

Death of a Student: Policy and Guidelines

Death of a Student: Policy and Guidelines

Policy Owner	Director of Student Journey / Counselling Service
Policy Author	Hugh Clarke (Head of Advice and Well-being)
Consultations	Director of Student Journey Head of Student Services Student Union
Date of Approval	June 2017
Version Number	2
Related Guidelines, Policies and Procedures	1. Mental Health Policy (London Metropolitan University) 2. Infectious Diseases Policy 3. Incident Management Procedures 4. Data Protection Act
Appendices	1. Checklist - Who Should Be Informed 2. How To Inform 3. Signs & Symptoms of Shock 4. Responses To Bereavement 5. Sample Letter To Students 6. Process Flowchart

Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Circumstances of Death
3. Exclusions to the Policy & Guidelines
4. Context of the Death
5. Death On / Off University Premises
6. Who Should Be Contacted
7. Nominated Family Contact
8. Death While Student Is Abroad
9. Death on University Premises
10. Taking Care of Yourself
11. Summary of Roles: Death Not On University Premises / Not During University Activity
12. Summary of Roles: Death on University Premises / in Suspicious Circumstances, Related To Terrorism or Crime
13. Incident Log
14. The Case Conference
15. Multiple Deaths
16. Welfare Check and Debriefing
17. Retrieving
18. Policy Review and Update
19. Helpful Publications and Information
 - Appendix 1: Checklist - Who Should Be Informed
 - Appendix 2: How to Inform
 - Appendix 3: Signs and Symptoms of Shock]
 - Appendix 4: Responses to Bereavement

Appendix 5: Sample Letter to Students

Appendix 6: Flowchart - Procedures

1. Executive Summary

1.0 This document has been written following several recent student deaths in the University, with a view to providing clear guidance on how the University should respond in such unfortunate circumstances. If managed badly, the death of a student can have serious consequences for the University, many of its students and the friends and family of the deceased. If the response is sensitive and coordinated, it can be of great value to the University and its students and; more significantly; to the friends and family of the deceased.

1.1 The Policy and Guidelines are necessarily detailed. This is to ensure that even small, but significant, actions are taken and others not taken. For example, ensuring that unnecessary and possibly upsetting correspondence is not sent to the family. The Policy and Guidelines are also detailed because they take account of the context in which the death takes place, e.g. whether on or off University premises or whether at home or abroad. These factors will shape the actions which need to be taken. For instance, death by natural causes will require a very different response to death by other means, such as suicide or death due to violent crime.

1.2 Findings from the 'Centre for Death and Society' indicate that, *"bereavement support, when done well, has a significant and often life-changing impact on individual students, but when done badly, it can be enormously damaging, with impacts on performance and even students leaving University prematurely."*

1.3 Fortunately, the death of a student is not a common occurrence, but it happens often enough to have a significant impact across the university, affecting students and staff alike. When a student's death does occur, we need to be aware that the University's response affect the overall student experience and reflect upon the University's reputation. In some instances, there is a need to follow legal procedures. In other instances, there is a need to protect the interests of the University, particularly in cases where negligence might be alleged. Above all, there is a need to respond sensitively and compassionately to those who are affected by the death and to ensure that the information we give is accurate and unlikely to cause confusion or additional distress. This is the rationale for this policy and the reason why it outlines very specific and clearly defined roles and procedures.

1.4 The aim of the policy (and Guidelines) is to provide advice on what the university should do when a student dies, taking account of various circumstances. We recognise that the death of a student can cause considerable shock and bewilderment, and when these are experienced, it is important to have clear procedures. Guidelines of this nature cannot cover every eventuality and in all instances, a degree of 'common sense' needs to be exercised. The guidelines will nevertheless provide a framework within which to respond. This document aims to:

- (a) Outline these procedures and specify those responsible for implementing them.
- (b) Outline an approach to supporting university staff and students and (within reason) supporting the family or partner of the deceased.
- (c) Outline an approach which will protect the University from embarrassment.
- (d) Protect against undue distress to relatives and friends of the deceased student.
- (e) Ensure that the University is acting in a caring, discrete, responsible and timely manner.

1.5 The Guidelines indicate a clear coordinating role for the Head of Student Services (see Appendix 6). His/her role is to ensure that appropriate people are informed and that the necessary action is taken. Responsibilities are then delegated to some other figures within the University, including: (a) the Director of Student Journey, (b) Heads of Schools, (c) Counselling Service Manager, (d) Manager of the Student Money and Accommodation Advice (SMAA), (e) Head of Academic Services, (f) University Librarian, (g) Head of Finance, (h) Head of Customer Liaison, (i) Director of Human Resources, (j) Director of Engagement and (k) the General Manager of the Student Union.

1.6 Finally, the Policy and Guidelines outline what administrative and communications processes should be followed, e.g. creating an incident log, when to hold a case conference and who should attend. One great importance among these is the appointment of a single 'nominated family contact', whose role is to liaise with the family, to relay important information and to ensure that the family's wishes are respected.

2. Circumstances of Death

2.0 There are a number of circumstances under which a student's death may occur and these circumstances will have a strong influence on how the university should respond:

- Accidental death, e.g. road accident, sport related, domestic
- Sudden death due to natural causes
- Anticipated death due to short or long-term illness; in or out of hospital
- Death due to illness, with infectious disease implications
- Death due to suicide, either at or outside university (1)
- Death related to non-prescribed drug use
- Death due to unexplained or suspicious circumstances
- Death due to terrorist activity at home or abroad
- Death due to known crime, such as manslaughter, domestic abuse or murder

Note 1 - Suicide: If it is believed that the cause of death is suicide, the University should refrain from referring to 'suicide' until the Coroner's results are published. It is generally not essential to disclose the cause of death and in the case of a death by suicide, the University should make a decision regarding disclosure, which respects the wishes of the family / partner.

2.1 Regardless of the cause, it is important that the University is able to react quickly, appropriately and sensitively, addressing the following areas:

- Response to family - striking a balance so that the intervention is supportive but not imposing
- Response to peers / other students
- Response to University staff and University partners
- Legal requirements, e.g. reporting, document keeping
- Other University policies and procedures, such as those related to 'Health & Safety', 'Safeguarding', 'Infectious Diseases' and 'Mental Health'.

