

Student Death, Serious Injury, or Serious Illness Procedure

Student Success

Version 3.0

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1. Purpose and Scope of Procedure

- 1.1 Solent University (hereby now referred to as the 'University') has a duty of care to its students for the duration of their studies. As a part of this duty of care the University aims to ensure that wellbeing for students extends beyond their academic studies and wherever possible is supportive of their personal needs, health, and wellbeing.
- 1.2 The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that in the sad event of a student becoming suddenly seriously ill or suffering serious injury or death that the University responds in a timely, co-ordinated, and sensitive manner and with due care and consideration to that student, their family, friends and/or nominated representative.
- 1.3 This procedure provides an overview of roles and responsibilities for University staff and outlines what students, their family and/or nominated representative can expect in terms of University support if a student is suddenly seriously ill, seriously injured or where there is a sudden and unexpected death. The relevant elements of the procedure will also be applied to expected deaths.
- 1.4 There will be occasions where the response provided by staff may vary or deviate from this procedure, this is likely to be dependent on the nature of the circumstances, e.g., where a death is deemed suspicious by the Police, any deviation should be kept to a minimum. Any change in process will be documented with a rationale on the student record and where able and lawful (under GDPR) to do so an explanation will be provided to the student and/or their family/nominated representative.
- 1.5 The definitions applied in this procedure are as follows:
 - 1.5.1 **Serious Illness** - a health or medical condition that carries a high risk of mortality, incurs a life changing condition, requiring a significant period of hospitalisation and/or health care which is likely to require long term suspension or withdrawal from studies. Serious illness may also include illnesses that have public health implications for staff and

students and the wider community due to high-risk of contagion e.g., Meningitis.

1.5.2 Serious Injury - an injury which results in the student having significant and long-term impact on their life e.g., a brain injury, serious burns or spinal cord injury and may require suspension or withdrawal from their studies. The injury may be caused by any mechanism including by a third party, an accident, fire, or attempted suicide for example.

1.5.3 Sudden Unexpected Death - an unexpected death which may be due to natural medical causes or due to other causes including suicide, serious violence, or accidental death.

1.5.4 Expected Death - a death which is expected (as determined by a medical professional) following serious illness or injury. This is less likely to occur on University premises however elements of the procedure will be applied to ensure a sensitive and appropriate response to the deceased, their family, and friends.

1.5.5 Child Death - for any student aged under the age of 18 years, this may apply to an apprentice, cadet or a QAHE student.

1.6 As a part of this procedure the University will undertake to:

1.6.1 Ensure there are clear lines of staff responsibility when an enrolled student suddenly dies or is seriously ill or seriously injured. This includes whilst living in University Halls of Residence, on campus or residing in alternative accommodation.

1.6.2 Provide a sensitive and compassionate approach in all communication and correspondence with the student and/or family and friends.

1.6.3 Proactively provide pathways of support and/or counselling for students affected by the death or injury including:

- [The Student Hub](#)
- [The Therapy and Mental Health Team](#)
- [The Student Assistance Programme](#)
- Other third-party providers

- 1.6.4 Ensure any University staff affected by the passing/circumstances will be supported by their line manager and P&D to assist and support them with their wellbeing and any ongoing need associated with the circumstances.
- 1.6.5 Ensure staff members affected know how to access counselling and support via the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) a 24/7 confidential support line.
- 1.6.6 The Head of Student Success may nominate appropriate senior staff member e.g., the Deputy Head Student Success (Wellbeing), the Safeguarding Manager or Therapy and Mental Health Manager to liaise with the relevant authorities including the Coroner, the Police, and other statutory authorities (as required).
- 1.6.7 Ensure appropriate legal advice is sought and in place for the University in cases where negligence may be alleged.
- 1.6.8 Ensure the relevant departments are notified of the circumstances of the injury or death where able and in a timely manner.
- 1.6.9 Ensure a robust and co-ordinated response to public health concerns/or emergencies linked to a death or serious illness e.g., meningitis or Covid-19.
- 1.6.10 Initiate (where required) a Serious Incident Review (SIR) to identify any learning following the death or serious injury or illness.
- 1.6.11 Cooperate with any statutory review process which may be initiated as a result of the death for example a Safeguarding Adult Review or Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

