UCQ UNIVERSITY CENTRE QUAYSIDE

Suicide-Safer Strategy and Action Plan

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1. Purpose

1.1 University Centre Quayside (UCQ) is committed to creating a suicide-safer community. We aim to minimise suicide and attempted suicide in so far as is possible, recognising that Universities play a key role. This strategy and action plan outlines UCQ priorities although it cannot cover all eventualities and it is recognised that sadly not all suicide is preventable.

1.2 This Suicide-Safer Strategy applies to both staff and students, recognising UCQ's duty of care to its whole community. It is approved through the University committee process through to Board of Governors and forms a distinct part of the mental health strategy. The action plan builds in review processes, as well as the mechanisms for ongoing review and updating of the broader Wellbeing Strategy.

2. Rationale

2.1 In September 2018, Universities UK and Papyrus, the national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide, published guidance to outline how leaders of higher education institutions work to prevent student suicide by developing a safer-suicide strategy and action plan. This strategy also reflects increasing regulatory expectations around student wellbeing, safeguarding, and mental health governance within higher education, including the Office for Students' requirements on harassment, safeguarding and student protection.

2.2 The Suicide-Safer Strategy and action plan is a distinct component of the broader Safeguarding Policy (SA-002) and Student Welfare Policy (SA-016), emphasising the requirement for an organisational approach.

2.3 In addition to the work currently being undertaken to embed wellbeing across our university centre, we recognise the need for a distinct suicide prevention, intervention and postvention strategy and accompanying action plan. This has been developed in partnership with key internal and external stakeholders. It is owned by the Strategic Safeguarding Lead, who has strategic oversight and disseminated by the Head of Policy and Governance. It will be reviewed and amended annually to reflect feedback, effectiveness and impact.

3. Context

3.1 The ONS report (June 2018) 'Estimating Suicide among Higher Education Students, England and Wales: Experimental Statistics' notes the following data:

- The rate of suicide in the 12 months ending July 2017 for higher education students in England and Wales was 4.7 deaths per 100,000 students, which equates to 95 suicides; this is higher than in most of the earlier years studied, although the small numbers per year make it difficult to identify statistically significant differences.
- Between the 12 months ending July 2013 and the 12 months ending July 2016, higher education students in England and Wales had a significantly lower suicide rate compared with the general population of similar ages.
- Male higher education students had a significantly higher rate of suicide (6.7 per 100,000) compared with female students (2.8 per 100,000).
- Only 1 in 3 people who die by suicide are known to any mental health services (general population).

3.2 Student suicide is defined as those who died by suicide or an event of undetermined intent before or on the end date of their studies and where the death was registered in England and Wales.

3.3 The Samaritans guidance "Understanding UK and ROI Suicide Statistics" (2018) outlines how statistics are collected and calculated and how best to interpret and use the latest ONS data (2020).

3.4 Current ONS data for England shows:

- In 2022, 5642 suicides were registered in England and Wales. This is an increase of 730 on 2020 data.
- Suicide rates decreased in 2020 and increased in 2021, likely because of both decreases in male suicides at the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and delays in death registrations because of the pandemic.
- The overall suicide rate was 10.7 deaths per 100,000.
- The male suicide rate was 16.4 deaths per 100,000, an increase of 1.1%, compared to the female suicide rate of 5.4 deaths per 100,000.
- In 2022, those aged 50-54 years had the highest suicide rate (15.2 deaths per 10,000) consistent with 2021 (14.9 deaths per 100,000).
- Males aged 90 years and over had the highest rate in 2022 (32.1 per 100,000 – 58 deaths). While this is an increase, it is not statistically significant because of wide confidence intervals and low number of deaths.
- Males aged 45-49 had the 2nd highest suicide rate, 23.0 per 100,000 (-0.8% on 2020 data), There is regional variation in the suicide rates. The North East of England had the highest suicide rate (12.8 per 100,000, down 0.5 on 2020 data), closely followed by the North West, with a rate of 12.5 per 100,000.

