

**International
students in crisis**
a guide for institutions

by Neil Gaskin

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UKCOSA has endeavoured to check that all the information given in this guide is correct at the time of going to press. However, it cannot take responsibility for any errors or omissions. Institutions will need to make their own decisions about how to plan for and respond to crises, and seek professional advice where appropriate.

1 INTRODUCTION

This guide aims to help educational institutions in the UK prepare for and respond to international students in crisis. UKCOSA recognises the valuable work done by tutors, counsellors, welfare officers and others who, in the normal course of their duties, advise and support students going through personal crises. The guide does not attempt to advise such people as to how to go about their normal duties, but seeks to complement existing good practice in the following ways:

- By supporting staff with an international student welfare role, in dealing with the international dimensions of the student crises that they can reasonably expect to encounter.
- By helping institutions plan for and manage critical incidents involving international students, particularly those which have an impact on and disrupt the normal running of the institution, because they make abnormal demands upon staff and resources.

We must state at the outset that the guide provides a template and does not prescribe procedures. Institutions will adopt and adapt as they see fit, according to their own circumstances and fitting in with institutional crisis management plans already in existence. Some of the advice will inevitably appear simplistic to institutions with many years of experience of international students, but we are including it for the benefit of those institutions with less experience of such matters.

The guide generally refers to international students, but much of the advice may also be helpful when accompanying dependants of international students are in crisis - if the institution takes a role in assisting in such circumstances.

This guide is written for a wide audience in all types of educational institutions across the UK, from administrative staff dealing daily with students to senior managers making planning, policy and budgetary

decisions. Institutions outside the UK may also find it useful, and indeed it draws upon the experience and expertise of staff in institutions in North America, Europe, Australia and elsewhere.

1A DEFINING CRISIS

In a state of crisis one is no longer able to rely on one's usual coping mechanisms, usually because abnormal events cause these to break down or fail. This inability to cope may apply only to an individual, or extend to a group of people, an institution, a country or a geographical region.

Many UK and international students experience personal crises of varying gravity, for financial, academic, psychological or other reasons. Larger scale crises and events, such as a natural disaster or political unrest in the country of origin, often have a severe impact on students and on those close to them, including institutional staff. This guide focuses on the international and cross-cultural dimensions of crises affecting individuals, with the aim of encouraging institutions to make plans that explicitly acknowledge and incorporate the circumstances of international students.

1B TYPES OF CRISIS COVERED

This guide deals first with personal crises, whether or not they are part of some larger-scale crisis, then addresses additional issues which arise when a group of students are affected by a shared experience of crisis. A crisis for an individual is something normal institutional mechanisms are designed to deal with. However, in extreme cases (such as an outbreak of meningitis) normal functioning of the institution is affected – the institution itself may be in a crisis state. We therefore consider how to prepare for institutional crises with an international student aspect.

Aspects of crisis can be sub-divided into those that are primarily related to finance, physical health, mental health, legal or political matters. However, it is an impossible task to fit a crisis easily into a single category and crises will be, in nearly all cases, multifaceted.

We examine the following common crisis situations:

Individual:

- Being a victim of serious crime, assault or harassment
- Having committed or facing an accusation of a serious crime
- Going missing
- Experiencing severe mental health problems
- Experiencing serious injury or illness
- Death of a student

Group:

- Outbreak of communicable disease, such as meningitis
- Crisis in the home country such as financial turmoil, political upheaval or natural disaster

Many aspects of planning are common to more than one type of crisis so they are grouped together in Section 3B, to avoid repetition.

2 PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CRISIS

Note: When advising on courses of action we use 'you' as a form of shorthand. We are not suggesting that it is the job of one person, such as an International Student Adviser, to carry out all the actions, nor would it be possible or desirable for one person to do so. In all cases, it should be the most appropriate person or people in the institution – often specialists or senior members of staff – who should act. Given the variation between institutions in the structure and systems, we have only attempted to give an indication of the type of staff member likely to be in an appropriate position or to possess suitable expertise.

"The problem of disaster and its management can be divided into four areas

1. Mitigation - activities designed to reduce the likelihood of disaster happening...
2. Preparedness - including planning, public education and training potential service providers.
3. Response - the provision of emergency response...
4. Recovery - longer-term efforts to assist, or rebuild the affected community." (Tierney KJ, 1989, quoted in Hodgkinson and Stewart, 1991)

Although this passage is taken from a book that deals with large-scale emergencies such as the Zeebrugge car ferry disaster in 1987, the four areas provide a useful framework for planning for crisis in general.

In the case of educational institutions dealing with international students:

Mitigation includes provision of:

- 1) pre-arrival information covering
 - a) health care
 - b) insurance
 - c) finance and banking
 - d) student responsibilities
 - e) a realistic picture of student life
- 2) orientation events
- 3) cultural awareness training for staff and students
- 4) tutoring
- 5) counselling
- 6) social activities
- 7) mentoring
- 8) language support.

Preparedness implies having procedures that takes account of international student crises, backed up by staff training and a budget. We will call this stage preparation throughout these guidelines.

Response means putting the procedures into action swiftly and calmly.

Recovery could involve:

- 1) follow-up counselling for students
- 2) individual assistance plans for students covering fee payments and academic readjustment
- 3) debriefing and counselling of staff
- 4) modifications to institutional practices and procedures
- 5) revision of budgets
- 6) staff development and training

Any lessons learned from the recovery stage should feed back into the preparation, mitigation and response stages so that a virtuous circle is created.

2: Preventing and Responding to Crisis

This guide will make use of this broad approach to describe the different stages of dealing with individual crises. Many institutions will already have their own procedures in place. We hope they will find something useful in the guide to help them improve those procedures, based on the lessons learned.

So that we do not simply see crisis management as a necessary evil, but also view it constructively, we should bear in mind that, through experiencing a crisis, people and organisations can grow and develop. Indeed, crisis management should not just be about containment or damage limitation, but should also include, particularly in the recovery stage, provision for learning from the experience, both for the students and for the institution.

Hoff (1995) describes various possible responses to a crisis by an individual:

1. The person can return to his or her pre-crisis state;
2. The person may not only return to the pre-crisis state but can grow from the crisis experience through discovery of new resources and ways of solving problems;
3. The person responds to his or her problem by lapsing into neurotic, psychotic or destructive patterns of behaviour.

An institution has a similar set of options. Often after a crisis we simply aim to avoid any negative outcome and return to the pre-crisis state, but there is no reason not to try to grow from the experience. Here, we are concerned not just with the student's recovery from crisis, but also with the institution's recovery, and it is on the basis that institutions would wish for this positive outcome for their students, staff and management that UKCOSA has written this guide.

3 RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CRISIS

Before discussing how to plan for specific crises, there are some general observations about identifying and responding to students in crisis.

3A THE SIGNS OF A CRISIS

In some cases, such as a death, it is self-evident that there is a crisis to which staff need to respond. In others, there may be no clear outward signs – so how do staff know there is a crisis and that it is time to act?

The most common signs of a potential crisis are:

- Students say that they feel distressed
- Their academic performance suffers
- There are signs of lethargy in their approach to academic work and in general
- Students are overactive or work too hard
- Their behaviour becomes erratic
- Absence levels rise

In some cases, students will approach a member of staff, such as an academic tutor, but others may feel inhibited or ashamed to let it be known that they are in a critical situation. This means that staff need to be aware of individual students' normal behaviour so that they can recognise when they have departed from the norm, and to what extent, then decide whether action is needed, and if so to what extent. In some cases, students will benefit simply from talking through their situation with a tutor or counsellor, to help them realise that they themselves can or should take action or, alternatively, that there are people inside or outside the institution who can and will help them. Only rarely will a more extensive response be appropriate.

In most institutions, it will be impossible for one person or department to know all the international students well enough to keep an eye on changes in patterns of behaviour, so there is clearly a need for good communications and agreed procedures for referral and intervention across the institution. The international office is one obvious place to be a central point of referral. Alternatively, the role could be fulfilled by student support and welfare services. The relevant staff need to develop a good network of contacts across the institution, so that they gain the confidence of colleagues and are able to learn quickly of any students in difficulty.

i) Cultural aspects

Personal crises are more likely to occur when people are at a transitional stage in their lives. International students are in such a state of transition. They may be adapting to a new culture and missing their home culture, living away from their families for the first time, making important decisions about the future directions of their lives or struggling with their studies.

The very fact of being in a new and different culture could trigger off a crisis for some individuals. Many studies of culture shock and cultural adjustment identify a stage where the person goes through a period of negative feelings towards the new culture. These feelings can lead to severe personal crisis. International students and home students share many of the same potential difficulties, but the former are often separated by a longer distance from their usual means of social and emotional support, and face greater barriers of language, culture and unfamiliarity with their environment.

Anyone who has worked in a multicultural environment should be aware that it is not always possible to interpret a person's behaviour according to one's own cultural norms. When trying to judge whether a student is experiencing difficulties, therefore, we cannot assume that what we perceive to be a crisis according to our own norms is seen as such by others. Furthermore, we could even precipitate a crisis by reacting to a situation as if it were critical when, in fact, those affected by it do not

view it as such. The difficulties involved in interpreting behaviour across cultures mean that staff must seek confirmation that their perceptions of students apparently in crisis are accurate before making any intervention.

It is now widely recognised in institutions that personnel dealing with international students need cultural awareness, so that they can interact with the student body in ways that are appropriate and sensitive to cultural differences. Awareness-raising is only a first step, putting an onus on individuals to develop a frame of mind which leads them to find out more about different cultures, both as a rewarding exercise in its own right, but also as a tool for understanding and relating to students.

Background information gleaned from international students about their culture can prove very useful in times of crisis, as you can learn about how families operate, the value placed on education and customs and beliefs relating to life events such birth, death, marriage and divorce, for example. In addition, institutional staff who show an interest in and some level of understanding of the culture of an international student in normal times are more likely to gain that student's trust in a time of crisis. It is better not to wait to gather the background information until crisis hits. When gathering such information, remember:

1. One country will be home to many cultures, so ask students to be precise about whom they are describing
2. You may only be getting one person's view, so make sure you get others from the same cultural background to confirm your observations
3. Check what you are told against other reliable sources

Cross-cultural understanding, however, requires more than a knowledge of traditions and cultural practices. Staff need to develop an awareness of the ways in which culture mediates communication – how staff and students understand and react to one another. Training sessions are vital in developing these skills, coupled with regular contact with students.

One of the aims of welfare and advice work with international students, as with home students, is to build up a picture of them as individuals, but also to detect trends in students from the same background, in order to be better able to meet their needs. Staff can sensitise themselves to difficulties at an early stage through their own personal reflection and by comparing notes with their colleagues. Over time, staff working with international students should build up awareness and sensitivity to common patterns of behaviour. They must guard against developing stereotypes, but generalisations can be helpful, as long as they remain open to modification in the light of experience.

An overemphasis on cultural differences can lead to fear of action. Individuals involved in crisis intervention should not be terrified to act at the risk of offending or committing some terrible cultural blunder. Most experiences, reactions and emotions are common to all people. International students have many of the same experiences as home students and react in the same ways.

ii) Knowledge of the students' countries of origin

A fundamental part of international recruitment work – and of on-going student support - is to have reliable, up-to-date information on the countries your students come from, so you understand the events which may be affecting them. Every country has its subtleties, whether they be political, social, cultural, economic, linguistic or historical, and responsible recruitment and welfare work require an awareness of these. At least know what are the potential causes of crisis for your students, and where to go for reliable information. For example, when the currency crisis struck South East Asia in 1997/98, it was extremely difficult to understand the impact of the crisis on students without a basic knowledge of the different ethnic groups in Malaysia and their relationship to each other and to the state.

This sort of information can be gleaned from sources such as the British Council, reference books, the media, embassies, but also directly from students. Most students will gladly talk about their home country and

information gained from them in normal times will be useful to you at times of crisis.

Once a crisis is under way, where students are affected by events happening in their home country, then it is vital to obtain regular updated information on events in that country. With modern telecommunications and the Internet, this is not a difficult task, and there are some useful website addresses in appendix B.

iii) The effect of crisis on other students

It is important to bear in mind that if one student is experiencing a crisis, then there is the possibility of a knock-on effect on others from the same background. The effect will vary hugely according to circumstances, but one student's predicament may cause others to feel indirectly slighted or at the centre of unwanted attention. For instance, if a student is found guilty of sexual assault, students from the same background may fear that others will stir up ill feeling against them as a result.

On the other hand, compatriots may wish to show solidarity with a fellow student in crisis and be willing to assist in making practical arrangements such as interpreting, providing accommodation for relatives or explaining cultural aspects of the situation.

Do not assume that one or the other is the case, but be sensitive to the potential range of responses.

iv) The effect of crisis on accompanying dependants

Many international students are accompanied by a partner or spouse and/or children. A crisis affecting one will inevitably impact on the other(s), and institutions need to take this into account in their response. On the one hand, it may in some respects be easier to deal with a crisis such as illness or death when the next of kin is near at hand - and may even wish to take charge of arrangements him/herself rather than leaving this to the institution. On the other hand, the family members

may themselves require support and assistance, and in the case of children accompanying a single parent undergoing a crisis, the extent of support required may be considerable.

3B GENERAL ASPECTS OF A RESPONSE

i) Respect for students' needs and rights

Many international students will have an excellent command of the English language and substantial experience of looking after themselves in the UK. They may have already solved all kinds of problems for themselves without help. Therefore you should always check with the student whether he or she wants you to intervene at all and if so whether he or she agrees with the proposed course of action. The student may wish to act for him/herself or the action you propose may be inappropriate. Not only could you lose the trust of the student but there may also be legal ramifications if you act without a student's consent. Both the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act provide potential grounds for legal proceedings against institutions or individuals.

ii) Legal implications

This section does not set out expert legal opinion on the issues outlined. It merely sketches out the potential legal issues involved in planning for and managing a crisis. The following advice has been simplified and does not provide a definitive guide.

Institutions will be well aware of the increasing amount of legislation and case law governing the relationship between it and its students and staff. In addition to the long-established legislation on racial and sexual discrimination, there is the more recent Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which is expected to apply to educational institutions in the future. The definition of disability arguably covers students with mental health support needs, so if a crisis has a mental health aspect, then institutions should assure themselves that they are not discriminating in any way.

The 1998 Data Protection Act enhances an individual's right to access data that are or have been processed on them by individuals and

organisations such as an educational institution. From October 2001 this will include manual records in filing systems from which it is possible to identify the subject, as well as those held on computers. A number of recommendations arise from this, so you should consult your institution's data protection expert as part of the planning exercise, particularly on what is suitable wording for a consent form.

UKCOSA recommends that:

- Wherever relevant, institutions obtain a student's written consent to the processing of data. Note that the absence of dissent does not constitute consent. Institutions are obliged by law to process data for some purposes, such as making statistical returns. In such cases, consent is not required
- Students receive written information about the type of data being processed, the purposes for which the data are processed, the people who will have access to these data and under what circumstances, including potential crises

Consent can be obtained at registration at the beginning of each academic session, but, if a crisis arises, then it would be a good idea to reconfirm the student's consent.

Other points to note:

- The Act places restrictions on the transmission of data outside the EEA.
- Under the Act, you can transmit data without the student's consent if you are acting in the student's vital interests. This is commonly taken to mean that it is a matter of life or death.
- You can transmit data without the student's consent if it is being done under a contractual obligation, eg with a student's sponsor, or if it is in connection with legal proceedings, the administration of justice or the exercise of government functions. However we recommend that you only disclose data in response to a written request from the relevant government department or other office,

explaining why and under which legislation they are making the request.

