



POSTVENTION GUIDANCE: RESOURCES

Communications following the sudden death of a student

Press template for universities	2
Press template for use by the family	3
Draft letter for students who knew the person who has died	4
Draft letter for teaching and support staff	5



This resource is for those involved in sending out communications after the sudden death of a student. Here you will find examples of the kind of communication that you may need to send to the wider community and in response to media enquiries.

Each of the following are provided as examples. It is vital that they are personalised according to the particular circumstances, to ensure they are appropriately human in tone and that they are not identical to communications issued around previous deaths. They should also be signed by or quote named staff, never using 'Student Support Team' or 'A spokesperson said'.

Press template for universities

A press statement should be drafted in the event that the higher education institution is asked to comment on a recent death. You should keep the information to a minimum and not include any detail in terms of the cause of death or location etc. It can be a number of months, sometimes years, before a suicide is confirmed, so avoid speculation within the statement.

We are deeply saddened to hear about the death of (name if agreed by the family) one of our students/staff members. Our thoughts are with his/her/their family and friends at this difficult time.

As a valued member of (name of higher education institution), we know the loss is being felt by many and we are doing everything we can to support friends, family and the wider student and staff community.

We encourage anyone who has been affected by this news to contact our wellbeing team (or other appropriate support service) or reach out to other support services (See suggested support services listed in the Resource list in the Appendix of the [How to respond to a student suicide](#) document).

Resources and advice

If the family and friends have concerns about approaches from journalists, it may be helpful to advise them to contact IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation), the UK's main press regulator and/or offer to help them to connect. IPSO operates a 24-hour harassment helpline providing advice to those who have been affected by a suicide and do not wish to have contact with the press. IPSO can issue a notice to press advising them not to contact named individuals and can give advice around reporting in relation to the Editors' Code. IPSO can be reached at: inquiries@ipso.co.uk

If a death is covered by press as a suicide it can be helpful to remind journalists of the risks associated with media coverage of suicide, particularly with a young audience, and signpost them to Samaritans' [Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide](#)

Social media is less regulated than the mainstream media, but should be proactively monitored by your team, with inaccurate posts clarified and individual concerns by students addressed through direct messaging.

Press template for use by the family

NB: This draft statement can be given to the family of the deceased if they need any additional support when dealing with the press. We recommend that the family are made aware that the media may request a photograph of their loved one and should this request be denied that they are within their rights to obtain an image from a public page or forum such as social media. To avoid further potential upset and to retain some control over what is published, we recommend that the family choose the image that they would like their loved one to be remembered by.

On (date) we lost our (son/daughter/brother/friend etc) who was loved and will be missed by so many.

We have been overwhelmed by the support shown and the many kind words that have been shared by those who knew (name).

As we try to come to terms with what has happened, we request that we are given the space and privacy needed to grieve as a family.

Draft letter for students who knew the person who has died

We recommend that this letter is sent following a face-to-face conversation where possible, particularly where the student was well known to others (eg accommodation, class/tutor groups, sports teams). The purpose of the letter should be to reiterate the higher education institution's support at this time and to signpost students to further services and support. The level of detail included will need to be in accordance with what has been agreed with the family of the deceased.

Dear (student)

We are all shocked and saddened by the death of (enter name, if permission has been granted). Our thoughts and condolences are with (his/her/their) family and all who were (his/her/their) friends.

We know that this is an incredibly difficult time for everyone who knew [name], and for those who did not know (name) well, it is still a huge shock to lose someone in our community so suddenly and tragically.

You do not have to go through this alone. There are people who can help:

(Insert details of services available.)

You can also visit supportaftersuicide.org.uk, (insert other key websites/helplines) to find out more about how to support yourself and others.

(name's) family has asked that we, as a community, respect their privacy at this time, especially when sharing news on social media. Making sure you post safely and responsibly can also encourage others to seek help. If you are concerned about anything you see or hear on social media, or about your own or the safety of any of your friends, please contact (postvention/mental health services). We want to make sure that everyone who is struggling at this time can get the help they need.

(Insert any details about memorial service, funeral or when students will be updated on this)

Draft letter for teaching and support staff

Those teaching staff closest to the student should be informed face to face in the first instance. The purpose of this letter is to inform wider staff groups, to offer support to them and to give details of possible student reactions and how to support.

To all (name of higher education institution) staff

We are shocked and saddened by the sudden and tragic death of (name if permission is granted, or) one of our students. Our thoughts and condolences are with his/her/their family and friends.

All students have been informed and support has been made available. We are monitoring student reactions carefully and will put in place additional support where needed. Currently, students can access support through:

(list support services available)

This is an incredibly difficult time for everyone in our community. We would ask that you remain aware of how your students are reacting to this news over the coming weeks and months and continue to signpost them to support. If you are concerned about the safety of anyone, please contact (postvention/mental health support).

(name's) family has asked that we, as a community, respect their privacy at this time, especially when sharing news on social media. Making sure you post safely and responsibly can also encourage others to seek help. If you are concerned about anything you see or hear on social media, or about your own or the safety of any of your friends, please contact (postvention/mental health services). We want to make sure that everyone who is struggling at this time can get the help they need.

We have a plan in place to support everyone who has been affected by (name's) death. That includes supporting our entire staff, so if you or a colleague is finding the news difficult to cope with, we are here for you. Please contact (insert name/service) to talk any time.

This will be a challenging time for us all over the coming weeks and months, but please be assured that (name of higher education institution) will provide whatever support is needed for as long as it is needed.