Actions Advised in Helping a Student in a Psychological and/or Medical Crisis⁸



⁸ If there is a need to contact a Next of Kin or a Third Party related to the student - please contact the Dean of Students claire.bohan@dcu.ie / 01 7005164.

Appendix 3 – Communication to Students

We recommend that this email is sent following a face-to-face conversation where possible. The purpose of the email should be to reiterate DCU's support at this time and to signpost students to further services and support. The level of detail included will need to be in accordance with what has been agreed with the family of the deceased. The draft email should be agreed with the Dean of Students prior to sending.

Email Template to Students

Dear Students,

We are all shocked and saddened by the death of (enter name). Our thoughts and condolences are with (his/her/their) family and all who were (his/her/their) friends. We know that this is an incredibly difficult time for everyone who knew (name), and, for those who did not know (name) well, it is still a huge shock to lose someone in our community so suddenly. You do not have to go through this alone. There are people who can help here in DCU.

(Name's) family has asked that we, as a community, respect their privacy at this time, especially when sharing news on social media. Making sure you post safely and responsibly can also encourage others to seek help. If you are concerned about anything you see or hear on social media, or about your own or the safety of any of your friends, please contact student.support@dcu.ie. We want to make sure that everyone who is struggling at this time can get the help they need.

Once the funeral details have been made available by the family, we will let you know. May (student's name) Rest in Peace.

Appendix 4 – Communication to Staff

Those teaching staff closest to the student should be informed face-to-face in the first instance, if at all possible. The purpose of this note is to inform wider staff groups, to offer support to them and to provide advice when dealing with possible student reactions to the news and to inform staff of the support available.

Email Template to relevant Staff:

Dear Colleagues,

We are shocked and saddened by the sudden death of (name if permission is granted). Our thoughts and condolences are with his/her/their family and friends. All students have been informed and support has been made available. We are monitoring student reactions carefully and will put in place additional support where needed. Currently, students can access support through student.support@dcu.ie.

This is an incredibly difficult time for everyone in our community. We would ask that you remain aware of how your students are reacting to this news over the coming weeks and months and continue to signpost them to support. If you are concerned about the safety of anyone, please contact student.support@dcu.ie directly.

(Name's) family has asked that we, as a community, respect their privacy at this time, especially when sharing news on social media. Making sure you post safely and responsibly can also encourage others to seek help. If you are concerned about anything you see or hear on social media, or about your own or the safety of any of your colleagues, please contact your HR Partner in [DCU People](#). We want to make sure that everyone who is struggling at this time can get the help they need.

We have a plan in place to support everyone who has been affected by (name's) death. That includes supporting our entire staff, so if you or a colleague is finding the news difficult to cope with, we are here for you. Please remember that the [DCU Employee Assistance Service](#) (EAS) is a confidential service for DCU staff.

This will be a challenging time for us all over the coming weeks and months, but please be assured that DCU will provide whatever support is needed for as long as it is needed.