- Bear in mind that any expression of opinion about a student could be seen by them following a request for access to data.
- Data must be kept securely. This means that computerised data should be password-protected, and manual records must be in a lockable filing cabinet. There need to be arrangements for emergency access to the data for designated staff.

iii) Duty of care

Under the contractual relationship between the student and the institution, as under any contractual relationship, the supplier of services (the institution) has an obligation to act with reasonable care and skill. It is therefore important to establish the limitations on the institution's responsibilities and on individual staff members' actions so that they do not act beyond their competence and leave the institution open to charges of negligence. Relevant staff will need to be given training in understanding those limits and where responsibilities lie within an institution. In areas where they are designated as responsible, the institution should provide training if required to ensure that they can carry out their responsibilities adequately.

The CVCP's *Guidelines on Student Mental Health Policies and Procedures for Higher Education* (CVCP 2000) suggests that an institution may have an enhanced duty of care as regards what it calls "more vulnerable groups" of students, such as international students. Unfortunately, there is very little case law in this area to help define the extent of duty of care.

iv) Make students aware of their responsibilities

Pre-arrival information, orientation events and other literature for international students all provide an opportunity to take action to avoid or mitigate crisis. New students need comprehensive honest information on the following, together with advice on action to take and where to obtain further advice:

- The need to take out insurance covering accident, serious injury and death, particularly including repatriation costs (although some will not take out insurance because it is against their beliefs)
- Alcohol and drugs, including the potential for misuse
- Sexually transmitted diseases, including but not only HIV/AIDS
- Racism
- Crime, including assault
- Banking arrangements
- Living costs

Many students take out a health cover policy. If they are staying for more than six months they will not need this, as the National Health Service covers them. Instead their money would be better spent on a policy that pays for repatriation, either for medical treatment, or in the event of death.

Institutions may feel reluctant to paint too bleak a picture through fear of putting students off coming. The picture needs to be balanced with accurate figures about the number of students who have unpleasant experiences. It is also very useful to get the help of current students when compiling information for new students and to involve them in orientation activities so that new students get a picture of any potential risks from a similar viewpoint to their own. Mentoring or 'buddy' schemes can play a part too, both in helping new students become aware of potential risks to safety, and providing an early warning system of things going wrong.

Once a crisis has emerged, then students should play as active a part as they can in dealing with it. They should not be encouraged to wait for the institution to find the solution, but should be seen as active partners in tackling the situation.

v) Limits on individual staff actions

A pitfall to be avoided when acting in a helping role is the temptation to do too much. Sometimes, when one person sees another person in distress, he or she can become too involved, taking over the situation,

perhaps in order to make him or herself feel good and valued. The effect can be to smother the person in crisis with an overemotional reaction. A student may simply need practical assistance and instead finds him or herself being offered all kinds of unsolicited support.

Individuals should not be in a position where they are acting alone, unable to check with colleagues that their action is appropriate. There is a danger of this happening in a smaller institution where one member of staff may have a number of roles. In such institutions, some backup mechanism is needed, and it may even be necessary to arrange for somebody external to provide it. This may be particularly necessary where there is only one student support or welfare officer in the institution. It is a condition of their profession that counsellors are supervised. Welfare officers often are not supervised but may well benefit from it equally.

Different cultures will define the roles of institutional staff differently. In some countries staff will be acting in loco parentis, whereas in others there will be no pastoral involvement at all. Consequently, staff need to clarify for themselves the boundaries between the personal and professional, to be aware that students may have different expectations and to make clear to students what those boundaries are.

vi) Student records

In order to respond quickly in a crisis, institutions will need to have certain background data on individual students. Note the following:

- Institutions should obtain the details of an emergency contact person (normally next of kin) for all their students, explaining to the student the circumstances under which the person might be contacted.
- Students should be asked to confirm that the details are correct at least once a year.
- Under Data Protection legislation, institutions must obtain the student's permission to contact the person, unless the student is in a life or death situation.
- This information must be readily accessible at any time – crises don't just happen in office hours, so key staff need to be able to get emergency details whenever they are needed.

- In large institutions, records are usually kept both centrally and by individual teaching departments. There is therefore the potential for inconsistencies between different sets of records. This could lead to confusion, delays and worse. Institutional procedures need to ensure consistent record keeping across the institution, with a clear allocation of responsibility for its collection and maintenance.
- Institutions should consider whether to obtain details of whether the student is accompanied by a partner, spouse or children.

vii) Immigration implications

A crisis is likely to affect a student's position under UK immigration law in one or more of the following ways:

1. He or she has to request an extension of leave to remain beyond the normal length of the studies as the crisis has had a negative effect on academic progress.
2. He or she is unable to study full-time for personal rather than financial reasons and needs to request leave to study part-time outside the immigration rules.
3. He or she has to apply for further leave to remain and is unable to demonstrate that she has sufficient funds to support him/herself due to the crisis.
4. The situation in the student's home country may be such that he or she is frightened to return there and wishes to remain in the UK for the foreseeable future.
5. He or she may be subject to a deportation order if he or she has broken the law. Immigration offences and criminal offences which are punishable by imprisonment are likely to lead to deportation proceedings.

In fact, all these scenarios are fairly regular occurrences and in many cases can be resolved with a satisfactory outcome for the student. However, any advice on immigration matters should be given only by an adviser authorised by the institution in relation to its duties under Part V of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Briefly, in the first two scenarios, the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) will generally allow the student to remain and continue their studies if he or she gives a satisfactory account of the reasons for the situation, has the written support of the institution and has evidence of adequate funding. The third scenario is more problematic and will probably mean that the student has to suspend their studies and leave the country unless finance can be arranged quickly. The fourth and fifth scenarios may well be beyond the expertise of all but the most experienced advisers and are likely to need the advice of a specialist immigration or asylum advice agency. Part of crisis planning should therefore be to:

- Ensure that at least one member of staff has a sufficient level of expertise in immigration matters.
- Identify any potential sources of emergency funding for students.
- Identify and develop working relations with specialist advisers locally, or nationally, if there are none locally.

UKCOSA provides advice to its members on handling these situations, through its publications, training and telephone advice service. Advisers who are new to the work should ensure that they have access to *Onyx*, the *UKCOSA Manual* or other equally authoritative guidance, such as that provided by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (see appendix A for details).

viii) Financial implications

International student funding frequently arises as a difficulty, even when not exacerbated by other issues. Students regularly come to the UK with inadequate funding from the outset, not only when dependent on private funding but even when funded by scholarship and sponsorship schemes. They may still gain entry despite the immigration rules requiring them to demonstrate adequate levels of funding. Many institutions ask for a financial guarantee, but these are often of little real value. This state of affairs is so frequent that it cannot be seen as a crisis in the sense addressed in this guide. Information about dealing with finance and funding issues for international students can be found in the *UKCOSA Manual* and *Onyx*.

However, funding problems often only emerge when a critical incident occurs or can be the precipitating factor that triggers a crisis. Many crises will have a direct or indirect impact on a student's budget, leaving them in financial difficulties. Indeed, in some cases, the first indication of a student's difficulties will be late or non-payment of tuition fees or accommodation charges. For this reason alone, the finance office, or the office responsible for collecting fees, and the student accommodation service should be part of the early warning system.

Both staff and students may feel inhibited about discussing students' finances, for example because of cultural norms which treat such things as a private and personal matter. However, the matter has to be broached openly and frankly, to make a realistic assessment of the situation and find ways of tackling it.

For those students who started out with sufficient funds, large institutions generally approach financial hardship brought about by a crisis by putting students through a formal application process, asking them to apply to a hardship fund or for a reduction in tuition fees. This has the advantage of achieving consistency, as they all have to produce documentary evidence of their circumstances, and it also means that you can control the number of applications by imposing deadlines and other conditions. Formal schemes are fairer as the criteria can be agreed with student representatives, written down and publicised. The people responsible for awarding money will inevitably have to make some tough decisions, which is another reason why it is advisable to have formal criteria and procedures, and a committee rather than an individual responsible.

Discretionary funds awarded on the approval of a small number of members of the senior management have a part to play in compassionate circumstances but cannot cope with a whole group in crisis.

Institutions who recruit international students should consider setting up hardship mechanisms, by putting a small proportion of each international student fee into a dedicated fund. For further information about

hardship funds, see appendix E and the *UKCOSA Manual* and *Onyx*. This is not to say that institutions have a duty to come to the rescue of every student in financial hardship. Students have a responsibility to bear for their own finances. Any financial assistance scheme has to be carefully thought out so that it targets those who are most deserving of help, but they must also be those who can benefit from it, i.e. those who will then be able to continue their studies.

It is also important to bear in mind that for some students applying for financial assistance may carry a sense of stigma, so you may want to seek ways of encouraging students in real hardship to feel able to apply.

ix) Debts

If a student cannot pay his or her fees, there is a good chance of there being other financial problems. He or she may be in arrears with rent, utility bills or other payments, such as credit cards. Students from different cultures will have different attitudes to debt, and in certain cases may be so ashamed of it that they find it enormously difficult to talk through their problems. It is important to encourage open discussion, having first established with the student to what extent cultural aspects affect their reaction.

Many student welfare departments will have a debt counsellor or good access to one in the local area and you may well find that a student will talk happily to someone from outside the institution, as he or she will not be seen as having any vested interest in the matter.

The question of whether students with debts to the institution can progress or graduate is highly contentious. There is a widely held view that, under Data Protection legislation, it is illegal to withhold the results of examinations and assessments from students with debts, but that it is legitimate to bar them from progressing or receiving a degree, diploma or other award until debts have been paid. However, to withhold results could be a contravention of the European Convention on Human Rights 1950 and the Human Rights Act 1998 if it was considered that the negative effects of withholding the results (eg inability to take up a job

or postgraduate place) were disproportionate to the [legitimate] aim of recovering the debt. Institutions need to have clear policies in place based on sound legal advice in this area.

x) Academic progress

Institutional policies on academic progress no doubt cater for students affected by circumstances such as illness and personal crisis. It is important that the policies are flexible enough to recognise the extra dimension that such unforeseen circumstances have for international students. For instance, a death in the family may necessitate an absence of a few days for a UK student, whereas an international student may need to be away for some weeks, for both cultural and practical reasons.

xi) Communication with the student's family overseas

Communications in some developing countries are not always as reliable as in the UK. If you need to contact family of an international student overseas, you should identify the most reliable method of contacting them whether that be phone, fax, email, telex or telegram. Important documents might need to be dispatched by courier. Ask students what works best in their country. Be ready to use all the options.

You may need to go through an intermediary, such as a consulate in the UK or elsewhere in Europe, a British embassy abroad or a British Council office in the student's home country. Keep up to date lists of telephone, fax and email details. The London Diplomatic List (see appendix A) gives details of all embassies, high commissions and consulates, including the names of staff.

If you have government-sponsored students, then it is helpful to have a named contact person in the relevant embassy or high commission, so that they can help smooth the way with any formalities, particularly in the event of a death. Other scholarship administering bodies such as the British Council or Association of Commonwealth Universities also have a pastoral role in respect of their students, and should be involved when appropriate.

3: Recognising and Responding to International Students in Crisis

This section has dealt with some of the general aspects of dealing with crises which may arise in a broad range of circumstances. We now move on to consider particular types of circumstance and the procedures for dealing with them.

4 PLANNING FOR AND RESPONDING TO SPECIFIC CRISES

This section deals with crises caused by particular types of event and offers advice on actions that institutions can take in response. We must stress, however, that we are not suggesting that you have to carry out all of the actions described. Your response may well include only some of those actions suggested, depending on the particular circumstances and the wishes of the students affected. We would also stress that, in all but the most urgent life-threatening situations, your response should be agreed with the student(s) affected, or with their proxies if necessary.

4A STUDENT IS VICTIM OF ASSAULT OR HARASSMENT

Below we examine situations where a student has been violently or sexually assaulted, or has experienced racial or sexual harassment.

Mitigation

Racial harassment

International students new to the UK, particularly those who have not lived in a similar environment before, need to be made aware of the possibility of being the target of a violent crime. The fact that an assault could be racially motivated should not be ignored. This is a sensitive issue, as institutions will want to minimise the likelihood of students being attacked, while painting a positive picture of the area in which the students will live and study. Remember that there is violent crime almost anywhere in the world and that most students will be in the habit of guarding against it. The majority of students are not attacked during their stay and most will be familiar with the basic precautions. However, anyone in an unfamiliar situation is more at risk.

Pre-arrival and induction information should include realistic advice on how to reduce the risk of being a victim of such an attack. However, publishing advice on which parts of the town or city to avoid could lead

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to difficulties with those communities. Such advice is best given orally, and supported by evidence.

International students should be given the same advice about personal safety as home students. However, they may be less familiar with potential danger signals and situations to avoid (such as pub closing times in certain areas). If considering giving international students briefings on the risks of racial harassment and attack, work with your local Race Equality Council or trained racial harassment counsellors and equal opportunities staff on campus.

Violent incidents on campus are very rare, but do happen. Depending on the extent to which it is possible to control entry, institutions will try to make sure that only bona fide students, staff and visitors gain access to the campus, so that anyone from outside the institution who wishes to threaten or abuse students is unable to enter the premises. Institutions should be aware of the possibility of incidents occurring, particularly if there is any history or indication of resentment in the local community targeted at minority ethnic groups or foreigners. Institutions will no doubt keep their security arrangements under review.

Sexual harassment

Differing cultural norms concerning sexual relations are potential sources of distress for international students. Some may not be aware of how their behaviour could be interpreted by people from other cultures. Such misunderstandings could lead one person to believe that their sexual advances are welcomed when they are not. Similarly, some students' lack of familiarity with the language and conventions could lead to them being threatened or assaulted.

National and institutional guidance on equal opportunities, racism and sexism should be consulted when planning induction materials on such topics.

Preparation

Institutions should establish good relations with local police, who can usually provide leaflets and videos and a speaker on crime prevention and safety. Community liaison officers will normally be pleased to come to the campus and meet staff and student representatives to discuss how you can work together to combat crime and increase safety. This can be a good opportunity to find out about local crime facts and figures, let the police know about the make-up of your student body, the areas in which they tend to live and to make contact with community representatives on the local police and community liaison groups. All this work should mean that working with the police is easier should any critical incidents occur. However, you should brief the police officer(s) before they talk to students so that they are aware of the make-up of the student body. Police officers may make insensitive or inappropriate comments and alienate students.

Literature produced for students should make it clear where to go if they wish to report an attack, stressing the complete confidentiality of the service, offering the use of an interpreter where viable, and the opportunity to speak to someone of the same sex as the student.

Some institutions, particularly in London and other major cities, enrol students from a huge range of backgrounds, and the potential for racial tension between different groups must be acknowledged. Institutions need to take positive steps to promote a safe non-threatening environment on campus, and be alert to the signs of tension. The institution's Equal Opportunities Officer, Local Authority Equalities Officers or local Racial Equality Councils can advise on promoting good race relations.

