



# The Church of Scotland

## **Faith Nurture Forum – Initial Ministerial Education Student Policy**

### **Death of a Student**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Faith Nurture Forum of The Church of Scotland (Faith Nurture Forum) is committed to ensuring respect, dignity and support for students in all situations and this includes the death of a student. This policy is designed to assist Faith Nurture Forum staff, and other colleagues, who are faced with the difficult situation of a student dying. It outlines the practical steps that should be taken.

The death of a student represents a sad loss to the whole Church of Scotland community, fellow students, staff and office bearers as well as the students' family and friends. Whilst comparatively rare, student deaths do occur and Faith Nurture Forum has a responsibility to respond in an appropriate way whilst being highly sensitive to the needs of the deceased student, their family/friends and other students.

#### **2. Purpose & Scope**

Faith Nurture Forum has prepared a clear, supportive policy which will guide actions. It will also ensure that appropriate notifications are made and that all activity is undertaken with regard to the family, friends and colleagues of the deceased.

Whilst every student death is different and will require a unique response, Faith Nurture Forum has an agreed and consistent process in place.

There are a number of different scenarios in which a student may die. A student death can take place either while on participating in study on Church of Scotland, or nominated formal, premises, at University, on placement, or another activity related to their study. Student death may also occur away from their normal studies, at home or in a setting not connected to their studies or the Church of Scotland.

Depending on the circumstances, responding to a student death may involve colleagues from across the Church of Scotland and the University (if applicable), and therefore while Faith Nurture Forum will take the lead role in the management and implementation of this policy, it is the responsibility of all named individuals to familiarise themselves with its scope and procedures.

#### **3. Policy Statement**

There are a number of ways in which Faith Nurture Forum might be told of a student's death. It might be contacted by the deceased's family/next of kin, it might be informed by the authorities, for example after a catastrophic event such as a road traffic accident. The death of the student might be sudden or the result of a long illness of which Faith Nurture Forum is aware.

The primary responsibility on learning of student death is to respond immediately in an appropriate, sensitive but efficient and effective way, at all times keeping the feelings of the family and friends of the deceased person at the forefront of our minds.

Following the discovery of a death there are a number of tasks which must be carried out immediately. A case conference will be actioned bringing together key colleagues from across Faith Nurture Forum and the wider Church of Scotland, to co-ordinate a response and actions for the first 48 hours following notification of the death. This case conference team will also set tasks and co-ordinate activities for colleagues following the initial 48-hour period, as well as lead a case review at an appropriate later date to consider any longer term issues arising from the circumstances surrounding the death.

#### **4. The Initial Response**

The initial response will differ greatly depending on whether the student death takes place on Church of Scotland premises (e.g. while on placement, at a formal place of study), at a University, or at home (non-study).

In the case of a death on Church of Scotland premises, it is the responsibility of the most senior person witnessing the death or discovering the body to inform emergency services immediately and carry out any instructions they give. That person should stay with the deceased or secure the area until the emergency services arrive, ensuring that nothing is touched or moved.

If the student dies on University premises, then the Faith Nurture Forum will liaise with the University and ensure a co-ordinated and co-operative approach, participating in University procedures as required.

The Head of Faith Nurture should be informed as soon as possible. Care needs to be taken to ensure that affected students or witnesses do not inform any third party until it is confirmed that the family of the deceased have been notified. This applies particularly in the case of social media. The Head of Faith Nurture/Chief Officer will call a case conference as soon as practicable, immediately if possible

If the death occurs at home, or not on Church of Scotland premises, the person notified should contact the Head of Faith Nurture/Chief Officer and they in turn will instigate a case conference.

#### **5. Case Conference**

Following notification of student death the Head of Faith Nurture/Chief Officer will call a case conference to manage the response over the first 48 hours. The members of the case conference meeting will vary according to the circumstances of the student's death. The decision on the members of the case conference will rest with the Head of Faith Nurture/Chief Officer, but as a minimum must consist of the following core members, or their nominated deputies:

- Chief Officer
- The Head of Faith Nurture, and their full Senior Management Team.
- The Faith Nurture Forum Convenor
- The Solicitor of the Church of Scotland or the Principal Clerk
- The Head of Communications

- The Head of Estates

In the first instance, members of the case conference team will establish that the death has occurred, the circumstances surrounding it and whether other students and staff were present who may be in need of support. The conference team will then obtain the deceased's full name and identify, and in the unlikely event that the Police have not informed the next of kin arrange for the Faith Nurture Forum Secretary, or their nominated deputy, to do so or liaise with the Police.

Each member of the case conference team has a number of defined roles and responsibilities and tasks to be carried out immediately. These are detailed at Appendix A.

The Head of Faith Nurture has a responsibility to inform Senior Management colleagues across the Church of Scotland and ensure that their Councils and Departments in turn take any necessary and appropriate action.

At an appropriate time, following the death of a student the case conference team will reconvene to consider the circumstances surrounding the student's death and any lessons which could be learned.

## **6. Monitoring and Review**

The impact of this policy will be monitored and the policy is subject to amendments as necessary. The policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

<b>Date First Published:</b>	<b>September 2018</b>
<b>Date of Last Review:</b>	<b>December 2020</b>
<b>Frequency of Review:</b>	<b>2 years</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>E&amp;S Committee</b>

## Appendix A: Case Conference Responsibilities

The immediate responsibilities for the case conference team are to:

1. Establish that a death has occurred and the circumstances surrounding it.
2. Coordinate the support that students, staff members, family members and others may need from the Faith Nurture Forum, or the wider Church of Scotland.
3. Co-ordinate all other aspects of the Faith Nurture Forum response. Each member of the case conference team then has individual responsibilities normally within the first 24 – 48 hours:

Role	Responsibilities
Chief Officer, The Head of Faith Nurture and the Senior Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liaise with the Police, Procurator Fiscal and other key bodies (e.g. hospital etc.), as required</li><li>• Liaise with the University if the student dies on University premises and ensure full co-ordination with their procedures, policies and processes.</li><li>• Inform the Council of Assembly of the death of the student, following the case conference, to establish the position in relation to a range of any administrative and financial matters.</li><li>• Provide a direct point of contact with the family of the deceased.</li><li>• Inform and liaise with the Pastoral Support Team to ensure that immediate practical support is provided to those who require it.</li><li>• Prepare and issue letters of condolence.</li><li>• Task other members of the case conference team as appropriate.</li><li>• Ensure Faith Nurture Forum is appropriately represented at funeral.</li><li>• Make arrangements for return of personal items, if applicable.</li></ul>
The Faith Nurture Forum Convenor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work closely with the Faith Nurture Forum Secretary and the Senior Management Team, supporting them and ensuring that all Council members are informed.</li></ul>
The Solicitor of the Church of Scotland/Principal Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advise on any matters as required.</li></ul>
The Head of Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handle all enquiries from the media relating to the death.</li><li>• Co-ordinate, monitor and oversee the social media response and respond accordingly.</li><li>• Assist in shielding relatives from excessive media attention.</li></ul>
The Head of Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advise on any matters as required.</li></ul>