Introduction

This document sets out the procedure for implementing the University’s Missing Persons Policy to establish the whereabouts and safety of a missing student.

Definitions

**Missing person** - a student who is potentially missing when his or her whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded as unusual in relation to his or her normal behaviour patterns, plans and routines and/or his or her absence gives rise to concern and as a consequence an individual or individuals express(es) their concern.

Confidentiality

There is potential to cause distress when investigating suspected missing persons. Therefore cases require careful handling and clear coordination.

In order to avoid unnecessary distress or alarm, and to protect the confidentiality rights of the missing person, it is important that no member of staff contacts the missing person’s family or other external person or agency, except on the advice of the Head of Student Support Services or Director of Operational Services.

Procedures

Stage 1 – Initial Enquiries & Escalation

Concern about a missing person may be raised by:

- a member of staff;
- another student;
- a member of the missing person’s family; or
- from someone outside of the University

Where concerns are raised by a person other than a member of staff, the recipient should ensure that they do not disclose any details but should ask for the information listed below.

- Name of missing person
- Name and contact details for person reporting, together with their relationship with the missing person
- Reasons for concern – obtain full details from the person who has raised the concern
Missing Persons Protocols

The person reporting the concern should be thanked for making contact and asked to inform the staff member if contact is subsequently made by the missing person.

Any such concern should be raised immediately with the student’s Programme Lead or, in their absence, the Campus Dean.

Programme Leads should at this stage contact Student Services to check that the student is still registered on the course, obtain their attendance records and ascertain the student’s last date of attendance.

Where concern is raised from someone outside of the University, information should not be disclosed on confidentiality grounds however staff can contact students to advise them that a concern has been raised, e.g. we are able to prompt a student that their parent has been in touch without releasing any details to the parent and will encourage the student to make contact.

If there is still concern after taking these steps, the Programme Lead should attempt to contact the student by email (to both personal and University account).

If the Programme Lead does not manage to make contact by email within 1 working day*, they should then follow up by:
- Phone, preferably mobile
- Text message (where a mobile number is available) if no contact made by phone

Contact can also be attempted by landline numbers, however staff should ensure that confidentiality is maintained when leaving any voicemail messages or if speaking to anyone else residing at the same address. Staff should ensure that they do not disclose the reason for making contact with the student. If contact is made with the student, whether by mobile or landline, the identity of the student should be verified prior to disclosing the reason for calling, for example by confirming their date of birth and Student Reference Number. Investigations must be carried out discreetly without causing undue alarm.

If a response to initial contact has not been received within 24 hours* and the concern for a student’s welfare remains, the Programme Lead should escalate the matter to the Head of Student Support Services and Campus Dean.

Note; Students sponsored by the University on a Tier 4 Student visa are expected to fully comply with the Attendance Policy for Tier 4 Students. Where a student’s attendance falls below 90% for unauthorised reasons and/or they have ten or more consecutive unexplained absences, the University is required to report the student to the Home Office. The International Visa Office should also be notified if a Tier 4 student is considered to be a Missing person as defined above.
Stage 2 – Investigation, Risk Profile, Report & Escalation

Concerns raised via Stage 1 of these protocols or through the standard attendance monitoring process will be managed by the Head of Student Support Services.

Investigation

After escalation, the Head of Student Support Services will investigate the following:

- Last known contact with missing person including date, time, contact type and any supporting key information
- Normal patterns of contact
- Last login to the University’s IT systems
- Attendance records including any reasons known relating to previous absences where appropriate
- Assessment records including any reasons for recent concessions where appropriate
- Visa status for non-EEA students
- Age – under 18 or over 65?
- Previous access to student support or wellbeing services, last date of contact, relevant background information, e.g. disability status, and confirmation of any future appointments booked
- Last activity by missing person on social media (where possible)
- Whether emergency contact/next of kin details are available

The following may be contacted discreetly and without disclosing the reason for making the request for contact information about the missing person, to see if they can provide any useful information:

- those sharing term time accommodation where appropriate;
- staff and students who have contact with the missing student;
- Student Association, particularly if the missing person is a member of any groups or partakes in any activities/sports;
- GP where appropriate; and
- any other known social contacts.

All contacts made and information gathered should be documented.

Where there is genuine concern about a missing person’s welfare then information can be shared if this is in the legitimate interests of the student concerned. However, all parties to the information have to be made aware of the need to maintain confidentiality wherever possible.