3. Exclusions To The Policy & The Guidelines

3.0 The policy (and Guidelines) apply only to the death of students who are directly enrolled at London Met and are studying with attendance, or through distance learning. They do not apply to:

- The death of students in any of our 'partner' institutions, which are expected to have their own local policies.
- Students who have ended their studies at London Met and have transferred to another University or institution.
- Alumni, 'friends of alumni' or ex-students of the University, whether or not they completed their course. Should these ex-students be employed at the University, procedures related to the death of a member of staff should be followed.

4. Context of The Death

4.0 It is important that the University's response takes account of, and is sensitive to, the context of the student's death. The response should be neither overwhelming nor inappropriately underwhelming in relation to the event. The context will influence decisions and the follow-up action. Examples of context include:

- Death of a student who is estranged from his/her family - This raises questions about who to contact and these questions may be difficult to answer without knowing the background.
- Whether death occurred on or off university premises (1).
- Death occurred while the student was engaged in University activity, e.g. in class, field trip etc (2).
- Death occurred whilst student was abroad, perhaps on a placement or teaching overseas.
- The living place of the student, e.g. at parental home, in Halls, private rented accommodation, accommodation shared with peers, a Landlord / Landlady, student who is without a fixed address or is sleeping rough.
- The country of origin (Home, EU, International).
- Cultural and religious factors (3).

Note 1: University Premises - If the death has taken place on university premises, where possible, the person designated as the contact point for the University should be someone from the deceased's department who knew him/her. They should keep in close contact with the Head of Student Services who will assist in dealing with any queries or practical matters that may arise.

Note 2: University Activity - Should the death take place while the student is engaged in university activity, a Case Conference, coordinated by the Head of Student Services, should be called, with representatives from key areas of the university. (see: Case Conference).

Note 3: Some families may prefer minimum contact from the University and experience our interventions as interference. Others may want a high level of support, particularly if the family are living abroad. In some religions, the funeral takes place as soon as possible after the death and this may have implications for others attending.

5. Death On or Off University Premises

5.0 This section of the policy outlines the immediate action that should be taken when the University is informed about the death of a student off premises and not on University activity. Death on premises, is addressed in another section.

5.1 This section details individual or departmental responsibilities for disseminating information and follow-up action. The level of action required by the University will be determined by the circumstances of the death. Good communication is key to ensuring that a death is handled well and it is important that those involved understand the boundary of their role.

5.2 A member of staff, having been informed about a student's death, must not try to deal with this on his/her own, either practically or emotionally. The University Counselling Service and other departments can provide guidance and support. In all cases of student death, there is a need for a coordinated response, to provide the best support for the student and his / her family and for the University. This is particularly so if the deceased student is not a 'home' student and where there are geographical, cultural and language differences. For this reason, one person (the Head of Student Services) will assume a coordinating role.

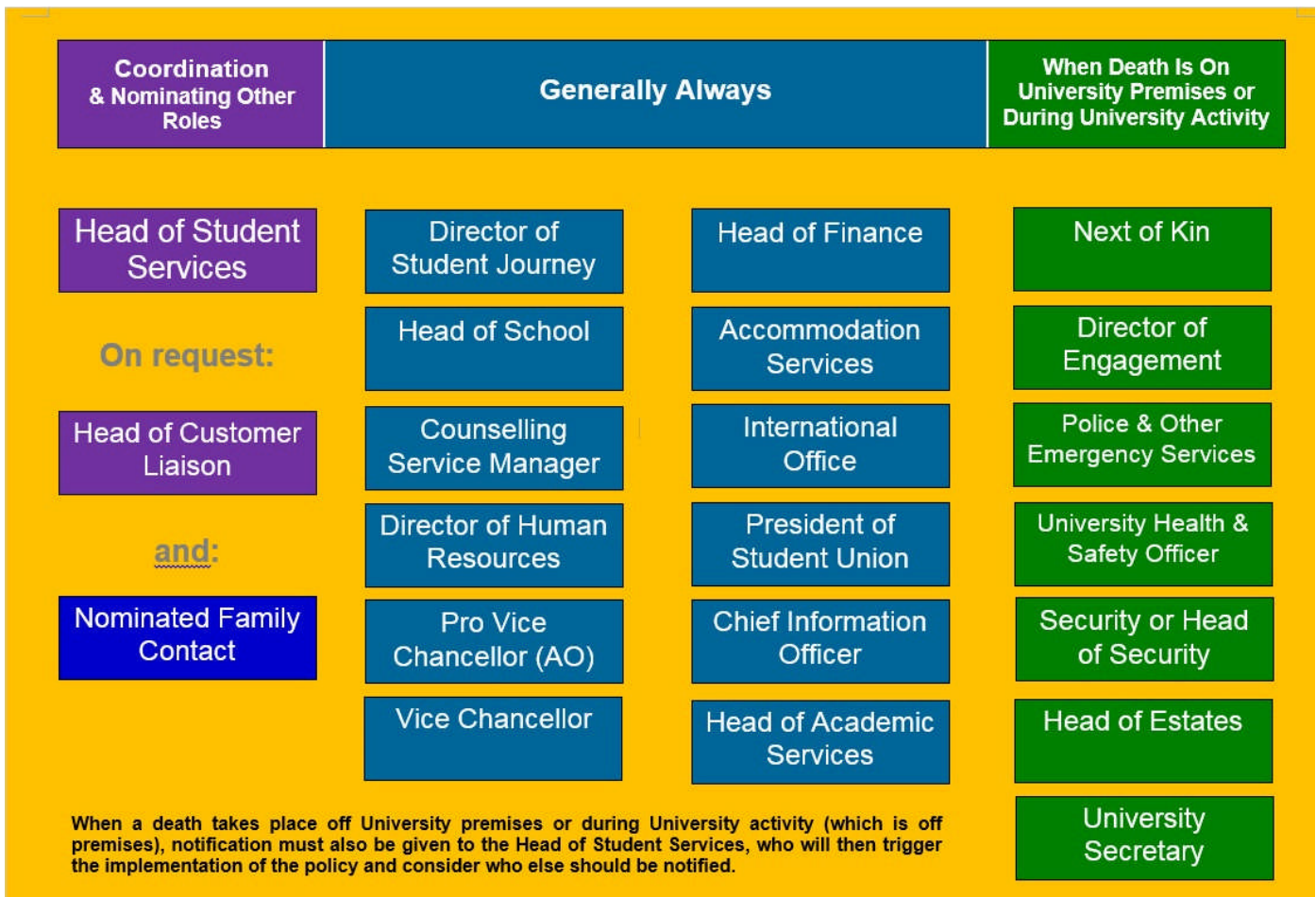
6. Who Should Be Contacted

6.0 Any member of staff, learning of the death of a student, is obliged to inform the Head of Student Services. Once you have informed the Head of Student Services, you should take no further action until you have heard from him/her or his/her Deputy. This gives the University time to check facts and clarify the most appropriate response. There are then other members of staff who should be informed as soon as possible by the Head of Student Services, or someone nominated by him/her. See table, page 4.

