



(Author)

Joint Board for Student Experience

(Title)

Protocol for Responding to the Death of a Student

PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO THE DEATH OF A STUDENT

Introduction

The death of a student is a serious and unsettling event for the whole of the University community.

It is important that the University reacts to such a sad event in a way that recognises the loss of one of its members and that supports those most affected by the death – family, students and staff.

Each student's death is different. Some may die during the teaching period, others during a vacation period. Some deaths result from illness or from a sudden accident. A few students take their own lives. A death may occur while a student is abroad or, in the case of a student from outside Ireland, very far from their own home. This protocol is intended to cover all of these diverse situations thus ensuring that UCC can respond sensitively, quickly and appropriately to the death of a student.

Principles

The primary consideration at all times must be respect for the deceased and their family, which means that the information communicated should be limited to that which is necessary and appropriate.

While it is obviously essential that accurate information about the death be communicated immediately to those who need it, it is also essential that this be done with an awareness of the sensitivity of the information and its impact on the recipients.

In addition to proper communication of information to the relevant sections of the University, there is a need to ensure that all necessary responses occur leading to and including the funeral service. There is also need to provide for on-going support for fellow students of the deceased.

1. Key Contacts

Information concerning the death may come from a variety of sources. **In the first possible instance any member of staff of the University (or student member) who becomes aware of the death of a student should inform either the Vice-President for the Student Experience, one of the Chaplains or in the case of an international student the Support Officer for International Students.** A Chaplain should first verify the death has taken place using their network. A Chaplain may also be in a position to ask the family how they want the details released.

The Vice-President and Chaplain will then contact one another and initiate the required communication and responses as indicated in Figure 1.

2. University Response

- 2.1 The death of a student should be reported to the Chaplaincy and the Vice-President for the Student Experience and in the case of an international student to the Support Officer for International Students.
- 2.2 The Chaplaincy will contact the family and ensure the subsequent liaison. In the case of an international student the contact with the family may be made through the Support Officer for International Students or by the Chaplaincy depending on the circumstances. The Chaplain will also liaise with the Students Union.
- 2.3 The Vice-President for the Student Experience shall contact the Head of the relevant College, who in turn will contact the Head(s) of the relevant Schools/Departments. The Head(s) of the relevant School/Department will inform School/Department members.
- 2.4 In the event of the Head(s) of Schools/Department(s) informing students collectively of the death of a student, he/she should be accompanied by a Student Counsellor and a Chaplain who will be available to support fellow students of the deceased as required. Outside of term an appropriate email should be sent to students by the Head of School/Department.
- 2.5 The Head(s) of Schools/Departments will have discretion as regards cancelling lectures and extending assessment deadlines in support of students.
- 2.6 In the event of a communication to all students informing them of the death of a student permission of the family should be obtained beforehand. The communication should be written in a sensitive manner and the student number should not be used.
- 2.7 The Vice-President for the Student Experience shall ensure that all relevant sections of the University e.g. President's Office, Student Records and Examinations Office, Fees Office, Careers, College and relevant School(s)/Department(s), Library are formally notified immediately in order that no inadvertent communications occur which might cause distress to the student's family. The Student Records & Examinations Officer will bring the death of a student to the notice of the relevant Examination Board(s) (see Figure 1 for full list).
- 2.8 The General Services Officer shall ensure that the University flag is lowered and a notice posted in the Archway.
- 2.9 The Chaplain will liaise with other student support services particularly with Student Counselling & Development and will form an important point of contact with the family and friends of the student as appropriate.
- 2.10 The Chaplain will normally attend the funeral service and will have an important role in organising any memorial service at UCC in line with the wishes of the family.
- 2.11 The Vice-President for the Student Experience or his nominee will normally attend the funeral service as the official representative of the University and be identified to the family and also to officiating clergy at the service. The Head(s) of Schools/Department(s) or his/her representative should also be present.
- 2.12 The President of the Students Union or his/her nominee will normally attend the funeral service as the official representative of the student body and be identified to the family and also to officiating clergy at the service.

