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## **Student Death Protocol**

**Vice-President for the Student Experience  
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## 1 Introduction

The death of a member of the University student body is a serious matter for the whole of the University community, especially the student's close friends, peers and College staff, and it is important that the University responds to the death in a way that:

- Acknowledges the loss properly
- Deals sensitively with the aftermath
- Supports the bereaved, both on and off campus.

In responding to the death, the University should, **at all times, be sensitive to the role and involvement of the family and relatives of the deceased** as the persons primarily concerned with the death.

There are four stages in the response of the university to a student death:

- Verification of the death, establishing personal details of the deceased and ensuring notification of deceased's next of kin has taken place
- The immediate communication of the news to the appropriate officers and offices of the university
- The lead up to and the funeral or memorial service
- The provision of on-going support for friends of the deceased in the university.

The protocols below **are intended to be a guide towards a response rather than an exhaustive and prescriptive plan of action**. Aspects of the plan may not be appropriate in all circumstances, and in certain circumstances actions in addition to what are set out below may have to be taken.

## 2 Response to Student Death

Information about a student death may enter the University from a variety of sources. The information, however it is received, should be immediately communicated to the office of the Vice-President for the Student Experience.

On learning of the death of a student in an associated institution<sup>1</sup>, the Vice-President for the Student Experience shall make immediate contact with their counterpart in the other institution, shall convey the condolences of the University community and shall offer any advice and practical support that is considered appropriate in the particular situation.

### 2.1 Vice-President for the Student Experience

The Vice-President for the Student Experience will be in overall charge of the response to the student death and will consult as appropriate with the Registrar & Deputy President and such members of the University Management Team as is deemed appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Angelas' College; Burren College of Art; Shannon College of Hotel Management

The Vice-President for the Student Experience will oversee actions related to the death including making contact with the family of the deceased to express condolences on behalf of the University, and represent (or ensure representation of) the University at the funeral or memorial service.

The **Vice-President for the Student Experience** (or his/her nominee) will

- Verify in so far as possible the accuracy of the information received.
- Contact in person by telephone:
  - **Dean** of relevant College (or substitute) and request him/her to initiate the College Response Protocol outlined in Section 4 below.
  - **Dean of Chaplaincy Services** (or substitute) and ask them to initiate the Support Services Response Protocol outlined in Section 3 below.
  - In the case that the student is an International Student or the death of the student occurs abroad whilst pursuing part of their University Course, the **Director of International Affairs (or substitute)**.

**This Group will constitute the overall steering group for handling a student death and will make any decisions required by the College or Support Services Response Teams.**

The Vice-President for the Student Experience will:

- Establish the enrolment status of the student (Class, Faculty, Year, Registration status) through the Director of Academic Administration.
- Notify the following of the death by e-mail:
  - University Management Team
  - President's Office
  - Administrative Officer of relevant College
  - Director of Communications
  - Press & Information Officer
  - Director of Academic Administration
  - Admissions Officer
  - Fees Office Manager
  - President and Welfare Office of the Students' Union
  - Buildings Office

and as appropriate:

- Mature Students Officer
- Disability Liaison Officer
- Access Officer
- Director of the Office for International Affairs

The Vice-President for the Student Experience will be responsible for maintaining this document and ensuring that it is made available on the University Intranet.

In the event of the Vice-President for the Student Experience being unable to take overall charge, in person, to the response to the death, he/she will nominate a person to act on his/her behalf.

## **2.2 Dean of College**

The Dean of College is responsible for the implementation of the College Response Protocol in line with section 4.0 below.

## **2.3 Deans of Chaplaincy Services**

The Deans of Chaplaincy Services are responsible for the implementation of the Support Services Response Protocol in line with section 3.0 below.

## **2.4 Press & Information Office**

It is important in the distribution of notices that these are made in a timely and appropriate fashion. It would be important in the case of a death of a student whilst living away from their family that family and friends of the deceased are aware of the death before any public University notice is issued.

The Press & Information Office, under the direction of the Vice-President for the Student Experience, will be responsible for:

- Preparing a suitable notice for distribution to all Staff via the e-mail system.
- Preparing a suitable notice for distribution via e-mail by MIS/Computer Services to all students except in the case of an undergraduate student where the death occurs during the summer break.
- Issuing the notices taking into consideration whether the information is public.
- Dealing with queries arising from a student death from the public.