2. Associated Policy and Procedure

2.1 This procedure will operate in conjunction with the following Policies and Procedures:

- The [Student Handbook](#) (Withdrawals and Suspension)
- The [Fitness to Study Policy](#)

- The [Fitness to Practise Policy](#) (professional practice courses only)
- The [Funding Implications of Suspending, Leaving, Changing or Repeating your course](#)
- The [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [GDPR and Data Protection](#)

2.2 In applying this procedure, the University will ensure that GDPR and Data Protection Legislation is adhered to. For students who are seriously ill or injured there will be greater limitations regarding information sharing due to GDPR and data protection. Information will only be shared where there is consent to do so or where there is lawful basis (necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, timely and secure) and is covered by one of the GDPR exemptions i.e., it is in the ‘vital interests’ of the student or there is a public interest.

2.3 UK GDPR only applies to information which relates to an identifiable living individual therefore information relating to a deceased person does not constitute personal data and therefore is not subject to GDPR - for further information please visit the [Information Commissioner’s Office](#).

2.4 For further information regarding safeguarding and information sharing please read the [Solent University Safeguarding Policy](#).

3. Procedure and Notification following a Student Death, Serious Injury or Illness and Emergency Services Attendance

3.1 On the occasion that a student dies or is suddenly seriously unwell or injured on campus or in a halls of residence room there will be a requirement for the University staff member/first responder to undertake several important actions:

3.1.1 If there is a concern/report that a student is seriously unwell or having a serious medical episode or appears to have attempted suicide, then the staff member responding must phone 999 for an ambulance.

- 3.1.2** If the serious medical episode is because of an injury caused by a third party the police must also be notified as a part of that 999 call.
- 3.1.3** In cases where the incident or aftermath is witnessed by other students or staff, the responding staff member must record their details such as name, contact number and address in order that this can be provided to police and Student Success (Wellbeing) for potential witness and/or welfare purposes. This must then be emailed to safeguarding@solent.ac.uk and marked as confidential. The person collating this information must explain to the student why they are recording their details and how the data will be held and used.
- 3.1.4** Within Solent University managed halls of residence the staff can access bedrooms in case of emergency and they will operate in line with the Halls of Residence protocols. They can furthermore administer first aid if required. If the responding University staff member is unable to access the room and is seriously/urgently concerned for the 'life or limb' of the occupant, then they must call 999 for police attendance providing explicit reason for the concern. Police have a power of entry under S'17 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) however a generic concern for welfare would not be a high enough threshold for police to force an entry.
- 3.2** If the staff member discovers a student deceased on University property:
- 3.2.1** On all occasions the police and ambulance must be notified immediately by calling 999.
- 3.2.2** Staff must not touch the body unless first aid is being administered or instructed by the emergency services call handler to do so.
- 3.2.3** When able the staff member must immediately call for additional support i.e. Campus Security, Facilities Duty Manager, or a Residence Hub Manager (depending on location of body and time located) and in office hours please call the Head of Student Success, or Deputy Head of Student Success (Wellbeing) and/or the Safeguarding Manager.
- 3.2.4** Ensure the area is immediately cordoned off and kept clear of any other students or non-assisting staff.