6.1 Head of Student Services - The University's response will be coordinated by the Head of Student Services, who may ask others such as Head of School, Head of Customer Liaison, Deputy Head of Student Services and the Counselling Service Manager, to assume specific responsibilities. Being coordinated in this way, will help to avoid confusion and ensure that tasks are not duplicated or left undone. Not following the Guidelines could result in misinformation being circulated, important actions not being taken and unnecessary distress being caused. The Head of Student Services (HoSS) may require the assistance of various others on specific actions, which include:

- Verifying that the death has taken place and, if so, under what circumstances.
- Liaison with University staff, e.g. Director of Student Journey, Head of School, Counselling Service.
- Where necessary, liaison with the Police, Coroners Officer and other authorised bodies (1).
- Providing updates of developments and actions taken, to all those involved, when necessary.
- Arranging a named contact (as appropriate), with the family of the deceased in a sensitive and compassionate manner (1).
- Ensuring that all enquiries are channeled appropriately and dealt with efficiently and sensitively.
- Ensuring that appropriate people are consulted and involved with any further input on the part of the University.
- To liaise with others (e.g. Head of Finance, Head of Academic Services), to ensure that no routine administrative procedure is continued, or information sent, which may cause embarrassment to the University and additional distress to relatives or friends of the deceased.
- If appropriate, to liaise with others, so that an appropriate University tribute can be made at the funeral or cremation (2).
- Inform the Head of School about funeral arrangements, so that staff and students who wish to attend can do so.
- Keep an Incident Log, with notes of actions taken and contacts made (3). Decide, as early as possible, if other agencies (such as Police, Prevent) should be involved and if the

University's communications team should be informed.



Note 1: Coroner's Role - The Coroner is an independent judicial office holder (usually a doctor or a lawyer) responsible for investigating unexpected deaths. Coroners must investigate to find out, for the benefit of bereaved people and for official records, who has died and how, when, and where they died. Neither the family nor the University can object to the Coroner's involvement, post-mortem or inquiry. If there is a violent, unnatural or sudden death, of which the cause is unknown, the Coroner's Act, 1988 imposes on the Coroner a duty (usually delegated to the Police at the scene) to establish: (a) the identity of the deceased; (b) where, when and how the deceased died; (c) details required for the registration of the death.

Note 2: The Head of Student Services should take advice from the named contact (or others in contact with the family) so that attention can be given to family and cultural sensitivities.

Note 3: The Incident Log Review will aid the review of this policy and the University's response to the death, ensuring that the experience informs the future development of this protocol. If the death has taken place on University premises or during University activity off premises, the Coroner may ask to see a copy of the Incident Log or other outcome reports.) A checklist is provided in Appendix 1, to facilitate tracking and record keeping.

6.2 Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Outcomes) - The Pro-Vice Chancellor will liaise with and support the Head of School. At the funeral, the University should be represented by whichever members of staff choose to attend. This is often the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Head of School.

6.3 Head of School - The Head of School (HoS), in consultation with the Counselling Service

Manager (CSM), will decide how and when is best to inform students, teaching staff and other staff. The HoS and CSM will also decide on what support is needed to inform students. Thought should be given to who tells the students. Ideally, this is best done by someone who knows the deceased and / or the other students well. Such staff may not however feel able to do this (because they don't feel skilled or are themselves upset) and should not be pressurised to do so. In these circumstances, a senior member of staff could be involved, so that students can see that the University is being respectful. The Head of School (HoS) and the Counselling Service Manager (CSM) can consider if a counsellor (or someone else) be present.

6.3a It is possible that members of staff may also be grieving. The Head of School should give consideration to support for staff including, in the first instance, liaising with the Course Leader. In conjunction with the Head of Student Services and the Director of Human Resources, the HoS will arrange and confirm the availability of follow-up support for staff.

6.3b The Head of School and / or the Head of Student Services will nominate an appropriate person to liaise with the family (if required and accepted by the family). It may be helpful for the family to know the purposes of the contact and that it is of a short-term nature (see section: Nominated Contact).

6.3c The HoS will disseminate information about funeral arrangements and ensure that there is appropriate representation by staff and students at a funeral and / or memorial service. S/he will consider (with others), but especially the family of the deceased: (i) an appropriate ways to commemorate the student's life and (ii) ways in which the life of the student and his/her contribution to the University can be recognised. Options include a single event, a prize, a reference in University publications, opening a book of remembrance. The HoS will advise the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Outcomes) and the Head of Student Services about any requirement.

6.3d As a mark of respect, consideration should be given to cancelling lectures and tutorials on the day of the funeral, thus enabling those who wish, to attend the funeral. The School may wish to send flowers but should first of all clarify the family's wishes. The cost of doing so should be borne by the student's School.

6.3e The Head of School may wish to write to the next of kin. Before doing so, s/he should check with the Head of Student Services, that the Vice Chancellor's letter has been sent.

6.4 Counselling Service Manager (To be read in conjunction with Appendix 2: 'How to Tell'). - The Counselling Service plays a key role in supporting students affected by the death and, to some degree, in supporting other staff in their support of students. On first being notified, the Counselling Service Manager will confirm if the student was known to the Counselling Service and if there are any ensuing implications. This disclosure will be to the Head of Student Services only. Students enter into counselling anticipating that it will be a highly confidential experience. They are not anticipating that others will know what was discussed and this understanding must be respected even after death. Outside legal requirements, the Counselling Service will therefore not inform parents, partners nor any enquirer about what was discussed in counselling by the deceased.

6.4a The Counselling Service Manager should consider the possible support needs and ensure that this is communicated to students who need to know. To this end, s/he will:

- Liaise; in particular; with the Head of School.
- Ensure that adequate appointment spaces have been created and that group sessions are arranged for students (if necessary).
- Write to individual students informing them of the support available within the University, in particular within the Counselling Service.

- In some instances, arrange for a counsellor to visit the Hall of Residence (if appropriate), to meet with and support London Met students and to arrange follow-up support.
- If appropriate, assists students (and others) in planning for and implementing a secular memorial ritual.

6.4b The Manager may also be able to advise family on how to get further bereavement support, through such organisations as: Cruse, Samaritans, Compassionate Friends (help for those who have lost a child), and Winston's Wish (support for those caring for a bereaved child or young person).

6.5 Director of Student Journey - The Director of Student Journey will liaise with the Executive Group and Vice Chancellor, ensuring that they have accurate and up-to-date information about the death and the University's response.

6.6 Head of Academic Services - The Head of Academic Services will take the necessary action to ensure that the student's academic records are amended. The Head of Academic Services will consider the student's award status - is the student eligible for an award? If so how will this be organised and presented?

6.6a if a posthumous award is being made, then the student's family should be informed as soon as possible by the Head of School. The Head of School should ask the family how they would like the award to be given: (a) by post, (b) through a small private ceremony or meeting with the family, (c) which staff and family to involve, (d) at the next formal Awards Ceremony. If the formal Award Ceremony is the preferred option, it should be considered how the family would like this to be done: (i) should the student's name be read out, (ii) should there be a brief statement (by whom) on the posthumous nature of the award or more generally about the student.

6.6b where the death has taken place on University premises and is a room used for exams, the Head of Academic Services should consider, if possible, relocating exams for at least one year.

6.7 Head of Customer Liaison - The Head of Customer Liaison will, on request, assist the Head of Student Services in coordinating the University's response to the death. S/he will act so that any possible communications to the deceased (from Student Liaison and Customer Front Office) are halted. Staff in the Customer Liaison team may have been working closely with the student and therefore required personal / emotional support.

6.8 Head of Finance - The Head of Finance will take the necessary action to ensure that the student's finance records are amended, including ensuring that any outstanding debts are not invoiced to the student, his/her family or employer. It is important to check that there are no letters or demands which are about to be posted and, if there are, these should be withdrawn. This is essential to guarantee that the family are not caused undue upset. Where necessary, the Head of Finance will provide copies of recent communication between the student and Fees Department.

6.9 Manager: Student Money & Accommodation Advice (SMAA) - The SMAA Manager will liaise with Halls of Residence (or other providers, depending on where the student has been living), so that staff and friends within Halls are notified. The manager will inform Halls of Residence about the support available within the University for London Met students. The SMAA Manager will also inform the Funding team and any applications to the Hardship or others funds should be dealt with appropriately. The SMAA team will assume responsibility for informing Student Finance England (SFE).

6.9a In cases where suicide is the suspected cause of death, SMAA Manager will establish (and report to the Head of Student Services) if the student has recently sought funding or

accommodation support.

6.9b The University does not have control over the internal procedures at Private Halls or with other accommodation providers. It is therefore the responsibility of the SMAA Manager to work with these other agencies, to ensure that:

- Halls managers liaise with the University Counselling Service to ensure appropriate support for London Met Hall residents.
- The University obtains names of all London Met students, residing in the hall concerned, from the Hall Provider.
- Halls managers and other accommodation providers make arrangements with the family for the collection of the student's possessions.
- The Hall provider is appropriately guided and supported on such matters as organising a meeting (in Halls) for all students affected by the death, including those who are not London Met students. In the longer term, students from other universities can be directed to their respective in-house support services.
- (If relevant) the Hall Provider is dealing with either the deceased's parents or with the police with a view to obtaining contact details for the family.

6.9c If possible, the student's belongings should be left as they were at the time of death. This does not preclude tidying the room, though in some circumstances (e.g. where police have been involved) this should not be done without approval from the Police. If the student was living in private rented accommodation, this matter should be dealt with by the family and the landlord / landlady.

6.9d if the student was living in private or shared accommodation, the Manager (SMAA) will liaise with the landlord and with other students sharing the accommodation. The Manager will also ensure that information about counselling and other support is disseminated and that arrangements are made for the collection of the student's possessions.

6.10 Manager: Disability & Dyslexia Service - The Manager of the Disability & Dyslexia Service will inform any relevant agencies / support workers, e.g. Randstad, Clear Links, mentors. S/he will also ensure that the student's records are amended appropriately. DDS will also check if the student had a locker and if so, arrange for the possessions to be sent to the Head of Student Services.

6.10a in cases where death is on University premises, the Manager of the Disability & Dyslexia Service will clarify if the student was registered with the service and report to the Head of Student Services on relevant information.

6.11 Head of Estates Department - If the student's death occurred on university premises, the Estates Department should be informed, so that the circumstances of the death can be investigated and reported on and so that remedial action (if necessary and appropriate) can be taken. Should an inquest take place, the Coroner may ask to see the report. The University Health & Safety Officer may need to be involved. The Estates Department will also inform the University Insurance Officer at the earliest convenience.

6.12 Head of Campus Services - The Head of Campus Services will check with the University gym, if the student had a locker and, if so, arrange for the possessions to be sent to the Head of Student Services, who will in turn, arrange for them to be returned to the next of kin.

6.13 Head of Security Staff - When a death takes place on University premises, it is important to take immediate action, in accordance with the procedures above. Security should also attempt to clarify if the deceased is a student or a visitor. When the immediate procedures have been

followed, Security should contact the Head of Student Services and the Head of Academic Services.

6.13a The Head of Academic Services will, in the first instance, attempt to clarify if the student has any siblings (or other close relatives) at the University. It is important that these students hear of the death in a formal and supportive way. The Head of Student Services will arrange an urgent Case Conference.

6.13b The Head of Security will take steps to ensure that any evidence at the scene is protected and that any CCTV footage is captured. The Head of Security (in conjunction with person discovering the body) will complete an incident log and ensure that all actions and policy decisions taken by Security are recorded and copies sent to the Head of Student Services.

6.13c If you are contacted by any external agency (including any press agency) you should give no information about the death. Instead, please refer to the University Communications Department.

6.14 Health & Safety Officer - The Health & Safety Officer will be informed in some circumstances only. His/her role is to:

- Assess Health and Safety implications of any incident.
- To ensure that legal or HSE reporting procedures are followed
- Where necessary, to advise on the implementation of immediate closures or changes in practice
- Following recommendations by the Police or other statutory authority, to implement immediate closures or changes in practice where necessary.
- Take any action required by law as the result of a possible death by reason of infectious disease.
- Collaborate, if appropriate, with the local Health Authority.
- Ensure that appropriate information is disseminated to affected staff and students.

6.15 International Support & Compliance Manager - If the deceased student is international, it will be necessary for the Head of International Office to be informed. It is recommended that the Head of the International Office act as 'Nominated Contact' in cases where the deceased is an international student. The Head of International Office is responsible for:

- Informing the Home Office about the death.
- Contacting the appropriate Embassy, Consulate or High Commission. This agency will normally assist in informing the next of kin.
- Helping with planning a family visit - arranging translators, recommending accommodation etc.
- Making plans for the involvement of University representatives in the home country.
- Advising the family on issues relating to the repatriation of the student's body.
- Ensuring that cultural requirements relating to funeral arrangements are taken into account.
- Advising the family on financial matters, such as closing bank accounts, return of deposits etc.

6.15a The University should be aware that (depending on how the student died), a formal identification of the deceased may be required. This can be difficult or delayed, particularly if the student comes from outside the UK. Where a member of the student's family identifies the deceased; and with the family's agreement; the University may consider offering the support of a member of staff to accompany them.

6.16 University Vice Chancellor - The Vice Chancellor will normally write a formal letter of

condolence to the family or partner. This will be done after appropriate consultation to establish background information. This should be the only formal letter from the university. Any other correspondence should be personal condolences only. The Vice Chancellor (or his/her nominee) may also:

- Meet with next-of-kin (if appropriate)
- Write to the member(s) of the University staff who were directly involved with the death
- To attend or be represented at any service of thanksgiving or memorial service held at the University (if appropriate)

6.17 University Librarian - The University Librarian will be informed so that the student's library account can be amended and managed appropriately. Should the student be working in library Services, colleagues should be informed. When a reasonable time has elapsed, the University Librarian will decide if action should be taken to retrieve outstanding borrowed items (see section: Retrieving University Property).

6.18 Director of Engagement - The Director of Engagement and UK Recruitment will coordinate any aspects related to publicity and press enquiries. Specifically:

- To handle, or delegate the handling of, all media enquiries (1)
- Oversee responses being made on social media and respond accordingly
- Where practicable, to assist with protecting relatives and students from the excesses of the media.
- If necessary, to advise relatives about potential (negative) responses from the media and how to deal with them.
- To arrange, where appropriate and following consultation, dissemination of information to the University at large
- To liaise with Switchboard Operators to ensure that all internal and external enquiries are channeled to the Press Officer or other named persons.
- To ensure that all frontline staff have a clear holding message, which is regularly updated, including information about available support and how to respond to press enquiries.
- Where appropriate, and in consultation with the Head of Student Services, information to be disseminated to other University staff

Note 1: Any media enquiry must be referred directly to the Press Officer, without response or comment. It is the University's normal practice not to make any comment in such cases.

6.19 University Secretary - The University Secretary's Office will be responsible for liaising with legal representatives and; in some instances, at the discretion of the Head of Student Services; with the police. The University Secretary will also liaise with the University's legal team.

6.20 Students' Union - The General Manager will ensure that Student Union registrations and memberships are cancelled and that other members of the Students' Union are informed, as appropriate. Clubs and societies may also need to be informed.

Following consultation, the President may wish to write a letter of condolence to the family or partner of the deceased, with content dependent on the level and nature of involvement with the SU. This would be from the Students' Union, as distinct from the University.

The General Manager will also ensure that the Students' Union:

- Circulates notification of the death to key staff and officers, asking for this to be treated in confidence

- Checks engagement / membership lists
- Suspends any email or social media alerts to the deceased
- Monitors social media and respond, if needed
- Works with the University on any media announcement, if applicable
- Ensures that the SU refers students affected by the death, to University well-being services
- Publicises support available to students, if relevant.

6.21 The Director of Human Resources - The Director of Human Resources will be involved if staff are affected by the death. It should be noted that the development of PTSD can be mitigated if staff involved in a traumatic incident receive an acknowledgment for their role or their distress. The Director of HR will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for staff to get help and support, internally or externally. This will apply if staff have; in some way; been directly affected by the death, e.g. death on a university trip, death in class, finding the deceased. The Director of HR will also ensure that any staff involved are thanked, either by the Director of HR or the Vice Chancellor.

6.22 Chief Information Officer (CIO) - In most circumstances, the Chief Information Officer (CIO) will be informed so that: (a) computer accounts relating to the student are closed and (b) appropriate liaison can take place between the University and the Police over access to the student's IT account.

If you are notified of the death by another student, please be sensitive to how the student is feeling and respond sensitively and supportively, checking how the student is feeling and giving information about sources of support, e.g. the University Counselling Service.

7. Nominated Family Contact

7.0 This is a very important role which should be fulfilled by a member of staff who can exercise tact and compassion and is able to establish clear role boundaries. If the deceased is an international student, it is recommended that this role be fulfilled by the International Support and Compliance Manager (or his/her nominee). In other circumstances, it is recommended that the named contact be someone who knew the student and was not the student's counsellor (if the student was using the Counselling Service). In many circumstances, the most appropriate person may be someone who is not a senior member of staff. The role includes:

- Being a sole contact with the family in the period following the death and up to the completion of formal procedures
- Ensuring that the University's relationship with the family is direct and sensitively handled
- Liaising with the family in a manner which does not compromise the University's legal obligations
- Advising the family on internal procedures and actions which they need to take
- Informing the University of funeral and / or memorial arrangements. The nominee will report directly to the Head of Student Services.

7.1 The nominee will contact the family within 24 hours of the death being confirmed by the police and when it is clear that the family have already been informed. The nominee should give the family his / her contact details at the University but should not give his/her home contact details. This call (or later calls) is intended to convey the University's condolences and to offer support. The nominee should also address:

- If the family wishes to give details of funeral arrangements
- If the family agrees to these being disclosed to other students and to staff and are at ease

with staff and students attending the funeral

- If the family agrees to the University sending flowers or if they would prefer a donation to charity
- Arrangements for possible awards (if applicable) and how the family would like this to be done.

8. Death While Student Is Abroad

8.0 If a student dies while abroad, the Head of School will inform the host institution and liaise with relevant individuals at the host institution. The HoS will also liaise with the Head of Student Services and the host institution to explore what support can be provided to other home students, who may be affected by the incident whilst overseas. The HoS will inform and liaise with Foreign and Commonwealth Office (or relevant Embassy in UK if the student is an EU national).

8.1 The repatriation and funeral arrangements are the responsibility of the family, who must register the death in accordance with procedures applicable in the country. Further information can be found on the <Gov.uk> website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad>

9. Death on University Premises

9.0 In the unlikely event that you are the person who discovers a student who has died on University premises, you will need to:

- Call the Police on 999 (1).
- Call an ambulance on 999.
- Call University Security (2).
- Call a trusted colleague who will be able to support you, and ask if they can come to the scene.
- Ensure that you (or others) do not touch or move anything at the death scene, including the body.
- Take a note of names and contact details of anyone who witnessed the death or was present at the time of discovering the body.
- Stay at the scene until Security staff have arrived.

Note 1: Police - Unless it occurs within a controlled environment, such as a hospital, a death must always be notified to the Police. The Police will normally arrange for the removal of the body, contacting the family and any necessary post-mortem.

Note 2: Contact Numbers For Security: Tower Building - 2702; *Calcutta House* - 1263; Moorgate - 1613; *Rocket* - 3735; Learning Centre - 2124).

9.1 On contacting Security, please give them the information which you gave to the emergency services. You must also give your name, room number and contact details (mobile or extension in the room) so that you can be contacted. When Security staff arrive, they will take the charge of the scene and liaise with emergency services and the Head of Student Services (who will take charge of overall co-ordination).

9.2 Staff are advised *not* to contact anyone outside of the University (including family and friends of the person concerned). This is usually undertaken by the Police or NHS services.

9.3 Others present (including friends of the deceased) may understandably be upset. They should be accompanied by a member of staff and taken to a quiet area away from the death scene. Police may wish to interview them but the immediate concern is for their well-being. All other students should be escorted from the area. All witnesses should be asked not to inform others about the death until the family have been contacted. In an age of social media, news spreads fast so informing the family must be treated as a priority.

10. Taking Care of Yourself

10.0 Responding to the death of a student (or any death) can be both demanding and draining. It is important that you take care of yourself and seek appropriate support. The manager or the University Counselling Service will be able to advise. Please be aware that shock reactions (Appendix 3) are often delayed, so you may feel fine while you stay busy and while you are at university but feel the impact when you get home. Should you need out-of-hours support, you can call 'Workplace Options', the University's Employee Assistance Programme, on: 0800 243 458.

Summary of Roles: Death Not On University Premises / Not During University Activity

Contact	Name (2017)	When	Role In Death Procedures
Head of Student Services	Lynsey Berrecloth	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify that the death has taken place - Coordinate the University's response - Nominate a named contact with the family or partner - Monitor and coordinate response to issues raised through the Inquest
Head of Customer Liaison	Karen Omisore	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On request, to assist the Head of Student Services in coordinating the University's response - Take appropriate action in relation to the work of the Student Liaison team
Pro-Vice Chancellor, Academic Outcomes	Elizabeth Charman	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with Head of School
Head of School		Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate the School's response - Inform relevant teaching staff - Disseminate information to other students - Inform family of a posthumous award (if applicable).
Counselling Service Manager	Hugh Clarke	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirm if student was known to the Counselling Service and potential implications of the relationship - Coordinate support for other students - Liaise with Head of School regarding informing other students
Director of Student Journey	Hayriye Mehmet	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with Executive Group and Vice Chancellor
Head of Academic Services	Subi Darbhanga	Within 24 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update academic records

Head of Finance	Richard Lee	Within 24 hours	- Update financial / fee records - Update payroll - if student was employed in the University
Manager Accom. & Funding Service (AFS)	Robert Everett	Within 24 hours	- Liaise with Halls of Residence (or other provider)
Head of Estates Department		Within 24 hours	- Report on circumstances of a death on site - Consider any implications for University Estate
Head of Student Services assisted by the International Support and Compliance Manager		Within 24 hours	- Deal with specific issues related to the death of an international student - Assist with issues related to the death of a Home student, while abroad
Vice Chancellor	John Raftery	Within 24 hours	- Send letter of condolence to next of kin, family, partner (as appropriate)
Director of Human Resources	Robert Fisher	Within 24 hours	- Address Payroll issues if student is employed by the University - Ensure support for staff is in place and information disseminated

Death on University Premises / in Suspicious Circumstances, Related To Terrorism or Crime (1)

Circumstance	Who	Contact	Role In Death Procedures
Death on University premises	Person Discovering The Body		- Contact emergency services - Contact University Security - Escort others to quiet area - Assist with completion of formal incident report
	Security Staff		- Manage the death scene - Check if emergency services have been contacted - Inform Head of Student Services - Check identity and student status - Complete formal incident report
	Director of Engagement	Phil Chapman	- Manage possible media responses - Ensure frontline staff have a clear & up-to-date holding message
Death in suspicious circumstances, terrorism related, crime related (1)	Head of Student Services	Lynsey Berrecloth	- Coordination (with assistance) as outlined above
	Director of Engagement	Phil Chapman	- Manage possible media responses
	Police (Emergency)		- Attend (if appropriate), take control & secure the scene and area

	Number - 999)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate the cause of the death on behalf of the Coroner; - Inform the next-of-kin. <i>The University may need to assist the Police by making next of kin information available.</i> - Arrange for the removal of the body and any necessary post-mortem - Interview witnesses for the preparation of a file for the Coroner - International student - police will contact counterparts in the student's' country, who will then inform the next of kin.
--	---------------	--	---

Note 1: Terrorism Related - Where suspected terrorism is involved in the death [terrorist suicide or victim(s) of terrorism] there is likely to be a 'Prevent' duty obligation. Referral to the Local Authority Prevent Coordinator should be considered and advice may be sought from the Police Community Liaison Officer.

11. Incident Log

11.0 The Head of Student Services (and others involved) will maintain a log of all actions taken and people who have been contacted. The log will contain basic information about the student, the death and also include:

- Relevant and significant information
- Who has been contacted within the University
- Who has been contacted outside the University
- Actions which have been delegated to others and reports on such actions
- Contact details for those involved in responding, internally and externally, including the family

12. The Case Conference

12.0 A case conference will be held if following notification of a student's death on University premises. This will be coordinated by the Head of Student Services (or, in his/her absence, by the Deputy Head of Student Services or Head of Customer Liaison). The purpose of the case conference is to coordinate the 12.1 University's response. The case conference should take place within one day of the death. As a consequence, it may be difficult to have representation from all significant areas, but this is outweighed by the benefits of achieving an immediate response, agreeing appropriate communications and ensuring that those who need support are given it.