Response

1. Actual violent assault

Once you become aware that a student has been attacked, then there will be many aspects of the response that will be the same as for a home student. The first question is whether they want a member of staff to be

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involved. If they do not want to involve anyone, then all you can do is explain the sort of help you can offer and that they can request help at a later stage if preferred. If the student wishes to involve a member of staff then someone who is experienced in dealing with delicate situations should:

- Establish the exact nature of the injuries.
- Ask if they want to report the incident to the police, acknowledging that they may have fears about becoming involved in legal proceedings in a foreign country.
- Urge the student to see a doctor and to undergo any treatment suggested by the doctor. However, you cannot force someone to see a doctor or to undergo treatment, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Check the financial implications. For instance, the student may have a job, be unable to work and be entitled to claim statutory sick pay or incapacity benefit, which are not public funds under the immigration rules.
- If a female student has been raped, she should be offered confidential advice on pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases from someone who is sensitive to cultural and gender considerations. The student must be told of the possibility of having an abortion. If she has decided to go to the police then they are likely to deal with these aspects.
- Male rape is likely to need sensitive handling. If there has been a homosexual rape, this may be particularly difficult for the victim to deal with, if he comes from a country where homosexuality is illegal or stigmatised.
- Make sure the student receives a clear explanation of the relevant law and police procedure and has discussed whether or not to take legal action.

If the attacker is another student at the institution, then this will have implications under disciplinary procedures, and you should check how your internal procedures cover such matters. Institutions should await the outcome of any legal proceedings before taking any disciplinary action.

If the attacker is a student, or even if a student is suspected, then there is the potential for the situation to escalate into a conflict between different groups of students. The reaction of those close to the student assaulted will depend on their cultural background. Be alert to the possibility of people seeking to take the law into their own hands. You are not likely to be told this directly, but previous knowledge of cultural norms may alert you to the possibility. There have been isolated reported cases of students owning firearms. Students must be warned of the illegality of seeking retribution outside the legal system.

If a member of staff has concrete evidence of a genuine threat of further violence, then they will have to consider whether to inform senior management, who will then have to decide whether to involve the police.

If the member of staff obtains this information during a confidential discussion (for instance as a counsellor) then they may be prevented from passing it on by their professional code of conduct. However, confidentiality may normally be limited if the counsellor believes that there is a realistic risk to the client or a third party, which might cover self harm, suicide, murder, child abuse, etc. In such instances, the counsellor would normally talk over the reasons for breaking confidentiality, eg to a GP or Social Services, to try to get the client's consent. If the client did not consent the counsellor would need to make an ethical decision. If the decision is to go ahead and break confidentiality, it may well end the counselling relationship as well.

Other staff will normally be governed by the principle of discretion rather than confidentiality – ie where appropriate, information may be shared with other members of staff. In either case, students should be made aware from the outset of the relationship what principles of confidentiality apply, and under what circumstances they might be broken. Institutions should have a clear policy for staff covering such circumstances. If there were to be violence, and it transpired that a member of staff knew of the threat, the victim(s) or their representatives could have grounds for taking legal action against the institution.

Victim Support is a non-governmental organisation with a national network of advisers providing confidential advice to victims of crime and those who support them. It produces a range of leaflets and publications, some of which are available in several languages. See appendix B for contact details.

2. *Harassment or threat of violence*

If an international student tells someone at the institution that they feel threatened or harassed by another student, then this should be dealt with under the relevant institutional procedures. However, if the student perceives the threat as relating to their nationality, religion or ethnic origin, or to their status, perhaps as a refugee or asylum seeker, sensitive handling will be required. Feelings of persecution must be acknowledged and students should be offered the opportunity to receive expert counselling and advice, which may only be available outside the institution.

Recovery

- Violence involving or between students can have repercussions over a long period of time for the individuals involved and for those around them.
- The students directly involved may not be able to resume their studies for some time, either because of physical injury or their mental state. This may in turn affect their academic progress, financial position and possibly their immigration status. Their difficulties must be explicitly recognised and tackled. It can be dangerous to avoid talking about the situation through fear of embarrassment or exacerbating the situation. This is a sensitive area that is best left to a skilled counsellor, hence the importance of having access to external ones if you do not have them on the staff.
- There may be an atmosphere of tension or mistrust of others among students close to the victim, which will need to be acknowledged. You will need to have good channels of communication with national

student societies to be able to tackle and defuse such situations. Be aware that tensions between groups may stem from long-term political differences and that you are unlikely to be able to remove them. By acknowledging them openly, you indicate your willingness to understand. It would be a grave mistake to dismiss them as simply irrational.

- In some circumstances, the only way to remove tensions will be for a student or students to leave the institution, preferably to continue their studies elsewhere. This is perfectly feasible under the immigration rules. It would be better if it is done voluntarily, but you should be prepared to apply some pressure if a move were the only solution. Do not try to negotiate with another institution without the student's knowledge, as this would be a clear breach of confidentiality.

4B STUDENT IS ACCUSED OF OR HAS COMMITTED A SERIOUS CRIME

This section is written on the basis that a student has been charged with, has admitted to or been found guilty of a crime punishable by imprisonment.

Mitigation

- Pre-arrival and induction materials should alert students to the fact that UK laws may well differ from those in their home country, and that breaking the law could have serious consequences, including imprisonment or deportation.
- Information on driving in the UK should emphasise the penalties for driving without the proper insurance, driving licence or vehicle documentation, as well as for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and for careless or dangerous driving.
- It should also be stressed that students should not attempt to offer any sort of gift or payment when dealing with the police.

Preparation

- Ensure in advance that you can get legal advice quickly when you need it. Many student welfare advisers have good knowledge of police and court procedures or have standard reference books (see appendix A). Many will also have good links with local solicitors or law centres and should know how to get free legal advice and representation, if necessary. If you do not have such expertise within the institution, then develop links with your Citizens' Advice Bureau, Law Centre or other advice agency. The website of the Community Legal Service (see appendix B) can point you to local sources of help.

Response

It is outside the scope of this guide to give specific legal advice, especially as there is such a range of crimes that might be considered serious. You will have to liaise with local advice agencies and solicitors as suggested above.

- All contact with the police and the courts should be channelled through one central point, with access to legal advice.
- Make sure the student has access to a solicitor and an interpreter, if necessary.
- Channel all press enquiries through one central point. Respond promptly to any media interest but do not give out any information that could identify or incriminate the student. Explain to journalists that you are obliged by law to do this. They ought to know this and they are just fishing for details.
- As far as the next of kin are concerned, act in accordance with the student's wishes. Explain to the student that if details of the alleged offence get in to the media, family and friends are likely to find out, so it is preferable for them to hear it from the student or the institution first.
- As far as other students are concerned, give them an absolute minimum of information on a 'need-to-know' basis – the principles of confidentiality still apply.
- Make sure the student understands the immigration implications. A court could recommend deportation. If it does, there is little chance

of reversing it, but the final decision rests with the Home Secretary. Chapter 14 of the JCWI *Immigration, Nationality and Refugee Law Handbook* (see appendix A) has advice on this question.

- If a student is in custody, consider whether you should enable them to continue with academic work by having a member of staff arrange to visit/telephone them regularly.

Excerpt from NACAB Information System:

"A suspect who has been arrested and is in police custody is entitled to have one friend, relative or 'other person known to her/him who is likely to take an interest in her/his welfare' (this would include a solicitor) told that s/he has been arrested and where s/he is. Under the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984] Code of Practice, the custody officer should inform a suspect of this right orally and in writing at the time detention is authorised. Visits may be received at the custody officer's discretion. If this person cannot be contacted, the suspect may choose up to two other people to notify and the officer in charge of the detention or investigation has discretion to allow further attempts. The suspect must be given writing materials on request, and allowed to speak on the telephone for a reasonable time to one other person, except in certain exceptional circumstances. Before he or she sends a letter or message, the suspect must be informed that what he or she says or writes may be listened to or read and may be given in evidence against her/him."

- Establish the implications for the student's future at the institution. What does the disciplinary code say? If he or she is found guilty does this mean expulsion? Explain the situation to the student. He or she may not understand that there are disciplinary implications.
- Be aware of the impact that this event may have on other students, particularly those of the same nationality. They may feel stigmatised by association. Offer them an opportunity to talk about it. It might be better to do this only after the student's guilt has been established, but you will need to be sensitive to the mood and respond to it. Do not ignore it, hoping it will go away.

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- If the student is ultimately found not guilty, make sure this is widely known across the institution if there has been a lot of talk about the occurrence.

Recovery

This stage will depend to a large extent to on the outcome of legal proceedings and on what crime the student has committed, if any.

- If they have been found not guilty, then you will need to agree with them if and/or how they are going to resume academic life.
- If they are found guilty, this will probably be the end of their time at your institution. Explain everything in a letter.
- Debrief those involved. Learn from the event:
 1. Did you handle the situation well?
 2. Did you have access to good legal advice?
 3. Where there any signs that this student might offend which were ignored?
 4. Did any cross-cultural misunderstandings contribute?
 5. Should you include more information on the law in your pre-arrival and induction materials?

4C MISSING STUDENT

- At what point is a student declared to be missing?
- Can you apply the same criteria to all students, home and international?

Unfortunately, there are no simple answers to these questions, and institutions would be well advised to consult with student representatives when deciding policy, as well as taking legal advice, particularly where young students under 18 are involved.

Mitigation

Other than ensuring that you have appropriate welfare and support mechanisms in place for international students, there is little else you can do to mitigate.

- There have been rare instances of students being abducted, perhaps by relatives opposed to a marriage, or for political reasons. There is little you can do to stop this, but you can ensure that your premises are as secure as they can realistically be and that unauthorised persons do not get access to students while they are on campus or to their addresses.
- Students who have recently arrived in the country may be more vulnerable, as they will not know their way around the area and may also place undue trust in strangers. Help new students familiarise themselves with the locality as part of induction.
- Pass on advice on personal safety (eg from the local police) to students.

Preparation

- Liaise with your local police as to what action to take if a student is missing.
- Decide what steps you will take to locate a student before formally declaring them to be missing.
- Make sure you have a current photograph of every student, which the police can use.
- Some institutions have a privacy policy which students have to sign up to when they enrol. As part of such a policy, you could consider including a clause stating the circumstances under which you would contact the student's next of kin without their prior consent. You could state that you would do so if the student has not been seen for a an agreed period of time.

Response

- Explore all possible avenues before declaring a student to be missing. In particular, talk to the student's friends and gain their co-operation. Find out as much as possible from them about such things as the student's habits, frame of mind and finances. You will have to decide how much of this you will do and how much the police will do. Do not go to the police immediately, unless you have real fears for a student's safety.
- The police can work through the National Missing Persons Bureau

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and Interpol if necessary, so you should not delay contacting them if you have real fears for a student's safety.

- There are websites for tracing missing persons that you could use, but you should be very wary of these as people with criminal motives could use them.
- Contact the next of kin, unless you are aware of specific reasons not to do so. You may wish to find a pretext for ringing and asking if the student is there.
- If the student has accommodation provided by the institution, security staff probably have the right to enter the accommodation under specific circumstances. Check the legal position on this, and include a clause in the accommodation contract.
- If a student is sponsored, you will have to inform the sponsor at some point. The institution's responsibilities towards the sponsor should be laid down in the sponsorship agreement.

A student may be "missing" for a very good reason that only you know.

"A Muslim woman from East Asia became pregnant and disappeared when her pregnancy began to show. This made communication with the family and other students very difficult since all I could tell them was that I knew that she was safe."

Quote from an International Student Adviser

- If you have reason to think that the student has returned home, the Family Tracing Service of the Red Cross may be able to help. (See appendix B)
- If a student is missing, to what extent do you want to publicise the fact around the institution and further? There may be sensitive personal issues involved, which the student would not thank you for making public. Agree with police how much publicity to give to the disappearance.
- If you are thinking of contacting the student's consulate or sponsor, check first whether there may be any financial or other repercussions

for the student. Establish beforehand what contractual obligations there are upon the student and the institution to report to their consulate or sponsor. You may be under an obligation to report a missing student to a consulate or sponsor.

- A student may have gone missing to avoid military service or through fear of persecution. Find out what the regulations on military service are in that country. Students from the same country should be able to tell you.
- Gauge what effect it is having on other students. If the missing student is part of a close-knit group, it could be very disruptive. Offer them the opportunity to talk about it as a group or to have individual counselling if appropriate.
- Distressed relatives may arrive from abroad. Look after them as much as you can, and ask students from the same country to help. Explain to them clearly what you and the police are doing. Ask a member of senior management to meet them to demonstrate that you are seriously concerned.

Recovery

- If the disappearance was given wide publicity, then the return should be given equal prominence, if the student consents.
- Try to find out from the student why they went missing, but respect their wishes if they prefer not to say. Anything they tell you may help you plan future safety and welfare arrangements.
- Discuss their reintegration into academic life with them. You may need to agree a staged return with some initial private tuition to ease them back in.
- If the student isn't found, consider the need for on-going support for those affected by the disappearance, which may involve counselling for students and staff and some allowances from academics for students affected.

4D MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Mental health problems must be dealt with by suitably trained staff. Institutions that do not possess the necessary skills should seriously consider whether they are properly equipped to deal with the welfare needs of international students and take steps to acquire the expertise by buying it in or recruiting appropriate staff.

International students may experience mental health problems purely as a result of living in a foreign land. Many of them go through a period of cultural adjustment that is often difficult for an observer to detect. This section does not deal with the common effects of cultural adjustment on students' behaviour. Much has been written about culture shock and cultural adjustment and UKCOSA can provide you with a list of references if you wish to explore the topic. Staff and home students who have little experience themselves of living in a foreign country need to be sensitised to the experience that international students undergo, so that they can empathise with them. A person who shows some understanding of this experience is going to be in a better position to assist them in dealing with it.

It is equally important to bear in mind that students may have already experienced mental health problems before coming to study in the UK. Institutions are not likely to know about these unless the student volunteers the information.

International students, just like home students, may also experience personal crises stemming from academic, financial, social or personal problems. They will also have the usual ups and downs that anyone has, but there will be some crises that demand the intervention of the institution, as the student is far from home and the support mechanisms that he or she normally has. Institutions should make students aware that support is available.

Counsellors will approach these issues according to their own models of counselling, but should always be aware of the potential for the personal and the cultural aspects to be interrelated. Students themselves may well be confused as to what is causing their difficulties, and skilful counselling can help them to clarify what exactly is happening to them.

Mitigation

Institutions should assess honestly whether all their academic and welfare support is inclusive of international students. Some key questions to ask are:

- Are key members of staff trained in cultural awareness and sensitivity?
- Are members of staff, such as those in charge of halls of residence, briefed to detect students with difficulties? Do they know the signs to look for, such as changes in eating and drinking behaviour, or how to detect drug or other substance use?
- Is there adequate language and study skills support, and do students know how to obtain it?
- Do you have reliable information about the composition of the student population, and do key people have the information?
- Do students know where to go if they have problems?
- Have you set up suitable opportunities for students to socialise and meet others?
- Do you have a hosting scheme that enables students to stay in a British home for a short break? Contact the national organisation HOST for more details of this scheme, or join or set up your own local scheme. (See appendix B for details of HOST.) It would be inappropriate to send students with severe problems to hosts, but those who are feeling lonely and isolated may benefit from a stay in a sympathetic family. Hosts may well discover problems during a stay, and alert you to them.
- Do you have a counselling/support service that is able to respond quickly to students in crisis?
- Are there international student societies? If not, can you do more to encourage students to set them up?

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- Do you provide a support service during the vacations, when international students may be left on a deserted campus?
- Do you offer support to a student's spouse and family? If not, where will you refer them if they have difficulties?