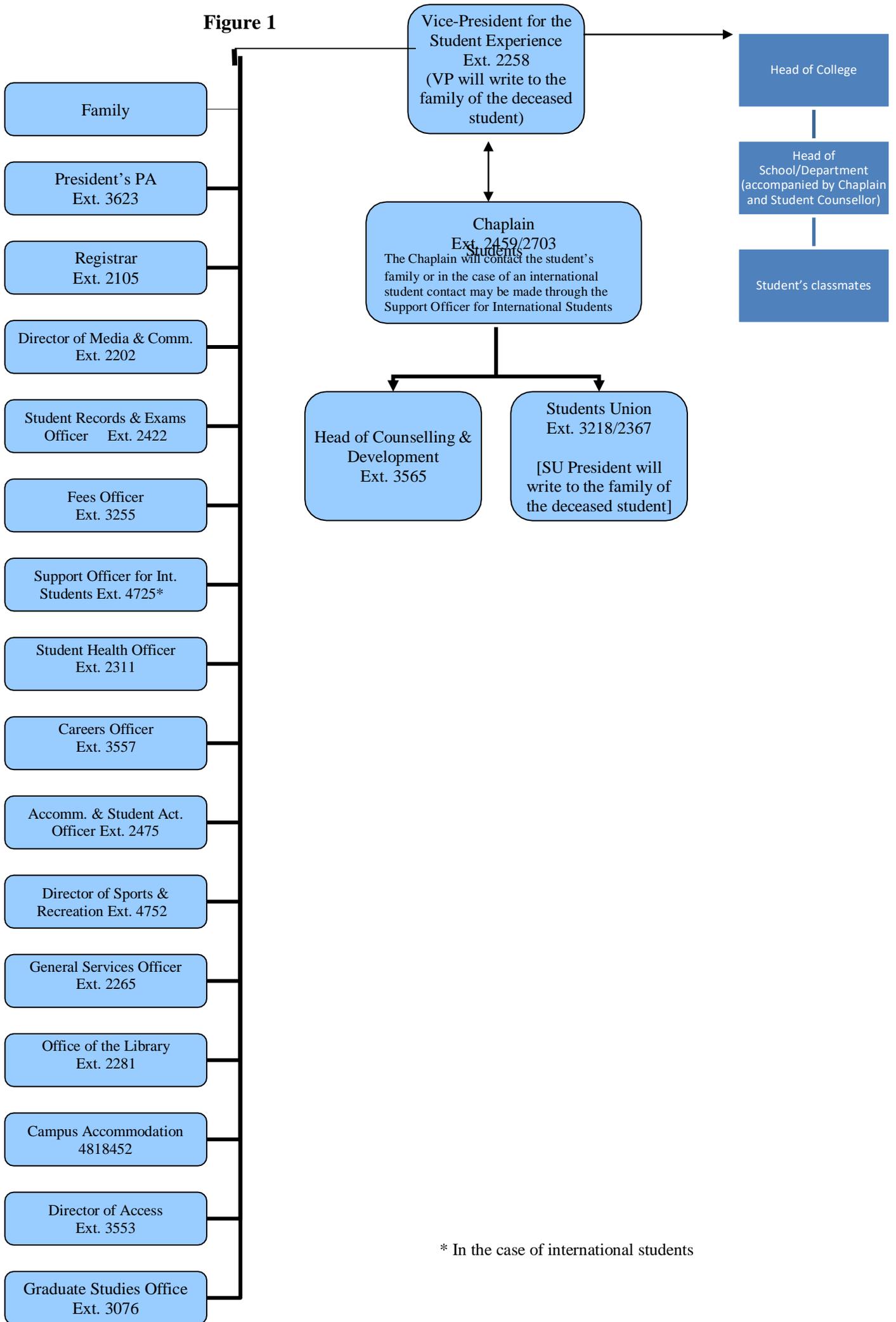
- 2.13 The Vice-President for the Student Experience will write to the family and the President of the Students Union and others may also do so. The Registrar will write to the family expressing the condolences of the Academic Council.
- 2.14 The Vice-President for the Student Experience should ensure with the Registrar that, where a posthumous award to the student is possible, the possibility of same is sensitively considered when an appropriate interval of time after the student's death has been allowed to occur.
- 2.15 In the case of students where a posthumous award to the student is not possible the Registrar may write to the family suggesting that a Certificate of Attendance may be presented to them at a ceremony organised by the Registrar.

Vice-President for the Student Experience

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Protocol for Responding to the Death of a Student - Communications

Figure 1



* In the case of international students

