



## **Procedure to be followed in the event of a death or critical illness of a student**

### **1. Notification**

- 1.1 In the event of the death or critical illness of a student either on or off campus, it is important that all appropriate personnel are informed. The route by which the notification reaches the University cannot be controlled but thereafter it is the responsibility of the Director of Student Support & Accommodation to co-ordinate the dissemination of information. Therefore whoever receives the information, whether it is the student's School/Institute, Warden, Security Control, Medical Practitioner or other, should immediately contact Student Support & Accommodation.
- 1.2 If the information is received in office hours ( 0830-1800 Monday to Friday) the University Health Centre should be telephoned on 0131-451-3010 and the University Physician-in-Charge will be contacted. The University Physician will ensure that the Director of Student Support & Accommodation is informed as soon as possible.
- 1.3 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate departments, listed below, are informed and that their records are updated accordingly. If there is a need to inform some of these urgently, e-mail can be used however, this will always be followed up with a signed memo. In both cases the student's registration number should be included to avoid any confusion.
  - The Secretary of the University (who will inform the Principal)
  - Deputy Secretary & Academic Registrar
  - University Health Service
  - Corporate Communications
  - University Chaplain
  - Academic Registry
  - Human Resources (if staff have witnessed or are affected by a traumatic event)
  - University Librarian
  - Finance Office
  - University Information & Computing Services
  - Head of student's Academic School/Institute
  - Student Counsellor
  - Residence Warden and Residence Manager (if appropriate)
  - Safety and Risk Office (if appropriate)
  - President of the Heriot-Watt University Students' Association
  - If the deceased student was in final year or had just recently graduated, the Director of the Careers Advisory Service and the Director of Development and Alumni Relations should also be informed to ensure that their records are amended and that no inappropriate contacts are made.
- 1.4 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation is responsible for deciding whether it is appropriate to call an informal meeting of some or all of the above to pool information, co-ordinate procedures and to provide support.

## **2. Immediate procedures in the event of a death**

- 2.1 In the case of critical illness or injury some of these procedures may also be appropriate; especially where the student is not able to continue his/her studies as a result of illness or injury.
- 2.2 It is essential that information is disseminated sensitively and confidentially in order to alleviate any further distress to students, relatives and colleagues.
- 2.3 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation will arrange for a letter of sympathy to be sent to the parents and/or partner from the Principal's office.
- 2.4 If there is likely to be press interest in an incident, the Secretary of the University and the Director of Corporate Communications will liaise to agree a strategy for handling the media.
- 2.5 In addition, the Director of Corporate Communications will arrange for the preparation of a notification of the death expressing the University's sadness in announcing the sudden death of the individual concerned to be communicated to the University community as appropriate.
- 2.6 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation and the University Chaplain will liaise closely regarding contact with the family, parents or partner, offering support, practical assistance with the registration of death and funeral arrangements as required and communicate these as appropriate.
- 2.7 The Chaplain will also post a public notification of the death on the Chaplaincy and Student Union notice boards and in the University residences if appropriate.
- 2.8 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation will advise the relevant academic staff on what should be communicated to other students who may have known the deceased.
- 2.9 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation and the Chaplain will co-ordinate the provision of support and information to other students affected by the death.
- 2.10 In the case of serious injury or illness the Chaplain or Director of Student Support & Accommodation will, where appropriate, visit the student and offer support both to them and their relatives, partners and friends.
- 2.11 The Physician-in-Charge and Director of Student Support & Accommodation will be responsible for making any enquiries regarding the condition of a student under the care of external health professionals.
- 2.12 No information should be given to any external enquirer; instead they should be referred to the Press and PR Office.

## **3. Follow up procedures**

- 3.1 In certain circumstances, the issue of a posthumous award may be considered appropriate. The Director of Student Support & Accommodation will write to the Academic Registrar and Deputy Secretary with a formal request that this is considered in line with existing University policy.
- 3.2 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation will convene a debriefing meeting for all staff who may have been involved in dealing with the death to ensure that all necessary action has been taken and that support is in place where necessary.

- 3.3 If a death was caused by an accident, the Head of Health & Safety will notify the Health and Safety Executive and, in conjunction with the Head of School involved, initiate an internal enquiry in the event of an accident on campus or other circumstances which would make an enquiry appropriate. In the event of a medical emergency it may be appropriate for the Physician-in-Charge to initiate an internal enquiry.
- 3.4 The Director of Student Support & Accommodation will ensure that the Head of Risk and Audit Management is informed of any incidents which have the potential to give rise to a claim against the University.
- 3.5 Incidents involving students out with the UK should be reported without delay to the Head of Risk and Audit Management and the Head of Health and Safety Services in order to ensure suitable assistance can be provided. Copies of relevant incident report forms and investigation reports should be forwarded to the Head of Health and Safety. Out-of-hours emergency contact details can be obtained from Security.