Preparation

This section deals with a range of mental health problems which students may experience, ranging from loneliness and depression through to attempted suicide. Institutions should already be prepared for home students' mental health problems, with a range of responses dictated by the nature and gravity of the problem, and we do not propose to spell out in detail how to respond to every likely situation here. Instead we focus on the international aspects of the preparation.

- International Student Advisers should identify local counsellors or other suitable people from, or with substantial expertise in, a range of language backgrounds, who can be called upon to support students in difficulty. The Community Mental Health Team will be a valuable resource. The British Association of Counselling (see appendix B) can help with names of counsellors with language skills.
- In the course of your normal interaction with students, find out from students what help is or is not available in their own country for people who are in personal difficulty. Compare it with services in the UK and tell the students how they operate. Introduce them to the notion of counsellors and what they do. Such people may not exist in other countries, or there may be a different understanding of their relationship with the client. A student is more likely to accept an offer of support later from a counsellor if he or she is already familiar with them. Some students will fear being labelled as "mad" and may equate a counsellor with a psychiatrist, if the notion of counselling is alien to them, and may consequently refuse to see one.
- Some students may be unwilling to tell a stranger about their difficulties, and you may have to gain their confidence before they will reveal anything personal. It is important that someone with a welfare role is perceived by students to be understanding. It is preferable for this person not to have any academic role.

- Guidelines issued to staff on how to respond to a student in difficulty should explicitly state that international students present a particular challenge, because of the cultural issues involved. These guidelines should be supported by staff training in cultural awareness, together with clear guidance on the limits upon an individual member of staff's actions.
- Institutions should provide staff welfare support, such as counselling, to enable staff involved with student problems to receive their own support. Some of this work can be traumatic.

Response

Your response to a mental health crisis should be in line with existing institutional policies and procedures and external legislation, particularly the *Mental Health Act*. If your institution does not yet have such policies, the CVCP's *Guidelines on student mental health policies and procedures for higher education* may be helpful. Institutions need to have their own protocols for the referral of any student to statutory mental health services.

Your prime consideration has to be your own safety, so do not put yourself in a situation where you feel nervous or uncomfortable. A person with psychiatric training must be involved if there is any possibility of anyone being harmed.

The following advice is offered to help ensure you take account of the special circumstances of international students:

- Your response will obviously depend on the student's mental state. If there is a risk of violence or abusive behaviour, only an adequately trained person should take on the responsibility of dealing with the situation. If a student is possibly to be sectioned under the *Mental Health Act*, take the lead from the psychiatrist or decision-maker.
- The student's family may not want to have anything to do with the student. In this case, you will have to make a decision as to what you are prepared to do. Do not take on something which you are not equipped to deal with.

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- Any person offering support must be acceptable to the student. Ask them if they want to talk to a man or a woman or to someone from their own cultural background, if you are able to arrange this.
- Remember that students have the right to refuse to see a counsellor.
- Can they be repatriated if necessary? Some insurance policies will cover this in the event of mental illness.
- In some cases, it is sufficient simply to be with the student. Do not feel you have to talk. If you are inhibited by the cultural differences between you, tell the student, but with sensitivity. Be open, as it will encourage them to do likewise. Apparently insignificant gestures such as asking them what they would like to drink, if anything, rather than automatically offering tea or coffee, can demonstrate that you are conscious of different cultural habits and help you to gain the student's confidence.
- Encourage the student to do as much as they can for themselves. Beware of taking over the situation. Avoid the assumption that, as the person is foreign to the UK, he or she is unable to cope.
- Beware of interpreting anything the student may say according to your own frame of reference. Check your understanding by asking the student further questions.
- If you think the situation is critical, eg an attempted suicide or threat of suicide, and a student is at risk, contact the appropriate internal or external personnel, regardless of any cultural considerations.
- One of the people involved must have a thorough understanding of the process for and implications of sectioning under the *Mental Health Act*. If a student is formally treated in this way, this could have drastic long-term career implications for them, such as exclusion from professional training.
- Any case conference should take account of cultural factors. Make sure that psychiatrists and other medical staff involved know the student's cultural background. Try to involve someone from the same background as the student or with a thorough knowledge of it.

Recovery

The following questions should enable you to reflect upon the implications for both student and institution of an occurrence of mental illness.

- The student concerned may well need support or counselling for some time afterwards. Can you offer appropriate support? If not, can you obtain it outside the institution?
- Is it appropriate for the student to suspend their studies and resume at a later date? What would be the financial, legal and academic implications of this?
- Is this a one-off occurrence or part of a trend? If it is a trend, is there a mismatch between students and courses which puts students under undue stress? Your recruitment criteria or teaching methods may need to change.
- Counselling may not be the answer. Returning home may be more appropriate, but the student may feel too ashamed to do this. The situation will require expert handling. Do not attempt to do it unless you are sure you have the skills. Consult with others who are more experienced in dealing with such situations.
- What support do the staff involved need? Dealing with mental illness can be extremely disturbing for them and they are likely to need a period of recovery, which may include clinical supervision. Qualified counsellors have access to this as a matter of course, but advisers and welfare staff may well need this kind of support as a result of dealing with distressing situations. This means support offered by a qualified person, and not the usual supervision of a line manager.

4E SERIOUS INJURY OR PHYSICAL ILLNESS

This section concentrates on the cross-cultural dimension of a student sustaining a serious injury or physical illness. It can apply equally to the accompanying members of a student's family. For advice on dealing with communicable diseases, see section 4G.

Such an event is unlikely to place huge demands upon institutional resources but could be very stressful for those members of staff involved. You will need to decide as a matter of policy what resources you are prepared to commit. As mentioned earlier, institutions owe a basic duty of care to their students, but this has not been defined by UK law. To protect yourself, be sure that you consult with the student, or with the

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next of kin and/or any sponsor if the students are unable to decide for themselves, before taking any important decision, unless delay would harm the student significantly.

Mitigation

Pre-arrival information should include information on:

- Entitlement to health care under the National Health Service (see the *NHS Executive Patients Guide on Hospital Charges to Overseas Visitors*, *Onyx* or *UKCOSA Manual* for advice on this issue, as the regulations are complex. Entitlement depends on several factors, including nationality, length and purpose of residence in the UK or EEA and the nature of the illness or suspected illness).
- Medical insurance, including paying for repatriation in case of illness.
- Potential risks of living in the UK, such as road accidents and household appliances (eg some students will never have seen gas appliances before).
- Climate, keeping healthy, local availability of different foods, medicines and therapies.
- Registration with the student health service or a local GP and dentist.
- Sexually transmitted diseases, but not exclusively about HIV and AIDS. (Beware of creating unnecessary panic about HIV. There are still a lot of misunderstandings and prejudices about HIV and AIDS so be sure to provide accurate information and challenge the myths.)
- How to call the emergency services.

Institutions should have a questionnaire covering special medical or other needs as part of the application and enrolment processes. This might include a question about whether a student has had an X-ray for tuberculosis (TB) and a recommendation that they have one if they have come from one of the specified countries. Consult your local Consultant for Communicable Diseases for advice on TB and vaccinations against certain diseases. Alert new students to the fact that they may be asked to undergo a medical test on arrival in the UK, which could include an X-ray. However beware of discriminatory questions. In order to guard against this, the same questions should be asked of all home and international students. Home students may have been travelling before coming to your institution and are all potential carriers of TB and other diseases. Institutions are primarily in the position of providing information. Appropriately qualified medical personnel should take decisions on the implications for study of certain medical conditions.

Preparation

So that you are better able to respond to a serious illness or injury, we suggest the following actions:

- Develop a good working relationship with the local hospital(s). It will make communications easier if a student is admitted. You can also explain to them the health facilities that you have, as they may then be willing to discharge a student into your care.
- Have a list of temporary accommodation for use by visiting relatives. This should include a mix of hotel-type and self-catering, short-term and long-term.
- Identify sources of help in the community, such as faith groups and voluntary groups who can offer support to the student and relatives.
- Discuss with your institution's accommodation service how to provide suitable accommodation for convalescence. This will be particularly important for practical reasons, eg if the student is unable to climb stairs, but also to enable them to be near friends and relatives.

Response

If a student says that they wish to be tested for a sexually transmitted disease without being referred by their doctor, then they or you should be able to arrange this by liaising with the local hospital. Similarly, if the student wishes total anonymity, they can ask a hospital further away from the campus to test them.

You will not automatically be informed that a student has been admitted to hospital. The hospital may well only contact you if they need details of next of kin or an interpreter. The student and family may wish to take care of their own arrangements, but someone from the institution may be able to help with the following, but only with the student's and/or the family's agreement:

- Arrange a rota for relatives, staff and students to visit a student in hospital. Local faith groups will also get involved in visiting if appropriate. This should be done in consultation with the hospital and visitors may need to have the rules of hospital visiting explained. In many developing countries it is done very differently. Visiting relatives may expect to take food to the patient and spend long periods there. Check with nurses what is permitted. They may well be flexible, especially during the recovery stage.
- Check that the student is getting appropriate food in hospital. A student may be unhappy with the food being served for religious or cultural reasons, but not say anything through fear of offending hospital staff. You can act as a "cultural interpreter".
- You can help by asking the student if they want any personal belongings brought, eg clean clothes.
- Discuss with the student and medical staff any cultural or religious stipulations as to medical treatment. Some beliefs may forbid certain treatments such as blood transfusion.
- Discuss how the hospital can meet the student's requirements, such as prayer facilities.
- Help visiting relatives to find accommodation and offer to put them

in touch with local faith representatives.

- Talk to the student about the implications for their studies and ensure that they are in touch with a course tutor.
- Keep tutors and classmates informed as to the student's progress.
- Liaise with the student's sponsor if necessary.
- Liaise with the student's employer, if they have a part-time job locally.
- Ensure the student has course books and lecture notes to read if they wish to have them.

You may also need to reassure those students who are eligible for NHS treatment that they are not going to get a bill for the services they are receiving in hospital.

Recovery

- The student will need to discuss the implications for their studies. All the options should be explored frankly, including abandoning the course.
- Some students will be reluctant to rely on Leave of Absence Regulations as they may see them as something that only weak students use. Explain that this is not the case.
- You may also need to explain and agree any special assessment and examination arrangements, as students may not realise that there are alternatives in special cases.
- They may need a formal assessment of support needs if they are debilitated or disabled as a result of the illness or injury. They may not realise that it is possible to continue with the help of aids or adaptations. Liaise with your disabilities officer on this question. For example, are there funds available to help with them to use taxis while they recover from a broken leg?
- The student may have to return home for a period before resuming studies. Can you provide them with work to do while they recover?
- Debrief and ask if there is anything the institution could realistically have done to prevent the occurrence. If the student had an accident, is it because they lacked vital information about some aspect of life in the UK?
- When they have recovered, ask the student whether your response was appropriate and well received.

4F ILLNESS AFFECTING A GROUP OF STUDENTS

Communicable diseases can affect all students regardless of their nationality, The recent occurrences of meningitis on some campuses have concentrated minds on how to respond to such outbreaks. Many institutions will therefore already have made plans as to how to respond. The Association of University Administrators (AUA) publication *Weathering the Storm* (see appendix A) is a useful guide for those who have not. This section sets out some of the main points, bringing attention to specific ways in which international students need to be considered. For advice on issues relating to illness or death of individual international students caught up in an outbreak, see sections 4E and 4G.

Mitigation

The advice on pre-arrival medical information in the previous section is also valid here. In addition, the following steps will prove helpful and will save time in the event of an outbreak:

- Contact the Consultant for Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) in your local Health Authority. Ask their advice as to any preventative measures that you could take, including arranging vaccination sessions on campus. Invite them to come to the campus and familiarise themselves with the layout and give them information as to your students' countries of origin. They can tell you about high-risk countries and symptoms to look out for.
- Involve your student health service or your local GPs.
- Distribute copies to all students of relevant information leaflets and obtain other public awareness materials. These will be available from the relevant charities or through the health authorities. Many are available in languages other than English, which will be useful if you have students, spouses and families who speak little English.
- Involve the student representative body and national societies, particularly as they can help spread information through their channels of communication.

Preparation

- Discuss with the CCDC whether students carrying a communicable disease can or should remain on campus. If appropriate, decide if you can feasibly isolate them from other students.
- Be prepared to respond to concerns from parents, relatives and other students and to media interest. Make sure you have the facts as to how the disease spreads and what the symptoms are. Reliable information is available through the CCDC, support groups and websites, such as the World Health Organisation and the Department of Health (see appendix B).
- In conjunction with the CCDC, prepare standard letters ready to go out (see example at appendix G).

Response

- The CCDC will take charge of the response to any outbreak but will need the full co-operation of the institution. Decide who will liaise with them and make sure their instructions are communicated and carried out across the institution. Key staff may need to be available 24 hours a day.
- In consultation with the CCDC, you may need to arrange for mass vaccinations to be carried out at or near the institution. Mass vaccination programmes are a common occurrence in many developing countries so many international students will be used to them. However, the CCDC will not automatically order mass vaccination. Some people may refuse a vaccination, and they have the right to do so. On the other hand, some students may take the view that the institution is not doing enough to protect them, so it is important that the CCDC takes the lead and is seen to be working closely with the institution.
- Respond swiftly to concerns raised by parents, relatives and students. Panic could spread among the student body and reach students' families in the home country, with potential knock-on effects on future recruitment. You will probably need to set up a dedicated telephone line with staff and volunteers who are regularly briefed. You may need to find interpreters to talk to relatives. International students can be asked to help, provided you are sure they are

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able to give accurate information.

- Send out letters to all students and offer to hold meetings with them.
- Consider whether you want to use the institution's website to post updates and to direct people to background information on other websites. By not acknowledging on your website something which is public knowledge, you run the risk of appearing to be uncaring. A website is the quickest and cheapest means of global communication.
- Prepare written statements and updates which can be sent by fax and email to the press and others, such as embassies and sponsors.
- Respect the confidentiality of the students who are ill by not releasing their personal details to the media or in other public information.
- Public information should not identify an international student as the source of an outbreak, as medical information is confidential. Any such talk will be based on rumour and should be challenged publicly.

Recovery

An outbreak of an infectious disease in an institution can have far-reaching repercussions. Current students may seek a transfer to another institution. Potential students may be put off applying

- Take all possible steps to ensure that it does not happen again. Take advice from the CCDC.
- Debrief staff in order to identify shortcomings in your response to the crisis and remedy them for the future. A senior manager should take charge of this or very clearly delegate authority to an appropriate person.
- Make sure that you publicise the details of your preparations and response in key places, notably to staff, to provide reassurance that you are well prepared for any future occurrence.
- Once you know that the outbreak is over, publicise it widely to counteract any negative publicity you may have gained.

4G DEATH OF A STUDENT

Much of the advice below will also apply if a member of a student's family dies while in the UK, although the student will probably take care of arrangements himself or herself.

The first issue to resolve is the extent to which the institution is going to get involved in responding to a death. This is a policy matter with implications for staff and resources. There is no legal obligation to take charge of all the arrangements, and consular offices can take care of the formalities concerning disposal of the body and dealing with a student's family in the home country. However, many institutions have decided to take on the role. This has the advantage that you can make sure that the institution's response is 'official' and co-ordinated, that the public relations aspect is properly handled, with the institution able to present a caring and responsible image.

Mitigation

It is assumed that you will have done all you reasonably can to prevent the death of a student, including following the advice on pre-arrival information and induction in this publication.

