

N3 DEATH OF A MEMBER OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Purpose and scope

- 3.1 This section of the Consolidated Academic Policies and Regulations explains what should happen in the College when a staff or student member dies, how the College will respond, and the actions the College requires of a range of people.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all current students and staff or past students and staff until three (3) months after leaving the College, and to any death notified on or after 1 June 2017 regardless of the date of the death giving rise to the notification.
- 3.3 After three (3) months, this policy does not apply to students who are no longer registered with the College, staff who are no longer employed, or private citizens.

NOTE: This policy does not intend to add unnecessary bureaucracy to already difficult circumstances but to simplify and clarify what must be done when a death occurs. It will ensure the College meets its obligations to its members in these circumstances.

Definitions

- 3.4 In this policy, 'incident response manager' means the operational manager leading the overall coordination of the College's operational response to a death.
- 3.5 In this policy, 'family contact officer' means the person appointed to act as the College's sole liaison point with the family after a death.
- 3.6 In this policy, 'student contact officer' means the appointed staff member who acts as co-ordinator and identified 'go to' person for closely affected students.

Introduction

Overview

- 3.7 The death of a student or member of staff is rare. However, in these circumstances the College needs to be sensitive and compassionate, recognising the distress of the person finding the body, the next of kin, and the staff and students who knew the deceased well.
- 3.8 There are many scenarios in which a student or staff member may die. Each of these may require the College to respond differently. For example:
- a) the death may take place on or off campus, including during a College field trip or other related activity such as placement in industry, or at a time and place unconnected to the College;
 - b) the death may take place during or between terms.
- 3.9 As the College's global reach increases and its student body becomes more diverse, the College has more students in more locations. Broadly, these can be divided into home students, international students, partnership students, and placement students. In these broad categories the needs of individuals and their families will differ. Therefore the College needs to respond differently to every death.

Principles

- 3.10 In any death of a member of the academic community, the College must aim to:
- a) create time, space and suitable support for those affected to begin to adjust to and recover from the news;
 - b) respond in a way that is personally, culturally and religiously sensitive; and

- c) ensure that confidence in the College's response is maintained and that the College completes all necessary actions.
- 3.11 The College must deal with any death of a member of its academic community by:
- a) following clear lines of responsibility to support a set of coherent contributions by College staff and students in response to the death;
 - b) observing legal formalities to protect the College's interests; and
 - c) taking a suitable duty of care towards all staff and students.
- 3.12 This will seek to ensure that:
- a) the College informs appropriate people inside and outside the College and involve them in responding suitably to the death; and
 - b) those the College charges with its management of and response to the situation act responsibly, reasonably, compassionately and sensitively.
- 3.13 The principle of all communications must be that no cause of death is known – in particular an apparent or alleged suicide is not a suicide until confirmed by the Coroner.
- NOTE: It is important that everyone in the College understands this and does not say anything (even in private) that pre-empt the Coroner's verdict. All College statements must be factual. No cause should be discussed even in private.
- 3.14 For example, the College should say, 'A member of the academic community has died', but not 'been killed' or 'committed suicide'.

Procedures

Overview

- 3.15 There are three (3) phases to the College's response to a death in the academic community:
- a) Phase 1 – Initial response (only required for a death on campus)
 - b) Phase 2 – Immediate aftercare
 - c) Phase 3 – Long-term support and care
- 3.16 The College may be notified of a death by the next of kin, or a member of its community may discover a death on campus. If the College is notified by a death away from the College, it must move immediately to Phase 2.

Phase 1 – Initial response (only required for a death on campus)

- 3.17 Any student or member of staff who discovers a body on campus should:
- a) not touch or move the body or any object connected with the scene;
 - b) immediately notify the Security Team, who will immediately notify a Senior Officer; and
 - c) take note of any witnesses (other people present at the time of discovering the body) and give this information to the Security Team.
- 3.18 If there are witnesses the police may wish to interview, the Security Team will ensure they are taken to a private area away from the immediate scene as soon as possible and given suitable support (e.g., crisis counselling).
- 3.19 The Senior Officer will attend the scene with the member of the Security Team and will immediately notify:
- a) Chair of Silver Command;
 - b) Academic Registrar;

- c) Head of Advisory and Engagement; and
- d) A member of the Counselling Team.

