

# Death Response Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) The University acknowledges that, during their studies or employment, a student or staff member might die. In such circumstances, the University has a duty of care to provide a consistent, respectful and timely response to the management of the academic, financial and administrative aspects of the student's enrolment, and to the financial and administrative aspects of a staff member's employment.

(2) The University is cognisant of the role social media plays in today's society and will consult with key staff when preparing any social media messaging, ensuring at all times the communication is holistic and respectful.

(3) The purpose of this Policy is to make provision for the active management of student academic and related matters, and staff employment and related matters, following their death.

(4) This Policy and the [Death Response Plan](#) apply to:

- a. all students who are currently enrolled with the University (including students who are enrolled with Western Sydney University The College (The College) and WSU Online; on approved leave of absence; on suspension or whose enrolment is inactive;
- b. students who are not currently enrolled, such as those who have been excluded, or alumni who are actively engaged with the University; and
- c. all staff currently employed with the University, including staff appointed under the [Honorary Titles and Awards Policy](#).

## Section 2 - Definitions

(5) For the purpose of this policy:

- a. Crisis Management Team - is the team, appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and President, responsible for the University's crisis and emergency management.
- b. [Death Response Plan](#) - is the framework of specialised University administrative actions to be taken following the report of a student/staff death.
- c. Death Response Plan Coordinator (DRP Coordinator) - is the staff member delegated to initiate, coordinate, monitor, record and finalise the [Death Response Plan](#).
- d. Next of kin - are persons who identify themselves to the University as family or next of kin of the deceased student/staff member 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 DRP and does not investigate their bona fides.
- e. Unverified death - is a student or staff member death about which the University has not received formal documentation such as, but not limited to, a death certificate, death notice or police report.
- f. Verified death - is the death of a student or staff member for which the University has received formal documentation such as, but not limited to, a death certificate, death notice or police report.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(6) The University is committed to managing the death of any student or staff member with care, dignity, sensitivity and respect.

(7) The University's [Death Response Plan](#) will be implemented following the report of the death of a student or staff member.

(8) At all times actions identified in the [Death Response Plan](#) will be considered alongside the wishes of the family.

(9) In the case of international partnerships, where the death occurs off-shore, the [Death Response Plan](#) will be followed to the extent that is reasonable given local partner customs, conventions and processes.

(10) The [Death Response Plan](#) is limited to those formal actions that will be taken by the University in response to the death of a student or staff member. 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.

(11) In the event that there is more than one student or staff death at any time, the [Death Response Plan](#) does not alter. The individual student or staff centred focus of the [Death Response Plan](#) remains the same. The University will make arrangements for multiple Death Response Plan Coordinators and alternates to coordinate multiple [Death Response Plans](#).

(12) In the event of a crisis or emergency, the [Death Response Plan](#) will not be enacted until instruction to do so is provided by a representative of the Crisis Management Team.

## Section 4 - Procedures

### Death Response Plan (DRP) Coordinator

(13) A DRP Coordinator will implement the [Death Response Plan](#) in the event of the death of a student or staff member.

(14) The DRP Coordinator will usually be a senior administrative officer appointed by the Dean of the School in which the student was enrolled, or the relevant Senior HR Partner in Office of People. In exceptional circumstances, DRP Coordinators from other Schools or trained alternates from within the School, or Office of People, may be called on by the relevant Unit Head, Dean or Deputy Dean to assist.

(15) DRP Coordinators may be supported by alternates within their area.

### Activation of the Death Response Plan (DRP)

(16) The [Death Response Plan](#) provides a flow chart of the personnel to be notified and the actions to be undertaken in the event of the death of a student or staff member.

(17) When the death of a student or a staff member occurs off-campus, and is reported to the University by any source to any member of staff, the relevant DRP Coordinator should be notified immediately. The DRP Coordinator is then responsible for initiating, coordinating, monitoring, recording and finalising the [Death Response Plan](#).

(18) The on-campus death of a student or staff member will be considered a crisis situation and will be managed, in the first instance, by the Crisis Management team and who will inform the DRP Coordinator at an appropriate time. This will usually occur when the identity of the student/staff has been confirmed and next of kin have been notified. The [Death Response Plan](#) should not be initiated until this advice has been received.

(19) The DRP Coordinator must record all actions in the relevant student or staff member's TRIM file.

### **Contact with Next of Kin**

(20) The DRP Coordinator is usually the University's single point of contact for the next of kin.

(21) When the deceased is an international student, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, International (or nominee) may become the point of contact for next of kin or consular relations. Nevertheless, they must liaise with the relevant DRP Coordinator to ensure that all components of the [Death Response Plan](#) are actioned.

(22) In the event that the student or staff member's death is part of a critical incident on University premises, the actions and responses of the Crisis Management Team takes precedence.

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

(23) 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, the Director, Campus Safety and Security (or nominee) will coordinate internal aspects of the investigation.

### **Refund of Fees**

(24) In certain circumstances, the death of an enrolled student may result in a refund of fees paid. In these circumstances, the DRP Coordinator will liaise with the executor of the student's will or the next of kin (if there is no will) and Student Administration will facilitate a refund.

## **Section 5 - Guidelines**

### **DRP Coordinators**

(25) A list of DRP Coordinator's is available in the Associated Information attached to this policy.

### **DRP Coordinator Network and Training**

(26) The University has established a DRP Coordinator network, of which the core membership is Death Response Plan Coordinators and DRP Coordinator Alternates.

(27) The DRP Coordinator Network, which is led by the Executive Director, Equity, Safety and Wellbeing(ED, ES&W), meets regularly for professional development, quality assurance and quality improvement in [Death Response Plan](#) functions. The ED, ES&W may invite other areas such as Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor, International, Office of Audit and Risk Assessment and Campus Safety and Security to attend meetings. The ED, ES&W may also call debriefing meetings.

(28) The Death Response Plan Coordinators and their nominated alternates must be trained in the application of the [Death Response Plan](#). Death Response Plan Coordinators must also undergo cultural awareness (including religious awareness) training. They must attend meetings of the DRP Network to ensure knowledge currency, opportunities to participate in debriefing and receive input through peer learning.

## Status and Details

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