Preparation

There is a lot of preparation work that can be done, so that if a student dies, you have information to hand and are able to act straightaway.

1. Students

- Keep a record of next of kin and/or emergency contact details, and update it annually. Students may have family or friends in the UK whom you could contact immediately and who can help with contacting family abroad and advise on appropriate disposal arrangements (see section 3Bvi)
- Encourage students to take out health and/or travel insurance which covers repatriation in the event of death.
- Keep a list of local places of worship and representatives of the different religious communities. Where appropriate, such contacts can

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advise on the appropriate customs to be followed, and may conduct a memorial or funeral service, particularly if the body is remaining in the UK. They may also know about legal requirements and local undertakers. See appendix A for references on religious and cultural practices associated with death.

- Have a list of temporary accommodation for use by visiting relatives. This should include a mix of hotel-type and self-catering, short-term and long-term.

2. Institution

- Decide who will co-ordinate the response and who needs to do what and when. Involve counsellors and chaplains in this process. Think through all the different people in the institution who will need to know, so that records can be amended and any necessary administrative action taken (see appendix D for a model procedure).
- Determine how to provide cover to allow the co-ordinator to be freed up from their normal responsibilities to deal with the case.
- Wherever possible identify a colleague with whom the co-ordinator can work. This could be the person responsible for counselling or a chaplain. A man and woman team works best as this enables you to respond to almost any situation immediately.
- Identify contacts who can help arrange a translator if required.
- Prepare an internal incident support form for recording the circumstances and action taken (see example in appendix C).
- Decide how you wish to commemorate a death in the institution, though bear in mind the need to be flexible to respond to the wishes of family in particular cases. This could include an obituary in the institutional bulletin, a donation to or collection for the family, a memorial service or the bestowal of an honorary award. A representative of the institution could attend the funeral proceedings in the home country if appropriate, but check on the cultural and religious customs first.
- Decide in advance whether you are prepared to commit institutional finances. Repatriation can cost up to £5000. Normally the family of the deceased or possibly an employer or sponsor will pay this, but they may not be able to. If the student has no insurance policy then

the institution has to decide whether it will pay. It is not the responsibility of the consulate to meet the costs.

3. *Legal formalities*

- Make sure that you know the procedures involved. Registrars of Births, Marriages and Deaths and Coroners can advise and provide you with leaflets.
- Some funeral directors specialise in repatriation. They are generally based in London, but have local agents. Identify local agents or directors in advance. See appendix B for the relevant professional associations.

Response

1. *Family*

- It will usually be most appropriate for the family to hear of the death directly from a senior member of staff. However, if there is a student who knew the deceased particularly well you may ask them to break the news, especially if they are from the same culture and the relatives do not speak English. The cause of death will influence to a large extent your choice of an appropriate person to contact the family. Do not express any opinion about the cause unless it is beyond all doubt. If it is suicide, then special skills are required.
- If the student was accompanied by a partner or spouse, they may wish to take charge of arrangements, although the institution can help with knowledge of legal procedures and local contacts.
- If the student was a lone parent accompanied by dependent children, you may also need to speak to the next of kin or surviving parent about arrangements for their care.
- Contact the consulate of the student's home country immediately, and agree who will do what. They may be able to contact the family if you are having difficulty.
- Contact the next of kin immediately and ask them what they want you to do. In some societies it will be appropriate to contact a male relative rather than a female. Explain to them what you are going to do and explain the legal procedures. If you can send a fax, telegram or telex with a written explanation this should reduce the risk of

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misunderstandings, and gives the family a chance to absorb all the information you have given in their own time. It also gives a documentary record for the institution to keep. Students from the same background as the deceased may well be willing translators, if the family do not speak English.

- Your response should be in line with the cultural norms and personal wishes of the deceased and/or the next of kin. For example, in some religions, the funeral should take place within 24 hours, but this has to be balanced against the legal requirements of the coroner, especially if the death is sudden or accidental and a post-mortem is required.

2. Institutional procedures

The person responsible for co-ordinating the institutional response should:

- Circulate a notice of the student's death to all relevant personnel (see Appendix D), including the Health and Safety Officer if the death has happened on campus.
- Liaise with external agencies, staff, students and family throughout the case as required (see Appendix D for a list).
- Find out all they can about the circumstances of the death and record it.
- Find out who discovered the body and who last saw the student alive.
- Record events/conversations as they happen.
- Record personal information, anecdotes etc.
- Keep a copy of any press articles or press releases.
- Try to write a daily report (for their own use, it helps to plan the next day), and a final report at the end of the process.
- Give a daily report to all key people.
- Make sure funeral arrangements are made, if it is taking place in the UK.
- Advise Vice-Chancellor/Principal how the institution should respond to the situation.

3. Formal procedures

All the following tasks need to be carried out. The next of kin may wish

to take responsibility for some of them. The following is based on procedures in England and Wales. There are some slight differences in Scotland and Northern Ireland. A Benefits Agency leaflet, *What to do after a death in England and Wales* (ref D49) gives detailed advice on the procedures. The Civil Law Division of the Scottish Executive produces a leaflet, *What to do after a death in Scotland* (see appendix B for website). We have not been able to find an equivalent publication for Northern Ireland.

- Make sure someone has called an ambulance.
- Make sure the police are informed, and someone is available to talk to them if they want to carry out inquiries.
- Was the student registered as an organ donor? If you are not sure, check with the next of kin whether they know. There may be cultural reasons why donation is out of the question. This has to happen straight away for the organs to be of use.
- In a case of repatriation, contact the funeral directors and warn them in advance. They will then liaise with the consulate and the airline. They need to know the details of the consignee, ie the person who will formally receive the body at the destination.

CORONER

- In order for a body to be moved out of the country, a coroner has to give permission. Permission has to be obtained at least four days before the body is to be moved, but it can be given in 24 hours if necessary, and if there is no inquest to be held. The coroner will issue a Removal Notice once he or she is satisfied. If a funeral is to be held outside the UK this permission must be obtained.
- Make sure someone is available to deal promptly with any requests from the coroner. A post mortem may be necessary. An interim hearing will normally be held within 48 hours and then adjourned with an interim death certificate to allow the release of the body. The body will normally be released except in rare cases, perhaps if the coroner believes there are suspicious circumstances or there may be criminal proceedings relating to the death.

REGISTRAR OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS

- Clarify with the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths exactly what information they need in order to issue a Death Certificate.
- Obtain six copies of the death certificate. There is a fee for this service. Two copies are for the student's family, one is for the funeral director, one is for the consulate and two are for use in sorting out the student's affairs. It is wise to obtain them straight away, as they will cost more if you request them later.
- You may have to get the death certificate translated into the official language of the student's home country. Check which is the appropriate language. The consulate of the student's home country should be able to help. There will be a cost for this, which you may wish to recoup from the family.

OTHER LEGAL FORMALITIES

- The student's affairs need to be wound up. Bank accounts should be closed, after any money belonging to the student has been banked. You will require a death certificate to do this. The bank can then transfer the money to the next of kin. In some cases you may have to establish who is the legal next of kin. It may not always be obvious. For instance, if the student's father is dead, it may be another male relative and not the mother.
- Try to establish whether the student had made a will. Formalities relating to wills and the estate of the deceased vary from country to country, so you will need to liaise with the student's family. There have been cases in the past where institutions have acted as executor in the absence of anyone else.
- Return the student's passport to the relevant consulate.
- Inform the Immigration and Nationality Directorate in writing.
- Carry out an inventory of the student's possessions, with a witness for support, before getting them packed up. Establish with the next of kin what is to happen to the possessions. If they are to be transported to the family the undertaker can arrange for them to go back with the body, otherwise they can be sent later. You need to decide who will pay. The deceased's estate or family will normally pay, but this is not easy to arrange quickly.

3. Media

- Deal promptly with any media interest. Give them a press release as soon as you can.
- Only give them factual details and do not speculate.
- Release details of the student's identity only with the permission of the next of kin.
- Make sure they know what steps the institution is taking.

Recovery

The recovery process will include all or some of the following:

- A memorial service or other event. Involve the student's friends in agreeing what form this will take. Ask your audio-visual department to record it, either on video or as sound only. Offer to send a copy to the next of kin.
- Support for the student's friends and staff. Bereavement counselling may be offered by your own counselling service or by an outside organisation, such as CRUSE (see appendix B for details). Chaplains can play a role, especially for students with religious beliefs. In the case of a suicide, those close to the student may well need extra support. Counselling may not be available immediately. In the interim, you could organise a "debriefing" for staff and students who knew the student, offering them the opportunity to talk about what has happened. This may be particularly important for those students who have not been involved in other arrangements.
- An internal inquiry as to whether the institution could have done anything to prevent the death, leading to possible changes in policy and procedures. This is not a blame-apportioning exercise, rather an open discussion in order to identify gaps in communication or welfare provision and how to plug them.

COUNSELLING

The offer of bereavement counselling should be made to the following:

Residence

Student Friends
Boyfriend/Girlfriend
Residence Staff

Academic Department

Staff
Students
Cleaning Staff
Refectory Staff

Students' Union

Members of any clubs or societies student was involved in

Evening Classes

Staff
Classmates

Front Line Staff

Secretaries/Support Staff who have to deal with 'all callers' throughout your handling of the case
Registry Staff
Finance Staff
Accommodation

NB Some people may wish to use Professional Counselling Services outside the institution. This should be borne in mind and arrangements made accordingly.

SUICIDE

If a student has taken his or her own life, this will clearly require sensitive handling. Bear in mind the following:

- Suicide carries varying degrees of stigma across different societies. The student's family and friends may flatly deny the possibility of suicide, even if that is the coroner's verdict.
- The family could disown the student and refuse to have anything to do with the funeral arrangements, leaving you to arrange and possibly pay for a funeral.
- Students close to the deceased could be in need of support and sensitive handling. You may well need their co-operation in order to find out why it happened.
- The institution could be portrayed as uncaring in the media. Your response should respect the dignity of the deceased and the family.

4H GROUP OF STUDENTS AFFECTED BY CRISIS IN THE HOME COUNTRY

This section provides guidance on critical situations that may arise in another country which have an impact upon the nationals and residents of that country studying in the UK. The following are examples of situations that may arise:

- Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods and other severe weather, epidemics
- Civil or political upheaval, such as war, civil war, a coup d'état, rioting or mass demonstrations
- Financial turmoil, such as currency devaluation, foreign exchange restrictions, economic or political sanctions

When dealing with crises affecting a country, bear in mind that there are bound to be other students from the same country studying elsewhere in

the UK. They are likely to be in touch with friends in your institution, and will compare the responses of the different institutions. In the short term, students at your institution may use this information to apply pressure to get you to do more for them, particularly as regards financial assistance. There may also be long term implications for your image in that country, if you are seen to be uncaring. Talk to colleagues in other institutions to find out how they are responding. The UKCOSA email discussion group is particularly useful for such purposes.

Mitigation

You can't change the course of history, but you can take certain steps to soften the impact that events have on your institution, principally to recruit students from a wide range of countries. Relying heavily on a small number of countries could give you huge difficulties if problems arise in one of those countries.

Preparation

- Set up an international student hardship fund and/or fee remission policy with approval from the relevant committee or the governing body. Decide your criteria and procedures for making awards in advance. Do you want to give a blanket concession to all students or examine each case and request evidence of hardship? Are you going to require individual students to provide documentary evidence of their financial position and make individual decisions or give a blanket amount to all?
- Unless you have access to some generous benefactors, you will have to devise some strict criteria for making awards. You will have to restrict your awards to those students who have a realistic chance of completing their studies and who can demonstrate hardship. You will need rigorous means-testing procedures, requiring documentary evidence of financial and other circumstances. Consult with student representatives and gain their agreement to the principles and procedure. Find out what arrangements other institutions have made.
- Decide to what degree you wish to respond. Do you have an open-ended commitment in terms of staff time and finances? For example, are you going to offer free telephone calls home to all affected

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students, but ration them?

- Know about the countries from which you recruit students. This knowledge should lie with your recruiters, who should make use of the expertise of the British Council's Education Counselling Service (ECS). Make sure your recruiters pass information on to colleagues responsible for students' welfare. Which are the areas of the country more prone to natural disasters? What is the current political climate? How stable or unstable is it? Get the students to tell you, although when it comes to politics, do not assume they are giving you impartial information. The internet is a massive resource, but beware of propaganda and unreliable information. We suggest some authoritative websites in appendix B.
- Identify sources of information in advance. In many institutions, there will be academics with specialist knowledge of countries and regions. UKCOSA provides advice and information to member institutions in the event of a major event affecting significant numbers of students, as do other organisations such as the British Council.
- Establish channels of communication and decision-making in advance. You may have to react quickly to events as they unfold, although in most cases you will get time to consider your response.
- Political conflict abroad could have repercussions on campus, if you have students from the countries or groupings in conflict. At its worst, the conflict could be played out on campus, and you may need to be ready to step up security and separate students, perhaps by identifying temporary housing off campus.

Response

- Respond promptly to students' concerns, but do not panic. Only promise to do what you can realistically do. Tell students what you can and cannot do and be consistent, in that your response to each student should be in direct proportion to the effect upon them. If the crisis deepens, you may need to change your response accordingly.

Sources of information:

- Keep yourself updated on how the crisis is developing. Use websites and radio, such as the BBC World Service. Daily updates will be

needed in many cases. Pass on the information to the students affected. You can set up an email group for this purpose, and direct them to the relevant web pages, so that they can follow events for themselves. Set up meetings to discuss their concerns with you, although they may wish to do this without you. Tell them you would welcome any feedback from such meetings.

- Check on any national responses from within the UK, eg when the South-East Asian currency crisis hit, the ECS organised a scholarship scheme at national level to help affected students.
- If there is unrest or a natural disaster has occurred, students are likely to be concerned about the safety of family and friends. The Red Cross may be able to find out about them through its Family Tracing and Message Services (see appendix B for details).
- Use all possible means of communication. Where there is no telephone, consider using telex or a telegram.

Finance

- Students whose money has been coming directly from the home country may well have problems receiving money, either because banking systems have been disrupted or because their sponsors have been adversely affected financially. Beware of acting upon rumours and second-hand news passed to you by students. There are websites where you can follow changes in exchange rates. The Bank of England can give you advice on the financial and banking situation in any country (see appendix B for sources of financial information). Make sure you have reliable information before agreeing any financial concessions to students.
- If you give financial assistance, are you going to make grants or loans? If you make loans, be flexible as to the terms of the loan and make sure the students understand that the terms may be altered in the light of developments in the country.
- Home and other international students with their own financial problems may resent the fact that concessions are being offered to selected international students. You should be prepared to explain and justify any decision to the wider student body and the media.

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Immigration:

- Ensure that you can give or obtain expert immigration advice. Some students may wish to discuss claiming asylum or applying to remain in the UK exceptionally. UKCOSA can advise on the action to take in such cases.
- In some cases students will wish to return home, and you should discuss the practical implications of doing this, and also whether they can do anything when they get there. If their leave to remain is about to expire, they may need to renew it before going to avoid potential difficulties obtaining a fresh visa. If in doubt, check with the UKCOSA advisers.

