



## **Response to the Death of a Student Protocol**

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### **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

In the event of the death of an NIC student, certain procedures must be followed to ensure that the College's response is compassionate and respectful, accurate information is released in a timely fashion, and that the College implements necessary administrative procedures and support initiatives efficiently and effectively.

### **SCOPE AND APPLICATION**

These procedures are applicable to the death of a currently enrolled NIC student, on or off-campus, while recognizing that there may be differing priorities depending on factors such as manner of death.

The response to the death of a former student will be assessed on a case by case basis. In the event of an incident resulting in multiple fatalities, please refer to the Emergency Operations Policy (in development).

### **PRINCIPLES**

1. NIC will ensure the accurate and timely delivery of information as set out in the attached procedures or required in the specific circumstances.
2. NIC will demonstrate respect for the family of the deceased student by adhering to the family's wishes in terms of the information disclosed to the College community.
3. NIC will only disclose information in compliance with all relevant legislation including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) and NIC policy 1.01 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy. Where there is a conflict between these Procedures and FOIPPA, the legislation will govern.
4. NIC will support the well-being of the campus community through the provision of counselling and other relevant support services.

## PROTOCOLS

### 1. Response to the report of a student death on or off-campus

#### 1.1 Receiving the report of a student death

Designated members of the Critical Response Team (CRT) will act on behalf of the College and will coordinate the College's response to the death of a student and be a liaison with the family/next of kin/impacted persons. The CRT lead or designate will communicate additional roles and responsibilities to other members of the College community as required.

1.1.1 A report of a student death should be conveyed to the lead or designate of the Critical Response Team (CRT) as quickly as possible. The CRT consists of:

- Director Student Affairs (DSA) (**lead**)
- AVP Student Services/Registrar (AVPSSR) (**designate**)
- Manager Student Life
  
- Director Human Resources (if the report involves an employee)
- Manager Operations International (if the report involves an international student(s))
- Director of Facilities (If the death occurs on-campus)
- Manager Health and Safety (If the death occurs on-campus)

1.1.2 If a death occurs during College sponsored travel, the College staff member accompanying the trip should immediately contact local emergency services and the local law enforcement agency. The College staff member will then connect with their NIC contact and/or the CRT lead.

1.1.3 If a death occurs while a student is studying abroad, the program leader or representative of host institution will contact the Executive Director, International Education.

1.1.4 The lead or designate of the CRT will initiate the Critical Response Procedures.

### 2. Immediate response to a death of a student on-campus

2.1 In the event of a death of a student on-campus, the primary responder will contact the RCMP, paramedics and/or fire department. Following the notification of emergency services, the primary responder will alert the Director of Facilities and/or the Manager Health and Safety.

- 2.2 The Director of Facilities and/or Manager Health and Safety will initiate established protocols to secure the area and activate the appropriate emergency procedures (Emergency Operations Centre - EOC). This may include, but is not limited to, notification of law enforcement, activation of the Risk Assessment and Prevention Team (RAPT), temporary closure of a building/area, and notification of the Crisis Response Team (CRT)
- 2.3 The Director of Facilities and/or Manager Health and Safety will notify the CRT lead or designate who will initiate the critical response procedure beginning with:
  - a. The drafting of an initial email communication from the VP Strategic Initiatives to the impacted campus community stating that a death has occurred on campus and is being investigated (if applicable and in compliance with all relevant legislation including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) and NIC policy 1.01 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy).
  - b. Initiation and communication of counselling and other appropriate supports
- 2.4 Initial communication to the immediate family is the responsibility of the RCMP. The college will not release information prematurely to respect this process and family members (see 3.3.2).

### **3. Critical Response Procedure**

#### **3.1 Confirmation of Information**

3.1.1 Upon receiving the initial report, the CRT lead will obtain the following information (where possible):

- a. The full name of deceased person.
- b. Date of birth.
- c. Where/when/how the death occurred.
- d. Whether the RCMP has been notified, and if so, the name of police officer, and file/case number (as required).

3.1.2 The CRT lead or designate will determine, through contact with the coroner and/or RCMP, that proper notification of the family/next of kin has taken place.

