

# GUIDELINES

## Guidelines on Managing the Response to the Death of a Student

### 1. Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is to describe the procedures to follow in the event of the death of a student to ensure that there is a coordinated, sensitive and appropriate response with clear lines of responsibility.

### 2. Background and context

A student death can take place on campus or off campus, on a field trip or placement, in semester or out of semester, within the United Kingdom or outside the UK. The cause of death can also vary widely, to include, for example, a sudden death as a result of an accident or from natural causes, a death from a terminal illness, an infectious disease, as a result of a crime or a suspected suicide. Responses will therefore differ according to each individual scenario, and so flexibility within the guidance may be needed.

As a student death could involve University staff from a wide range of departments in the University, and could be discovered by or notified to any member of staff, it is the responsibility of all Department Heads to familiarise themselves with the procedures, and to take reasonable steps to ensure that their own staff are sufficiently familiar with the procedures to have confidence in how to respond should they be required to.

### 3. General principles and practice

Any member of staff who becomes aware of a student death should bear the following principles in mind:

- Be sensitive when sharing information, only share what is absolutely necessary, and only share information you are certain about
- Think carefully about who you need to inform. The University Case Conference Group (see 4. below) should be the first point of contact: that group can advise on next steps, and make sure that relevant colleagues are informed. It is usually also appropriate to inform your own line manager.

### 4. Initial response – on-campus death

Discovery of an on campus death should be reported to the police via 999. The Security team at Brookes should always be contacted whenever the emergency services are called to a Brookes campus. Their number (staffed 24 hours per day) is Brookes extension 3060 - 01865 483060 from an external line.

The Case Conference Group ([case-conference@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:case-conference@brookes.ac.uk)) should be notified as soon as possible in order that members of the group can convene and arrange an action plan to ensure the effective planning of support for staff, students and family, that appropriate notifications are made and that press communications are prepared.

(See Appendix A - Traumatic Incident Flowchart. This describes the process that the Case Conference Group will instigate when notified of a death).

It is possible that witnesses may wish to make contact through social media with relatives or friends of the student who has died. This is to be discouraged as it may be that the next of kin hears about the death before they have been informed by the police, and this can result in additional distress. Any assumptions about the cause of death, particularly suicide, should also be avoided. Whether or not a person has taken their own life is a decision that only the Coroner can make, and it is important that the University does not pre-empt the Coroner's verdict. There may, however, be situations in which the family chooses to inform the University that the student has taken their own life.

All press interest should be referred to the Public Relations Team.

#### **5. Initial response – off campus death**

A student or member of staff who has been informed of the death of a student off campus should notify the Case Conference Group:

[case-conference@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:case-conference@brookes.ac.uk).

Relevant members of the Case Conference group will then convene to ensure that information is communicated appropriately to all relevant staff and students of the University, all necessary administrative functions are completed and appropriate support is offered to the family, friends and colleagues of the student who has died. It is important that all press enquiries are managed by the Public Relations Team.