## **2.5 Director of Academic Administration**

The Director of Academic Administration will **immediately** :

- Verify the registration and examination status of the student and advise the Vice-President for the Student Experience.
- Ensure that all necessary steps are taken so that no correspondence (including registration material or examination results) emanates from the various offices of the Academic Administration of the University to the deceased.
- Update the Student Record appropriately.
- Ensure that the students name is removed from any graduation literature (if appropriate and possible).

## **2.6 Fees Office Manager**

The Fees Office Manager will **immediately** ensure that all necessary steps are taken so that no fees office or accounts office material is issued to the deceased.

## **2.7 Students' Union**

The Students' Union will notify the appropriate class representative and participate in the Response Team.

## 2.8 President's Office

The President's Office will advise the Buildings Office as to the dates on which the University flag should fly at half mast.

In the case of the death of a postgraduate student the President's Office will notify the following:

- **Alumni Office:** to amend their database to prevent mailshots re. reunions, Gala Banquets, *Cois Coiribe*, etc.
- **National University of Ireland (NUI):** to amend their database to prevent mailshots re. Senate elections, convocations, etc.
- **Our Switchboard Operators:** as research postgraduates would have access to a University extension and the Operators could unknowingly try to put through phone calls for them which would be distressing to other research students.

## 2.9 Buildings Office

In the event of the death or an assumed death on campus, discovered by security personnel, instigate emergency procedures for contacting Ambulance, Gardaí and Dean of Chaplaincy Services. Ensure that the Vice-President for the Student Experience, Chief of Security and the Health Unit Doctor are informed immediately, whatever the time, day or night

In the event of the death of a student arrange for the flying of University Flag at half-mast for two days of the funeral, following specific instruction from the President's Office.

## 2.10 An Rúnaí

Following the funeral of the student the Secretary for Academic Affairs (in the case of Academic Council expression of condolence) or the Secretary of the University (in the case of Údarás na hOllscoile expression of condolence) will issue a letter of condolence to the family on behalf of the University.

## 3 Support Services Response Protocol

The Deans of Chaplaincy Services have overall responsibility for the implementation of the Support Services Response Protocol.

The Response Team will consist of the following (or their nominee):

- A Dean of Chaplaincy Services
- the Accommodation Officer
- the Administrative Officer Support Services
- the Head of Counselling Service
- the Medical Director of the Health Unit
- the Students' Union Welfare Officer
- Director of International Affairs (as appropriate).

The composition of the Response Team is flexible and other university or Students' Union officers may be added as appropriate in particular circumstances.

A meeting of the Response Team will be convened and chaired by the Dean of Chaplaincy Services as soon as possible following knowledge of the death of the student, including at week ends and outside of office hours, and during periods when the University is officially closed. **The Dean of the College and/or the Course Director of the academic programme followed by the deceased student will be invited to the meeting.**

The Response Team will ensure that the actions set out in the 'Student Death Protocol' herewith, together with such other actions as may arise in particular cases, are carried out by designated personnel within and outside of the Team.

The Response Team will meet as necessary to ensure the discharge of its responsibilities.

### **3.1 Responsibilities of the Response Team**

#### **3.1.1 Deans of Chaplaincy Services**

On being informed of a student death and having confirmed the facts they will:

- Call together the Response Team
- Invite College Dean and academic Course Director to the meeting of the Response Team
- Check Quercus Student Records System to find out: ID Number, Faculty and Programme, Home Address and Home Phone Number.
- Briefing the Press & Information Office
- Contact as appropriate the
  - Family
  - Hospital/Mortuary/Undertaker
  - Gardaí
  - Local clergy
  - Housemates, classmates, friends – in the event that these are in Colleges other than the College of the deceased, the Dean of Chaplaincy Services will also contact the Deans of those Colleges so that they are aware of the situation.
  - Appropriate academic staff.
- Advise the Vice-President for the Student Experience of funeral arrangements and ensure that all concerned have them to hand.
- Advise An Rúnaí of the names of the appropriate family members (parents, spouse etc) and home address of the deceased in order that an appropriate letter of condolence may be issued to the family.
- Advise the Buildings Office of the date of the funeral to ensure that the flag is flown at half mast.
- Organise whatever liturgical response is seen as appropriate in the Chapel of St. Columbanus or in another suitable place. This may include elements of the actual funeral or may just have a gathering from the University community.
- Order and send flowers if appropriate.
- Attend the funeral services.

