

Policy Identifier: Bereavement Support Procedure – on the Death of a Student

Policy Title:	Bereavement Support Procedure – on the Death of a Student
Description:	The Bereavement Support Procedure provides a framework for the Institute to; acknowledge the deceased, recognise the loss for students, staff, and the wider community, ensure a timely, coordinated and consistent response to a student death, harness students’ support networks, identify and reach out to those requiring assistance and provision of a targeted response and minimise possible negative impact on other students’ wellbeing, their academic performance and ultimately student retention.
Author (Position):	Pastoral Care Team
Version:	2
Approved By:	MIE Governing Body
Policy Approval Date:	January 2019
Date of Next Policy Review:	April 2023 (or as necessary)

Bereavement Support Procedure – on the Death of a Student

1 Context

The death of a student is a serious event for the whole Institute, especially the student's close friends, peers and staff members. The Institute's response impacts on the families, students and staff affected. It is important that the Institute reacts to such an event in a way that recognises the loss of one of its members, deals sensitively with the aftermath and also supports those most seriously affected by the loss. The Marino Institute of Education (MIE) Bereavement Support Procedure guides the Institute's response to a student's death.

2 Purpose

The Bereavement Support Procedure provides a framework for the Institute to:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the deceased.
- 2.2 Recognise the loss for students, staff, and the wider community.
- 2.3 Ensure a timely, coordinated and consistent response to a student death.
- 2.4 Harness students' support networks.
- 2.5 Identify and reach out to those requiring assistance and provision of a targeted response.
- 2.6 Minimise possible negative impact on other students' wellbeing, their academic performance and ultimately student retention.

3 Benefits

The Bereavement Support Procedure will benefit the Institute by providing:

- 3.1 A coordinated and consistent Institute response.
- 3.2 Clarity of role for Institute staff.
- 3.3 Safeguards for the Institute's reputation.

4 Scope

- 4.1 The MIE Bereavement Support Procedure shall be applied in the case of the death of any undergraduate, postgraduate and visiting student. Although the response might be different depending on the situation, the procedure will apply to both registered students and students who are off-books, as well as MIE students who die when studying abroad.

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- 4.2 The procedure shall apply to students who have completed their courses but who have not yet graduated.
- 4.3 The procedure will apply equally in and out of term, as well as after-hours and at weekends.
- 4.4 Graduates/Alumni are not covered by the procedure. Although it is acknowledged that the death of a graduate, particularly a recent graduate, may be a very traumatic event for families and for other graduates – a formal Institute response is not possible. It is recommended that staff who are made aware of a death of a graduate inform relevant personnel, including former tutors¹, supervisors and academic staff. Outreach to families and former students and attendance at funerals where possible is advised, particularly if the deceased is a recent graduate.

5 Principles

The procedure is shaped by the Institute's:

- 5.1 Commitment to a holistic model of education and retention of students.
- 5.2 Commitment to a compassionate, collegiate community.
- 5.3 Duty of Care to students underpinned by Health and Safety legislation².
- 5.4 Commitment to best practice guidelines and research-led response.
- 5.5 Confidentiality – information is shared only with staff who are involved in the response on a 'need to know' basis and is treated as confidential.

6 Procedure

- 6.1 Bereavement (Sudden Death of a Student)
 - 6.1.1 Member of the Pastoral Care Team is informed of the death by Personal Tutor¹, or other member of MIE Community.
 - 6.1.2 When information has been confirmed as accurate, the bereaved Year Group is informed personally. Member of the Pastoral Care Team (consisting of a Lecturer from each of the following; the Department of English, Roinn na Gaeilge and the Department of Inclusion, Religious Education, and Student Life)/Personal Tutor³/Course Leader informs the campus (students, staff, community), and the

¹ See [Tutor System Policy](#) and [Tutor System Procedure](#)

² See [Safety Statement Policy](#)

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President of the [Students' Union](#) about the death and subsequent funeral arrangements.

6.1.3 The Pastoral Care Team establishes contact with the deceased's family to establish their wishes in relation to managing and responding to the death.

6.1.4 Where possible, the Personal Tutor³ and member of the Pastoral Care Team attend funeral on behalf of all staff at MIE. The Pastoral Care Team tries to ensure that MIE is represented at the funeral by at least one member of staff.

6.1.5 A memorial service may be organised, as appropriate, for the bereaved Year Group.

6.1.6 A letter of sympathy is sent by the Pastoral Care Team to the family of the student.

6.1.7 Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin ([Trinity](#)) [Counselling Service](#)/[MIE Counselling Service](#) is invited by Pastoral Care Team to meet with the bereaved Year Group and the Year Group is made aware of bereavement support available at Trinity.

6.2 Death of a Student on Campus or in Student Accommodation (Institute-affiliated and non-affiliated)

The Gardaí are notified immediately. In these situations, it is usually the Gardaí who will inform the family. Once confirmation has been received from the Gardaí that the family has been informed, the Pastoral Care Team will be responsible for initiating this current procedure, including contacting the family.

6.3 Death of an International Student on Campus or in Student Accommodation (Institute-affiliated and non-affiliated)

The Gardaí will be notified immediately. The Pastoral Care Team will provide the Gardaí with the next of kin details for the deceased. Once confirmation has been received from the Gardaí that the family has been informed, the Pastoral Care Team will be responsible for initiating this current procedure, including contacting the family. The Pastoral Care Team will liaise with the Gardaí and the Embassy for the deceased's country (where possible) to ensure suitable arrangements are followed until such a time as the deceased's family can make arrangements.

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6.4 Dealing with Media Enquiries³

6.4.1 Where media interest in a student death is anticipated, the Pastoral Care Team will inform the Registrar. All media queries should be referred to the Registrar who will develop an appropriate response. The Institute will not disclose to the media the identity of a deceased student until it is determined that it is appropriate to do so, i.e. after the authorities (Gardaí), family, and MIE community (staff and students) have been informed.

6.4.2 Where appropriate a press statement will be released by the Institute.

6.5 Post Obitum Awards

In the case of students who have completed their final examinations and/or all required assessments, their degree certificate may be presented to the family either during the appropriate Commencements or at any other suitable time. This also applies to students who are eligible for the award of an ordinary degree on the basis of Junior Sophister results. The student's Personal Tutor⁴ will liaise with the Registrar to arrange a post obitum degree.

7 Responsibility

The Pastoral Care Team is responsible for initiating this procedure. The Pastoral Care Team is respectful of all faiths and traditions, and equally respectful of situations where no faith is professed. The Pastoral Care Team is responsible for advising the Institute on the appropriate response in each individual case.

8 Related Documents

- 8.1 [Academic Assessment and Academic Progression](#)
- 8.2 [Tutor System Policy](#)
- 8.3 [Tutor System Procedure](#)
- 8.4 [MIE Policy on Social Media and Social Networking](#)
- 8.5 [Safety Statement Policy](#)

³ See [MIE Policy on Social Media and Social Networking](#)

⁴ See [Tutor System Policy](#) and [Tutor System Procedure](#)