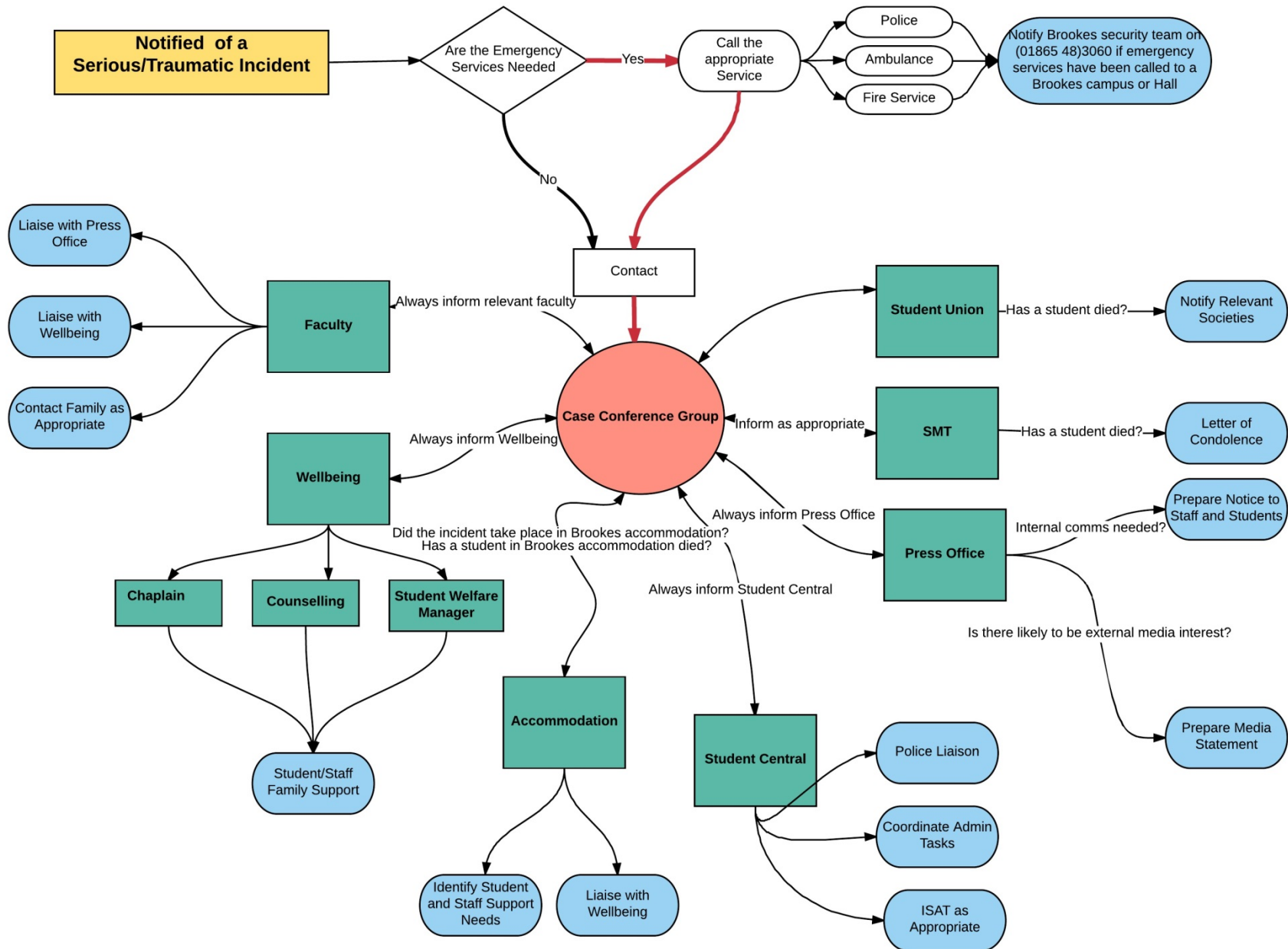
Appendix B identifies tasks to be undertaken and by whom.

#### **6. University Case Conference Group**

The University Case Conference Group will co-ordinate the University's response to a student death, in liaison with colleagues as appropriate. The remit and membership of the Case Conference Group, including telephone contact details, can be found at:

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/staff/case-conference-group/>

# APPENDIX A: THE INITIAL RESPONSE - TRAUMATIC INCIDENT FLOWCHART



## APPENDIX B: STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff Member	Responsibilities
<b>Security Services</b>	On-campus death:  Coordinate initial response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish and record facts</li> <li>● Notify and liaise with the emergency services.</li> <li>● Secure area until emergency services have arrived.</li> <li>● Notify the Duty Facilities Manager</li> </ul>
<b>Duty Facilities Manager</b>	On-campus death: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Notify Press Office if required.</li> <li>● Ensure site security.</li> <li>● Notify Case Conference Group</li> <li>● Notify Director of Estates &amp; Facilities Management</li> </ul>
<b>Case Conference Group</b>	On or off-campus death:  Immediate email notification to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vice Chancellor</li> <li>● Registrar</li> <li>● Dean of relevant Faculty/Faculties</li> <li>● Executive Officer to the VC</li> <li>● Executive Assistant to the VC</li> </ul> Immediate text notification to all of the above, requesting that they check their email as soon as possible
<b>Wellbeing Services Manager</b>	On or off-campus death:  Formally notify the following as appropriate by email: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Registry)</li> <li>● Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Student Services)</li> <li>● Executive Assistant to Vice Chancellor</li> <li>● Registrar</li> <li>● Faculty Dean/Programme Lead/Academic Adviser/Student Support Co-ordinator</li> <li>● Media and Communications Manager</li> <li>● Head of Student Finance</li> <li>● Brookes Union president</li> <li>● Graduation Team</li> <li>● Head of Counselling</li> <li>● Head of Disability Advisory Team</li> <li>● Student Welfare Manager</li> <li>● Ecumenical Chaplain</li> <li>● International Students Advice Team (if deceased is an international student)</li> <li>● Head of Accommodation (if student was in hall)</li> <li>● Associate Director of Learning Resources – Services</li> <li>● Head of Statutory Reporting</li> </ul>