- 3.2.5** Staff must not leave the body unattended unless there are extreme or unprecedented circumstances i.e., a terrorist attack or major health and safety incident such as a fire.
- 3.2.6** Where able immediately restrict the view of the deceased at the earliest opportunity - this is essential to prevent any photography or filming of the body by passers-by.
- 3.2.7** In office hours contact or nominate a person to contact the Head of Student Success or Deputy Head of Student Success (Wellbeing). If out of hours, contact the Head of Student Success on the provided out of hours phone number.
- 3.2.8** Follow all instructions given by the emergency services who will take full responsibility for the deceased upon arrival, they will also be responsible for notifying the student's emergency contact in the first instance.
- 3.2.9** If the death/sight of the body is witnessed by a student or staff member, the responding staff member must record their name, number, and email address. This is important for the emergency services and for Student Success staff to follow up on for witness and/or welfare reasons. This must be emailed to safeguarding@solent.ac.uk and marked as confidential. The staff member must explain to the person why they are recording their details.
- 3.2.10** Where applicable the University first responder e.g., Security, Facilities team, or Residence staff will escalate matters as per the University [Incident Management Plan](#) as soon as practically possible during or following the incident regardless of within normal working hours or out of normal working hours.
- 3.2.11** If available the key information to be included in the notification must include:
- Name of the deceased
 - Location of incident
 - Cause of death/illness/injury (if known)

- Student number
- Date of birth
- Programme and year of study
- A summary or context relating to the incident or issue
- If police involved, the name and collar number of the officer in the case

3.2.12 If the incident involved attendance of emergency services, then an Emergency Services Attendance form (ESAF) is to be completed and emailed to wellbeing@solent.ac.uk within 24 hours of the incident including all the information listed above. This process also applies to Students' Union staff.

3.2.13 The ESAF will be processed by the Student Hub on the next working day following submission and will be recorded on the case management system. The ESAF for death, serious injury or serious illness will be forwarded by the Student Hub to the Head of Student Success, Deputy Head of Student Success (Wellbeing) and safeguarding@solent.ac.uk and where applicable therapy.mh@solent.ac.uk.

3.3 Following the death or serious injury or serious illness of a student, the Head of Student Success will act as a single point of contact (SPOC) who will be responsible for managing and co-ordinating any ongoing required responses that are related to a student(s), their family or nominated representative. The Head of Student Success may delegate this responsibility to an appropriate member of staff. If the Head of Student Success is not available, this role will be assumed by the Deputy Head Student Success (Wellbeing).

3.4 Following a death, the Head of Student Success will immediately notify the PVC Students & Governance who will brief the Vice Chancellor, members of VCG and the Chair of the Board of Governors as required.

3.4.1 The Head of Student Success will further immediately inform relevant Student Success Teams and the affected course team and discuss next steps.

3.4.1 The Head of Student Success will notify the following staff within one working day (where deemed appropriate to share/applicable):

- Head of Department
- Course leader
- Academic Registrar
- Head of People and Development
- Director of Estates and Facilities
- Guided Learning Advisor Team Leader
- Director of Finance
- Senior Corporate Communications Manager
- Students Union Chief Executive Officer
- UKVI Compliance & Audit Manager (in the case of a student on a visa)
- Campus & Residential Services Manager (or appointed deputy)

3.5 In cases of a deceased student a letter of condolence will be written by the Vice Chancellor or nominated representative formally expressing the sympathies from the University for the passing. Detail of the family member/representative to receive the letter will be provided by the SPOC liaising with the family.

4. Emergency Contact and Family Liaison

4.1 The University is committed to developing supportive relationships with the family/friends of a student who is seriously injured, unwell or dies during their studies.

4.2 Upon notification of a student passing or becoming seriously ill or injured whilst studying at the University, wherever possible a single point of contact (SPOC) within the University Student Success Team will be appointed e.g., Head of Student Success or Deputy Head of Student Success (Wellbeing).

4.3 At the point of enrolment all students are required to provide detail of at least one person who the University can contact in case of emergencies. In the case of a student being seriously ill or injured, at the earliest opportunity the University will decide about notifying the emergency contact.

