



Social
Sciences

Support for Departments Dealing with a Crisis

Incident Management Toolkit



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1 General guidance and contacts

University policy guidance and procedures

[University's Policy and Procedure on Harassment](#)

[Harassment Procedure Flowchart for University Staff](#)

[Harassment Procedure Flowchart for Students](#)

[Guidance on handling cases of sexual assault or sexual violence](#)

[Social Media Guidelines \(Staff\)](#)

[Social Media Guidance \(Students\)](#)

Student Support and Welfare – Gillian Hamnett, Director (Gillian.hamnett@admin.ox.ac.uk)

[Guidance for students on student portal](#)

Student registration data, including supervisory arrangements – Social Sciences education team (Andy Garlick andy.garlick@socsci.ox.ac.uk and Lesley Darcy lesley.darcy@socsci.ox.ac.uk, (6)14875 or (6)14863)

Social Sciences Division – Catherine Paxton, Divisional Secretary (catherine.paxton@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

Personnel Services – Sarah Oliver, Social Sciences HR Team Leader (sarah.oliver@admin.ox.ac.uk)

Contact list for departments in event of crisis

Occupational Health support for affected staff

Mailing lists

Departmental staff and student mailing lists - ensure that at least two individuals in department have access.

[Conference of Colleges Handbook](#) includes contact details for college Heads of House, Senior Tutors, etc.

Travel Insurance

University travel insurance can assist travellers in a crisis in accordance with the terms of conditions of cover.

They will be able to help locate travellers in the event of a crisis.

Contact information, including who to contact in an emergency is given on the [University's travel insurance website](#).



2 Crisis Response

Summary Communications Guidance for Divisions and Departments from PAD

Head of Corporate Communications

stephen.rouse@admin.ox.ac.uk

Stephen Rouse

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01865 280528

Public Affairs Directorate

University of Oxford

www.ox.ac.uk/public-affairs

The role of the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD) in the event of a crisis or an emergency is to support an effective and coordinated University response.

This document supports the **University's Crisis Management Plan**. The Director of PAD, Ceri Thomas, is a member of the University's **Gold** crisis response team and the Deputy Director, Jonathan Ray, is a member of the **Silver** team.

Definition of a Major crisis (triggering the Crisis Management Plan)

A major crisis is an event or series of events that threatens harm to the University, its staff, students and visitors, University property, the community or the environment. A major crisis may significantly affect the University's ability to carry out its day-to-day activities, pose a threat to health and safety, include a threat to life or significantly damage the University's reputation. Such events may have a widespread impact that extends across and beyond the University, and could (but will not necessarily) include a significant fire or explosion, bomb or terrorist threat, a significant outbreak of a contagious disease, or major systems failure.

In the event of uncertainty or disagreement, the Registrar shall determine whether an event constitutes a major crisis.

Definition of a Local Crisis (Faculty, College, Institute)

When an incident is specific to a building, department/faculty or college this will be led locally even where there are major implications for the University as a whole. PAD will always seek, however, to work closely and supportively with Divisions, departments and colleges, who will be encouraged to keep PAD informed (Corporate Communications Office) while an issue is 'live'.

On occasion, you may be unaware of a local matter with potential reputational consequences, and PAD may bring this to your attention after media or public enquiries.

How the Public Affairs Directorate can assist you

The media, public and stakeholders are usually very well informed about major crises or potentially damaging local stories, drawing their information from external sources such as online news channels and social media; it will not be possible to keep a major incident or serious issue 'under wraps'. In a major crisis (generally when the University's Crisis Management Plan is activated by the VC or Registrar) **PAD will lead the University's communications response with all key audiences**, including the general public and key external stakeholders, as well as University staff and students.

PAD is here to:

- **advise on actions necessary to protect the University's reputation**
- **manage all University statements, media releases, requests for interviews, press conferences and media visits**
- **monitor media coverage and take action as required**



- manage information published on the University's website (and any back-up website if required) and central social media channels, including Twitter and Facebook
- monitor social media coverage and take action as required
- manage internal communications with staff through available tools, including all-staff emails and the staff gateway
- liaise with the affected college, Faculty or the Academic Administration Division regarding communication with students
- liaise with IT Services Telecommunications about messages used on the main University switchboard
- manage communications with key local and national audiences, including MPs, councils, and councillors
- liaise with communications teams outside the University, such as the emergency services and local government, as necessary.

PAD's crisis communications team will consist of the Director of PAD, Deputy Director of PAD, Internal Communications Manager, Head of Corporate Communications, Head of Campaigns and Digital Communications (or alternates) and other team members as required.