NOTE: The Chief Operating Officer is the College contact for the police.

- 3.20 Under the Chair's direction, Silver Command will be set up to coordinate initial responses and communications. Silver Command will immediately notify the police and appoint an incident response manager.
- 3.21 The police will normally arrange for removal of the body and any necessary post-mortem. The police will also normally arrange to inform the next of kin. The Chair of Silver Command must check with the police whether this has been done and which people have been informed.
- 3.22 The College may need to help the police by making next-of-kin information available on request from its Student Record System (the 'SRS'). In the unlikely event that the police do not agree to inform the next of kin, responsibility falls to the Academic Registrar.
- 3.23 Immediately on appointment, the incident response manager will inform:
 - the President and Chief Executive Officer;
 - the Provost and Chief Academic Officer;
 - the College Secretary or the College's legal counsel;
 - the Director of Marketing and Recruitment;
 - the Director of Human Resources;
 - the Dean of the relevant Faculty; and
 - the President of the Students' Union.
- 3.24 At Silver Command's direction, the Academic Registrar will inform all colleagues in student-support roles.
- 3.25 The Chair of Silver Command will ensure a record is taken of actions agreed by Silver Command.
- 3.26 The Head of Security will ensure that any evidence at the scene is secured and preserved, including any CCTV footage.
- 3.27 The Head of Security will open an incident log and ensure that all Security's actions and policy decisions are recorded.

Phase 2 – Immediate aftercare

- 3.28 The Phase 2 response is when:
 - a) responsibility for responding to the incident is transferred from the Chair of Silver Command to the Academic Registrar; and
 - b) designated operational College teams are directed to follow up agreed actions.
- 3.29 The 'Death of a Member of the Academic Community – Procedures' document lists actions to be taken and the responsibilities of staff during Phase 2.

Phase 3 – Long-term support and care

- 3.30 Phase 3 is the College's longer-term response to those affected by a student death. It begins after the funeral (or equivalent).

- 3.31 The 'Death of a Member of the Academic Community – Procedures' document lists actions to be taken and the responsibilities of staff during Phase 3.

Advice and support

- 3.32 Advice and support for students on death of a member of the academic community, and the associated lower-level College rules, is available from the Learning Support and Wellbeing Office (wellbeing@gsmmlondon.ac.uk). More complex queries may be referred to appropriate individuals.
- 3.33 Students can also visit the GSM London Students' Union (GSMSU) support service for confidential signposting to the services available.
- 3.34 Advice for staff on death of a member of the academic community is available from their Head of Department.
- 3.35 If any staff development needs are identified, they may be discussed with members of the Staff and Educational Development Team.

Fees

- 3.36 No additional fees or charges are associated with this policy.
- 3.37 The College is not liable for financial or other consequences arising from action under this policy.

Legal and regulatory context

- 3.38 The College may not be bound by the principles and this policy alone may not provide the procedure to meet all of these principles, some of which may be met by other College policies and procedures. It uses the principles as guidance only, to help it deal soundly with these matters.

Enforcement, monitoring and review

- 3.39 If any person or body in the College refuses to comply with a request or decision made to enforce this policy, their refusal must be reported to the Academic Registrar, who will take such action to enforce this policy as they think necessary.
- 3.40 Each year, the College must receive a report that enables it to monitor, identify and act on any shortfalls in how this policy is interpreted and applied.
- 3.41 The annual report must include narrative incident information in an anonymised form, including the outcomes of monitoring the long-term effects on members of the academic community
- 3.42 Every two (2) years, the College must review these regulations to ensure that:
- a) they remain up to date and continue to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, applicable legislation or guidance;
 - b. areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, external examiners, or professional bodies have been addressed; and
 - c. opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.

Schedule (not part of the policies or regulations):

Responsible Officer: Head of Advisory and Engagement

N3 Death of a member of the academic community

Approved by: Board of Directors and Academic Board

Version: 1.0

Date:

Monitoring and Review Body: Academic Regulations and Awards Committee

Effective From: 01/06/2017

Next Scheduled Review: June 2019