3.5 Suicide is confirmed by the coroner who needs clear evidence, for example an accompanying suicide note. A conclusion is reached on the balance of probabilities. Where there is insufficient evidence, a death may be recorded as an accidental death or open verdict/conclusion; this can result in deaths being misclassified.

3.6 UCQ recognises that its work-based, non-campus delivery model presents different risks and protective factors compared with traditional residential universities, and this strategy is adapted accordingly.

4. Higher Education at UCQ

4.1 UCQ is not a campus-based university centre. Although our Head Office is in Newcastle, we deliver work-based higher education across England, using a hybrid model of learning. Students are employed and over 19 years (with the majority over 30). Currently all students are studying on a degree apprenticeship. At the time of updating this strategy UCQ has 150live apprentices across England, across 15 cohorts.

4.2 As HE students are employed, geographically dispersed, and primarily engaged through employers, UCQ's suicide-safer approach emphasises early identification, strong referral pathways, employer engagement, and clear escalation routes rather than campus-based interventions.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 UCQ will ensure there is a clear focus on student welfare, mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention and support.

5.2 Strategic Priorities will be measured through:

- Safeguarding trend analysis
- Achievement rates
- Student and staff feedback
- Review of serious incidents/near misses

5.3 A Staff/Student Liaison Committee allows student champions and representatives to be actively involved in UCQ and regularly consulted and updated on policy change. A student representative also sits on the Board of Governors, UCQ's governing body, and the Academic Board.

This strategy and action plan has been considered by the student body representation, prior to approval by the Board of Governors and publication

5.4 Safeguarding and Prevent are key priorities at UCQ. The Vice Principal is the Strategic Safeguarding Lead (SSL) and there are a minimum of two Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). Policies and procedures incorporate this strategy and action plan (SA-019) and the Student Welfare Policy (SA-016) which states:

- UCQ is committed to fair and equitable treatment for all members of the UCQ community and the disclosure of any health issue or physical, social or cultural need, will be treated confidentially and will not put the student at a disadvantage

- UCQ take all reasonable steps to ensure that the provision of appropriate welfare support is appropriately resourced based on the needs of students. The amount of support to be provided will be determined using demographic and demand needs and will focus on resilience and prevention as far as possible. Where there are external specialist services which are well placed to support our community UCQ will form links with them as far as possible in order to develop the best referral pathways, rather than replicating services.

5.5 Monthly safeguarding meetings are held to discuss safeguarding concerns, staff and student welfare, prevent referrals, updates to legislation, guidance or policies and procedures, ensuring staff and students remain safe while at UCQ.

5.6 UCQ are active members of the National Suicide Prevent Alliance (NSPA) and have trained mental health first aiders to provide support to both employees and students.

5.7 UCQ staff are encouraged to complete a Level 2 qualification in self harm and suicide prevention awareness, which is also available to students, through distance learning.

5.8 UCQ have dedicated a section of the website to safeguarding and prevent where staff and students can access training and support, including mental health and wellbeing. Support services relating to suicide can be accessed at https://ucq.ac.uk/support-links/ and include Mental Health Foundation, Papyrus UK, CALM and Hub of Hope.

6. Understanding Suicide[1]

6.1 In the UK, in 2022, 5642 suicides were registered in England and Wales. Men are three times more likely than women to die by suicide. Women are more likely to report suicidal thoughts. Men aged 45-49 and women aged 50-54 have significant suicide rates in England and Wales with the North East having the highest rates.

6.2 Suicide is complex and there is no single reason people die by suicide. Suicidal feelings can be confusing, frightening and complicated. They can range from having general thoughts about not wanting to be here to making a plan about how and when to end your life and make the pain stop.

6.3 Feelings can include:

- Hopelessness and feeling trapped
- Tearful, anxious or overwhelmed by negative thoughts
- Desperation
- Temptation to do risky or reckless things
- Wishing to avoid other people.

