

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 with the University and its entities, including students who are on approved leave of absence or who are on suspension and who are inactive. Where students are not enrolled, such as those who have been excluded or those who have graduated, there are some minimum actions under the SDRP that are required.

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 TRIM 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 administrative officers in Dean's Units or equivalent. The SDRP Coordinator normally comes from the school in which the student was enrolled. In exceptional circumstances, Student Death Response Plan Coordinators from other schools or trained alternates from within the School may be called on by the Dean or Western Sydney University The College Deputy Dean, Academic Quality Unit to assist.
- c. unverified death - refers to when a report of a student death is received by the University/Western Sydney University The College 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 Student Death Response Plan Coordinator's 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 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 Student Death Response Plan Coordinators and alternates to coordinate multiple SDRPs.

(9) The University Crisis Management and Recovery Plans, and Emergency Management Plans take precedence in the event of a student death on campus. The Student Death Response Plan Coordinator will be informed of the student death on campus at an appropriate time by personnel who have delegations under the Crisis Management and Recovery and/or Emergency Management Plans 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 Student Death Response Plan Coordinator should be immediately notified. The Student Death Response Plan Coordinator is then responsible for initiating, coordinating, monitoring, recording and terminating the SDRP.

(11) In the case of an unverified death the Student Death Response Plan 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 Student Death Response Plan Coordinator arranges for the deceased flag to be placed on the student Callista record and commences processes to seek verification of the death. All actions are recorded by the Student Death Response Plan Coordinator in the student or relevant TRIM file.

(12) When the death is verified the next phase of the SDRP is activated by the Student Death Response Plan 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 Student Death Response Plan 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 SDRP Coordinator is usually the single point of contact for the next of kin within the University. Where the matter relates to an international student, the Director, International (or nominee) may become the point of contact for next of kin or consular relations, but is required to liaise with the relevant Student Death Response Plan Coordinator to ensure the appropriate components of the SDRP are actioned. Where the student death is part of a critical incident on University premises, the Crisis Management and Recovery Plan, or Emergency Management Plan takes precedence.

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 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.

Refund of Fees

(16) In certain circumstances, the death of an enrolled student may result in a refund of fees paid. In these circumstances, the Student Death Response Plan Coordinator will liaise with the executor of the student's will or the next of kin (if there is no will) and the Fees and Student Finance Unit to facilitate a refund.

Section 5 - Guidelines

SDRP Coordinators

(17) A list of Student Death Response Plan Coordinators is available in the Associated Information attached to this policy.

SDRP Network and Training

(18) An SDRP network exists, comprising University employees who meet regularly for professional development, quality assurance and quality improvement in SDRP functions. The network is led by the Executive Director, Student Participation and Success and its core membership comprises the Student Death Response Plan Coordinators and SDRP Coordinator Alternates. The Executive Director, Student Participation and Success may invite other areas such as Western Sydney International, Office of Audit and Risk Assessment and Campus Safety and Security to attend meetings. The Executive Director, Student Participation and Success may also call debriefing meetings.

(19) The Student Death Response Plan 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 debriefing and receive input through peer learning.

Status and Details

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