Principles of good crisis communications

While every crisis is different, three principles should underpin the approach in all cases and all degrees of severity:

1. **Empathetic:** we should demonstrate that the University **understands how a crisis impacts staff, students, their families and members of the local community or those further afield.**
2. **Transparent and responsive:** we should seek to ensure that **all stakeholders, including the media, but especially our staff and students, have the appropriate level of information they will find valuable and reassuring.**
3. **Action-focused:** we should **outline what the University can do, or is doing, to take control of the situation**, either itself or in conjunction with other agencies, and **give examples (where possible) of actions already taken. Where we are seriously restricted (for example by legal process or rapid change) we should be clear about this.**

Rumour will prevail in the absence of clear statements. **We need to communicate alongside managing a difficult situation.**

Inform the Public Affairs Directorate as soon as possible and do please use them as your conduit with the media.

Where information is not yet available, or sharing would be inappropriate due to University policies and duty of confidentiality, or because of employment law or criminal law, tell your staff and students this, rather than simply saying nothing.

Initiating a Local Crisis Response – Seven Recommended Actions for Faculty

1. Allocate responsibility: Who will lead the local management and be principal point of contact?
2. Rapidly confirm and summarise the facts (including known and anticipated consequences)
3. Alert the Head of Division/Divisional Office and Public Affairs Directorate and share these facts.
4. Request an update from PAD on media coverage – level of coverage, tone, questions
5. Work throughout with Division and PAD to identify potential reputational and operational risks
6. Draft, with Division and PAD input, your key messages and a Q&A
7. Make arrangements to brief your affected staff and students and do so in accordance with the principles set out above.

Student Meetings: Context, Expectations and Guidance on Professional Media/Social Media

1. Remind students that the purpose of the meeting is to inform, hear concerns, answer questions and – wherever possible – to reassure.
2. In return, students are asked to respect confidence. We should request politely – as much as a courtesy to fellow students who will be contributing their views – that proceedings are not recorded covertly. This has happened in the past.

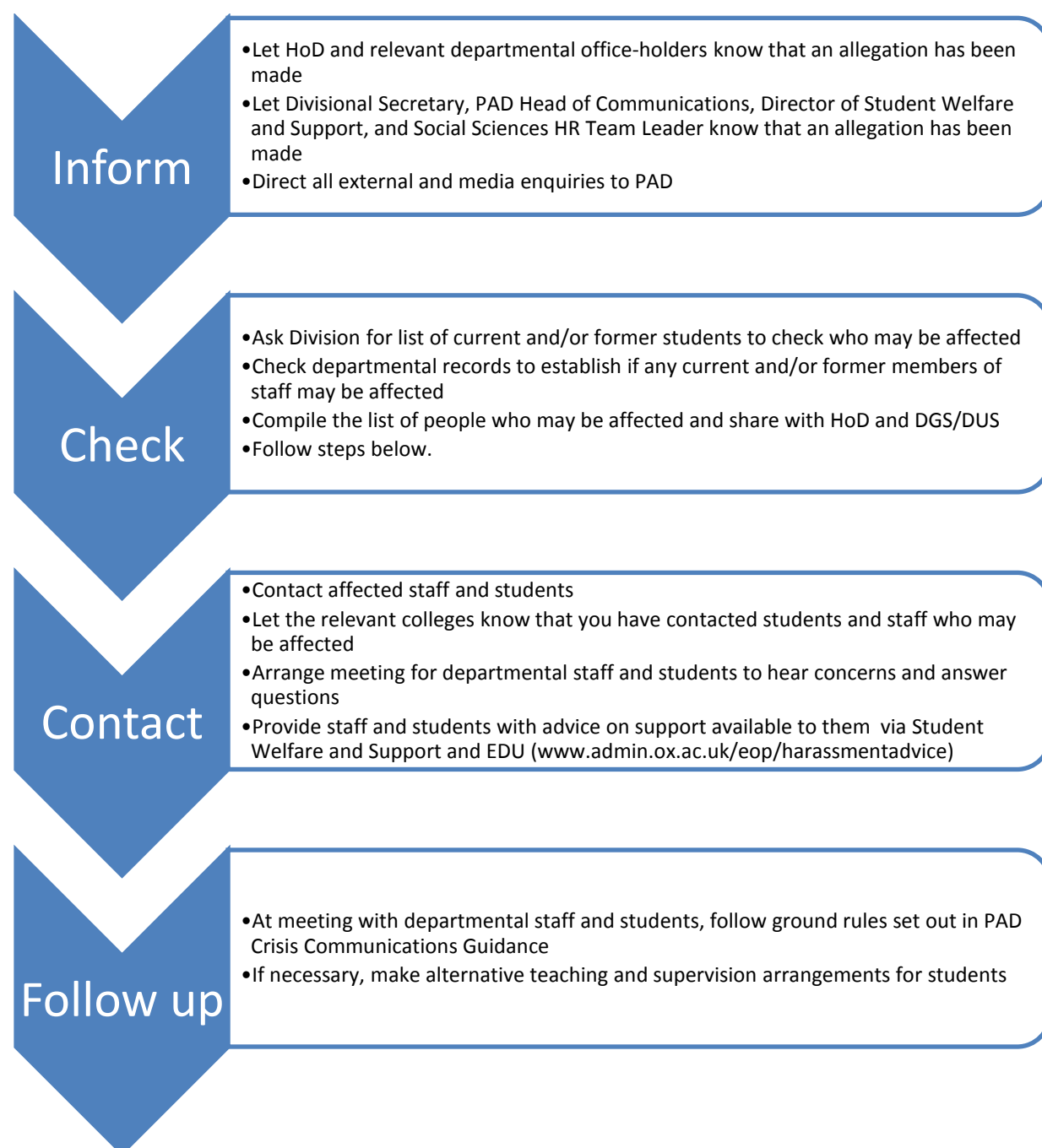


3. Student media, in common with professional media, should not be invited to attend. At Oxford student media and professional media are treated with parity and University business on sensitive matters would not be thrown open to the press.
4. Advise students that they may well be approached by the media. Ultimately the decision to engage with the media is theirs. However, the following advice might be useful:
 - If students are among those directly affected or close to the events concerned - and they are receiving calls or visits from the media – they should be encouraged to think very carefully about the pros and cons of speaking to the press.
 - The University has expertise which can help them. Staff within the University Communications team can provide specialist advice on how to deal with the media, and can guide on how best to deal with unsolicited or unwanted media attention.
 - In some matters (such as rape and sexual assault or other allegations of serious misconduct) there are legal restrictions on what the media can and can't report.
 - If a student wishes to go ahead with an interview, even if they think it is 'off the record' (when a reporter provides the undertaking that your identity or source will not be revealed), they should be encouraged to think very carefully about what they want to say. Once they have spoken to a journalist it is usually impossible to take back what has been said. Once a journalist has reported something it is very hard indeed to stop it being repeated across lots of other media.
 - If students are being approached repeatedly by journalists, and would prefer to be left alone, the University will assist.
5. Remind students of the potential difficulties arising from injudicious use of social media:
 - There is inherent risk from instantaneous and often far-reaching communication, with potential to cause serious (and sometimes unexpected) long-term consequences.
 - The University encourages its community to engage, collaborate and innovate through social media. Students and staff should, however, be aware of the potential impact on themselves and other users.
 - When using social media it can be tempting to speak and act in a way we wouldn't face-to-face. Innocently intended comments posted online may be misconstrued, as the written word can lack the nuances of face-to-face interaction.
 - Students should be advised to think twice about how they post content if they are feeling angry or upset about something. They should consider the effect that this might have on the situation.
 - Various civil and criminal laws apply to content posted online. Civil claims that could be brought include actions for defamation, harassment, breach of intellectual property rights, fraudulent misrepresentation or breach of confidence.
 - Criminal offences that could occur online include harassment and malicious communications.
 - Members of the University must be careful not to post confidential material online without permission.
 - The collegiate University is not responsible for, and does not hold any ownership of, any content posted on social media by its students. When posting online there may be circumstances in which students risk giving the impression that they are speaking on behalf of the University or their department. If in doubt, they should consider adding a disclaimer to make it clear that they are posting in a personal capacity.



3 What to do in the event of an incident involving an allegation of harassment in the public domain

The purpose of this guidance is to offer a quick checklist for Heads of Administration and Finance to use to manage an incident occasioned by an allegation of harassment, when this allegation is in the public domain, and **in parallel** to any investigation of the allegation under the [University's policy and procedures on harassment](#):





4 Incident management template letters/emails

Please read PAD's Crisis Communications Guidance before contacting students and staff.

Please ensure that you send your message to the intended recipients using 'Bcc' field (i.e. put recipients' addresses in 'Bcc' field). You may wish to include your own or HAF's email address in 'Cc' field.

The text of the two draft emails below has been drafted in conjunction with PAD, and reviewed by the Legal Services Office.

Holding email

You may be aware of media coverage about **[subject]**. There are often limits on what the University is able to say to the press in light of its legal obligations and employment policies such as confidentiality. We are not able to provide information at this point but please be assured that this matter is being addressed seriously and managed actively, and that we intend to **[provide an update/invite you to a meeting to discuss the issue]**.

If, in the meantime, you are contacted in any way by journalists, please do not provide information directly but refer the enquiry to the University's nominated representatives: **[We would also ask you to refrain from making any references via social media.]**

Stephen Rouse, Head of Corporate Communications

Stephen.rouse@admin.ox.ac.uk

01865 280533.

Stephen is based in Public Affairs and Communications at Wellington Square.

We recognise that this is a difficult matter and may have caused distress. The University offers support and advice for its students and staff and you can find further information at **[relevant link]**

If you have any questions or concerns, please do ring me on **[number]**

Invitation to meeting

Dear X,

I'm writing to follow up my earlier email to invite you to a meeting about **[X]**. This meeting will be with **[list invitees]** and the purpose is to offer a forum to raise questions and concerns frankly. In that spirit all those invited are asked to keep the matters that are discussed and views that are voiced confidential and any breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously. External and student media will not be present.

The meeting will be held at: **[give details, including start and end times]**

I would be grateful if you could let me know by **[day/date]** whether you plan to attend.



5 Checklist of points of consideration in a crisis situation

This summary is to support departments experiencing a serious incident, such as a serious accident or incident, a police matter or adverse publicity. Each set of circumstances will be different. Not all points for consideration may apply and the guidance may not be comprehensive. Please contact your HR Business Partner for further advice.

	Consideration	Contact
Immediate safety	Evacuation of the area	Local fire marshals if applicable?
	First aiders	Local first aiders
	Emergency services	999
	Security services	01865 (2)89999
Parties to consider informing	Head of department, head of division and the Registrar	
	Next of kin contacts	
	Safety office (Accident reporting)	01865 (2)70811 postmaster@safety.ox.ac.uk
	Press office	01865 (2)80533
	Local reception/facilities helpdesk may need to be advised on handling related calls, within the limits of confidentiality	Local staff
	Personnel services	01865 (2)70122 for local HR team
	Legal services	01865 (2)70126
	Insurance	01865 616135
	College (where appropriate)	
Investigation	Preserving immediate evidence (e.g. securing offices, swipe card data, CCTV footage and taking photographs)	
	Personnel services and the safety office can assist in the appointment of a suitable investigator	
Potentially serious disciplinary matter?	Suspension of individuals	Personnel services
Communications	Communications planning via a case conference	
	Data protection and employee relations issues	Personnel services and legal services as above
	Director of student welfare and support services	01865 (2)80444
	Press office	As above
	Occupational health	01865 (2)82676
On-going support for affected managers and individuals	Further communications planning	
	Resource planning	
	Occupational health	As above
	Access to advice	Personnel services and legal services as above
	Maintaining appropriate contact with absentees	



Learning	Involving the appropriate parties to review practices to safeguard against any future recurrence	
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If there is a death at work, you should refer to the death in service guidance:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/end/deathinservice/>

Where the death occurs at work the first step is to call the normal emergency services.

The death must be reported as soon as possible to the Director of the Safety Office who will be responsible for reporting it to the health and safety authorities.

The department should nominate an appropriate and reasonably senior member of staff - perhaps a manager who knew the employee well or an employee who know the family - to break the news to next of kin.

If an employee dies as a result of an accident at work within one year of the date of the accident, this must also be reported to the Director of the Safety Office, for reporting to the appropriate authorities.



6 University Guidance on Escalation and Reporting Procedures for Students Suspected Missing on Fieldwork

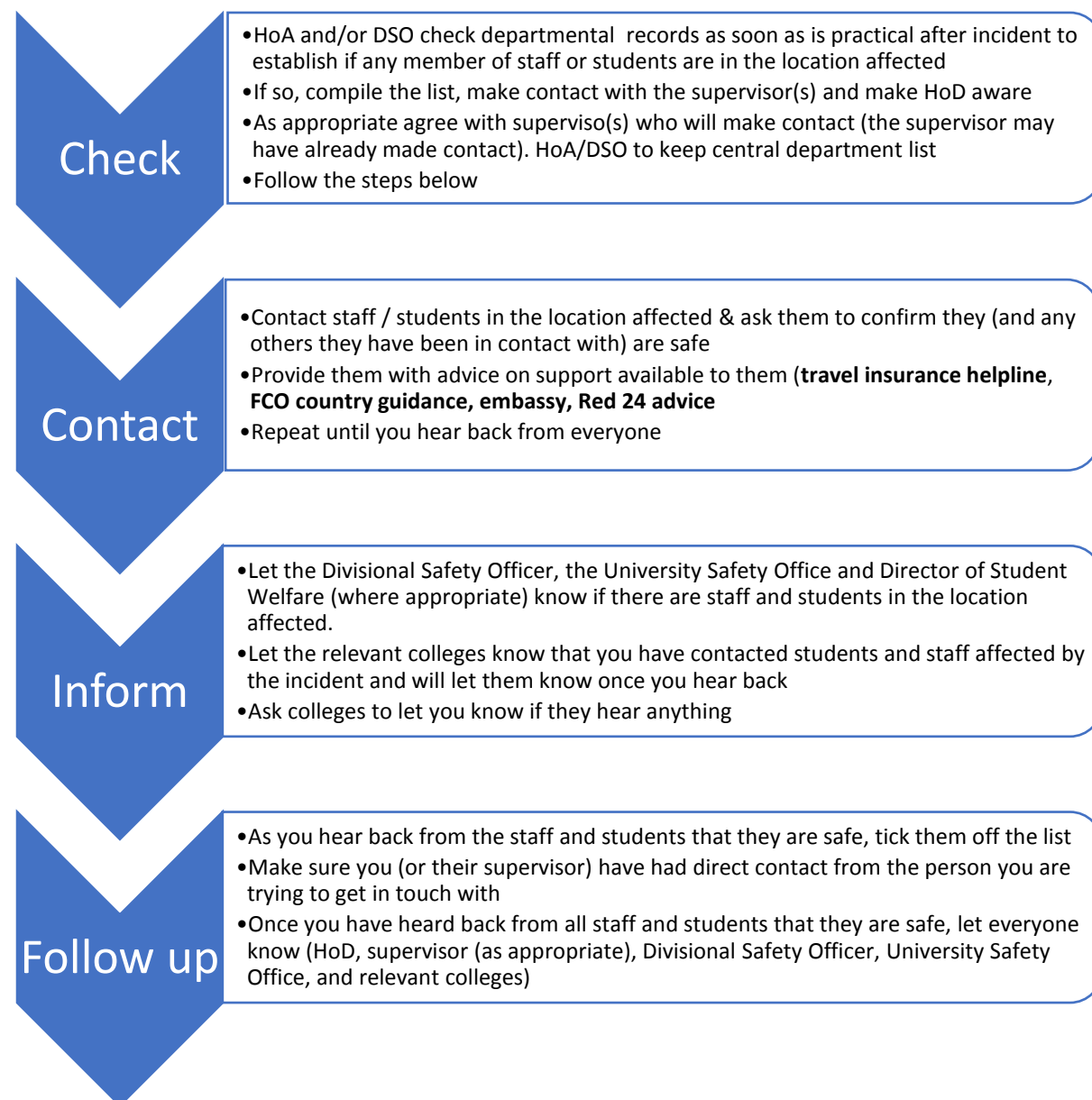
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7 Checklist for a Major Incident Overseas