In order to avoid unnecessary distress to the missing person’s family, in most circumstances they need not be contacted until any investigation has been completed and as much clarity as possible about the absence has been obtained. However it is important to maintain a degree of flexibility dependant on the circumstances.
Risk profile

When conducting the investigation and information gathering tasks it is important to establish the following about the missing person:

- do they suffer from any form of physical or mental health condition that makes them considered a high risk?
- do they require essential medication or treatment?
- is their absence a significant change in their established pattern of behaviour, which cannot be explained, and gives reason that some harm may befall them or suspicion of abduction?
- are they usually resident abroad and have gone missing in the UK?
- are they usually resident in the UK and have gone missing abroad?
- are there any drug/alcohol related difficulties?
- have they stated an intent to harm themselves/others?
- have they recently been involved in racial/violent incidents(s)?
- have they been a victim of crime, especially harassment, bullying or violence?
- have they previously expressed extremist views and may be at risk of radicalisation?
- do they partake in any hazardous sports or activities?
- have they had any recent injuries, especially head injuries?
- are there adverse weather, travel or security alert conditions?
- do they have a previous history of having been missing?
- are there known to be family/relationship difficulties?
- are there known to be academic difficulties?
- are there known to be financial problems?
- how long is it since the missing person was last seen by any member of the University community?

The Head of Student Support Services will use the risk profile to identify an appropriate course of action which may involve some, all, or none of the following:

1. Do nothing for the time being – this option should only be pursued after full investigation and consultation with the Safeguarding Officer and Campus Dean; and/or

2. Unless there is a clear reason as to why not, contact the student’s next of kin; and/or

3. Contact the police.
Missing Persons Protocols

Report

Once the investigation and information gathering tasks are complete the Head of Student Support Services should report all findings and his/her action recommendation to the Campus Dean who should be kept updated at all times. The Head of the International Visa Office should also be informed if the student is enrolled with a Tier 4 visa.

If the Head of Student Support Services feels there are continued grounds for concern, they may attempt further contact with the missing person using all means of communication available. A letter/email should be sent advising the student of the level of concern and requesting urgent contact. The student should be advised that, if we do not hear from them within 48 hours*, the University will need to make contact with their next of kin and/or the police.

Note: where contact has already been attempted by the Programme Lead in accordance with the attendance monitoring process, the Head of Student Support Services will consider whether to make immediate contact with next of kin and/or the police dependent on the level of risk identified. In these cases, the student will already have received notification from the Programme Lead that this action may be taken.

Escalation

If the missing person does not make contact within 48 hours*, the Head of Student Support Services may attempt to make contact with the next of kin where known. If this does not result in the wellbeing of the student being satisfactorily confirmed, the missing person should be reported to the police immediately.

The Head of Student Support Services should ensure that they have sufficient information before contacting the police. This includes (but is not limited to) the following information about the missing person:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Current address
- Contact numbers
- Next of kin contact details
- Home address (where applicable)
- Reason the student is believed to be missing
- Contact details for the person who made the report
- Details of when the student was last seen (including date, time, location, who they were last with)
- Physical description
- Any vulnerabilities
- Any relevant history

Where contact is made, the member of staff should attempt to find out the whereabouts of the student and ascertain whether any support is needed. The student should be
asked to contact the person who has reported their concerns or, if they have provided their written consent, for the University to update the person on their behalf.

*Timescales within these protocols are indicative but action may be taken sooner depending on the level of risk identified.

Analysis

Following a missing person incident, the Head of Student Support Services will complete a report to highlight lessons learned and inform the development of this document and procedures and the University’s Missing Persons Policy.

Date for next review

November 2020

Version history:

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<th>Version</th>
<th>Amended by</th>
<th>Revision summary</th>
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<td>V1.0</td>
<td>Head of Student Support Services</td>
<td>Initial Draft</td>
<td>16/03/2017</td>
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<td>V1.1</td>
<td>Director of Operational Services</td>
<td>Minor amendments</td>
<td>13/04/2017</td>
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<td>V1.2</td>
<td>Legal</td>
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<td>7/5/2017</td>
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<td>V1.3</td>
<td>Head of Student Support Services</td>
<td>Incorporate feedback from Campus Deans</td>
<td>15/09/2017</td>
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<td>V1.4</td>
<td>Head of Student Support Services</td>
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<td>27/11/2017</td>
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<td>V1.5</td>
<td>Registry Officer</td>
<td>Change to coding convention</td>
<td>24/03/20</td>
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### Missing Student Action Sheet

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's full name (and preferred name, if different)</th>
<th>SRN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth/Age</td>
<td>Disability/SpLD?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>If yes, give details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visa status (non-EEA)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Address (term time) (inc telephone contact details)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address (home) (inc telephone contact details)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where and when last seen and by whom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When last seen, were they with anyone? If so, name and contact details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is their absence typical or unusual (give details)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have they missed any assessments/submitted concessions within the last 2 weeks (give details)?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When last seen, what was their state of mind and is there any reason to consider them vulnerable?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and contact details of person who reported the missing student</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Action taken</td>
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Signature:  
Date: