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Executive Responsibility:	President & Vice-Chancellor	Next Review: Oct., 2017
Administrative Responsibility:	Manager, Human Resources	Policy: 41.13

1. Introduction

Initial reports of a death may come from a variety of sources. Four factors are crucial during the initial stages to effectively manage the situation. These are:

- a. Prompt notification of the appropriate¹ administrators (see “Notification”).
- b. Designated administrators respond as requested and provide support to the department affected.
- c. All information received/conveyed is accurate.
- d. The University’s response to the death is considerate and respectful.

2. Notification

In all cases, once a death has been confirmed (see Section 6), the Executive Director, Student Affairs and/or the Dean, International Education shall be notified immediately.

The Executive Director, Student Affairs or the Dean, International Education, depending on the status of the student shall immediately select an appropriate administrator as a designated “Contact Person” to act on behalf of the University and be a liaison with the family/next of kin. This Contact Person, will immediately notify the following people:

- President and Vice-Presidents.
- Administrator responsible for the student’s area/ department (e.g. Dean, Director, Regional Campus Principal, or Campus Academic Administrator).
- Registrar.
- Executive Director, Infrastructure and Ancillary Services.
- Manager, Human Resources.
- Executive Director, University Relations.
- Administrative Coordinator, Health and Safety Services.
- Financial Aid.
- University Secretary.

Each of these will have specific roles (see Section 7), depending on the circumstances of the death.

¹The word “appropriate” is used throughout this document to indicate that there may be alternate possibilities and alert the reader to that fact. Its use also serves to act as a reminder that a particular aspect of this procedure may or may not apply, or that there may be several ways to approach a particular point.

3. Information Requested

Upon receiving the initial report, the following information shall be obtained (if possible):

- a. Full name of deceased person.
- b. Where the death occurred.
- c. When the death occurred.
- d. How the death occurred.
- e. If the death occurred as part of a Vancouver Island University (VIU) course, program or activity.
- f. If the police were notified: name of police officer and police file number.
- g. If positive identification was made: the name of the person who made the identification and how identification was confirmed.
- h. The next of kin: name, address and phone number.
- i. Alternate contact person: name, address and phone number.
- j. Name and telephone number of person providing the initial information.

Not all of this information may be available. Obtain what information is available and forward it immediately to the President's office.

4. General

The response to the death of a student shall take into account:

- a. whether the death occurred on campus or in the course of a University related activity;
- b. whether the death occurred during the student's non-University activity work time; and,
- c. whether the death was a result of illness, accident or some other circumstance.

5. Death on Campus or During University Activity

In the event that a death occurs "on-campus" or "off campus" in the course of a University related activity, other than ensuring that initial emergency response has been provided, the Office of the Vice-President, Administration and Finance shall be contacted for further guidance with regard to legal obligations and notification of the University, College and Institute Protection Program (UCIPP) before taking any other action.

6. Confirmation of Death

Depending on the source of information and/or the circumstances of the death, it may be required for the Administrator receiving the initial report to confirm with the local police agency and/or Coroner that a death has actually occurred which involved a student.

This is required to avoid reporting misinformation and/or initiating this protocol when no death has occurred.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

This section provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the various Administrators who would be involved in the event of a death of a student.

7.1 Depending on the status of the student, either the Executive Director, Student Affairs or the Dean, International Education shall:

- be initially responsible for implementing and overseeing this particular procedure;
- appoint a suitable person to serve as the designated Contact Person on behalf of the University.

7.2 The Contact Person shall be the primary person responsible for coordinating the University's response in the event of the death of a student. This response shall be in accordance with these procedures. The Contact Person shall function as the principal conduit for information within the organization.

Human Resources will be available to provide support and guidance to the Designated Contact Person.

The Contact Person shall select an alternate to assist him/her in the fulfillment of this role for those occasions when the Contact Person may be unavailable.

The Contact Person and Alternate shall be reachable at all times and at their discretion internally publish their name(s) and their contact options (e.g. telephone numbers) via email.