The guidance offers a checklist for departments when news emerges of a major incident overseas. In the immediate aftermath travellers should be guided by local government advice and should contact their insurance helpline for practical assistance. They can also get advice from their own embassy in country. Supervisors/line managers will be aware of the locations of travellers they are supervising and will wish to contact any affected to check they are OK and whether they need further support.

Staff are not expected to come into the office out of hours except under exceptional circumstances (for example activation of university crisis team, direct knowledge that life of staff or student is threatened).



Useful contact numbers:

University Safety Office: 01865 (2)70811

Divisional Health and Safety Officer: 01865 (6)14878



8 Guidance for Dealing with a Student Tragedy

1 Introduction

These Guidelines are intended as a model of good practice across the collegiate University to use in considering their own practices. 'Student tragedy' is here defined as any event concerning a student which both seriously and directly affects the community, both College and Faculty/Department communities. This will include student deaths, but may also concern cases of significant injury also.

Annex A contains a quick-reference checklist for responding to a student tragedy and numbers for key contacts.

2 Being Prepared

It is expected that Colleges would take the lead in responding to a student tragedy. The guidance may also be useful for Faculties / Departments in handling a student tragedy, particularly where graduate students are concerned. Where a student has no college affiliation, the Faculty / Department would be the lead. Where the guidance refers to Colleges the same principles apply to Faculties / Departments should they take the lead. It is important to set up and keep under review procedures for informing all relevant parties in the event of a student tragedy. This will normally involve setting up a chain for the dissemination of information. It is vital to ensure that procedures are in place for evenings, weekends, and outside of term-time; procedures may also need to be altered for location depending on whether an incident has occurred on College or University premises, private premises, and outside of Oxford.

In all cases, it is necessary to identify a front line of individuals (with identified deputies) who must be informed as soon as possible in all cases:

- Colleges: Examples include Heads of House, College Doctors, College Nurses, Senior Tutors or Tutors for Graduates, Deans or Junior Deans, Personal Tutors or College Advisors, Chaplains or Welfare Leads, and College Secretaries
- Faculties/Departments: Heads of Faculties/Departments, Supervisor(s), Academic Administrators, and Welfare Lead if appropriate.

Where colleges take the lead, efforts should be made to ensure that the Faculty / Department are kept informed and alerted to any communications the College may issue.

2.1. Responsibilities

There are four main lines of information dissemination needed:

External professionals: It is particularly important to decide who will deal with the emergency services, including the police, fire brigade, the ambulance service and the medical authorities (as necessary). In dealing with student deaths, normally the police will inform the family. However, a member of College staff will need to ensure this has been done, including when and how, before contact is made with the family.

University Authorities: Someone should be designated to contact University Security Services, who will inform the University Marshal, and (depending on the College's wishes), will liaise with the News and Information Office and inform the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Proctors' Office, the Director of Student Welfare and Support Services, the Counselling Service, Oxford SU, and the Chair of the Health & Safety Management Committee, as appropriate. This is important since these people may find themselves being approached by the press without notice. All of these groups and individuals will be willing to help any College or Faculty/Department in times of tragedy, but will normally wait to be invited to do so.

