



# Student Suicide Response Procedure

## Purpose

A student suicide is a tragic and distressing incident which has the potential to have far reaching repercussions within the community of students and staff at Unitec. Whilst it is acknowledged that every situation is unique, it is important that Unitec has a planned and thoughtful response to any student suicides. This procedure acts as a framework to assist staff to manage these situations. These guidelines must sit alongside an active suicide prevention strategy and plan.

The purpose of this procedure is to outline Unitec's organisational response to a student suicide with the aim of

- Providing psychological support and crisis intervention
- Facilitate the grieving and adjustment process
- Clarifying how Te Noho Kotahitanga is woven into a process of supporting a multicultural student body
- Stabilise the situation and environment and help the community to restore pre crisis functioning
- Reduce the risk of negative behaviours and prevent further suicides
- Allow for learning from current "Postvention" efforts to improve future prevention, postvention

For cases of student suicide on campus, these guidelines are written to manage the impact of the incident after the initial emergency procedures has been carried out.

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## Scope

All Unitec Students

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## Procedure

1. Any student suicide on or off campus must be reported to the Suicide Response Lead. This person will gather as much information as possible about the incident from the reporting staff member or external party. Information gathered includes
  - Time and date of incident
  - Where the incident took place
  - Who is currently aware and family involvement
  - External agency involvement so far including police and coroner
  - Whether the death has been confirmed by the coroner as a suicide

The response lead will ensure all suicides are reported as an incident in the Unitec internal incident management system and ensures that ELT has been alerted and briefed on the situation and subsequent follow up.

2. Within 24 Hours of being informed of the suicide the Response Lead will call an urgent meeting of the Suicide Response Team and advise ELT. Depending on the circumstances of the incident the Response Lead will decide the core membership.

In this meeting the following discussion and planning will occur

- Which students and staff will be most impacted by this information?
  - Is it possible to identify “Close Contacts” and meet with them before a wider communication is sent out?
- What communication will go to students/staff/external and who will lead this?
- What support can be offered to students and staff, who will provide this and where will this occur?
- Who is the lead contact with family/whanau?
- What is the best way to support the family?
- What are the cultural and spiritual aspects to consider in this communication and support?

3. When the initial crisis is managed and within the first week of the incident occurring the response team will meet again and consider the following

- Has everything been done to contain the situation and reduce the impact on those involved?
- Has the student’s death been acknowledged by the organisation appropriately?
- Is a memorial or similar appropriate/beneficial and if so who will lead this?
- Have staff identified any students/staff who they believe are high risk and need extra support? Who will follow up with these students/staff?

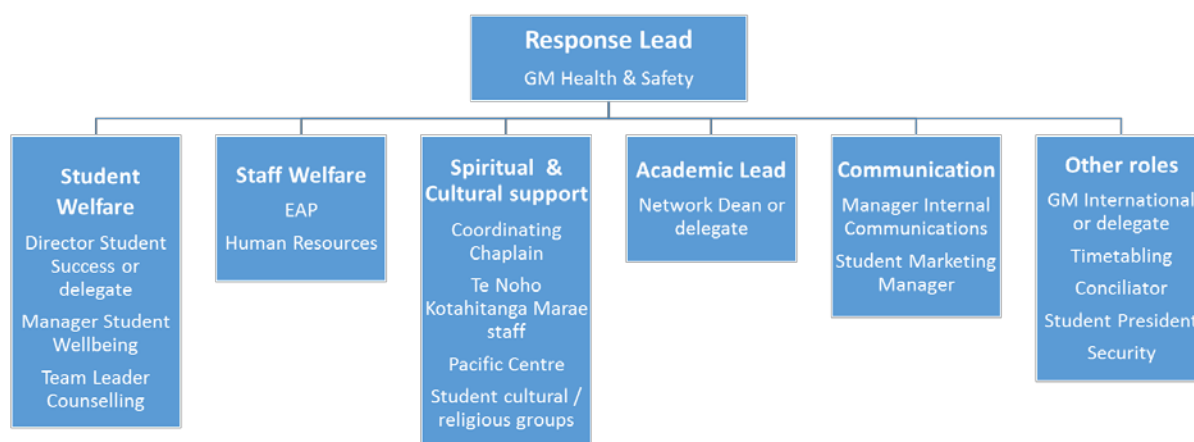
4. Within 4 weeks of the incident occurring an incident review will occur led by the Response Lead. This review will include members of the response team and academic staff that were closely involved with student and the postvention activities