- 4.4 In cases where the statutory services are involved, they will take the lead in contacting the student's emergency contact as they will be the agency with the most up to date information. The University will follow up with the family to offer support when appropriate to do so.
- 4.5 In cases where the University is the lead agency then the decision to notify the emergency contact or other nominated person will start with obtaining consent from the student. If this is not possible then there will be consideration of all known information to ascertain if it is in the vital interest of the student to share information relating to their medical episode. This gathering of information enables decisions on the sharing of detail with the emergency contact to be made on an ongoing basis, based upon information known and the specific context of each individual case. If the student is under 18 the emergency contact will be notified at the earliest opportunity. The decision to notify the emergency contact lies with the Head of Student Success and PVC Students & Governance.
- 4.6 In regard to a student death the nominated University SPOC will contact the emergency contact at the earliest opportunity. The timing of the contact will also be guided by any statutory agency involvement.
- 4.7 The nominated University SPOC will:
- 4.7.1 For deceased students or those unable to communicate or advocate on their own behalf due to their illness or injury, initiate and maintain contact with the student's family acting as a single point of contact wherever viable. Any changes to the SPOC will be notified to the family or nominated representative as soon as possible and any handover will be sensitive and thorough.
- 4.7.2 Ensure that those affected have up to date information regarding the parameters of the University response and establish what further information the family/student needs from the University and where possible obtain and explain this information.

- 4.7.3 For seriously ill or injured students communicate with them to ensure they are supported as required or communicate (with the student's consent if over 18) with a nominated family member or nominated representative.
- 4.7.4 Support the family and/or friends to access the students' belongings in University managed Halls of Residence (where applicable) and where able and if required provide guidance for family or friends regarding students living in private accommodation i.e. providing contact information for the landlord/accommodation provider.
- 4.7.5 To answer any questions or provide information regarding the studies of the deceased and/or a summary of the students' achievements to date.
- 4.7.6 For seriously ill or injured students provide information and support relating to suspension or withdrawal requirements and/or a summary of the students' achievements to date.
- 4.7.7 To establish any close contacts (students on other courses) who may need to be advised of the passing or injury/illness and ensure they have access to support pathways.
- 4.7.8 For students remaining under the care of a health provider i.e., a hospital, the University SPOC identify themselves as a point of contact to that health provider.

5. Liaison with the Student's Peers, Friends, and Housemates

- 5.1 All liaison with the student's peers, friends and housemates must be overseen by and with prior agreement of the SPOC.
- 5.2 It is important to contact fellow students on the same course group/residing in the same house or flat as the unwell, injured, or deceased student to arrange support, as required, for those affected in a timely manner.
- 5.3 Notification to other parties regarding illness or injury needs to be completed in line with GDPR and will require consent to share from the affected student unless it is in the public interest to share (i.e., where there is a transferable

disease or ongoing risk). Where the student is unable to communicate, a decision will be made to communicate with friends upon seeking approval via the emergency contact. Before this is completed the SPOC will liaise with any involved agencies e.g., the Police to ascertain the appropriate timing so as not to jeopardise any other statutory processes.

- 5.4 The University is conscious that friends of the student may already be aware of the incident or circumstance, it can also be known more broadly due to online news and social media. The SPOC will therefore be in contact with known friends/course peers as soon as allowed to ensure they have the relevant facts; any additional information will again only be provided where there is consent to do so or kept to a minimum to offer reassurance where able, for example the student is 'medically stable'.
- 5.5 Advising students of the death of a peer needs to be done sensitively and in a timely manner. Where possible this should be done in person, however sometimes this is not possible due to external factors i.e., COVID 19, out of term time etc and should therefore be completed via telephone, a virtual meeting or email. If students are advised in person, members of the Therapy & Mental Health Team will be present where possible to support students.
- 5.6 Information to be shared will be factual and importantly include information on how students can obtain ongoing bereavement support. Students should be encouraged to utilise the support pathways available either individually or as a group if so required. Any students under the age of 18 impacted by the death will be signposted to the relevant bereavement support as provided by the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships (HIPS) - these can be found [here](#).

6. Death or Serious Illness and Public Health

- 6.1 If the death or serious illness is confirmed to be a part of a public health concern or emergency, then this will be referred to the Major Incident Process.

