USI Student Bereavement Policy and Protocol Guidelines

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# About USI

"The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 354,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience."

# Objectives of the Union of Students in Ireland 1. An education and training system open to all, irrespective of any consideration, including consideration of national origin, ethnic background, age, ability, sex, sexuality, creed, political beliefs or economic circumstances, so that each individual can realize their full potential. 2. An education and training system which truly serves the interest of the people of Ireland. 3. The right of students to a decent standard of living including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland. 4. The defence and promotion of all democratic and human rights. 5. The provision of student services for the benefit of the membership on the principle that control of student service should lie with the membership. 6. To represent the interests of the students if Ireland at international level.

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### USI Student Bereavement Policy and Protocol Guidelines

The protocols below are intended to be a guide for students’ unions towards initiating a response protocol rather than an exhaustive and prescriptive plan of action. It is recommended that it is done with the agreement of institution staff and the approval of the president.   
Aspects of the plan may not be appropriate to all institutions and in all circumstances, and in certain circumstances actions in addition to what are set out below may be necessary. It is recommended that the protocol team be made up of relevant staff in the college and members of the Students’ Union.

# Introduction

# The death of a member of the student body is a serious matter for the whole of the college community, especially the student’s close friends, peers and College staff, and it is important that the protocol response acknowledges the loss properly, deals sensitively with the aftermath and supports the bereaved, both on and off campus.

1. **Suggested Response To Student Death**

# Stages to consider: Verification of the death, establishing personal details of the deceased and ensuring notification of deceased’s next of kin has taken place. The immediate communication of the news to the appropriate officers and offices of the university. The lead up to and the funeral or memorial service. The provision of on-going support for friends of the deceased in the university.

**On Campus:**  
The primary consideration in the College’s response on these occasions should be the wishes of the family. Therefore, if the parents, for example, wish absolutely no comment to be made to the media (even confirming that the deceased was a student here), or if they wish that the circumstances of the death not be conveyed to anyone in the college, this wish must be adhered to.

* A nominated party should contact the family and coordinate subsequent liaison with the family.
* Campus staff should be informed that all queries, from the media or otherwise, be referred in the first instance to the nominated party.
* The Security Superintendent should immediately ensure that the University flag is flown at half mast on the day on which news of the death is received and on the day of the funeral.
* As soon as the removal and funeral details become known, they should be communicated by the Head Chaplain to all those listed above.
* If a large number of students from the class group wish to attend the funeral, it may be desirable to hire a bus or a mini-bus for this purpose. This can be organized by the Students’ Union.
* A nominated party should inform the Director of Registry, in writing, that the student has died, and this must be recorded on the student database by the Registry.
* If the death has occurred abroad, the college may have an important role to play, through the Department of Foreign Affairs, in assisting with the bureaucracy and expediting the return of the remains to Ireland.
* The class group may wish to have a commemorative service on campus. If so, this should be organised by the Chaplains, with support from the Students’ Union and the above listed members of staff should be informed of arrangements.
* Following the funeral, a letter from the President should be sent to the family of the student.   
    
    
  **In the event of the death of an International Student in Ireland:**   
  Contacting the Relevant Embassy   
  Contacting the Agent/Home College or the individual student’s family as appropriate   
  Briefing the Press & Information Office Meeting, greeting and ensuring the family of the deceased are appropriately taken care of.   
  Attending the funeral.   
   **In the event of an Irish Student abroad on a College Course:**Making contact with the Irish Embassy Abroad Liaising with the family Liaising with Department of Foreign Affairs Briefing the Press & Information Office   
  If appropriate travelling abroad with the family to help with the repatriation of the deceased.  
  Attending the funeral

1. **Suggested Response Protocol - Support Services**

The Counsellors can be an important resource in cases where grievance counselling is deemed useful either for individuals or for the class group. Protocol team should be informed of arrangements.   
  
Be aware that both colleagues of the deceased student and staff may require ongoing support following the death of a student and refer them as appropriate to the support services available in the college (this is particularly important in the case of a suicide).

Students’ Unions should if possible promote support services to students who may have been affected by the bereavement.

1. **Suggested Responsibilities of Response Team**

**Alert:**Having been notified of the death of a student of the College by the nominated party should communicates news immediately to the relevant Heads of Schools, Course Directors, Tutors, Advisors, and appropriate lecturing staff. Ideally this should occur in advance of the general college notice which will be issued by a nominated party such as the Press & Information Office.