- Organise an appropriate memorial service following the funeral (approximately one month) to which members of the family would be invited and which would be advertised to all students.
- Continue to offer ongoing support to the family, to the students and to the staff involved.
- Send a card on the 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary.

The University shall strive to be respectful of and sensitive to the religious and cultural norms of the deceased and their family. To facilitate this, the Deans of Chaplaincy Services will have adequate training and information on how all the major religious traditions respond to death. On the death of a student the Deans of Chaplaincy Services will determine his or her religious affiliation and, where appropriate, make contact with the religious leaders of that church, denomination or faith community to seek advice and to offer possible assistance. The Deans of Chaplaincy Services will advise the University in such matters so that a sensitive and respectful response is made. A list of appropriate contacts is available as Appendix 3.

### **3.1.2 International Student Officer**

In the event of the death of an International Student or a student of NUI Galway abroad on a University Course the Director of the International Office and the International Student Officer (and/or their nominees) will participate in the Response Team.

The Director of International Affairs will be particularly responsible for:

- (a) In the event of the death of an International Student in Ireland:
- Contacting the Relevant Embassy (the Vice-President for the Student Experience will decide on the involvement of the Embassy based on each individual situation)
  - Contacting the Agent/Home University or the individual student's family as appropriate
  - Briefing the Press & Information Office
  - Meeting, greeting and ensuring the family of the deceased are appropriately taken care of.
  - Making appropriate arrangements for the repatriation of the deceased in line with the procedures identified in Appendix 4.
  - Attending the funeral.
- (b) In the event of an Irish Student abroad on a University Course:
- Making contact with the Irish Embassy Abroad
  - Liaising with the family
  - Liaising with Department of Foreign Affairs
  - Briefing the Press & Information Office
  - If appropriate travelling abroad with the family to help with the repatriation of the deceased in line with the procedures identified in Appendix 4.
  - Attending the funeral.

### **3.1.3 Administrative Officer Support Services**

In the case of a funeral within Ireland the Support Services Administrative Officer, where necessary, will arrange transport of students to funeral and make students aware of transport arrangements



### **3.1.4 Accommodation Office**

The Accommodation Service will

- Liaise with the housing personnel who are dealing with the friends and family of the deceased.
- If the student was residing in a residence other than his/her home, the Accommodation Service will contact the Student Residence Management, landlord or landlady to inform them of the student's death, funeral arrangements etc.
- Inform housemates from possibly other Colleges.
- Provide temporary accommodation for the housemates of the deceased if necessary, and assist in re-housing them if requested.
- Liaise with landlord regarding the student's belongings, re-renting of rooms, etc.
- Refer housemates of the deceased to other Support Services if needed, i.e. Counselling, Deans of Chaplaincy Services etc

### **3.1.5 Counselling Service**

The role of the Student Counselling Service is to support students affected by the death and staff members who need to break the news to other students.

Counselling will be made available immediately but Students may not choose to access counselling in the immediate aftermath of a death and may prefer the support of a group or friendship. After a period of time individuals and groups recognise whether these sources of support are sufficient or whether professional help is appropriate. If professional help is required at a later stage it will be available.

The counselling service is a resource for the staff who will need to convey the news of the death to the student's classmates and friends.

On receipt of the news of the death the Counselling Service will:

- Review records to establish whether the student was attending counselling
- Attend the meeting of the Response Team
- contact the relevant department by e-mail, to offer support in whatever manner the staff member feels is appropriate. This could take the form of going to the class with the staff member to break the news, or it could involve consulting with the relevant staff as to how to approach the class group and to discuss how to deal with the situation, e.g. if the death was due to suicide there will be additional issues to consider.
- In the case where there is a service held on campus, one of the Counsellors will attend and will briefly outline the support available through the counselling service. This can be in the form of individual counselling or meeting with groups of peers who express a need for this support.

