



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Death of a Student Policy



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1.0 Purpose

This policy sets out Dublin City University's (the 'University') commitment to managing a student bereavement in a sensitive and compassionate manner and implementing its related protocol in a timely fashion and with clear communication.

Taken together, this policy and its accompanying protocol, intends to set out the steps to be followed in the event of student death and lays out the standard University response. However, the actual response in practice may diverge from the policy and protocol depending upon the circumstances and the family's wishes. The key aims are to simplify the process by laying out the appropriate flow of information and communication when managing a bereavement and set out the various roles involved and the responsibilities. However, ultimately the protocol is at the discretion of the President of the University and the Dean of Students.

The circumstances surrounding a student's death can affect how the University responds, however, broadly speaking the following circumstances can be included.

1.1 Student death on campus

- related to a University, Students' Union, club, society, sport or other academic activity;
- not related to one of the above (e.g. an accident, natural causes or suspected suicide¹); or
- within a campus residence.

1.2 Student death off-campus

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

2.0 Scope

This protocol applies to all currently registered DCU students, deferred students or students on a leave of absence.

3.0 Policy Statement

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

¹ Please note there is a separate Postvention Protocol for the death of a student by suspected suicide.

3.1 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 an appropriate manner can support those impacted such as the immediate family, classmates, staff and friends, and enable them to adjust to the loss.

3.2 Clear and Timely Communication

It is important that the University responds to the news of a student death in an appropriate manner and ensures that relevant staff are made aware of the news and provided with support where necessary. This allows for a streamlined and respectful process, an appropriate and timely flow of information and ensures that the family's wishes are taken into consideration.

4.0 Roles & Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of staff engaging with this policy and accompanying 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.

- Confirm details of the death and details of the deceased student².
- Inform the following people/units of the death;
 - University Executive
 - Head of School
 - Chairperson of the Programme (if a taught programme)
 - Security Services Manager
 - Heads of Student Support and Development
 - Principal Supervisor(s) (if a research student)
 - Director of Registry
 - DCU Reception Desk
 - Managing Director of Campus Residence (if in campus accommodation)
 - 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.
- Liaise with the Programme Chairperson to arrange support for the class 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 DCU Accidental Bodily Injury Insurance Policy with the family at the appropriate time, if relevant.

² If the University hears of the death of an Alumnus, the Alumni Office should be informed along with the Chairperson of the Programme.

- Contact the Student Advice Manager to discuss preparing information about 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.
- Engage the services of a professional interpreter to communicate with family of international students, if required.

4.2 Communication Lead

The Communication lead is typically a senior member of Communications, Marketing and Events (CME).

- Deal with media enquiries.
- Organise a statement for the media, University website and 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 student³. 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.
- Once the funeral details become available to the Programme Chairperson / Head of School / Principal Supervisor(s), this information should be passed on to the Programme Board and / or any other member of staff who may have known the student. 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 should email the student class group informing them of the passing of the student and providing funeral details (and a RIP.ie link, if available). In the case of a research student, the Principal Supervisor(s) should email other students who may have known / worked with the deceased student⁴. The Dean of Students will advise whether a bus is being provided through the Students' Union.

³ An email template can be found in the *Protocol for Staff Dealing with a Student Death*.

⁴ An email template can be found in the *Protocol for Staff Dealing with a Student Death*.

- Arrange for the class group to come together. See Section on 'Large Class / Group Support', in the *Protocol for Staff Dealing with a Student Death*.
- 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 / Principal Supervisor(s) should contact the Chaplaincy or 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 should 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 Related Documentation

- [Protocol for Staff Dealing with a Student Death](#)
- [DCU Postvention Guidelines - 'How to Respond to a Student Suicide'](#)
- [University Crisis and Emergency Response Protocol](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress or at Risk](#)
- [Contact with Third Parties Policy](#)

6.0 Contact

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

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7.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as and when changes are required. If no reviews are requested, the policy will be reviewed in 2030.

8.0 Version Control

Policy Name	Death of a Student Policy		 Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath Dublin City University
Unit Owner	Student Support and Development		
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End.