The Contact Person shall:

- a. Ensure that the procedures outlined below are followed.
- b. Confirm that a death has occurred involving a student of Vancouver Island University, what the circumstances were, and whether other students and/or employees were present at the time.
- c. Mobilize University resources as required to assist him/her in managing the response to the death and related considerations. If required, assemble an "Action Team" drawn from a list of available Administrators, to assist in the handling of this incident.
- d. Determine through contact with the coroner and/or police that proper notification² of the family/next of kin has taken place.

² Notification of the family is normally done by either the physician who attended the person at the time of his/her death, or by the Coroner, or by the appropriate police agency (e.g. RCMP, Municipal Police). This responsibility should be left to those specific agencies / individuals and the role of Vancouver Island University's administrator should be limited to confirming that this notification has actually occurred. Direct contact with the family / next of kin should not be initiated, if possible, until they have received the formal notification from the appropriate authorities.

- e. After the official notification has been made by the authorities, contact the family/next of kin (in person, if possible), within a reasonable time to express condolences and establish a link as being the official “Contact Person” for the University and offer whatever assistance is appropriate.
- f. If appropriate³ and subject to the wishes of the family/next of kin, notify the University community by e-mail of the occurrence of the death and of the memorial service arrangements as soon as that information is available.
- g. Draft a formal letter of condolence to be signed by an appropriate member of the senior administration, normally the President.
- h. Initiate a second contact with the family/next of kin within 24 to 48 hours of the initial contact to determine the memorial service arrangements and their wishes with regards to flowers, charitable donations, etc.
- i. If the student was receiving financial aid, obtain a certified copy of the Death Certificate and provide it to the Financial Aid Office.
- j. Advise other administrative units, as follows, regarding the death of the student so that their records can be updated and any required action taken:
 - i. Financial Aid Office
 - to make appropriate notations in any pertinent financial aid and awards files;
 - to notify both the Ministry and the appropriate bank(s).
 - ii. Library
 - to cancel the student’s library card and advise the Contact Person regarding any outstanding items.
 - iii. Information Technology
 - to close the student’s computer account.
 - iv. Alumni Office
 - to update its mailing list.
 - v. Student Employment office
 - to remove the student’s name from any placement files, etc.; and
 - to advise Co-op Employer, if appropriate.
 - vi. Student Services Office
 - to close any existing files;
 - to assist with supportive counseling to the students who were close to the deceased student; and,

³ Whether or not this is appropriate may vary depending on who the student was and the circumstances of their death. The wishes of the family / next of kin should prevail. If they want to limit the information that is circulated, then the University should respect that and oblige.

- to empty the student's gym locker.
- vii. Parking/Security
- to close any existing file; and
 - to cancel any outstanding traffic fines.
- viii. Vancouver Island University Residences
- to notify Western Student Housing to take appropriate action;
 - to ensure that the student's roommates and acquaintances are aware of the death; and
 - to arrange with the family/next of kin for the disposition of the student's personal effects.
- k. Ensure that any regular mailings from the university to the deceased and/or family are stopped.
- l. Provide ongoing information to the senior administration and other designated administrators regarding the death, the wishes of the family/next of kin, etc;.
- m. Provide information to the Executive Director, University Relations to assist in the preparation of Press Releases, if required and as appropriate.
- n. Liaise between the family/next of kin and any other university Administrators/Departments they may be required to deal with in regard to the settlement of the deceased student's personal matters.
- o. Meet with the family/next of kin to discuss how the university has responded and to determine if there are additional ways the university could respond. The Contact Person will answer questions and provide appropriate information which the family/next of kin may require.

7.3 The President shall:

- a. Directly notify the Chair of the Vancouver Island University Board and official inform the Board at their next meeting.
- b. Send a letter of condolence to the family/next of kin of the deceased student.