12.2 Those invited to attend will vary from case to case and according to the circumstances but all those named in the policy should be considered (or their deputies), but (depending on the circumstances of the death) not all will be required to attend.

- The Head of Student Services
- Head of School
- Head of Academic Services
- Director of Student Journey
- Teaching or other staff present at the time of the death

- Counselling Service Manager
- Head of Estates
- Head of Security
- Director of Communications
- Head of Security or nominated deputy
- University Secretary
- Health and Safety officer
- Pro-Vice Chancellor, Academic Outcomes
- Police or Community Liaison Officer
- Representative from NHS
- International Support

12.3 In the first instance members of the Case Conference will establish that the death has occurred, the identity of the deceased, the circumstances surrounding the death and whether other students and staff were present who may need support. Should it become clear that the Police or NHS have not informed the next of kin, the conference will arrange for a senior member of University staff to do so or to liaise with embassies if and when appropriate.

12.4 Each member of the case conference has a number of defined roles and responsibilities and tasks to be carried out immediately. These are detailed at Appendix B. Also, the Chair of Conference has further responsibilities to inform colleagues across the University of a Student Death and ensure that their departments in turn take any necessary and appropriate action. These will be identified and recorded in the case conference checklist (Appendix).

13. Multiple Deaths

13.0 Should there be an incident involving multiple student deaths, the same procedures will be followed with assistance being provided for some of the roles. The Head of Student Services, in particular, will require additional support in his/her coordination role. S/he will be assisted by the Head of Customer Liaison.

13.1 The University will also consider calling in external staff to help with high demand areas, such as supporting staff and supporting students. To reduce the need for additional training and induction, the Counselling Service may consider offering additional hours (paid) to current Trainee and Associate counsellors. An assessment of additional needs will be made by the Counselling Service Manager, the Head of Student Services and the Head(s) of School(s).

14. Welfare Check & Debriefing

14.0 In cases where a student's death has occurred on University premises or has been due to suicide, it may be necessary, after closure of proceedings, to carry out a welfare check and debrief with all those who have been closely involved. Whether or not to do so after death off University premises should be decided by the Head of Student Services. The debrief is primarily strategic and therefore distinct from personal or emotional support, but should include consideration of the emotional and personal support provided. The purposes of the welfare check and debrief are several:

- To bring a formal ending to the proceedings.
- To check that agreed actions have been completed and that no actions remain outstanding.
- To ensure that all those closely involved are adequately supported - consideration should also be given to those not attending the meeting.
- To clarify if contact with the family or any external agencies should continue and for how

long.

- To consider any lessons that need to be learned from the experience and if changes need to be made to the policy and procedures.

15. Retrieving University Property

15.0 There may be issues associated with the death of a student who died in possession of University property, such as library books, technical equipment, and DDS equipment. The University needs to decide if these should be retrieved but should not approach the family or partner until at least a month after the student's funeral. A request can be made, preferably by phone and by someone known to the family, who will agree a suitable collection place, e.g. they can be collected from the family home or another place.

16. Policy Review & Update

16.0 This policy should be formally reviewed every three years and, in the process, take account of changes to regulations and legislation. It should be reviewed at the end of each academic year and take account of changes to university structures and the roles of university staff. Contacts and contact details should be updated accordingly.

16.1 When a student's death occurs on University premises, the Head of Student Services should hold a review meeting at the end of the process. The review meeting should be seen, not as an exercise in blaming anyone for procedural failings but as an opportunity to consider improvements which can be made to the response.

Helpful Publications & Information

Age UK (2015). **When Someone Dies: A Step-by-step Guide To What To Do.** *This guide is full of practical guidance on such issues as: what to do first; unexpected death; registering a death; death abroad; organ donation; medical research; arranging a funeral; help with funeral costs; who to tell; dealing with the estate; tax changes; inheritance tax; financial help for bereaved people; bereavement support; useful organisations.*

Ministry of Justice (UK). **Coroner Investigations: A Short Guide**

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283937/coroner-investigations-a-short-guide.pdf

What To Do After Someone Dies - A HMG publication, which is a very practical, step-by-step guide to dealing with the death.

<https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/when-a-death-is-reported-to-a-coroner>

Employee Assistance Programme - The Employee Assistance Programme at London Met is provided by 'Workplace Options'. The service is free to London met staff and is a confidential and independent resource. This is a 24-hour service. Phone: 0800 243 458 - Outside UK: +44 (0)202 8987 6550

Email: assistance@workplaceoptions.com

Web: www.workplaceoptions.com

Centre for Death & Society (University of Bath). A research centre, looking at social aspects of death, dying and bereavement, focusing on: the experiences of people facing death and bereavement; practice and policy concerning the dying, the dead, and the bereaved; how end-of-

life practices require yet can also foster community development; relationships between the living and the dead; how all this is influenced by economics, politics, inequality, social networks, technology and culture.

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/cdas/about/>

Mental Health Policy (London Metropolitan University)

<http://student.londonmet.ac.uk/media/london-metropolitan-university/london-met-documents/professional-service-departments/student-services/counselling-service/Mental-health-policy.pdf>

CRUSE Bereavement Care - Cruse is the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They offer support, advice and information when someone dies. Cruse offers face-to-face, telephone, email and website support. Services are confidential and free.

<http://www.cruse.org.uk/?gclid=CJfLlcvX3dICFSEL0wodRs0FRw>

Appendix 1: Checklist - Who Should Be Informed

The circumstances of the death will determine who needs to be informed, so the list below is intended to be a guide and an aide to memory. It may also be used by the Head of Student Services to keep a record of all the actions which have been taken. The list does not imply that all named people should be contacted in every instance. The principles of 'need to know' and 'need to support' should be applied. Please check the policy to clarify who should be asked to do the informing. It is not always the responsibility of the HoSS nor always best that s/he do so.

Student Name	
Student's ID Number	
Date	
Circumstances of Death	
Nominated University Contact	
Nominated Contact Details (email/ext.)	
Staff Who May Need To Be Informed	
Next of Kin	Security Staff
Vice Chancellor	Switchboard
Head of School	General Manager of the Student Union
Head of Academic Services	Head of Customer Liaison
Counselling Service Manager	International Support
Director of Human Resources	Relevant Teaching Staff
Health & Safety Officer	Manager (Disability and Dyslexia Service)
Estates Department	Head of Finance
Manager of Accommodation	Director of ISS
University Librarian	Head of Engagement/Press Office
Others Who May Need To Be Informed	
Student Halls / Landlord / Landlady	Friends of the Student in Halls
Students Who Shared Accommodation / flat mates	Police
Students in Same Tutorial / Seminar Group	Ambulance Service
Students On Same Course	Students Sharing Clubs, Societies, Sports Teams
Work Placement Manager	
Notes & Follow Up Actions	

Date & Time

Date & Time

Date & Time

Date & Time

Appendix 2: How To Inform

There is no perfect or easy way of informing others about a death of a student. It will always be difficult. Equally, there is no standard response that we can expect, though it is helpful to plan for a distressed reaction, which in many instances, is not immediate. There are also some key principles and some key pieces of information which should be communicated.