Welfare and support:

- Students may well find it difficult to study while events are going on. You need to cater for this in your academic regulations. It is preferable for them to suspend temporarily with official approval from the institution, as this will help them when applying for any eventual extension of leave to remain from the Immigration and Nationality Directorate.
- People respond to disasters or political upheavals in a variety of ways. Look out for students becoming ill, or showing signs of mental strain and respond with appropriate support.
- If you only have one student or a small number of students from the country affected, you could offer to put them in touch with others in nearby institutions for mutual support. Email announcements can help with putting students in touch with each other. However, remember that some students may want to avoid contact with their compatriots due to political differences. Some students are sent here by their governments to keep an eye on their fellow citizens. Respect students' wishes to remain anonymous.

Media interest:

- The media may want to interview students from the country affected. It is up to the students to decide whether they want to be interviewed and whether they want to be identified. Where the crisis is a political one, they will probably know what risks they may be

running by expressing opinions publicly, but younger students may need some advice about whether it is safer for them to remain silent and/or anonymous. They may find themselves in difficulties with the authorities here and back home if they make unguarded comments.

Natural disasters

British television screens and newspapers are filled from time to time with pictures of floods, droughts, earthquakes, tornadoes and other natural disasters.

Bear in mind the following:

- In some areas these events happen regularly, varying in severity from year to year. Find out from your students how the latest event compares with previous ones, if any.
- The impact on the people of the country or region is not always as traumatic for the people affected as one might assume from the pictures and reports. Your response should therefore be measured and not assume that a student from the area affected has had their life devastated by the event. For instance, people who live in areas which flood regularly are used to rebuilding, and plan for it.
- The effects can be very localised, so be clear as to exactly where the disaster has taken place, and as to where your students come from.

Political and economic crises

These are complex events and affect the people of the country in very different ways, so be ready to spend time with individuals establishing the effect on them personally, and building up an overall picture of the range of effects the crisis is having.

Some factors to look out for are:

- Political unrest and violence may only be affecting the capital city and/or other large towns and cities while rural areas are unaffected.
- Students' level of political involvement will vary hugely. You may have students at your institution who are very close to the political leaders without your knowing it. Find out the different viewpoints, so that you are aware of the minority views.
- Crisis can strike without warning. For example, currency flow can be interrupted at a moment's notice. However, do not assume that all students from that country are affected equally. Some will have sources of finance from elsewhere.
- Some students from one country will be keen not to mix with other students from that country, because of strong political disagreements, or because they wish to avoid others who may be government informers. They may equally fear military call-up or being forced to return home. Respect their wishes. Do not reveal their names or any other information to students from the same country. You can volunteer to pass on information to such students.
- If the UK is a party to the conflict, the situation will be more delicate. Beware of expressing your personal views on the conflict in front of students, as this could ruin the relationship you have with them. They have to believe that you can deal with them impartially. Members of staff with a close involvement with the conflict, perhaps because a friend or relative is serving in the armed forces, may find it very difficult to work with students from the country in conflict. They should be allowed to opt out.

Recovery

The recovery process will be determined to a large extent by the duration and the outcome of the crisis. The effects of the crisis will go on long after the media have lost interest, and for some students will last for ever, if they have lost family members or friends.

- You will need to decide at what stage you scale down your response and how you do that. At what point have you done all you can or are prepared to do for the students? How long will you continue to make allowances for them both academically and financially? You may decide that you will only offer support for the duration of the current academic session or year. Some tough decisions are required, and you should be able to explain the grounds for your decisions. Some students may try to take advantage of your perceived generosity, by trying to obtain further concessions from you.
- Some students may have to abandon their studies because of the crisis. Make sure that they do not just leave without getting advice on all their options, including the possibility of suspending for a while.
- Recognise the trauma that some students may be experiencing. In cases of war or conflict, for example, it may be extremely hard for them to deal with being identified as "the enemy".
- Hosting schemes may play a part in the recovery, enabling students to spend time in a supportive environment, particularly if the hosts are familiar with the student's home country.
- If the student has children in school locally, then the school may well provide support for them.
- Have a full debriefing on how you handled the crisis:
 1. What did it cost you in money terms and staff time? Can you afford it?
 2. What if another crisis occurs soon? Can you and do you want to respond in the same way?
 3. Have you gained good publicity for your response? How do you compare with other, comparable institutions?
 4. Obtain feedback from students from the country affected, and offer them the opportunity to respond anonymously or through the Students' Union if they are inhibited.

4: Planning for and Responding to Specific Crises

- You may need to revise your recruitment strategy in the light of events. Do you want to continue recruiting the same numbers from that country? Will you pull out altogether or keep an eye on the situation with a view to recruiting again the future? Do you want to make gestures to show you expect to maintain a long-term relationship with the country? Seek advice on long-term prospects from bodies such as ECS.

5 PREVENTING AND PLANNING FOR INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

In the case of most of the incidents dealt with in the last section, the institution will continue to run as normal. However, some will put the institution as a whole, or significant sections of it, under unusual levels of stress. This section considers how an institution can prepare for such situations. Examples include an outbreak of infectious disease such as meningitis; the presence of a serial attacker on campus; or a catastrophic event on campus such as the collapse of a hall of residence or a plane crashing on campus. Even when no students have actually been harmed, a threat of harm of sufficient magnitude can be sufficient to precipitate crisis.

Any organisation needs to have contingency plans for dealing with emergencies. A familiar example is that people in any organisation need to know what to do in the event of fire. Notices are placed around the buildings, instructions are issued, training is organised and fire drills are held periodically, even though most people never experience a fire during their time at the institution. Similarly, most students pass through an institution without experiencing a crisis, but both staff and students need to know what to do when confronted by one. Institutions will be able to react appropriately if they have planned and rehearsed their response.

An institution's crisis management plans need to take account of the needs of international students for several reasons:

- International students make up on average over 10% of the UK higher education population. In further education, the percentage is smaller, but numbers in some colleges are still significant. As individuals who are often far away from home and their usual sources of support, they may be particularly vulnerable. Institutions therefore need to be equipped to deal with crises that involve them.
- International students may present staff with difficulties of

communication, because of language and cultural differences. During the planning process, you can identify where these factors could cause problems and therefore make preparations to overcome them.

- If a crisis does occur and the institution responds promptly and efficiently, you will probably gain some good publicity from that response and certainly reduce the chances of receiving bad publicity, which might have severe future ramifications for recruiting international students.

Specific factors relating to international students which may need to be taken into account include the following.

- Students may be affected by events such as natural disasters or political and economic upheaval in the home country.
- Communication between the institution and the next of kin in cases of emergency may be complicated by differences in language and time zone.
- Cross-cultural misunderstandings are a risk when dealing both with international students and with other interested parties (next of kin, foreign sponsors, etc).
- It is harder to control, monitor or correct what is being said in the foreign press, and its implications for future student recruitment may be serious for an institution (and UK plc).
- Where international students are here through a link with a partner institution, the relationship with that institution may also be affected by the crisis.
- Higher costs may arise eg airfares, repatriation costs, etc.

Increases in student numbers across all sectors over recent years, coupled with pressures to make efficiency gains, mean that staff in institutions are more and more hard-pressed and may find it difficult to devote time to preparing for potential events, as they are busy dealing with actual ones. However, it is a widely recognised principle of good management that time spent planning for potential problems pays off when they do arise.

This section examines some broad principles of crisis management mainly for the benefit of staff with limited experience of crisis planning for the whole student body.

5A PLANNING

Common sense

There is a view that you do not need to plan for crisis as common sense will dictate your response. Whilst we recognise the important role common sense plays we also believe that applying common sense in advance of a crisis will enable you to respond more swiftly and effectively.

Testing the plan

An important part of the preparation is to test out your planning through a simulated crisis. The key members of staff should get together as a training activity and carry out their part in the plan as if a crisis had really happened. By rehearsing the response you will show up any gaps in the plan, particularly breaks in the chain of communication, ambiguities as to where responsibility lies and resource implications such as room requirements, telephone lines and staffing levels. This type of exercise clearly cannot replicate all the details of a crisis, as each one will be unique, but it does provide an opportunity to test out agreed procedures for communications and decision-making. Local authorities have Emergency Planning Officers who plan for emergencies such as explosions and floods, and may well be able to share their expertise with you as far as communications and other procedural matters are concerned.

Review

A crisis management plan will inevitably be forever evolving, subject to modification in the light of changes in legislation, student numbers and countries of origin, internal and external funding decisions, staff and structural changes and political and economic events. The crisis management group, once convened, should continue to meet, at least annually, in order to review and update the plan. If crises do occur during the year and the plan is put into practice, then the group, or part of it, should convene as soon as possible after the event to analyse the response and record its findings.

Support across the institution

Successful implementation of a crisis management plan requires the active involvement of many members of staff. This means that the planning process must involve them. Individuals have to make realistic assessment of what is being asked of them and tell you whether what you are asking is feasible. Involvement in planning can help them to define what can and cannot be done. However, people are not always able to determine their own capabilities and limits, particularly in untested circumstances, or may not feel able to say 'no'. Exercise judgment about what staff can reasonably be expected to do.

It is important to involve the student representative body, and officers who have specific responsibility for representing international students in particular. If the institution finds itself helping out students in crisis, then other groups may feel that group has benefited from favourable treatment. If the plan has the formal backing of the student representatives, then they are much less likely to pursue any grievance of this type. You will need to keep the perspective of the wider student body in mind when planning to assist certain groups.

Formal approval

Once a draft plan has been agreed, a proposal should be put before the relevant committee(s) for approval. The terms and conditions of some institutions may require this anyway, but where it is not required, such formal endorsement strengthens the plan and lends it legitimacy. However, the approval of the governing body should be an agreement in principle, leaving the staff to put it into action.

5B STAFFING

Define the roles

As more and more international students study in the UK, so more and more individuals inside and outside the institution have some involvement with them. In view of this, we believe it is vital that areas of responsibility are clearly defined, so that, if a crisis does occur, students and staff know where to turn. This means that there will be no

duplication of effort and it also minimises the possibility of people working at cross-purposes, unaware of action being taken elsewhere.

A list of the staff members potentially involved in the response to a crisis illustrates this point very well. International officers, departmental and faculty administrators and lecturers, medical staff, accommodation staff, welfare and student support officers, counsellors, tutors, chaplains, finance and registry staff, external relations staff, health and safety officers and students' union elected officers and staff could all potentially be involved in the response to a crisis. This means that plans must have the input and agreement of all these interested parties if they are to succeed. In large institutions, all these people may well be spread out over a multi-site campus, making it difficult for them to convene at short notice. This is another justification for having a plan laid out in advance, as the logistics of bringing together a crisis response group at short notice would mean that valuable time would be lost.

Many institutions produce guidelines and protocols for use by staff when responding to students in difficulty, either as part of a staff manual or separately. These guidelines generally serve a dual purpose. On one hand, they advise people how to respond and, on the other hand, they define the limits to what an individual should do. In many cases, the first person to become aware of a student in difficulty will not be the person who takes control of managing the situation. In virtually all situations, other personnel will have to be alerted and become involved, because they are more qualified, experienced or senior. Accordingly, such guidelines include procedures for referral, placing limits on what action can be taken at each stage of the referral procedure.

A crisis management plan should be integrated with these guidelines, covering a range of eventualities, and specifying which member of staff is responsible for responding to which aspect of the crisis and when they should pass it on to someone else. There should be explicit instructions on who has decision-making powers, who is responsible for matters such as communication with the student's family, the media and for the approval of expenditure.

Team approach

A crisis management plan should adopt a team approach, emphasising the strengths of the different members, with referral and consultation stressed. There is sometimes a tendency for individuals to take the whole crisis on themselves, either because they find it difficult to delegate or they do not know where to go for help. A large-scale crisis has to be handled by a team of people and even if it is an individual crisis, it may require constant monitoring, requiring several people to be involved.

Flexibility

The nature and scale of the crisis will determine the extent to which a plan is put into action. The plan needs to be flexible enough to react to relatively localised crisis or to an outbreak of a disease threatening the whole institution. It also needs to be flexible enough to cope with a sudden escalation or lessening of the crisis. In other words, it must not be an all-or-nothing approach, but rather it should be framed as a staged response with staff and resources called upon or withdrawn as events unfold.

The nature of the crisis will determine to a large extent the types and numbers of personnel involved. In some cases, extra counselling may be needed, in others more administrative staff may be needed to make phone calls, send messages and process paperwork. Staff should be willing to act outside their normal duties at such times, and this needs to be formally acknowledged by involving them in planning and preparation activities, if you are to gain their co-operation. Planning will have to take account of institutional conditions of employment and may even lead to some changes, to enable adequate staffing at times of crisis.

Managers need to ensure that staff are equipped to carry out any tasks they are asked to undertake, through training and support. Staff who have to cope with a crisis without adequate preparation and support could find themselves experiencing their own crisis brought about by the stress of the situation.

An internationalised institution

Much has been written about the need to internationalise educational institutions in the UK, and we do not intend to rehearse those arguments here. We would simply suggest that an internationalised institution is in a better position to prepare for and react to crises affecting international students. Staff and students with a world view and an appreciation of the complex nature of nations and peoples are better equipped to understand and empathise with students whose distress is caused by some event in their home country or separation from their home environment. Students are not likely to put their trust in a member of staff or fellow student who demonstrates a parochial view of their dilemma. Staff do not need to be instructed in the intricacies of all the major countries of the world, but they need to recognise and value the diverse backgrounds of the students and not make judgements based on inadequate knowledge.

Internationalism in practice means, for example, that staff are familiar with the different naming systems used in different cultures. This can easily be found out by asking students. Institutions need to recognise the differences at enrolment time and ask students to specify the given name(s) and family name they wish to use for all formal interactions with the institution. These should be as they appear on the student's passport to avoid confusion. It is self-evident that in a crisis situation, you need to be very clear as to the identity of the student(s) involved.

5C INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

It is vital to keep a comprehensive record of the crisis as it unfolds. It should be immediately accessible to the principal personnel involved, recording who did what, when and why. You will find it useful to draw up a critical incident support form for use in a range of situations. There is a sample form in appendix C. This serves the dual purposes of ensuring that those involved are kept up to date with developments and can be used later for debriefing and revising the plan.

It is absolutely crucial that communications are functioning at their best during times of crisis. In the most extreme circumstances, it could be a matter of life and death. There needs to be a central co-ordination point, with access to appropriate staff around the clock if necessary, and all communications should be channelled through it. That does not mean that staff at the control point have to be responsible for carrying out every action, but they do need to be kept informed of everything that happens. This will help to present a coherent picture, whether internally (to the crisis team and other staff), to other students, to relatives or to the media.

Now that mobile phones are a normal part of daily life, there is no reason for key personnel to be unavailable, and you can speed up decision making by using conference calls. Video conferencing may also be a useful tool in some cases.

News of any incident or crisis will travel around the institution very quickly and as it travels, details will be inevitably become distorted. Staff and students should receive any official notices or press releases as soon as they are made public via announcements by staff, email, the web site, bulletins and student publications. Any information given out should take account of data protection legislation, which places strict limits on the publicising of personal information. Staff responsible for ensuring that the institution meets its responsibilities under the legislation should therefore be consulted.

5D EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Many international students make their homes in the areas where people of the same cultural background live, so it is sensible for institutional staff to work with the services provided in the community. Staff should therefore seek to develop co-operative working relationships with different ethnic and faith groups in the local community, in order to make maximum use of the resources available eg religious, welfare and health advisers and counsellors from an appropriate cultural background.