### **3.1.6 Student Health Unit**

The Medical Director will undertake the following actions, as appropriate:

- Review Records
- Meet with Health Unit team and alert them
- Attend meeting of Response Team

- Contact family or next of kin of the deceased, where appropriate
- Where the death is as a result of a notifiable condition, e.g. meningitis determine who else is potentially affected by it and inform the Public Health Doctor who will follow up with all contacts of the deceased
- Offer services of the Health Unit to students through Deans and Programme Directors.
- Liaise with Gárdai where appropriate
- Carry out any other functions that are appropriate or are required as is normal for a GP service in these circumstances.

**Dean of Chaplaincy Services**

Overall co-ordination of the Support Services Response. Calls a meeting of the Support Services Response Team. Involves academic Course Director and College Dean in the response. Makes contact with family of the deceased. Carries out other actions outlined in Dean of Chaplaincy Services protocol. Where the Dean of Chaplaincy Services intend being absent from the Campus they will nominate a deputy from among the other Support Services to co-ordinate the Support Services Response in the event of a student death.

**Accommodation Office**

Makes arrangements in relation to possessions, rent, re-housing of fellow students of the deceased if the need arises. Carries out other functions as set out in protocol.

**Administrative Officer Support Services**

Arranges transport of students to funeral. Carries out other functions as set out in protocol.

**Counselling Service**

Offers counselling and support to fellow students of the deceased; makes contact with family, if appropriate; liaises with faculty, and advise staff, as appropriate, on dealing with student reactions. Carries out other functions as set out in protocol.

**Health Unit**

Staff of the Health Unit alerted to be aware of reactions of fellow students of the deceased and Updates medical records; offers support to students. Carries out other functions as set out in protocol.

**Students' Union**

The Student Union President or nominee will be part of the Response Team. If available. he/she will attend the funeral.

## 4 College Response Protocol

The implementation of the College Protocol is the responsibility of the Dean of the College.

### 4.1 Immediate

Having been notified of the death of a student of the College by the Vice-President for the Student Experience, the Dean of College/Administrative Officer communicates news **immediately** to the relevant Heads of Schools, Course Directors, Tutors, Advisors, and appropriate lecturing staff. Ideally this should occur in advance of the general University notice which will be issued by the Press & Information Office.

It should be noted that in the event that family or close friends of the deceased are not in the same College as the deceased this will be identified as soon as possible by the Deans of Chaplaincy Services and the Dean(s) of those Colleges notified. In this case the Dean(s) should:

- Contact appropriate course supervisors and alert them.
- Extend course work deadlines and defer assessments for these students.
- Refer them as appropriate to the student support services available.

### 4.2 Up To and Including the Funeral

- Participate in the Response Team
- Extend course-work deadlines and defer assessments for fellow students of the deceased until after funeral, as appropriate
- Dean or delegate to represent the College at the funeral.
- College will send a wreath or charitable donation in line with the request of the family or any ethnic, cultural or religious considerations.

### 4.3 Aftermath

- Letters of condolence to be sent to the family of the deceased by the Dean and staff who knew student, as appropriate.
- Be aware that both colleagues of the deceased student and staff may require ongoing support following the death of a student and refer them as appropriate to the support services available in the University (this is particularly important in the case of a suicide).
- In appropriate circumstances, the Dean may make a recommendation on the awarding of a posthumous degree to the Standing Committee of Academic Council.

## Appendix 1 – Contact List

<b>UMT Members</b>
<b>Vice-President for the Student Experience</b>
<b>College Deans</b>
<b>Graduate Studies</b>
<b>Deans of Chaplaincy Services</b>
<b>Health Unit Medical Director</b>
<b>Administrative Officer, Support Services</b>
<b>President of Students Union</b>
<b>Admissions</b>
<b>Examinations</b>
<b>Librarian</b>
<b>Press &amp; Information Office</b>
<b>Head of Counselling</b>
<b>Accommodation</b>
<b>Disability Liaison Officer</b>
<b>Mature Students Officer</b>
<b>Access Officer</b>
<b>Overseas Officer</b>
<b>Fees Officer Manager</b>

## Appendix 2 – Text for E-mail notices

To be prepared by the Press & Information Office  
These notices will be prepared in Irish also.