- It should be done sensitively and quickly, as social media can often distort communication.
- While others may play a supporting role, informing students should ideally be done by someone who knows the group and the deceased student (1).
- If students are away on placement and it is impossible to inform them in person then alternative ways of informing them should be considered. Email should be used if necessary but only when all face to face alternatives have been exhausted.
- All known and accurate facts should be communicated - absence of facts can create unhelpful fantasy alternatives.
- Caution and tact should be exercised if the suspected cause of death is suicide. Even if it is established that suicide is the cause, it is more appropriate to refer to 'death' rather than 'suicide'.
- Information should be given about the support available and how to access it.
- Inform others about the possibility of a delayed reaction to the news.
- Explain the signs of shock reaction and what to do.
- Give information about funeral or memorial arrangements (if known) and about remembrance books (if organised).

Be Honest - It is important to be honest about the facts and acknowledge that death can be a challenging issue to speak about. Also, be honest about your own feelings and be at ease with showing genuine feeling. This is helpful modelling, showing others that in this situation, it's OK to be upset and to be unsure of your ground.

Be Direct - Clear language helps in the expression of feeling. It is therefore important to avoid euphemisms such as: 'passed away', 'moved on' 'gone to a better place', 'called by God'. These can be very patronising. Instead use the words 'death' and 'died'. Take ownership and avoid generalisations, through the words you use, e.g. 'I feel very sad' instead of 'one can feel sad'.

Expect Silence and Questions - Though seemingly contradictory, both these responses can be expected. However, you are not here as an authority on the death and should not expect yourself to provide all the answers. It is fine to say, you don't know but will try to find out (if the question is reasonable). Anticipate questions which might on first hearing seem absurd.

Respect Differences - Just as every death is different, so too are the responses to death, some of which are related to culture and others to personality. Some people respond silently and others noisily. The response may also be affected by the nature of the death, e.g. after an illness, murder, serious accident etc.

Encourage Expression - When you have informed others about the death, you allow enough silence for the information to be absorbed and when a reasonable time has elapsed, you should ask how people feel and if there is anything they want to say. Questions, which are not invasive or prurient, should be encouraged.

Note 1: Counselling Service - If a counsellor from the University Counselling Service has been asked to attend, s/he will act in a supportive role - students should be informed about the death by someone who knows them well. The counsellor will give students some information about the

support available to them through the Counselling Service. The counsellor will also give students information about general responses to death and about delayed shock reactions. It will be helpful to give students some concrete reminder of how to make contact with the service, e.g. leaflet, business card etc.

Appendix 3: Signs & Symptoms of Shock

The following are typical reactions to traumatic events, often called shock. They may be felt immediately after the event or days after the event. If a student is reporting an experience of shock to you, you should not attempt to deal with it. Instead, you must refer him/her to the Counselling Service as a matter of urgency.

- **Fear** - Feeling afraid, often for no apparent reason. Sometimes accompanied by loss of trust in others, anxiety about formerly comfortable situations. Hypervigilance. Exaggerated startle response.
- **Confusion** - This is often accompanied by feelings of dissociation, numbness, out-of-body feelings, and hyper self-awareness.
- **Physical Symptoms** - These include racing heartbeat, muscle tension, dry mouth, headaches, stomach upset, sleep disturbance, upset eating pattern, aches and pains.
- **Exhaustion** - Includes low energy, often accompanied by disturbed sleep and unsettling nightmares and panic attacks.
- **Bombardment** - Feeling overwhelmed by past experiences and memories, feelings such as guilt, shame, anger, sadness, tendency to blame self or others, mood swings, chaos. Crying a lot.
- **Personality Changes** - Feeling like someone else, e.g. going from open and outgoing to being closed and withdrawn; from careful to careless; from restrained to spontaneous; binging; other unusual behaviours.
- **Disproportionate Responses** - It feels like the response is disproportionate to the event. This is because it can trigger feelings associated with older historical experiences, which now come to the fore.

Appendix 4: Responses To Bereavement

Responses To Bereavement

Please note that this is not a one-direction cycle. Individuals will move backwards and forwards, and in some instances, skip out so-called stages. It is important to leave scope for individual differences.



Appendix 5: Sample Letter To Students

Dear

I am the manager of the University Counselling Service at London Met. I am writing to you because you may know (Deceased's Name), who, I am sorry to say, died on (Day). (Student's Name) was living in Halls at the time of his/her death and the University; along with Hall Providers; is liaising with his/her family. If you knew (Student's Name), this news can come as a shock to you and you may therefore be feeling very saddened or numbed.

If you do feel affected by (Student's Name) death and would like to speak confidentially to someone, please feel free to contact the University Counselling Service. As a London Met student, you can also use the Counselling Service for other personal reasons. This is a free service for all London Met students.

You can book a meeting, by telephoning Student Services Reception (020 7133 2094 North Campus or 020 7230 7003 City Campus). You are advised to phone as soon as possible after 9.30 am. You can also drop in to make an appointment (Holloway Learning Centre or the Aldgate Hub). Meetings with a counsellor last about 50 minutes and, in the meeting, you and the counsellor can decide if any further sessions would be helpful.

If you have used the Counselling Service before, you may wish to email the counsellor you first saw, using his/her email address at the Counselling Service:

Ioannis Andreadakis (Counsellor) - i.andreadakis1@londonmet.ac.uk
Fitz Douglas (Counsellor) - f.douglas@londonmet.ac.uk
James Lewis (Counsellor) - james.lewis@londonmet.ac.uk
John Mackessy (Counsellor) - j.mackessy@londonmet.ac.uk
Sharon Godfrey (Counsellor) - s.godfrey@londonmet.ac.uk

For further information, please have a look at our web site:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/studentservices/advice-and-well-being/counselling/>

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Best wishes,

Appendix 6: Flowchart - Procedures