The key aims of this review is to

- Outline the key timeline and facts of the incident, and follow up.
  - This report will be available for a potential coronial enquiry
- Ascertain any key learnings for the organisation in regards to:
  - How well we supported the student’s individual wellbeing
  - How well the incident was managed
  - How we supported and promoted student and staff well-being across the wider Unitec community
  - How we can strengthen our prevention strategy and approach
  - If the student was being seen by Unitec wellbeing clinical services a separate review will occur and where appropriate this information will help inform the discussion

The Response lead will be accountable to develop a report with recommendations and assigned actions that will be sent to the CEO or delegated ELT member. The response lead will ensure all actions are completed within the specified timeframe and evidence is collected to support this.

## The Student Suicide Response Team



## Responsibilities

The Key Roles within the Student Suicide Response team are outlined below:

Role	Responsibilities
Student Suicide Response Lead-GM Health and Safety, alternate-lead Director Student Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leads the response process and holds the final decision-making regarding the response team membership, the response plan and the delegation of roles and tasks</li> <li>Identifies the key risks and possible mitigations</li> <li>With team discussion will decide the most appropriate way to communicate with the student's family</li> <li>Does initial reporting and communication to ELT</li> <li>Is the key person that the team reports progress/updates</li> <li>Leads the post-incident review process and reporting</li> </ul>
Student Welfare Led by the Director Student Success or delegate the Student Wellbeing team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides expert advice on how the death should be communicated and can provide templates as required</li> <li>The counselling team can support academic staff to communicate the death in the classroom situation and can see students individually and in groups for immediate crisis support</li> <li>Provides psychological support and interventions to all students impacted by the news and can help staff identify at risk individuals needing additional support</li> <li>Can liaise with external community clinical services as required</li> </ul>

<p><b>Staff Welfare</b> Led by GM Health &amp; Safety, or delegate, any support interventions for staff involved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising time off as required</li> <li>• Arranging on and off site EAP psychological support</li> <li>• Organising support from Te Noho Kotahitanga Marae if appropriate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spiritual and Cultural Support</b> The Response Lead will identify the key groups based on the situation and what is known about the student in relation to their cultural background and/or spiritual and religious beliefs and weave this with the values of Te Noho Kotahitanga which underpin Unitec's cultural practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where appropriate Lead will seek advice from the Marae team</li> <li>• The Coordinating Chaplain will give advice regarding the specific processes/beliefs which might impact upon the suicide response processes</li> <li>• If an incident occurs on-site these teams may organise a 'blessing' or similar</li> <li>• Will offer pastoral /spiritual support for students alongside the student wellbeing team, which may include organising a drop-in space for students to access support as needed</li> <li>• May be the lead contact with the family</li> <li>• Take the lead in organising a memorial service/Unitec presence at a funeral service</li> <li>• Provide guidance in regards to how the incident is managed and communicated within the specific cultural/religious context of the student</li> </ul>
<p><b>Academic Lead-Network Dean or delegate</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides guidance and leadership for academic staff, reinforcing decisions made by the Response Lead</li> <li>• Assists with communication across the network</li> <li>• Assists to identify key contacts within the network</li> <li>• Ensures all post incident actions are completed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communications</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists the Response lead to get key messages across the Unitec community</li> <li>• Helps the wellbeing team promote support services available to students</li> <li>• Manages reputational risk externally and is key contact with media outlets</li> </ul>
<p><b>International Department-GM International</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works closely with the Response lead to ensure compliance with the Pastoral care code, including liaison with emergency services/coroner</li> <li>• Supports communications with family</li> </ul>

## Definitions

Term	Means
Postvention	Counselling and other social care given after the experience of a traumatic event

Term	Means
Close Contacts	Students of staff that knew the student well and will be emotionally impacted by the news of suicide

## Reference Documents

- The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2013). *Preventing and Responding to Suicide-Resource Kit for Schools*.
- Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (2014). *Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on College Campuses*.

## Approval Details

Version number	1.0	Issue Date	27/04/2018
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Procedure Sponsor (Has authority to approve minor amendments)	Glenn McKay Tumu Tauwhirowhiro Māori & Executive Director Student Experience	Procedure Owner:	Director Student Success
Contact Person	Glenn McKay	Date of Next Review	30/06/2020