Press: The local press liaise regularly with the local police and hence it is likely that the press will be aware of something unusual happening within the collegiate University, and particularly within a College very quickly and will approach that College. Therefore, it is strongly advised that someone in the College be detailed to contact the University News and Information Office as soon as possible, so that it can field initial enquiries and advise on how to respond to direct questioning



College and Faculty / Department Community: Systems will be needed to ensure that all sectors of the College (including College officers, senior members, junior members, College staff) and appropriate staff and students within the Faculty / Department (including heads / chairs, directors of studies, senior / academic officers, and relevant academic staff) are kept informed as to what has happened as quickly as possible. Where the College takes the lead, the Department / Faculty may wish to designate a member of staff to act as a liaison with the College to ensure continuity of information sharing and consistency of communication.

3 Immediate Action

As soon as there is notification of a student tragedy, follow the procedure of **immediate action** in the checklist [Annex A].

In the event of a discovery of a death on University or College premises, the police **must** be notified. Nothing should be moved or touched until the Police have arrived and advised on next steps. If there are witnesses whom the police will need to interview, ensure that there is a private area available to them and appropriate support provided. Care is needed to encourage witnesses and/or affected students to not inform any third party until the next-of-kin is informed. The police or hospital will normally make contact with the next-of-kin. The designated contact with the emergency services should ensure that next-of-kin have been informed before any communication is issued.

In the event that a student tragedy happens outside of Oxford or abroad, resulting in death and/or serious injury, the University may wish to consider sending an appropriately senior representative to that location to provide support for family and friends. Should a tragedy happen abroad, the University may need to liaise with local embassies and/or Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

4 Communications

4.1. Contact with individuals close to the person concerned

Family members

In the case of sudden deaths, the family will normally be contacted by the police first, who will require next-of-kin details from the College. It is essential that the College checks with the police that the family has been informed before any significant level of detail is disseminated internally or any press statement is released; in the case of families based overseas, contact may take some time.

If a student has no contact with their parents, the next-of-kin should be informed according to the details held by the College. The following guidance assumes family involvement, but in such instances of estrangement the named next-of-kin should be informed and cases should be handled on an individual basis.

Partner or close friends

It is important to discover as quickly as possible whether the person concerned has, in Oxford or elsewhere, a partner or close friends who should be informed urgently. JCR or MCR officers or friends may be able to suggest which fellow students to contact. The Faculty / Department may also be able to assist in this respect. Friends may be able to indicate membership of a club or society, and in cases where clubs / societies are heavily affected the Proctors' Office and/or Oxford SU can provide advice.

The College will need to consider how far, if at all, responsibility for breaking any bad news should be left to individual students within their respective communities.

4.2. Statement for the press

The University News and Information Office has considerable experience in dealing with the press in times of student tragedy and in liaising with the police press office. The News and Information Office will support Colleges and Faculties / Departments in the event of student deaths by: helping to draft a statement for the media; advising on how to deal with media interest; and, if asked, fielding all media enquiries on behalf of the College or Faculty / Department. **Annex B** provides guidelines from the News and Information Office. Basic guidance includes:



- Ensuring next-of-kin have been informed before releasing a name or making a statement
- A media statement would normally give the student's name, year and subject; express sadness and (if relevant) shock; give a positive message about the student and how they will be missed; and express sympathy to the family.
- It is not necessary or wise to go into detail about the circumstances of a tragedy, nor should any statements apportion blame in public.

It is important that staff, particularly those working in front-line roles, are informed how they should deal with requests from the press. While students cannot be forbidden from talking to the press, they should be warned about dealing with intrusive enquiries and advised to protect the privacy of the student and the family. Furthermore, if an arrest is involved, talking to the press may prejudice the outcome of a trial.

The above also applies the student press, which is often a source for national journalists. Porters within Colleges should be advised that journalists may doorstep. The College and the Faculty / Department can control access of professional journalists to their premises and internal communications, but cannot do so with student journalists.

4.3. Wider communication

Immediate community

It is essential that the College and/or Faculty / Department verifies that the family has been informed before any level of detail is disseminated. It is also important, even after the family is informed, to maintain confidentiality in any College statement and to urge all to maintain confidentiality in the general discussions that will take place informally in College. Personal information about a student continues to be confidential after their death. For example, it would not be acceptable to reveal that a student who has died had been receiving counselling.

Dissemination of the news in both the student's College and Faculty / Department can be achieved by:

- an internal communication which should be as informative as possible without being prejudicial to subsequent enquiries. Email must be used sensitively. Those disseminating this information must also be aware that any such message can be forwarded and so any wording must be thought through carefully. Sample communications can be provided by the News and Information Office.
- organising a (voluntary) assembly as soon as practicably possible to inform the College as a whole of developments and to provide information.

The latter is important in order to avoid a sense of alienation among the community, rumour-mongering and additional anxiety and uncertainty. Further meetings may be needed for those who missed the first or if more information comes to light. Note that any internal communications regarding the tragedy may be passed to the media.

Further communication

Other college communities may be affected by a student tragedy even if the student was not a member. Such colleges may wish to disseminate information to their students via the guidance above for the *immediate community*.