#### **3.2 Delegation of Roles and Responsibilities within the CRT**

3.2.1 Using the checklist (appendix B), the CRT lead or designate will assign roles, responsibilities and timelines to the CRT and College community, and will ensure regular updates to members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

The Senior Leadership Team consists of:

President, NIC  
Vice President, Finance & Facilities  
Director Human Resources and Organizational Development  
Executive Vice President Academic and Chief Operating Officer  
Vice President, Strategic Initiatives  
Associate Vice President, Access and Programs  
Associate Vice President, Student Services and Registrar  
Executive Director, International Education

### 3.3 Communication

- 3.3.1 Upon a report of the death of a student, the CRT will determine those who ‘need to know’ from the list below. If the report is unconfirmed, this will be clearly stated in the primary communication. Once the report has been confirmed, a further communication will be sent out to advise that that the ‘Response to the Death of a Student Protocol’ will be initiated.
- a. Members of the Senior Leadership Team
  - b. Dean, Director and/or Chair of the deceased student (who will then notify faculty members and staff associated with the student on a need to know basis)
  - c. Campus Administrator(s)
  - d. Director, Facilities (if applicable)
  - e. Others (as applicable)
- 3.3.2 After the official notification has been made by the authorities, the CRT lead or designate will contact the family/next of kin (in person, if possible) to express condolences, establish a link as being the official contact person for the College and offer assistance as appropriate.
- 3.3.3 If the nearest relative as defined in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Regulation gives the College permission to release information, an email will be drafted by the CRT and the VP Strategic Initiatives and sent out to the College community. The email will include the student’s name, program and year of study and any other appropriate information released by the family (See Appendix C for sample communication). The email will also contain condolences from the College as well as information on how those affected can obtain counselling and support if required.
- 3.3.4 If the nearest relative of the deceased does not wish to disclose the manner of death, communication might state: *“The family has requested that information about the circumstances of death not be shared at this time.”*

- 3.3.5 In the case where the College is asked for public comment prior to obtaining consent from the nearest relative, the designated college spokesperson is the Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, who will publicly explain that the College does not release such information without the consent of the nearest relative.
- 3.3.6 The CRT will draft a formal letter of condolence to be signed by an appropriate member of the senior administration (normally the President).

### 3.4 Support

- 3.4.1 The CRT will arrange support services for students and staff (in their first language whenever possible) for the period immediately following the death of a student (DSA for student support and Director HR for employee support). This may include contacting EFAP, counsellors, booking a room(s), and communicating the information to the College community.
- 3.4.2 In the event of a death by suicide, other members of the campus community may be at an increased risk of suicide. In addition to general counselling services, counsellors may reach out to students known to be at risk. These may include individuals close to the deceased and those who are already vulnerable to depression and/or suicidal ideation (see Appendix D for a list of high risk groups and individuals)
- 3.4.3 Additional support services may be contacted and made available as required; for example, translation service, specialized trauma counsellors and spiritual resources.
- 3.4.4 Faculty members should expect to be approached by students affected by the death of a fellow student. Along with other members of the campus community, faculty members can play an important role in helping students who are struggling with the loss of a friend or classmate. Suggestions for faculty to support students in crises following a death are as follows:
  - a. Consult with appropriate offices on campus, such as the Director of Student Affairs and Counselling Services
  - b. Identify counselling resources to students who are struggling.

*It is important to facilitate the grieving process as well as stabilize the environment by reducing the highly emotional tone of the campus, bringing it back to its more ordinary state.*

- 3.4.5 Faculty may, in collaboration with the dean, director and/or program chair, provide in-class supports including:
  - a. Recommending counselling to students in distress.
  - b. Extending assignment deadlines.
  - c. Providing make-up work or exams.
  - d. Excluding one or more test grades from the final grade.
  - e. Recommending a medical withdrawal.

3.4.6 The CRT will provide a general reminder of all support services. The use of the Red Folder: Supporting Students in Crisis will be well publicized to intended audiences and communicated through email and social media.

3.4.7 Responders, including counsellors and other support services, are not immune from grief, and will be encouraged to manage self and mutual care.

