

# Student Death Response Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and context

(1) The University acknowledges that on rare occasions a student may die. It is an important aspect of the duty of care that the University has for its students that in these circumstances there is a consistent and timely response to the management of academic, financial and administrative aspects of the student's enrolment following death.

(2) The purpose of this Policy is to make provision for the active management of student academic and related matters following death through the appointment of a Student Death Response Plan Coordinator (SDRP Coordinator) and the activation of the [Student Death Response Plan \(SDRP\)](#).

(3) The Policy and the SDRP apply to students currently enrolled in an award with the University including students who are on approved leave of absence or who are on suspension. It does not include students who have been excluded or graduates of the University.

## Section 2 - Definitions

(4) For the purpose of this policy:

- a. [Student Death Response Plan \(SDRP\)](#) - is a framework and flow chart of actions and personnel that identifies all personnel who need to know and need to act in the event of a student death; lists all functional areas where administrative or other action needs to occur following a student death; provides a coordinated framework for the communication of a student death event to relevant functional areas and a coordination point for the monitoring and recording of actions by relevant functional areas on University archived files.
- b. Student Death Response Plan Coordinator (SDRP Coordinator) - is the person delegated to initiate, coordinate, monitor, record and terminate the SDRP. The delegation is by virtue of this policy which creates the role and identifies that the delegation is within the positions of senior executive officer (or equivalent) in College Executive Dean Units. The SDRP Coordinator normally comes from the College that has the award in which the student was enrolled. In exceptional circumstances, SDRP Coordinators from other colleges or trained alternates from within the College may be called on by the Executive Dean (ED) of a College to assist.
- c. unverified death - refers to when a report of a student death is received by the University from any source it is considered alleged and unverified until such time as verification occurs.
- d. verified death - refers to when documentary evidence of the death has been received typically through the SDRP Coordinator efforts to locate the death certificate, death notice, police report or similar.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) The [Student Death Response Plan \(SDRP\)](#) provides the framework for University administrative action following the report of a student death. A single SDRP exists for the whole University. In the case of international partnerships where the death occurs off-shore, the SDRP will be followed to the extent that is reasonable given local partner customs, conventions and processes.

(6) The SDRP is limited to those formal actions that will be taken by the University in response to a student death. This does not preclude personal acts of condolence by University volunteers, students or staff however these will not be considered part of the official University response.

(7) The SDRP is a coordinating framework for specialised actions and it assumes local operating procedures for these actions with appropriate and approved delegations will be in place in relevant functional units.

(8) In the event that there is more than one student death at any time, the SDRP does not alter. The individual student centred focus of the SDRP remains the same. The University will make arrangements for multiple SDRP Coordinators and alternates to coordinate multiple SDRPs.

(9) The University Crisis Management Plan and Emergency Management Plan take precedence in the event of a student death on campus. The SDRP Coordinator will be informed of the student death on campus at an appropriate time by personnel who have delegations under the Crisis and Emergency Management Plans and/or staff of the Audit and Risk Assessment Unit (ARA) and this will usually be when the identity of the student has been confirmed. The SDRP should not be initiated until this advice has been received.

## **Section 4 - Procedures**

### **Activation of the Student Death Response Plan**

(10) When a student death on or off campus is reported to the University by any source to any member of staff the relevant SDRP Coordinator should be immediately notified. The SDRP Coordinator is then responsible for initiating, coordinating, monitoring, recording and terminating the SDRP.

(11) In the case of an unverified death the SDRP Coordinator activates the SDRP unverified death component which includes notification of personnel listed in the plan as those who "need to know". The unverified death process is presented in the SDRP Procedures of this policy. The SDRP Coordinator places the deceased flag on the student Callista record and commences processes to seek verification of the death. All actions are recorded by the SDRP Coordinator in the student TRIM file.

(12) When the death is verified the next phase of the SDRP is activated by the SDRP Coordinator. This is the verified death component which is presented in the SDRP Procedures of this policy. Personnel who "need to act" are notified and operating procedures for completion of specialised functional tasks by personnel with appropriate delegations are activated at the local level. Completion of local specialised tasks is monitored by the SDRP Coordinator who records this in the student Trim file. When all SDRP actions have been completed this is recorded in the student Trim file and the file is archived.

### **Dealing with Next of Kin**

(13) The next of kin are persons who identify themselves to the University as family or next of kin of the deceased student and those who have written confirmation of their status as the family contact person for the University. Next of kin may also be persons identified by police, consular officials, or medical personnel as family or next of kin. The University acts in good faith with such persons during the implementation of the SDRP and does not investigate their bona fides.

(14) The role of the SDRP Coordinator is to be the single point of contact for the next of kin with the University.

### **Police Liaison in Relation to Criminal Matters**

(15) In the event of a criminal matter, liaison with the police will normally be the responsibility of the Director Campus Safety and Security (Director CSS) in the first instance. Where a matter proceeds to investigation, responsibility for liaison with the police will transfer to the senior officer coordinating internal aspects of the investigation.

# Section 5 - Guidelines

## **SDRP Network and Training**

(16) An SDRP network exists, comprising University employees who meet quarterly for professional development, quality assurance and quality improvement in SDRP functions. The network is led by the Director Student Support Services (Director SSS) and membership comprises the SDRP Coordinators, SDRP Coordinator Alternates, and representatives of UWS International (UWSI), Audit and Risk Assessment Unit, Registrar's Office (RO), Office of Student Support Services (OSSS) and Academic Senate (Senate).

(17) The SDRP Coordinators and the nominated alternates must be trained in the application of the SDRP and will be a member of the SDRP Network to ensure knowledge currency and opportunities to participate in crisis and emergency drills, debrief and receive input through peer learning.

## Status and Details

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