If a crisis is affecting a whole country or a particular group of students from one country, other educational institutions in the local area or elsewhere in the country will be experiencing the same reactions from students. Staff should be encouraged to develop networks and exchange ideas with other institutions. You can be sure that students will do so with their friends around the country, and they will often tell you how another institution is responding, particularly if they think it will encourage you to match an action taken elsewhere. Use your own networks to check out the accuracy of what is being said about other institutions' responses.

UKCOSA itself plays a key role when a crisis affects a large group of international students, such as the 1997/98 currency crisis in South-East Asia, by acting as a central source of information, particularly on matters of government policy such as immigration, welfare benefits and funding. This information is made available in briefings for member institutions, both in printed form and electronically through the website and email lists. There will be other national and international organisations, such as the British Council, that can help in almost all circumstances. Find out about them beforehand and use them.

Media

We do not intend to describe a whole media strategy, as institutions will doubtless already have one that they will use in times of crisis. The AUA has produced a guide to dealing with the media (see appendix A). There is widespread agreement that an institution must channel all its contacts with the media through one central point, whether that be a public relations or press office. Staff should be very clearly instructed not to talk to the media without authorisation from the central point, as they will often know whether the journalist or publication is one of which to be wary or which may have a particular agenda.

The institution may decide to appoint one or more persons to deal directly with all media enquiries, or allocate different members of staff to field questions, depending on the type of crisis and the specific questions being asked. Whichever approach is favoured, make sure anyone

speaking to the media is well briefed, has been trained and knows their boundaries. Specifically, ensure that whoever is speaking to the media uses the correct terms to describe the ethnic origin and nationality of any students involved, gives a factual description of the events and does not express any opinion as to why something happened. Attention to detail is especially important when dealing with representatives of the media from the students' home country, which will not respond kindly to what they might see as an ill-informed attitude. Your institution's future prospects of recruiting in that country could be severely damaged by adverse media coverage there. Consider whether you need to liaise with your Students' Union to ensure that they are also properly prepared.

Reporters are looking for a story, and generally want a scandal or someone to blame. They can be very persistent and use all kinds of questioning techniques to try to get a person to open up and talk. They may come on campus or make telephone calls to all sorts of people in order to gather material for a story, so even though you may be able to control what is said to them on behalf of the institution, you cannot know who else they will speak to. If a crisis has hit, then they will obviously want to talk to students. Some students will be reluctant to speak, through a mistrust of the press, but others will happily do so, especially if the reporter agrees not to name them.

On the whole, students should be advised to avoid talking to the media. Ultimately, they are free to decide for themselves whether they want to say anything publicly, but they ought to be briefed by someone with press or public relations knowledge about avoiding libellous comments and preferably agreeing the questions beforehand if agreeing to be interviewed on air. Students should also be reminded that they have the right to end the interview or to refuse to answer if they feel the journalist is asking unreasonable questions.

6 CONCLUSION

This guide set out the guiding principles for institutions to use when dealing with crises affecting international students, looking first at general principles then at specific types of crisis, and finally considering elements of crisis management at institutional level. We said at the outset that we did not intend to be prescriptive, as crises by their nature are unpredictable and complex. We conclude with a reminder of what we see as the key principles of planning for crisis, but would stress that it should above all be a consultative process, if you are to best serve those who are experiencing the crisis.

Guiding principles:

- Mitigate, prepare, respond and recover.
- Consult with students and be sensitive to cross-cultural factors.
- Set up a team, headed by a senior manager and involve people inside and outside the institution. Responsibilities should be allocated by senior staff.
- Have an internal and external communications strategy.
- Write down your plan and review it in the light of events.
- Train key staff to carry out the plan.
- Finally, once you have agreed your plan, tell everyone about it.

APPENDIX A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT

General crisis management

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Crisis management in educational institutions

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PRACTICAL ADVICE

Reader's Digest (1986) *What to do in an Emergency*

APPENDIX B USEFUL RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Encyclopaedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/>

International news and media sites

<http://worldnews.about.com/>

<http://www.internationalaffairs.com/>

<http://www.fleet-street.co.uk/map.htm>

<http://www.thepaperboy.com/>

<http://www.mediainfo.com/>

<http://www.worldnews.com/>

<http://www.newsdirectory.com/web/>

<http://www.newsrack.com>

<http://www.orientation.com/>

CIA World-wide Fact Book - huge database of information

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

News from Arabia <http://www.arab.net/>

African specialist search engine <http://www.woyaa.com>

Africa Net <http://www.africanet.com/>

Africa Online <http://www.africaonline.com/>

African News Online <http://www.africanews.org/>

India Portal <http://www.indiaserver.com/>

Bangladesh International Community News Web <http://bicn.com/>

China <http://www.chinadaily.net/>

Indonesia on the net search engine

<http://www.indonesianet.com/search.htm>

News source from South America <http://www.southamericadaily.com/>

Latin America media site <http://www.zonalatina.com/>

News agencies

Press Association News Centre <http://www.ananova.com>

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com>
Associated Press <http://wire.ap.org>
Agence France Press <http://www.afp.com/>

Magazines/Newspapers

European Voice <http://www.european-voice.com/>
Le Monde www.lemonde.fr
Le Monde diplomatique www.monde-diplomatique.fr
Economist Intelligence Unit www.eiu.com
The Economist www.economist.com

Radio

Short-wave-Radio Catalogue <http://itre.ncsu.edu/radio>
BBC World-wide Monitoring www.monitor.bbc.co.uk
BBC World Service www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice
USA Public Broadcasting Service Online www.pbs.org
USA National Public Radio Online www.npr.org
World Radio Network www.wrn.org

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

GENERAL

Emergency Planning Society

Northumberland House
11 The Pavement
Popes Lane
London W5 4NG
Tel: 020 8579 7971
Fax: 020 8579 7972
Email: headquarters@EmergPlanSoc.org.uk
URL: www.EmergPlanSoc.org.uk

Home Office Emergency Planning College

The Hawkhill
Easingwold
York YO61 3EG

Appendix B: Useful Resources and Contacts

Tel: 01347 822877

Fax: 01347 822575

Email: epc.ho@gtnet.gov.uk

URL: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/epd

Institute for Crisis Management

PO Box 219

Louisville, KY 40201-0219

USA

Tel: 001 888 708 8351

Fax: 001 812 284 8354

URL: www.crisisexperts.com

Professional Crisis Management Association

Corporate Headquarters

10273 NW 46 St.

Sunrise FL 33351

USA

Tel: 001 954 746 0165

Fax (954) 746-4628

URL: www.pcma.com

International Crisis Group

149 Avenue Louise

Level 16

B-1050 Brussels

Belgium

Tel: +32-2-502 90 38

Fax: +32-2-502 50 38

Email: icgbrussels@crisisweb.org

URL: www.intl-crisis-group.com

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Centre for Crisis Management in Education

Roselyn House
93 Old Newtown Road
Newbury
Berks RG14 7DE
Tel/Fax: 01635 30644
Email: *capewell@which.net*

PERSONAL SUPPORT

British Red Cross

9 Grosvenor Crescent
London SW1X 7EJ
Tel: 020 7235 5454
Fax: 020 7245 6315
Minicom: 020 7235 3159
Telex: 918657
Email: *information@redcross.org.uk*
URL: *www.redcross.org.uk*

Victim Support

Cranmer House
39 Brixton Road
London SW9 6DZ
Tel: 020 7735 9166
Fax: 020 7582 5712
Victim Support Line: 0845 303 0900

NAFSIYAT, the Intercultural Therapy Centre

278 Seven Sisters Road,
London N4
Tel: 020 7263 4130

British Association for Counselling

1 Regent Place,

Rugby

CV21 2PJ

Tel: 01788 550899

Fax: 01788 562189

Email: bac@bac.co.uk

URL: www.counselling.co.uk

CRUSE Bereavement Care

Cruse House

126 Sheen Road

Richmond

Surrey TW9 1UR

Tel: 020 8940 4818

020 8332 7227 (bereavement line)

National Schizophrenia Foundation: <http://www.at-ease.nsf.org.uk/>

Depression Alliance: www.depressionalliance.org

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: www.mentalhealth.com/dis/p20-an06.html

The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org.uk

HOST UK

1 Ardleigh Road

London N1 4HS

Tel: 020 7254 3039

Fax: 020 7923 1606

E-mail: info@hostuk.org

URL: www.hostuk.org

PERSONAL SAFETY

Suzy Lamplugh Trust: www.suzylamplugh.org

HEALTH

World Health Organisation: <http://www.who.int/health-topics/>

Public Health Laboratory Service: <http://www.phls.co.uk/>

Department of Health: <http://www.doh.gov.uk>

Avert - AIDS/HIV Education and Research

4 Brighton Road

Horsham

West Sussex

RH13 5BA

Tel: 01403 210202

Fax: 01403 211001

Email: avert@dial.pipex.com

URL: www.avert.org

MONEY

Pacific Exchange Rate Service (Current and historical exchange rate data)

<http://pacific.commerce.ubc.ca/xr/>

Bank of England <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/>

Money Advice Association <http://www.maa.ndirect.co.uk/>

Money Management Council <http://www.cii.co.uk/facts.htm>

LEGAL INFORMATION AND ADVICE

British Government website: www.open.gov.uk

Scottish Executive: www.scotland.gov.uk

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: www.fco.gov.uk

Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate:

www.homeoffice.gov/ind

Data Protection Registrar www.dataprotection.gov.uk

Office for National Statistics - Registration services - Registering a death:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/registration/DeathsWhereWhen.asp>

NACAB Advice guide www.adviceguide.org.uk/nacab

Metropolitan Police: www.met.police.uk

Appendix B: Useful Resources and Contacts

Community Legal Service: www.justask.org.uk

Electronic immigration Network: www.ein.org.uk

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)

115 Old Street

London EC1V 9JR

Tel: 020 7251 8706 (for advisers 1400 - 1700 Mon, Tues, Thurs)

www.jcwi.org.uk

MISSING PERSONS

Public Record Office Leaflets - Tracing Missing Persons:

www.pro.gov.uk/readers/frcleaflets/tracingmissingpersons.htm

Missing You - UK missing persons - www.missing-you.net

Metropolitan Police Missing Persons Bureau

www.met.police.uk/police/mps

National Missing Persons Help line: www.missingpersons.org

APPENDIX C EXAMPLE OF INCIDENT SUPPORT FORM

To be completed by the Incident Support Co-ordinator (ISC). This form is designed to serve as a check-list, a source of useful information, and a means of recording events and action taken. It is important to record as much detail as possible as this information may be used for debriefing meetings or in the event of subsequent legal proceedings.

Please note that there is a separate procedure and specialist co-ordinators for dealing with cases of meningitis. Please contact the Campus Control Room or the University Health Service (office hours) for advice.

1. Name of Incident Support Co-ordinator

.....

Note: The role of the ISC will be to attend to the welfare processes which are subsequent to an incident or emergency where students are involved.

Although the ensuing tasks may be delegated, it is important that the ISC maintains overall control and co-ordination of the University's response.

2. Referral Details:

Name of Control Room staff member (or other person) reporting the incident to the Incident Support Co-ordinator (ISC):

.....

Reported to ISC, Date: Time:.....

How does this person know about the incident?

.....

.....

If possible, attach a copy of the initial incident form completed by the Control Room staff, and check that the details given on both forms are consistent.

Please include details of any instructions you are given in Section 9 of this Form.

3. Subject's Details

Subject's name (If multiple subjects please state link between those involved and attach list of names if appropriate)

..... Male Female

U-Card /Registration Number

Subject's AgeTerm-time phone number

Nationality.....

Term-time address:

4. Next of kin:

Name:Relationship to subject:

.....

Phone no.:.....

Address:

Should Next of Kin be informed? Yes No

Has Next of Kin been contacted by Subject/Police/Hospital/Other? Yes No

Has Next of Kin been contacted by ISC or other University contact? Yes No

Date:

Details:

5. Details of the Incident:

Date of incident:Time:

What is the nature of the incident?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6. Where is the subject now?

*Please record the address and contact number.
(Note; if the subject is missing, please see Annexe A, Section 2)*

.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Hospitalisation

Please complete the following if the subject is admitted to hospital: (see also Annexe A, Section 5 and Annexe B, Sections 1,3 and 4).

Hospital:
Date/Time Admitted:.....
Contact details:
Date/Time Discharged:

8. Whether or not you are with the subject, do your best to make a note of all persons who assist the subject in the case (i.e. doctors, counsellors, tutors etc).

Name	Role/position	Phone No.

9. Special Instructions

Use this space to record any instructions you may have been given by Campus Control, Safety Services, Police or other referral agent.

10. Subsequent Action

Start a log below to keep track of all events related to the situation as they occur.

(Note: some issues for consideration are provided in Annexes A and B)

Date/Time	Action taken/notes (action taken by whom?)

ANNEXE A

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The following guidelines are designed to be a helpful aide-memoir for use in particular circumstances. The ISC may choose to act outside these guidelines depending on the situation with which he or she is faced. No two events are likely to be the same and it will be necessary to exercise judgement based on the particular circumstances.

1. Death / suspected death

- if not already aware, ensure that Campus Control are notified. They will notify the emergency services.
- If the subject is certified as dead, the body may be sent to the mortuary by the hospital or the police. Confirm that Head of Security (or his representative) will liaise with the police and keep you informed of the whereabouts of the body and other details as they arise. Confirm that the police will take responsibility for advising next of kin.
- In the event of a death, report the details to Head of Student Services, or, in her absence, to a member of staff in the Central Support and Welfare section of the Student Services department at the earliest opportunity. Staff in this Section will follow an established protocol which will encompass notifying those who need to know, support for the next of kin and friends, arranging representation at the funeral etc.

Note:

If the death appears to have occurred in suspicious circumstances, care must be taken not to destroy anything which may be classed as evidence.

2. Missing Students

Try to ascertain the following:

- Who reported the subject as missing?
- Why has the subject been reported as missing?
- When was the subject last seen?

- by the academic department
- by friends
- by the subject's family
- at the subjects term time address? (Note: Campus Control can be asked to call at the address. They will have a master key which will allow them access to any University property).

Note:

In normal circumstances the ISC should not inform the police. Head of Security will contact and liaise with the police when this is deemed appropriate.

3. Student behaving in a way that is likely to endanger themselves or others

- If not aware, contact Campus Control immediately. If the student can be restrained, consider seeking advice from the University Health Service.
- if the student cannot be restrained, or if advised to do so by the doctor, Campus Control will contact the police who will determine necessary action .

Note:

In cases of student misconduct, see notes on Discipline below.

4. The arrest of a student

Campus Control must be informed at the earliest opportunity if a criminal act has been committed on University premises or if a student is involved in a crime where this leads to an arrest.

In the event of the arrest of a student:

- confirm that Head of Security will liaise with the police to ascertain the reason for the arrest
- Head of Security will inform the Vice-Chancellor and/or the Registrar.
- inform International Student Advisor if the subject is an international student
- inform Public Relations and the Union Student Advice Centre
- ensure that those notified are briefed about developments and whether the student has been charged, bailed, remanded in custody etc. Ensure that advice is available to the student if he or she needs it.