### 3.5 Follow-Up/De-brief

3.5.1 The CRT team will communicate regularly (in person, email or by telephone) during the initial days and weeks following the death of a student to provide updates and plan on-going support and information as required.

3.5.2 All records will be kept in the Student Case Management Team (SCMT) database for the purpose of quality assurance.

3.5.3 Where appropriate, a critical incident review may be facilitated by the CRT chair to review these procedures. Additional debriefing exercises will also be encouraged among those directly involved and impacted.

### 3.6 Confidentiality

3.6.1 The CRT will ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy legislation throughout this process.

### 3.7 Posthumous Academic Program Credential

3.7.1 A student who, upon death, has not completed the necessary requirements to qualify for the academic program credential but has substantially completed the requirements of the program and was expected to complete the necessary requirements, may be issued a posthumous credential at any time upon approval from the registrar after consultation with the dean. Exception may include programs with externally mandated curriculum.

3.7.2 When a posthumous credential is issued, a notation “posthumous” will be recorded on the student transcript but will not appear on the credential.

## 3.8 Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.8.1 A member of the CRT will communicate specific roles and responsibilities, with timelines, as follows. Once completed, updates will be sent to the CRT lead and designate.

The President (or designate) will:

- a. Notify the NIC Board of Governors.
- b. Send a letter of condolence to the family/next of kin of the deceased student.
- c. Make a decision regarding lowering of flags on campus as per Flag Usage Policy (currently in development).

The Vice President Strategic Initiatives (or designate) will:

- a. Communicate with NIC Marketing/Communications as needed.
- b. Liaise with the media, as required.
- c. In collaboration with the CRT, communicate information regarding supports available (social media, email, screens)

The AVP Student Services & Registrar will:

- a. Check the student record to gather appropriate information 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. Determine if a posthumous credential will be issued and record a notation "posthumous" on the student transcript. This will not appear on the credential
- e. Make any decisions about a refunding of fees, writing off outstanding balances, etc., and notify the appropriate offices.

The Director Human Resources will:

- a. In the event that the student was also an employee, ensure that any required action is taken with respect to the student employee, and ensure that the final wage payment(s) has been initiated to the estate of the deceased, that the eligible survivor has been advised how to contact the Canada Pension Plan Office for any available benefits, and that any other related items have been completed as required.
- b. Arrange supports available for faculty and staff through the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

The Dean, Director or Campus Administrator will:

- a. Inform the program chair, instructors and other impacted staff within their department regarding the death of the student (on a need to know basis).
- b. Remind staff, students and faculty about available supports.
- c. Work with faculty and staff to determine appropriate in-class supports and accommodations.
- d. Ascertain if the student was in possession of any College equipment or books, and inform CRT lead or designate.
- e. Arrange for the CRT to collect the contents of any locker or project area assigned to the student and return to family or next of kin.

The Director Facilities/Manager Health and Safety will:

- a. Ensure an investigation is undertaken (if applicable): Various legislation and legal obligations require that accidental deaths that occur on any NIC sites or during any college activity are fully investigated.
- b. Commence the investigation immediately to ensure the most accurate information is obtained. Depending on the circumstances of the death, outside agencies may also be conducting investigations.

**Links and Related Policies, Documents and Websites:**

BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ([FOIPPA](#))

Field School Faculty Lead Handbook (International Education)

NIC Adventure Guiding Program: Emergency Procedures for Field Activities (off-campus)

Risk Assessment and Prevention Team – [RAPT Terms of Reference](#)

Student Case Management Team – [SCMT Terms of Reference](#)

**Cross Reference:**

NIC Policy #1-01 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

NIC Policy #1-20 Code of Ethical Conduct

NIC Policy #2-08 Human Rights

NIC Policy #2-10 Protection of Employees from Violence in the Workplace

NIC Policy #2-11 Emergency Response to Inappropriate, Disruptive, or Threatening

NIC Policy #2-15 Occupational Health & Safety

NIC Policy #3-34 Sexual Violence and Misconduct

NIC Policy #5-01 Crisis Communication

North Island College Emergency Operations Policy (in development)



## **Resources**

Appalachian State University – Student Death Protocol

<https://policy.appstate.edu/images/b/bc/Student-Death-Protocol.pdf>

Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (2014). *Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on College Campuses*. [https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://hemha.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/postvention\\_guide.pdf](https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://hemha.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/postvention_guide.pdf)