Broader communication to the University community may be needed depending on the circumstances. For example, tragedies involving multiple students or situations where the collegiate University has experienced separate student tragedies in a short period of time may necessitate a wider communication to the student body. The News and Information Office may wish to inform the student press who may report on student tragedies. Oxford SU will communicate with student welfare representatives in JCRs and MCRs and inform Nightline.

4.4. Social media

Depending on the circumstances of the student tragedy, information may rapidly circulate on social media. The College may come under pressure from social media to release a statement; however, no statement should be made until it is verified that the family have been contacted. If, however, there is a likely to be a



significant delay, the College should consult with the News and Information Office about issuing a brief statement.

Students should be warned about speculating on social media and advised to protect the privacy of the student and the family. Anything said on social media may be used in a potential police investigation. Furthermore, students should be advised that the press may republish social media posts which may be used out-of-context.

5 Support

5.1 Supporting family and close contacts

It is important that contact with the family is continued and that they are offered help in dealing with the tragedy. Families may wish to visit the College and the Faculty / Department (both by arrangement) and to collect any personal effects. The College should consider offering accommodation to the family while in Oxford.

Families respond to grief in different ways: Colleges might find themselves subjected to anger and accusations, or individual staff and fellow students may be subjected to obsessive enquiries. In the case of an international student suicide, cultural awareness should be taken into account when discussing mental health issues.

In the event of a student death, it is important to ensure that all regular correspondence with that student ceases to mitigate further distress to the family. This could include updating a student's record to ensure that correspondence such as tuition fees, College fees, battels, and library fines. Consideration is needed for when a public profile of a student on a College or Department / Faculty website should be removed.

5.2 Support within the College

It may be necessary to have urgent support available within the College. College doctors will be able to advise. Generally, the kind of support needed will come from friends, tutors, chaplains or welfare officers, JCR or MCR officers, and Peer Supporters for example. The Counselling Service can help, but will only do so in a systematic way if requested by the College. Note that this does not prevent an individual student approaching the Counselling Service directly. Professional assessment may occasionally be necessary.

In some circumstances, the welfare representatives such as Peer Supporters from the College may be too affected themselves to provide support. Consideration should be given to approaching other College peer support teams for short term support. Student Welfare and Support Services can help to identify interim support.

5.3. Support for those in the Faculty / Department and elsewhere

It is important for the College to identify those close to the person concerned who are not members of the College community and to keep them informed. This includes students and staff (e.g. the director of studies and associated officer/s) within the relevant Faculty / Department. It may also be important to contact those who were students at the same time as the person concerned (e.g. students studying abroad for a period). Thought will also have to be given to any procedures for cases involving students currently out of residence for any reason.

The Counselling Service may be able to help: advice, assistance in managing meetings, counselling for individual students, group work for peers etc. It is helpful to let the Counselling Service know as soon as possible, as students may go there for support in any case.

5.4. Funeral Arrangements/Memorial Services

Colleges, in consultation with the family, might wish to mark the event of a death in some way. The Vice-Chancellor, and the relevant Faculty / Department, will be guided by College advice on whether to send condolence to the family on the University's behalf. Representatives from the collegiate University may wish to attend the funeral and it is recommended that a minimum of two staff members attend if appropriate. Colleges may also wish to mark the first anniversary of a death with the family and to maintain contact with



them in the longer-term. Permanent memorials to the individual, such as a tree in the grounds or a small plaque, are a means of allowing the family to return to College as and when they wish without feeling intrusive.

5.5. Coroner's Court

Members of the College and of the University may be requested to attend a Coroner's Court; this will require further support and may also re-kindle press interest, which might place the College and individuals within the University under a second episode of pressure. Many of the above procedures – especially regarding press statements – need to be borne in mind at this stage.

6 Longer term consideration

It is important for those closely involved in dealing with events following a tragedy to keep each other informed at regular intervals. It is advisable to hold a review meeting to consider how the tragedy was handled and whether there are implications for College or University procedures. Advice may be sought from the Director of Student Welfare and Support Services, as well as the College Doctor and the Counselling Service about meeting several weeks or months afterwards, to discuss delayed consequences that need to be addressed. It is recommended that an annual meeting is held in order to review and brief relevant officers on local procedures.

It is important to remember that there may be longer term impacts on the University community, including: impact on staff and students from a potential police investigation; additional support needed when the student's year group graduate; and anniversaries of a student death may lead to renewed press interest.

6.1 Document Control Information

Policy / Procedure title:	Dealing with Student Tragedies: Guidelines
Date approved:	16 May 2017
Approving body:	Student Wellbeing Sub-Committee
Version:	2.0 (16 May 2017)
Supersedes:	2013 draft
Previous review dates:	1998 Working Party (College Deans, chaired by Assessor); successive revisions; SCSHW 5 March 2009; draft 2013, SWSC October 2016
Next Review Date:	2017-18
Related regulations:	N/A
Equality relevance outcome:	
Related policies:	Mental Health policy
Related procedures:	
Related guidance / codes of practice:	
Policy owner:	Director of Student Welfare & Support Services
Lead contact for policy queries (see checklist at end of document for contacts in the event of a student tragedy)	Secretary to the Student Wellbeing Sub-Committee (Ms Sian Griffiths)

Any suggestions for amendments to these Guidelines should be submitted to the lead contact.