7. International and QAHE Students

- 7.1** For International or QAHE students who are suddenly seriously unwell or injured the University recognises there are additional processes and people that require notification. The additional matters may include for example; impact on the student's visa, the absence of an emergency contact within the UK and the student's access to financial support (this list is not exhaustive).
- 7.2** The University sponsors international students to study in the UK which entitles successful students to a student visa for their specified study time. The University under its Student Sponsor Licences is obliged to ensure that it adheres to the duties of this licence ensuring all students studying within the country are doing so within the bounds of Immigration law and regulation.
- 7.3** Upon being advised of an international student becoming suddenly seriously unwell or seriously injured the Student Success SPOC will liaise with the UKVI Compliance and Audit Manager at the earliest opportunity to establish if there is an impact on the student's visa status. This is dependent on whether the student is likely to return to their studies or must suspend or withdraw from their course.
- 7.4** For international students who are likely to have to suspend or withdraw or be subject to the Fitness to Study Policy and are unable to return home due to being incapacitated, the UKVI Compliance and Audit Manager will liaise with the Home Office to ensure the student and their family or representative are supported to seek an alternative visa type and therefore retain their legal right to remain and access the relevant medical care they may require.
- 7.5** Upon being advised of the death of an international student, the Student Success SPOC will liaise with the UKVI Compliance and Audit Manager at the earliest opportunity to ensure the Home Office are notified of the change in

circumstances. Where required, the UKVI Compliance and Audit Manager can assist with a Visa Support Letter if the family/representative of the deceased student wishes to travel to the UK.

7.6 For more detailed information pertaining to Solent University and Student Visa requirements please use the [hyperlink here](#).

7.7 For QAHE students the Student Success SPOC will at a minimum:

7.7.1 Notify the QAHE Pathway lead and Principal Safeguarding Officer of the student's death/illness or injury to ensure that family living within the country of origin are supported by the student's recruitment organisation.

7.7.2 Liaise with relevant senior leads in QAHE via the Pathway Lead or independently where required.

7.7.3 Support the QAHE staff to engage, guide and support with the student's peers/friends.

7.7.4 For QAHE students under the age of 18, where a guardian or UK nominated support person is listed, ensure they are notified of the situation and provided with the University SPOC and QAHE Pathway lead and Principal Safeguarding Officer details.

8. Inter-Agency Liaison

8.1 If a death is sudden and unexpected, violent, unnatural or unexplained the Police may undertake initial investigative enquiries, where the death is suspicious this will result in a more substantive Police investigation. In due course the Police will refer matters to the Coroner in order that the Coroner can make enquiries related to the cause of death, this may also result in a Coroner's inquest. For further information on the Coroners court process please use this [hyperlink](#).

8.2 The identified SPOC from the University will act as the point of contact for both the Police and Coroner's office throughout the duration of their

respective enquiries or on an as needed basis, the SPOC may also proactively make their role known to these agencies.

- 8.3** If a student is a victim of serious harm or violence perpetrated by a third party the Safeguarding Manager and/or Deputy Head of Student Success (Wellbeing) will take the lead at the earliest opportunity on behalf of the University and liaise with the Police, the family/emergency contact and other relevant agencies, this may also include notification to the Safeguarding Adult Board or the Safeguarding Children Partnership. If the perpetrator is another student, please refer to the Safeguarding Policy for further information regarding management of risk.
- 8.4** For a student with sudden illness or injury or where there is also an ongoing safeguarding matter relating to the death or injury, the Safeguarding Manager and/or SPOC will also represent the University at professional or safeguarding meetings/enquiries involving statutory partner agencies i.e., Social Care, Health and Police.
- 8.5** In the event of a student under the age of 18 years passing away there are statutory requirements undertaken by ‘child death review partners’ which must be fulfilled as outlined in [Working Together 2018](#). The local arrangements for the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Portsmouth (HIPS) can be found by using this [hyperlink](#).
- 8.6** In circumstances where an enrolled student under the age of 18 dies (either expected or unexpectedly), the University may be regarded as ‘being involved in the case’. The University will therefore cooperate with the child death review process carried out by the statutory partners.