Queen’s University – Student Death Protocol (2016)

University of Guelph – Protocol for Responding to the Death of a Student (2017)

Vancouver Island University – Procedure 41.13.002 Death of a Student (2010)

**Appendix A**  
**Critical Response Procedure Checklist:**

Student Name:  
Program:  
Date of death:

Student Number:  
Campus:

	Action	Who	Completed
1.	<p>A report of a possible student death should be conveyed to the Critical Response Team (CRT) as quickly as possible. The CRT consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director Student Affairs (DSA) (<b>lead</b>)</li> <li>• AVP Student Services/Registrar (AVPSSR) (<b>designate</b>)</li> <li>• Manager Student Life</li>   <li>• Director Human Resources (if the report involves an employee)</li> <li>• Manager Operations International (if the report involves an international student(s))</li> <li>• Director of Facilities (If the death occurs on-campus)</li> <li>• Manager Health and Safety (If the death occurs on-campus)</li> </ul>		
2.	<p>Confirmation of student death and student identity – call RCMP, and/or talk with initial contact (if appropriate). Check the student record to gather appropriate information including name of faculty, department, courses, whether the student is an international student, etc.</p>		
3.	<p>Upon a credible (albeit unconfirmed) report of the death of a student, the following will be informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicable members of the Senior Leadership Team</li> <li>• Director, Facilities (if applicable)</li> <li>• Dean, Director and/or Chair of the deceased student (who will then notify faculty members and staff associated with the student on a need to know basis)</li> <li>• Campus administrator (who will notify/support members of student services who have worked with the student)</li> </ul>		
4.	<p>Connect with NIC students/staff/faculty who have been <i>directly</i> impacted by the death of the student (these may include witnesses or roommates). Offer general NIC and community support resources Red Folder). Let them know that further supports will be offered on-campus.</p>		
5.	<p>After the official notification has been made by the authorities, contact the family/next of kin within a reasonable time to express condolences, establish a link as being the official contact person for the College and offer assistance as appropriate.</p>		

6. If/when the death is confirmed, or the report is <b>well</b> substantiated, inform the following with tasks as required. Some of these tasks will not be performed until after the next of kin has been contacted and further information regarding their wishes have been gathered:			
6.a	<p>President</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Notify the NIC Board of Governors.</li> <li>ii. Send a letter of condolence to the family/next of kin of the deceased student.</li> <li>iii. Make a decision regarding lowering of flags on campus as per Flag Usage Policy (currently in development).</li> </ul>		
6.b	<p>Vice President Strategic Initiatives (or designate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Communicate with NIC Marketing/Communications as needed.</li> <li>ii. Liaise with the media, as required, regarding the death and/or the circumstances surrounding the death.</li> </ul> <p>In collaboration with the CRT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Communicate information regarding supports available (social media, email, screens)</li> </ul>		
6.c	<p>Director, Human Resources (if applicable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ensure that any required action is taken with respect to the student employee, and ensure that the final wage payment(s) has been initiated to the estate of the deceased, that the eligible survivor has been advised how to contact the Canada Pension Plan Office for any available benefits, and that any other related items have been completed as required.</li> <li>ii. Arrange supports available for faculty and staff through the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)</li> </ul>		
6.d	<p>AVP Student Services &amp; Registrar (also see Notification of a Student Death – Student Services Procedures manual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Determine any emergency funding required and/or available.</li> <li>ii. Record the date of death on the student’s academic record and change the record status to “D” (deceased).</li> <li>iii. Withdraw the student from registered courses with an appropriate notation made to the record.</li> <li>iv. Determine if a posthumous credential will be issued and record a notation “posthumous” on the student transcript. This will not appear on the credential</li> <li>v. Make any decisions about a refunding of fees, writing off outstanding balances, etc., and notify the appropriate offices.</li> </ul>		