7.4 The Dean, Director, Regional Campus Principal, or Campus Academic Administrator shall ensure that:

- a. The Coordinator of the Program in which the student was registered is informed of the death and that he/she has advised the student's instructors.
- b. The Executive Director, Student Affairs, or the Dean, International Education is aware of the death of the student.

- c. Other staff within their Department or Faculty are informed regarding the death of the student.
- d. Written condolences are provided to the family/next of kin from the Department or Faculty.
- e. Arrangements for floral arrangements or charitable donations, subject to the wishes of the family/next of kin, have been made, if required.
- f. A statement of tribute to the deceased student is prepared for use within the organization, as appropriate.
- g. In cooperation with the designated Contact Person, arrange for the disposition of the contents of any locker or project area assigned to the student, and for the return of any University equipment and/or library books which the student had signed out.
- h. The Administrative Coordinator, Health and Safety Services is contacted to discuss the need for and make arrangements for any critical incident stress management (CISM) response services required.

7.5 The Office of the Registrar shall:

- a. Provide the Contact Person with any information required to profile the student, including name of Faculty, department, courses, whether the student is an international student, etc.
- b. Record the date of death on the student's academic record and change the record status to "D" (deceased).
- c. Withdraw the student from registered courses with an appropriate notation made to the record.
- d. Consider any requests from the student's family or next of kin or faculty for a posthumous degree or any special arrangements for presentation of an earned degree or other certification and make recommendations to the senior administration.
- e. Make decisions about refunding fees, outstanding balances, etc., and notify the appropriate offices.

7.6. The Executive Director, University Relations is responsible for:

- a. Liasing with the media regarding the death and/or the circumstances surrounding the death;
- b. Employees of VIU should refer any direct inquiries from the media to the Executive Director, University Relations.

Inquiries from non-media sources should be referred to the designated Contact Person for the University

7.7. The Executive Director, Infrastructure and Ancillary Services shall ensure that:

- a. The lowering of flags occurs in accordance with guidelines relating to the death and the memorial service of the deceased person.
- b. Any existing files are closed and any outstanding traffic fines are cancelled.
- c. If required, any security requirements which are required for the preservation of evidence, protection of the scene, or protection of University property are provided as quickly as possible.
- d. Any repairs to facilities which may be required as a result of any incident surrounding the death are promptly arranged.

7.8. Executive Director, Human Resources

In the event that the student was also an employee, the Executive Director of Human Resources shall ensure that any required action is taken with respect to the student employee. This would include, but may not be limited to:

- a. Ensuring that the final wage payment(s) has been initiated to the estate of the deceased.
- b. Ensuring the eligible survivor has been advised to contact the Canada Pension Plan Office for any available benefits.

7.9 Administrative Coordinator, Health and Safety Services

Various legislation and legal obligations require that accidental deaths that occur on any Vancouver Island University sites or during any University activity are fully investigated. The Administrative Coordinator, Health and Safety services is assigned this role, in conjunction with members of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee as required.

The investigation will commence immediately to ensure that the most accurate information is obtained. Depending on the circumstances of the death, outside agencies may also be conducting investigations. Full cooperation in the investigation process is expected from all members of the Vancouver Island University community.

In addition to coordinating the investigation on behalf of Vancouver Island University, the Administrative Coordinator, Health & Safety Services has the responsibility for:

- a. Serving as the primary liaison and point of contact between Vancouver Island University and any of the enforcement agencies with jurisdiction relating to the death (e.g., RCMP, WorkSafeBC, Coroner, etc.).

- b. Facilitating arrangements for any Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) responses for members of the campus community such as defusing, grief and loss, stress debriefing, and counseling
- c. Filing the required documentation with WorkSafe BC .

The Administrative Coordinator Health and Safety Services will assist the primary Contact Person as required.

- 8. The University Secretary is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Freedom of Information/ Protection of Privacy legislation and providing guidance to administrators or employees in these matters.

Related Policies and Procedures

[Policy 94.07](#) Posthumous Awards

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