### 1. In the event that Funeral Arrangements are known:

It is with deep regret that we have learned of the death of <name>, a < year of study> year student in the College of <College name> at NUI Galway.

Funeral Arrangements are as follows:

Reposing at <location> from <time> to <time> on <date>

Removal to <church> for Requiem Mass at <time> on <date>. Burial afterwards in <cemetery>.

May he/she rest in peace.

### 2. In the event that Funeral Arrangements are not known:

It is with deep regret that we have learned of the death of <name>, a < year of study> year student in the College of <College name> at NUI Galway.

Funeral Arrangements will be notified as soon as they are available.

May he/she rest in peace

### 3. In the event that the funeral has already taken place:

It is with deep regret that we have learned of the death of <name>, a < year of study> year student in the College of <College name> at NUI Galway.

<He/She> died on <date> and <his/her> funeral has already taken place in <County>.

May he/she rest in peace

**Appendix 3 – Other important contacts**

**To Be completed by the Deans of Chaplaincy Services.**

## **Appendix 4 – Repatriation Procedures**

### **Sending a Body From Ireland**

When someone from another country dies in Ireland there are certain formalities that must be followed before the body can be sent out of Ireland for burial or cremation elsewhere. The purpose of the following information is to set out the general process and rules involved.

A funeral director in Ireland can help with the formalities and can make the necessary arrangements for 'repatriation'. Assistance is also available from the relevant embassy representing the person's country in Ireland. A funeral director from the student's country may also be able to arrange to have the body returned home.

It can be very costly to have a body repatriated from one country to another and the family may wish to consider having the body cremated in Ireland and having the ashes sent to the deceased's country.

### **Reporting the death**

When a sudden, unnatural or violent death occurs, there is a legal obligation to report the death to the coroner. The appropriate coroner is the coroner for the district where the death occurred. Contact details can be found on:

[http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Coroner\\_details#Galway](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Coroner_details#Galway)

The death may be reported to a member of the Garda Síochána, not below the rank of sergeant, who will notify the coroner.

The coroner will arrange for the body to be moved to a mortuary facility and for a medical examination (post-mortem) to be carried out to determine the cause of death. The Garda Síochána will assist the coroner in arranging a formal identification of the body by a family member or a relative.

Where a person dies from a natural illness or disease for which the deceased was being treated by a doctor within one month of the death, there is no need to notify the coroner. In this case, the doctor will issue the medical certificate of the cause of death (Death Notification Form).

### **Registering the Death**

When someone dies in Ireland the death must be registered as soon as possible. Where the doctor issues the Death Notification Form, the death can then be registered and a death certificate can be obtained from the local Registrar of births, marriages and deaths. A death is automatically registered where a post-mortem is held at the request of the coroner however, there is likely to be a delay in getting a death certificate.

### **Preparing the body for shipment home**

The funeral director appointed in Ireland can embalm and prepare the body for repatriation on their premises. If a post-mortem has been held, the funeral director can obtain the release of the body from the coroner so that it can be prepared. It is



necessary to have the body formally identified. This can be carried out by a travelling companion or business colleague of the deceased. In some cases however, it may be necessary for a family member to travel to confirm the identification.

International regulations require all coffins crossing international frontiers to be zinc or lead lined and sealed. These coffins are not suitable for cremation and either the lining has to be removed or another coffin provided in the country of destination, if the body is to be cremated.

## **Documentation**

Before a body can be removed from Ireland the following documentation is required:

- Coroner's Removal Order/Non-infectious Note
- Embalming Certificate
- Passport or Identity Card
- Funeral Director's Declaration
- Embassy Permit
- Notarisation or apostilling of documents (where applicable)

The funeral director can obtain the Removal Order from the coroner and the death certificate from the Registrar (if available). The embassy can advise on what formalities and documentation are required. The funeral director can liaise with the embassy on any formalities that need to be carried out and assist in obtaining the required documentation.

## **Travel arrangements**

The funeral director can assist in making travel arrangements for the body from Ireland to the deceased's country.