6.e	<p>Dean, Director and/or Chair of the deceased student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Inform the program chair, instructors and other impacted staff within their department regarding the death of the student. Note: <i>Prior to obtaining consent from the family of the deceased student and formal confirmation of the death, individuals will be notified on a 'need to know' basis.</i></li> <li>ii. Remind staff, students and faculty about available supports.</li> <li>iii. Work with faculty and staff to determine appropriate in-class supports and accommodations.</li> <li>iv. Ascertain if the student was in possession of any College equipment or books and inform CRT contact.</li> <li>v. Arrange for the CRT to collect the contents of any locker or project area assigned to the student.</li> </ul>		
6.f	<p>Director Facilities//Manager Health and Safety (if applicable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ensure an investigation is undertaken.</li> </ul>		
6.g	<p>Manager Operations OGE (if applicable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Arrange for translation/interpretation services if required</li> <li>ii. Contact third parties (agents, homestays, etc.)</li> <li>iii. Liaise with Immigration, Embassies and Consulates to ensure contacts with, and support for, the student's family.</li> </ul>		
6.h	<p>b. NISU Organiser (if applicable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Provide CRT and/or family of the deceased, information about benefits.</li> </ul>		
7.	<p>Contact NIC counsellors to arrange emergency counselling on the impacted campus. This may include faculty/staff counselling (HR).</p>		
8.	<p>Contact community resources for translators and additional spiritual and emotional support on and/or off-campus (as required).</p> <p>Book room and communicate these details to Vice President Strategic Initiatives (or designate) for release via email and social media.</p>		
9.	<p>Advise the following administrative units regarding the death of the student so that their records can be updated, and any necessary action taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Financial aid office - make appropriate notations in any pertinent financial aid and awards files, and to notify both the Ministry and the appropriate bank(s),</li> <li>b. Library - cancel the student's library card and advise the contact person regarding any outstanding items,</li> <li>c. Career Centre - remove the student's name from any placement files, etc.</li> <li>d. Student support services (Department of Accessible Learning, counselling, advising) - close any existing files, and to assist, as necessary, with supportive counselling to students.</li> </ul>		
10.	<p>Arrange on-going supports (as required) and initiate debrief.</p>		

## Appendix B Sample Communication

### Sample Announcement

As previously noted, the release of detailed information should only be made with the consent of the nearest relative as defined in the FOIPPA Regulation. In the event that the family cannot be readily contacted, a general email, which does not name the student, may need to be distributed.

To all members of the NIC community:

I am deeply saddened to inform you of the death of an NIC student and member of our NIC family. (Name of student) was a (age) year old student studying in the (name of program) on the (name of campus).

(S)he passed away over the weekend *at his residence in (location)*. The cause of death is unknown. We offer our deepest condolences to (name of student) family, friends and loved ones.

Losing a student, a friend and member of our College can be very difficult. I encourage those who need support or would simply like to talk to someone to access the following resources:

#### **EMPLOYEE COUNSELLING AVAILABLE (e.g.)**

***Date:***

***Location: Time/Room*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Location: Time/Room*** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **STUDENT COUNSELLING AVAILABLE**

***Date:***

***Location: Time/Room*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Location: Time/Room*** \_\_\_\_\_

Example: The Sikh temple in Campbell River will be open to students beginning December 3 from 6:30 am via the side entrance. The Sikh Elders will be available from 2:30 – 4:40 pm Sikh Priest (Granthi) will be available at Comox Valley campus from 10 am- 4 pm (Discovery 204)

#### **NIC Counselling Services (9 am – 4 pm Monday to Friday):**

Comox Valley 250-334-5000 local 4048

Campbell River 250- 923-9711

Port Alberni 250-724-8734

#### **Emergency Counselling Support (24/7):**

Vancouver Island Crisis Line 1-888-494-3888 Dial

211 on your BC cell phone Keep.meSAFE 1-844-451-

9700

Ongoing support will be available to all those needing further assistance.

## **Appendix C**

### **Examples of High Risk Groups and Individuals**

- ✓ Siblings and friends
- ✓ Accidental and/or intentional first responders or individual(s) who discovered the body
- ✓ Academic support staff/faculty who knew the deceased student
- ✓ Staff that are known to have had a close relationship with the individual(s)
- ✓ Student in the same academic department
- ✓ Students in the same club/student activity
- ✓ Roommates or host families