The University's Discipline Regulations

The Discipline Regulations can be found in the Calendar and on the Web. They require any member of the University (ie Officers, staff or students) to report any serious misconduct or breach of regulations by students to the Registrar and Secretary. The Vice-Chancellor then has the power to decide whether to refer the case to the Discipline Committee and whether, in the meantime, to exclude the student from any University class or any part of the University. If the incident involved illegal actions by a student at the University then immediate action may be taken by the University if appropriate, up to and including their immediate suspension from the University by the Vice-Chancellor. If the incident is to be the subject of legal proceedings then no further disciplinary action will occur until after the resolution of the formal legal proceedings. If the incident is not the subject of legal proceedings then disciplinary action may be brought as appropriate.

The Secretary to the Discipline Committee and will be happy to provide further information and advice.

5. Attempted Suicide/Serious Injury/Serious Illness

If it is possible to do so, the consent of the student concerned to the following actions should be sought.

- If the incident has occurred in residential accommodation, inform the Director of Housing Services or the Hall Warden as appropriate.
- All accidents (including suicide) which happen on University premises or to University personnel on official activities must be reported to Safety Services and an Accident Report form must be completed (all ISCs will be provided with an Accident Report Book). This must be sent to Safety Services within 24 hours. In addition, Safety Services must be telephoned at the earliest opportunity if anyone is taken to hospital or if they are away from normal activities for more than three days as a result of an accident.
- Notify the University Health Service and ask for general guidance/advice

ANNEXE B

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Additional Support for students facing a period of prolonged illness or admission to hospital.

When a student is admitted to hospital, the University centrally will not automatically be informed. At a student's request, however, there are staff in the Student Services Department who can provide advice, support and information during such periods. They can, for example:

- notify the student's family, friends, personal tutor, landlord, head of Department, etc. (with permission of student)
- arrange for the student to receive advice on academic matters/ leave of absence arrangements
- arrange for items to be brought to the hospital
- act as point of contact, avoiding need for all University parties to contact hospital singly

Staff will be happy to consider any other reasonable requests in addition to the above . It will not be necessary for the student to reveal the reasons for the hospitalisation or the nature of the illness, and information will not be disclosed to others without the student's consent. Contact Student Services if you and/or the student would like to take advantage of this service.

2. Counselling

In many situations it may be beneficial for the subject or others involved in the incident to see a member of the University Counselling Services after the incident. (Counselling Services hours and contact details are....)

3. Academic Implications

The incident may have academic implications for the student and/or others involved. They may have physical injuries that prohibit their attendance at the University, or there may be a psychological impact that makes the student unable to attend lectures, or may significantly impair their work. If the student feels that their academic situation may be affected their Head of Department and/or Personal Tutor should be contacted.

If the student wishes to continue on their course, then any exceptional circumstances they have faced may be taken into account by examiners when considering marks to be awarded. If the student is considering withdrawing from their course temporarily then it may be advisable for them to contact the Student Advice Centre, Undergraduate Student Services, or the Graduate School as this can have significant financial implications, or, in the case of international students, immigration implications for the student.

Students should be advised to contact Central Support and Welfare re financial support (if necessary) during Leave of Absence and re. additional support (relating to injury or illness) on return.

4. Accommodation Issues

Depending on the nature of the incident the subject or friends/family may not wish to return to their normal residence after the event. If appropriate the person should be asked if they are comfortable returning to their residence, and whether there will be anyone else at home. If they do not wish to return to their normal accommodation, take details of where they are staying instead.

It may be appropriate for you to assist the subject in finding temporary alternative accommodation. Likewise, if family members do not reside locally, they may appreciate help in securing accommodation locally (to be near to the hospital, for example). It may be possible to reserve University accommodation by liaising with the Director of Housing Services and the Halls of Residence (except in special circumstances a charge may be made). Hotel accommodation can be found by contacting Central Support and Welfare.

5. Public Relations and the Media

Depending on where the incident took place, and the precise nature of the incident, there may be some media interest. If there is any possibility of media interest contact the Public Relations Office who will help to produce a press release and will help to ensure the privacy of the subject.

Never reveal information to the press yourself. If asked to comment, inform them that [a Press Statement will be released by the University] and contact the Public Relations Office, as soon as possible. All contact with press must go through Public Relations.

If the details of an incident are likely to be released by the press, it may be appropriate to contact family/friends of the subject to forewarn them.

6. Incidents occurring on organised activities /trips outside the area

(a) Union of Students

All high risk activities organised by clubs or societies associated with the Union of Students will have been registered and approved using a Trip Registration Form, a copy of which is kept in the Union Workspace and a copy sent to Campus Control.

Clubs and Societies are asked to contact Campus Control in the event of an incident. Campus Control will then contact a member of the Union of Students 'Contact Group' who will decide whether or not the help of a University's ISC is required. In these circumstances the ISC will support the Union of Students Contact. The ISC may wish to record action taken on this Form but the Union will be responsible for co-ordinating the response.

(b) University trips/activities

The following actions may apply in respect of trips organised by the University (as opposed to the Union of Students)

- If possible, agree a way of maintaining contact with the students concerned.
- If Mountain Rescue or the police are involved, inform them of your contact details and request that they notify you of all developments. Inform them that you can provide details of next of kin etc.
- contact the Public Relations Officer immediately. If possible, remind the students concerned of the dangers of speaking to the press themselves. Any statements should be released through the University's Public Relations Office.
- consider notifying next of kin. It will be difficult to decide on when this has become necessary, but in no circumstances should

Appendix C: Example of an Incident Support Form

they hear of the incident first from the press. The police or Mountain Rescue authorities may help you to decide when this is appropriate.

- In the case of a large group of students, it may be necessary to set up a telephone help-line staffed by volunteers to provide information to relatives. A room is on permanent standby for such purposes. Ask Campus Control to contact the Telecommunication Manager to assist in the technical aspects of ensuring that the lines are operational. Telephone lines are available but it will be the ISC's responsibility to recruit and brief the volunteers.

ANNEXE C

Contact details for:

Incident Support Co-ordinators

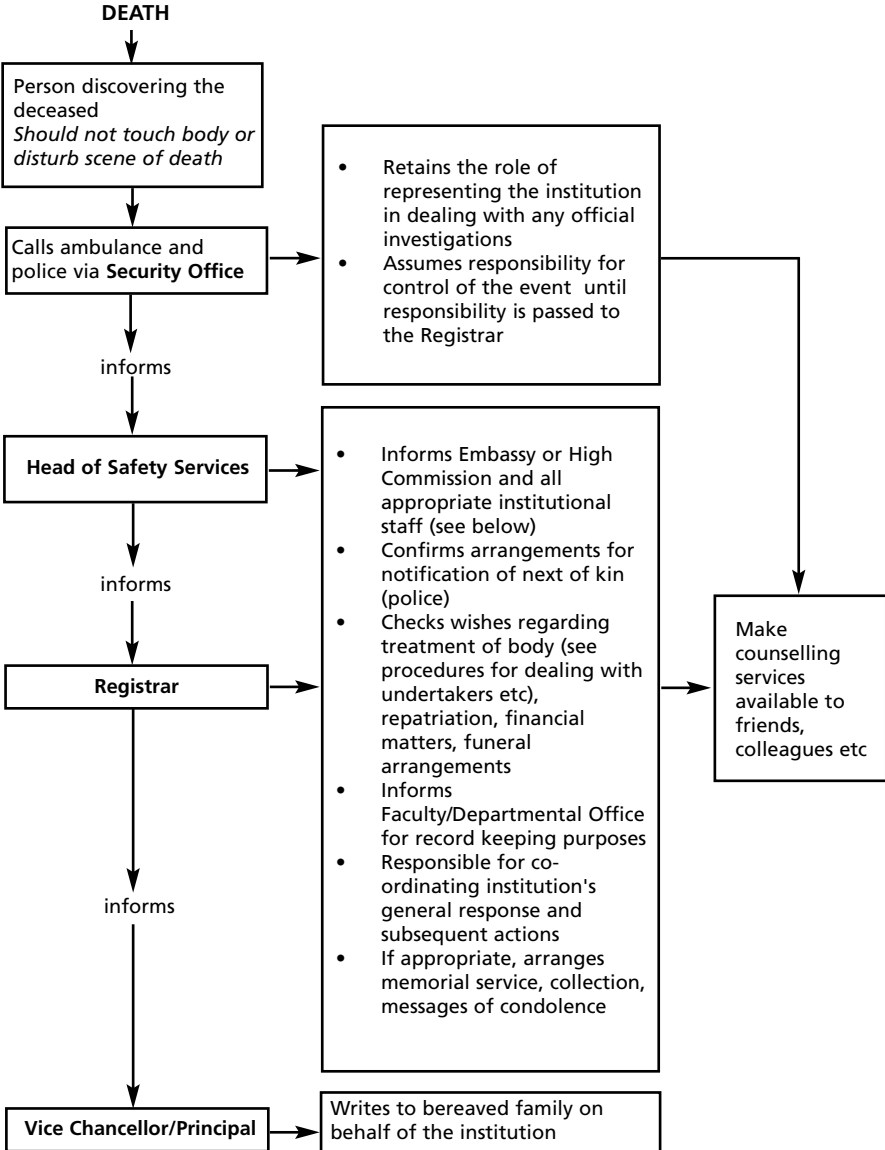
University Resources

- Safety Services
- Security Services
- University Health Service
- University Chaplaincy
- Housing Services
- Nightline
- Halls of Residence

External Resources

- Local hospitals
- The Samaritans
- National/local drugs helplines
- Victim Support
- Rape Crisis Centre

APPENDIX D SUMMARY OF ACTIONS FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A STUDENT



Appendix D: Summary of Actions Following the Death of a Student

List of contacts with whom co-ordinator should liaise

External	Internal	Personal
Police	Senior Officers	Family Members
Hospital	Press Office	Partner
Consul	Safety Officer	Boyfriend/Girlfriend
Lawyer	Student Health Service	Friends - In UK
Judge	Head of Accommodation	Friends - Abroad
Undertaker	Hall of Residence Staff	
Landlord	Academic Department(s)	
Home Institution	Chaplains	
Sponsor	Student Advisory & Counselling Service	
Religious Group	Support staff & Line Manager	
Airlines	Student Population	
Hotel		

APPENDIX E CRISIS/HARDSHIP FUND GUIDELINES

THREE KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Criteria for making award**
- 2 Application form**
- 3 Processing the application**

1 Criteria

- For unexpected, unforeseeable circumstances only
- Decide what costs you will cover. Is the fund for living expenses only or for arrears too?
- Demonstrable link (i.e. documentary evidence) between critical event and financial hardship
- Student is likely to successfully complete current academic session if given assistance (requires tutor to endorse the application)
- Student must demonstrate s/he has done all s/he realistically can to maximise income and minimise expenditure, eg looked for work, applied to trusts, applied for a bank loan, applied to sponsor
- Whether you will consider more than one application in the same academic session

2 Application form

- Keep the form short, three sides of A4, with one side of accompanying notes for the student to keep
- Keep the language simple and concise
- Avoid jargon and quasi-legal language, eg third party
- Explanatory notes to include:
 - a) Whether award is grant or loan
 - b) Criteria (see above)
 - c) Likely or maximum amount of award
 - d) Detailed description of process, time scale for decision, appeal procedure for student to keep

- e) Explain how incomplete application will be dealt with. All time scales must be short - this is crisis money - maximum two weeks? Include any time for preparing a cheque
- f) Any restrictions you want to impose - eg under what circumstances will an award cover vacations?
- g) Reserve the right to make payment directly to a third party, eg landlord
- Collect comprehensive information on and documentary evidence of:
 - a) student's personal circumstances
 - b) circumstances of any partner and dependants in UK and elsewhere
 - c) accommodation arrangements in UK
 - d) academic progress and future intentions
 - e) all income, expenditure and debts
 - f) circumstances which have caused the crisis. The evidence required here will depend on the circumstances, but is likely to include some or all of the following:
 - 1) student's or sponsor's bank statements for the period before and after the event
 - 2) letter from sponsor
 - 3) detailed evidence from reliable news source, eg BBC, CNN that circumstances in home country have had a detrimental effect on the student's home town, region
 - 4) medical certificate or letter from medical practitioner
 - 5) death certificate
 - 6) police or court report
 - 7) letter from lawyer

NB: You may need to ask the student to obtain certified translations of documents. Embassies are able to get documents translated for a fee or certify a translation as accurate.

- Declaration at end
 - a) Full and truthful answers to all questions
 - b) Supporting documents are genuine originals or certified copies of originals relating to me and any dependants

- c) Permission to contact Bank and/or Building Society for verification
- d) Understand and accept penalty for non-payment of any loan

3 Processing the application

- Offer student an interview with student adviser before completing application, to ascertain whether student has done all s/he can to maximise income and minimise expenditure and to get budgeting and financial advise
- The decision should not be made by people with personal knowledge of the student, and it should involve at least two people, with the second person having managerial responsibility
- Establish a panel of people who can be called upon to deal with applications. Get them together at least once a year to brief them on the scheme, and keep them informed of changes to the criteria
- Student must apply on required form and produce ALL relevant originals or certified photocopies of documents
- Attach a standard cover sheet to each application and record its progress through the procedure
- Devise a spreadsheet/database so you can collect and analyse data
- Return all original documents to the student having made photocopies
- Examine applications immediately they are submitted to ensure they are complete
- Make decisions promptly, and record the reasons for the decision in writing

APPENDIX F EXAMPLE OF LETTER FROM CONSULTANT IN COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL

Dear Student/Staff Member

This letter is to inform you that one of the students in the department has been taken ill with suspected meningococcal infection. The student is in hospital and is responding well to treatment.

Meningococcal infection is rare and does NOT spread easily from person to person. The germ that causes meningococcal disease is passed from person to person in droplets from the mouth and nose. Because the germ is very fragile, and dies rapidly outside the body, very close contact is necessary before there is a risk of becoming infected.

As the disease is not very infectious, it is unlikely that anyone else will be affected. There is no need for people to stay away from work, or for the department to close.

Research has shown that family contacts or "kissing contacts" of people with meningococcal infection are at an increased risk of developing the disease. We offer antibiotics to these people to reduce their risk of becoming ill.

Antibiotics are not usually recommended for less close contacts of a person with meningococcal disease (such as other class mates or work mates) because the risk of them developing the infection is very small, and because:

1. The meningitis germ may become resistant to the antibiotics, and so make future protection impossible.

Appendix F: Example of letter from Consultant

2. There can be side effects from taking antibiotics, which are occasionally serious.
3. The nose and throat contain many germs which protect against infection. Antibiotics may kill all these germs and remove this natural protection, which may put people more at risk of developing meningococcal disease

Vaccination is not recommended in most situations, as it offers no protection at all against the most common form of meningococcal infection.

If you become ill over the next ten days contact your own family doctor and tell her/him that you work in a department where there has been a case of meningococcal disease. It may help if you take this letter with you. The symptoms of meningococcal infection are:

- headache
- joint or muscle pains
- fever
- drowsiness
- turning head away from bright lights (photophobia)
- a fine rash, like pin pricks, which does not disappear when pressed with a glass
- stiff neck
- vomiting
- confusion

Not all these symptoms need to be present. Do remember that people with meningococcal infection can become seriously ill very quickly. If you develop headache and a fever, and your condition appears to be getting worse, do not delay in seeking medical help. Please keep an eye on your friends if they are ill.

If you would like any further information please contact the doctor on call at _____ Health Authority on _____ (office hours) or out of hours on _____, or you can always ask for advice from your own doctor. There are two national meningitis helplines which are also happy to answer over the 'phone enquiries, tel 0845 6000 800, or 0808 800 3344

Yours sincerely

Consultant in Communicable Disease Control