9. University Administration of a Student Death

- 9.1** In circumstances where a family member or representative notifies the University of the death of a student, in order that the University records system is appropriately updated, evidence of the student passing will be requested, this can be provided in the following formats:

- A Death Certificate
- Written notification from an involved statutory service e.g., a Medical Professional, Police Officer, legal representative, or the Coroner's Office

9.2 If the family have difficulty with this, then the SPOC will support them to explore an alternative option.

9.3 Providing this information enables the University to close the student's record which will be done by informing Academic Registry, this should prevent any further correspondence being sent to the student's address and/or their family which may inadvertently cause alarm or distress.

9.4 There will be occasions when the Police or other statutory authorities contact the University for emergency contact details held on University systems following the death or serious injury to a student, in those circumstances that information will be shared using the required information sharing documentation and in line with GDPR.

10. Suspension or Withdrawal for Seriously Ill or Injured Students

10.1 In circumstances where a student is seriously ill or is seriously injured and unable to continue with their studies at that point in time or likely to be absent for more than 20 days, the University would normally advise that the student suspends their studies.

10.2 For students that are unable to advocate for themselves due to injury or illness the SPOC will consider liaising with the nominated family representative who on the student's behalf can discuss suspension or where applicable, withdrawal options. This is to ensure that the student is not unnecessarily penalised in relation to their student fees. This should only occur in more extreme circumstances and wherever possible the decision making, and consultation should occur directly with the student.

10.3 The University will approach these discussions sensitively and in line with the student's best interests, this is also balanced against the requirements of

Academic Regulations. The SPOC will also ensure that the student or nominated representative or family member will be advised of any funding implications of withdrawal or suspension. For further information please use this [hyperlink](#) or email student.registry@solent.ac.uk

10.4 When the student is again fit to study the University will support that student and advise them on what is required to enable their return. The first point of contact in these circumstances will be the [Student Hub](#).

10.5 If a student decides not to return, the student's grades to date will be considered at the exam board. The student will then be awarded the appropriate exit qualification.

11. Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

11.1 The [Fitness to Study Policy](#) may apply to a student who has suffered injury or illness, the policy is in place for students who are at risk of not fulfilling their academic potential due to personal, physical, or mental health issues who potentially are not able to have insight into how these issues may impact their ability to continue with their studies.

11.2 As stated above the University will support the student when they are fit to return to their studies or where they decide not to return to the University to continue with their studies.

12. Public Communications and Media

12.1 The Senior Corporate Communications Manager will be advised of the student's death/serious injury in cases where there is likely to be media interest or enquiries. Where able the University SPOC will provide the relevant detail regarding the incident in order that a media response can be prepared, and social media can be observed in case of any misinformation, inappropriate reporting, or reputational issues.

12.2 All direct media queries will be directed to the Senior Corporate Communications Manager who will respond/provide a statement to be shared as a response. When deemed required and appropriate to do so the Senior PR and Media Relations Advisor will also liaise with the communications leads from key involved agencies e.g., the Police to ensure a co-ordinated approach that does not jeopardise any people involved or any resulting judicial processes.

13. Funeral, Memorial, and Service Arrangements

13.1 The Student Success SPOC will liaise with the family/nominated representative regarding arrangements for the funeral, memorial or other related event or service. With the family members' permission, the staff member will pass these details onto the course team/students to establish if they wish to attend.

13.2 The University will, where possible, send a senior representative to the service. Students choosing to attend can claim a reimbursement of costs via the Student Funding Team. The University will provide flowers or an appropriate donation in line with the family's wishes to mark the University condolences.

13.3 On occasion, where appropriate and in liaison with the family a memorial event or commemoration may be arranged at the University. This will involve liaison with the student's family, the Student Success SPOC, and the External Relations team to determine the most appropriate setting and style.

14. Posthumous Awards

14.1 When a student dies having not completed their course of study the academic position of the student will be established. The Academic Registrar will automatically issue a posthumous award.

- 14.2** If a student is close to the next boundary classification, it may be possible, at the discretion of the Academic Registrar to award at the higher classification banding.
- 14.3** Once the award has been confirmed the Student Success SPOC will liaise with the family to arrange the safe delivery of the certificate and where able attendance at the Graduation ceremony on behalf of the deceased student.