**Funeral:**Staff of college or Students’ Union should represent the College at the funeral.   
The College could send a wreath or charitable donation in line with the request of the family or any ethnic, cultural or religious considerations.  
 **Contact List**A contacts list should be formed to ensure all relevant parties are informed in the unfortunate event of a student's’ death.  
  
**Notification Protocol for Student Body**  
Text for E-mail notices, to be prepared by the nominated party. Example: Press & Information Office.  
 **Example from NUI Galway Student Death Protocol:**1. In the event that Funeral Arrangements are known: *It is with deep regret that we have learned of the death of , a < year of study> year student in the College of at<college>. Funeral Arrangements are as follows: Reposing at from to on Removal to for Requiem Mass at on . Burial afterwards in . May he/she rest in peace.*2. In the event that Funeral Arrangements are not known:  *It is with deep regret that we have learned of the death of , a < year of study> year student in the College of at <college>. Funeral Arrangements will be notified as soon as they are available. May he/she rest in peace*3. In the event that the funeral has already taken place:  *It is with deep regret that we have learned of the death of , a < year of study> year student in the College of at<college>. died on and funeral has already taken place in . May he/she rest in peace.*

### Students’ Union Guidelines: It is recommended that Students Unions follow the college’s Student Death Policy. If the college does not have a Student Death Policy then the Students’ Union should consult with college staff to seek the formation of a policy. It is recommended that the Students’ Union does not notify students of a student death until the college have officially confirmed it. Students’ Unions should aim to support students experiencing bereavement by referring them to appropriate support services either on campus or external. Students’ Unions should aim to support students experiencing bereavement by supporting them during this period in making arrangements regarding assignments, placement or exams.

# USI incidents Resulting in Death Protocol If a person were to die at a USI event, the response of the organisation would be critical in supporting the needs of delegates and attendees at a time of great stress and trauma. The objective of this protocol is to provide certainty for Officer Board and Staff. Immediate Response If present, the USI General Manager or his/her designated deputy will determine whether the incident would pose any continuing risk to delegates. It is possible that in circumstances of accident or natural disaster, it may be necessary to keep delegates together. It is extremely likely that the event would be stopped and delegates not witness to a serious event will be encouraged to go home – but we will be guided by law enforcement on this, as it may be necessary for witnesses or last contacts to help authorities with their inquiries. *A Serious Emergency team, comprising of, in order of precedence:* • The USI General Manager if present • The senior Officer Board member present (who may or may not be the lead officer for the event) • The Delegate Leader from the student’s MO will be formed. The President and the General Manager shall be informed immediately at the forming of the Serious Emergency team if they are not present at the event. Death of the President In the event of the death of the President, the deputy president will be recognised as the senior Officer Board member. Death of the General Manager In the event of the death of the General Manager, the President shall contact the next-of-kin of the General Manager and shall inform the Chair of the Finance Committee. Death of a member of USI staff The General Manager shall contact the next-of-kin of the staff member. Communication A further member of Officer Board (if present) will be briefed by the General Manager and will manage communication to other delegates. The message to be briefed to other delegates will be agreed between the Serious Emergency team. Any other members of Officer Board present at the event will be informed as soon as possible following knowledge of the death of a delegate. The General Manager if present (and the Senior Officer Board Member if not) will liaise with the law enforcement authorities to support their enquiries. In all such cases, the General Manager will engage the advice of a solicitor. Overseas If the death occurs overseas, the USI General Manager will communicate with the college or SU authorities. This will be necessary to contact the family of the deceased. There are a number of steps to be taken, including formal identification of the remains, prior to repatriation and recovery. USI will arrange for transport to the location of the remains for a member of the family of the deceased. USI will offer such support as necessary at this time. Secondary Response USI will assume initial responsibility, and will arrange for the transfer of response and authority to the Students’ Union and the College at which the student is studying. The General Manager will liaise with the Students’ Union and the college authorities to support the process mandated by the law enforcement authorities and college \ MO protocols • USI will offer to support the repatriation (if overseas) and retrieval of the body and the personal effects of the delegate. • USI will support the counselling needs of other delegates affected by the death, and the counselling needs of officers of USI and Staff. • USI will order and send flowers if appropriate. • The USI President and others as appropriate will attend the funeral. • We organise a memorial service, if appropriate. • We continue to offer ongoing support to the family, to the students and to the staff involved. • We send a card to the family and to the Students’ Union on the 1stAnniversary.