ANNEX A

First Response for Colleges

Immediate action on discovering the incident, contact:

1	Contact EMERGENCY SERVICES as needed: Police, ambulance, fire brigade.	999
2	VIA PORTER'S LODGE: College Doctor, College Nurse, Dean or Junior Dean, Personal Tutor or College Advisor, Senior Tutor or Tutor for Graduates, Chaplain or Welfare Fellow, College Secretary, Head of House.	Colleges to ensure that such lists are readily available to key contacts likely to receive a notification.
3	University News and Information Office If no answer from Duty Officer contact: University Security Services (24/7)	(2)80 528 (office hours) 07738 135 619 (duty officer) (2)89 999 (for emergencies)
4	COLLEGE Should endeavour to inform the student's Faculty or Department as soon as possible.	
5	University Security Services who will, unless requested not to do so, contact the: University News and Information Office, Vice-Chancellor's Office, Proctors' Office, Counselling Service, Oxford SU, Director of Student Welfare and Support Services, Chair of Health and Safety Management Committee, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) as appropriate.	(2)72 944 (24 hours)

Next steps

6	When police have informed family, establish official contact with the family. The local police and/or Security Services can assist to ensure the family have been officially informed.
7	Inform the student's partner, close friends etc. inside and outside College, Faculty / Department, Oxford etc.
8	Decide how to inform members of the College generally (perhaps a notice or meeting), and advise them on dealing with the media etc.
9	Prepare statement for students and staff, local and national media (as appropriate) in consultation with the News and Information Office.
10	Consider nature of support needed by any people closely affected.



First Response for Faculties/Departments

Immediate action on discovering the incident, contact:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Contact EMERGENCY SERVICES as needed: Police, ambulance, fire brigade. | 999 |
| 2 | VIA FIRST RESPONDER WITHIN DEPARTMENT:
Head of Department, Academic Administrator (or equivalent), etc. | Department/faculty to ensure that such lists are readily available to key contacts likely to receive a notification. |
| 3 | University News and Information Office
If no answer from Duty Officer contact:
University Security Services (24/7) | (2)80 528 (office hours)
07738 135 619 (duty officer)
(2)89 999 (for emergencies) |
| 4 | DEPARTMENT
Should endeavour to inform the student's College as soon as possible by ringing the Porters' Lodge. If the College is informed it would normally take the lead on most of the further steps (5-10 in the FIRST RESPONSE FOR COLLEGES document) although it may be necessary for College and Department to work closely together, or on rare occasions for the Department to take the lead. | |
| 5 | University Security Services | (2)72 944 (24 hours) |

Next steps

- | | |
|---|--|
| 6 | Work together with the college to inform close friends and colleagues within the Faculty/Department itself. |
| 7 | Decide how to inform members of the Faculty / Department generally (perhaps a notice or meeting), and advise them on dealing with the media etc. |
| 8 | Usually a statement for students and staff, local and national media (as appropriate) will be prepared by the college; in some circumstances Faculties/Departments might also produce a statement in collaboration with the college. |
| 9 | Consider nature of support needed by any people closely affected. |



ANNEX B: Guidance from the University News and Information Office

1. Always make sure that next of kin have been informed before releasing a name or making any statement to the media. Usually releasing a name and confirming personal details is a job for the police.
2. A media statement would normally give the student's name, year and subject; express sadness and (if relevant) shock; give a positive message about the student and how they will be missed; and express sympathy to the family.
3. The statement can be left with the News and Information Office and all media callers can be directed there.
4. The media will often ask the College or Faculty / Department (via the News and Information Office) to provide photos of the student. Providing photos is not advised except with express permission of the family: provision of photos to media is usually the next of kin's decision in the event of a death.
5. The media may try to obtain further information or images through indirect means. Possible routes are individual College and University members who may have known the student, and social media, in particular Facebook. The News and Information Office can advise on how to manage the interest and protect privacy.
6. It is not necessary or wise to go into detail about the circumstances of a death. This is a matter for the police and the coroner: it is for them to decide how much the family or wider public should be told.
7. Do not make any comments or statements apportioning blame in public. To do so could prejudice a police enquiry or an inquest or constitute serious libel, apart from causing great distress.
8. If a student has apparently been murdered or has died as a result of an overdose, accident or suicide, it is unwise to make any comment on the circumstances, which will invariably be the subject of a police enquiry.
9. When a student has died, the media (and sometimes those close to the student) sometimes blame Oxford and its perceived pressures for the death. In such cases, it is helpful for the College and the University to work together to show their deep concern for the welfare of all students and to highlight the wide range of pastoral care available.
10. Internal communications about the death, especially written communications, may be passed on to the media, and consideration should be given to this when drafting them.