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<b>Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Registry)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amend student records</li> <li>● Check whether student has any outstanding Mitigating Circumstances or Financial Aid applications</li> <li>● Make arrangements for posthumous award</li> <li>● Inform Student Finance England (if appropriate)</li> <li>● Check whether student needs to be removed from National Student Survey population (if appropriate)</li> <li>● Contact Alumni office (if appropriate)</li> </ul>
<b>Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Student Services)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coordinate support and guidance for staff impacted by student death.</li> <li>● In coordination with media and communications office, liaise with faculty on when and how to inform students, considering the need for timely and sensitive communication.</li> <li>● Ensure that affected students have access to Wellbeing support through Student Welfare Manager (SWM) and Counselling team</li> <li>● Ensure that affected students are aware of the mitigating circumstances process</li> <li>● Identify a single point of contact for staff and students, possibly SWM</li> <li>● Identify a single point of contact for the deceased's family, possibly SWM or the Faculty, and ensure that family is contacted within 24 hours of the student's death if appropriate.</li> <li>● Identify a single point of contact for external services, such as the police or coroner</li> <li>● Notify University Medical Practice</li> </ul>
<b>Ecumenical Chaplain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offer contact details to family and friends of the deceased</li> <li>● In conjunction with staff, students and the family, coordinate a memorial service/ book of remembrance/ tree planting as appropriate</li> <li>● Arrange opportunities for staff and students to meet with Chaplain as appropriate</li> <li>● Coordinate with other members of the Chaplaincy team as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>International Student Advice Team</b>	<p>If the deceased student was an international student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Liaise with the relevant consulate/embassy</li> <li>● Liaise with Wellbeing and/or the faculty to decide on a single point of contact for the family once the statutory services have notified the family.</li> <li>● Ensure relevant communication is made with UKVI.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Relations Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prepare press statement and handle all media enquiries.</li> <li>● Assist with the dissemination of information, e.g. communication with affected students and staff.</li> <li>● Monitor any social media channels to check whether any inappropriate / misleading information is being posted.</li> </ul>

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<b>Dean(s) of relevant Faculty/Faculties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify a single point of contact in the Faculty for liaison with Wellbeing and Public Relations Team. This is usually someone who knew the student, such as the Subject Coordinator or Programme Lead</li> </ul>
<b>Faculty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaise with Public Relations Team and Wellbeing to manage communication to, and support for, students affected</li> <li>Respond to PA to Vice-Chancellor for information about the deceased student for a letter of condolence</li> <li>Liaise with Media and Communications Office to ensure that there is a consistent message being posted to students</li> <li>Liaise with ASA if a posthumous academic award is made to ensure the family are supported and involved in any appropriate ceremony</li> </ul>
<b>Brookes Union</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify societies, groups or clubs the student was involved with and notify relevant committee members</li> </ul>
<b>Student Accommodation Managers</b>	<p>If the deceased student was a resident in Hall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify support needs for those affected and liaise with Wellbeing to arrange and manage support</li> <li>Liaise with Wellbeing single point of contact to arrange for next of kin to collect belongings</li> <li>Provide alternative accommodation for students in same flat where possible, either in short or long term</li> <li>Manage accommodation fee refund (if appropriate)</li> <li>Provide temporary accommodation for family if required/possible</li> </ul>
<b>PA to Vice-Chancellor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaise with Faculty to provide information to include in a condolence letter</li> <li>Send condolence letter to family</li> </ul>
<b>Occupational Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advise faculty/other relevant staff as to support available for affected staff</li> </ul>
<b>Student Finance Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make arrangements for refund of tuition fees or accommodation charges</li> </ul>
<b>Academic Registrar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At an appropriate time, arrange a review of the processes and procedures to inform future best practice.</li> </ul>