The embassy should be notified of the travel arrangements so that the authorities in the deceased's country can be informed. The funeral director normally does this. A funeral director in the deceased's country is required who can liaise with the relevant authorities there and arrange the removal of the body for burial or cremation when it arrives.

## **Costs**

Repatriation of a deceased person abroad from Ireland can be an expensive process due to factors such as the distance to be travelled and how the body is shipped. Check whether the person had travel insurance or private medical cover which would help cover the costs. If the deceased is covered contact the insurance company as soon as possible.

Financial assistance with the cost of repatriating a deceased person abroad **is not available** from the authorities in Ireland, just as it is unavailable from the authorities in many other countries.

## **Bringing a Body to Ireland**

The following sets out the general process and rules involved when bringing a body to Ireland for burial or cremation.

Repatriation of the remains of a deceased person to Ireland can be a complicated and costly process. Families may therefore wish to consider having the body cremated abroad and having the ashes returned to Ireland.

### **Notification that an Irish citizen has died abroad**

If notified of the death of student abroad by someone other than the Gardai contact the Irish embassy/consulate for that country for advice.

### **Formal identification of the remains**

Before any arrangements can be made to return a body to Ireland, it will be necessary to have the remains formally identified. That is, it is necessary to have the identity of the deceased officially confirmed in line with the laws in that country. The rules on who may formally identify a deceased person can vary, but usually identification may be carried out by a travelling companion or business colleague of the deceased. Depending on local laws and rules however, it may be necessary for a family member to travel to the place where the deceased is, to confirm the identity.

Further information on the local arrangements for formal identification of Irish citizens abroad is available from the Irish embassy for the country where the death occurred. While the embassy may assist in obtaining documents such as death certificates, etc. it cannot help pay for the cost of relatives travelling to where a death occurs. Neither can the embassy pay the costs of repatriation of bodies back to Ireland except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Appointing a funeral director**

In order to obtain the release of the body for repatriation from the authorities in the country where the student died, it is necessary to appoint a funeral director in that country. A funeral director in Ireland can find a suitable funeral director in the other country and make the appropriate arrangements. Alternatively, the Irish embassy for the country can provide help to Irish citizens in appointing a local funeral director.

The local funeral director can prepare the body for repatriation. The funeral director can also prepare the appropriate documentation and obtain the death certificate if possible. Assistance is also available from the Irish embassy in obtaining documents such as the death certificate or medical reports. The local funeral director can also make all the necessary flight arrangements.

### **Clearance from the coroner**

The repatriation of a body to Ireland must be notified to the coroner in Ireland for the district where the body is being flown to. The funeral director will contact the appropriate coroner with the required documentation.

The appropriate documentation in relation to the deceased has to be made available to the coroner for clearance by the coroner's office. The documentation required includes

- Medical certificate giving cause of death
- Certification as to whether a post-mortem examination has been carried out or not
- Authorisation to remove the body from the other country

- Certificate to the effect that the body is not coming from an area of infectious disease

Where there are some concerns as to the circumstances of the death, the coroner may direct that an examination of the body be carried out.

### **Funeral arrangements**

Funeral arrangements in Ireland should not be confirmed until the coroner's office has cleared the documentation. International regulations require all coffins crossing international frontiers by air or sea to be metal (zinc or lead) lined and sealed. These coffins are therefore not suitable for cremation and either the lining has to be removed or another coffin provided if the body is to be cremated in Ireland.

### **Registering the death**

If the death is registered in the country where the person died, it is not normally registered in Ireland. Where a system of registration does not exist in that country or where it is not possible to obtain copies of the relevant civil registration record (death certificate), contact the General Register Office in Ireland to see if the death can be registered in Ireland.

A death certificate is an important legal document, evidence of which is frequently required in Ireland in order to deal with the deceased's estate, access money, etc.

### **Rules**

While Irish embassies provide consular services to Irish nationals abroad, this does not extend to non-EU nationals. Nationals of other countries should avail of consular services from their own countries' embassies and consulates.

### **Costs**

Repatriation of a deceased person to Ireland can be very expensive, depending on the distance to be travelled and other factors. Check whether the person had travel insurance or private medical cover to help cover the costs. Financial assistance with the cost of repatriation of a dead body is not available from the Irish embassy.