

Responding to a Student Death – Website Content

If any member of the university community becomes aware of a student death, they should inform Campus Security and Emergency Services (CSES), through the Emergency Report Centre (ERC) available 24/7, at (613) 533-6111 or ext. 36111. CSES will then follow the appropriate university procedures.

Preamble

The death of a student is a tragedy that deeply affects the Queen's community. The University is committed to responding with compassion toward the student's family (or personal representatives, guardians, etc.) while providing support to peers, faculty, and staff who may be impacted.

CSES and Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs (VPDSA) work together to ensure coordinated responses to the death of a student. CSES will take the lead in responding to serious injuries or a death on campus working in conjunction with police and/or the Coroner's Office.

The VPDSA is responsible for coordinating the University's secondary responses after initial crises responses are concluded. A Response Team, comprising individuals from all appropriate units will be initiated by the VPDSA or designate to coordinate subsequent actions and interventions.

Principles

The University is committed to the physical and psychological safety of students. The University will use resources available to provide an effective, compassionate and caring response for all involved, and recognizes the enormous impact a death can have on the campus community.

In all circumstances, the university will respond to the death of a student guided by the following principles:

- i. To respect the grieving process of those authorized to make decisions regarding the deceased student.

- ii. To uphold dignity and reverence for the memory of the student.
- iii. To maintain privacy requirements and discretion in the use of and access to student information. The University will only disclose personal information as permitted under the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and/or the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), or with guidance from the student's family (or personal representatives, guardians, etc.).
- iv. To provide timely support and resources to students, staff, faculty, student's family, and campus first responders.
- v. To liaise and cooperate with police, the coroner and other external officials, as required, and to comply with all relevant legislative requirements.
- vi. To respond based on the individual's circumstances, including the nature and location of the death, while also taking into consideration the time within the academic year.

University Response

While every effort will be made to respond as quickly as possible, logistical considerations involving the release of sensitive information and processes beyond the University's control may affect the timeliness of a response.

CSES will initiate established incident response protocols to secure the area and activate the appropriate emergency procedures, if required. This includes notifying and liaising with Kingston Police.

CSES and the VPDSA will work together to arrange, where possible, immediate supports for any witness and/or close friends/contacts, providing alternative accommodations for anyone immediately impacted, if necessary. CSES will ask any witnesses to also be respectful of this process and refrain from posting information on social media until the family has been made aware or information is more widely known (such as through a public announcement).

Initial communication with next of kin is the responsibility of Kingston Police or the relevant police jurisdiction, which may involve other police agencies to facilitate

notification(s). The University will respect this process and the family members, refraining from releasing any information without proper authorization.

If the University learns of a student death that has occurred off-campus, the VPDSA will be responsible for gathering the Response Team and notifying university officials, when appropriate. The Senior Director, Student Conduct and Care will coordinate the Response Team and aspects to support the family, peers, and campus community. Whether a death occurs on or off campus, the Response Team will be responsible for the coordination of any secondary response and follow up and will work directly with the student's Faculty/School to provide appropriate support for instructors and classmates.

Typically, the VPDSA or designate will make initial contact with the family on behalf of the University. The University will adhere to the family's wishes regarding the level of contact or engagement with the University and their needs will be a priority.

Communications

The University does not, except in limited and extraordinary circumstances, publicly communicate information regarding the death of a student until the family provides guidance on how they wish to proceed with any communication. As a result, the timing and content of the university's communications will not necessarily mirror general media reports or personal social media sharing.

In rare and limited circumstances, there may be occasions when the University deems it necessary to communicate information about a student death before the family releases information through a public announcement or obituary. Such action will only be taken when deemed appropriate/necessary by the Response Team and will be in response to supporting the campus community.

The Campus Updates section of the Queen's Gazette functions as the official vehicle for the University to announce/confirm/recognize a student death.

Integrated Communications will track and work to mitigate any undesired social media, to the extent possible, and will support the family and the campus community by sharing factual and beneficial information, and available supports to students, staff, and faculty who may be struggling.

Support and Resources

[Office of Faith and Spiritual Life](#): Is available to provide grief support and will often assist in liaising with family members and communicating their wishes to the university. The office also helps to coordinate memorial gatherings and tree planting ceremonies, if desired.

[Care Support Services](#): Is available to provide non-clinical support services to students and provide assistance in connecting students to a variety of supports and resources, including support regarding academic considerations.

[Student Wellness Services](#): Is available to students seeking personal counselling and support and can facilitate group sessions for close contacts. The team also provides resources to students who have been impacted by the loss of a peer.

[Integrated Communications](#): Is the first point of contact for external media. All media requests shall be directed to the Media Relations team at <https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/for-journalists>

[Residence Life & Services](#): Is available for support in the event the student was living in residence at the time of death, or the death significantly impacts the residence community.