6.4 Risk Factors

Societal	Relationships
• difficulties accessing or receiving care – including transition from child and adolescent mental health services to adult services, or transition between geographical locations when transitioning to university • access to means of (attempting) suicide • inappropriate media reporting • stigma associated with mental health, substance abuse or suicidal behaviour which prevents people from seeking help	• isolation and lack of social support • relationship breakdown • loss or conflict
Community	**Individual**
• poverty • experiences of trauma or abuse • experiences of disaster, war, or conflict • experiences of discrimination	• previous suicide attempts • self-harm behaviours – • mental ill-health • drug and alcohol misuse • financial loss • chronic pain • family history of suicide

[1] Mental Health Foundation

6.4 Protective factors may include strong social connections, supportive relationships at work or study, access to appropriate support, positive coping strategies, and a sense of purpose or belonging.

7. Action Plan

The action plan highlights actions to be undertaken as **'Prevention'**, **'Intervention'**, and **'Postvention'**. It follows the objectives outlined in the UUK Suicide-Safer Universities document and Guidance Document. Progress against this action plan will be reviewed at policy review and following any serious incident.

1. **Prevention**

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
1.1 Whole University approach to good mental Health 1.2 Aim to create compassionate communities between staff and students	a. Effective Student Welfare policy/strategy. b. Embed Safer Suicide Strategy into Student Welfare, Safeguarding and Prevent. c. Update website to highlight mental health and wellbeing support d. Communicate strategy and support available to all staff and students. e. Report on Safer Suicide Strategy, Student Welfare, within monthly Safeguarding and Prevent meetings and as part of operational meetings. f. Report on Safer Suicide Strategy, Student Welfare, within Board of Governor meetings. g. Ensure Safeguarding team, including Strategic Safeguarding Lead, undertake Mental Health training.	➢ Updated Student Welfare policy/strategy. ➢ Safeguarding concern process to be used for Mental Health and wellbeing support to provide single point of report. ➢ Mental Health and Wellbeing Communication strategy/plan ➢ Promote mental health days with staff and students including: • World Mental Health Day • Mental Health Week • Suicide awareness day • National Stress Awareness Day • Anti-bullying week • Uni Mental Health Day • https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/take-action/resources-your-workplace/mental-health-calendar ➢ Maintain Better Health at Work and Mindful Employer accreditation	Achieved	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
	h. Provide Mental Health training as part of annual staff CPD plan. i. Provide Mental Health awareness training to student champions.			
1.3 Encourage disclosures of difficulty/distress 1.4 Ensure students with difficulties are identified, signposted and supported.	a. Incidents of sexual harassment, violence and assault can lead to stress and anxiety and should be considered as part of student welfare. b. Include mental health and wellbeing as part of the Staff/Student Liaison Committee.	➢ Comms to students about sexual misconduct policy. ➢ Promotion of support available within the University Centre including sexual harassment, violence and assault. ➢ Update TOR for Staff/Student Liaison Committee	Achieved	VP
1.5 Work together with schools and colleges to ensure smooth transition between educational settings.	UCQ, as a non-traditional campus-based university centre, do not usually recruit directly from schools/colleges. As part of the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA), UCQ deliver degree apprenticeships to those in the workplace. As such, student welfare should be included in induction.	➢ Update induction programme to include Student Welfare. Included within induction.	Achieved	HPG
1.6 Raise suicide awareness and de-stigmatisation talking about suicide.	Effective and planned communications to staff and students to include discussion points.	➢ Mental Health First Aider to create a schedule of communications, linking to awareness days and key dates. ➢ Social Media Campaigns ➢ Online events	Ongoing	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
1.7 Encourage students to involve parents, guardians or other trusted advisors early if they run into mental health difficulties.			Ongoing	
1.8 Making this everyone's business and provide specific training on suicide prevention awareness.	a. Effective and planned communications to staff and students. b. Suicide prevention awareness training available to all staff and students	➢ Mental Health First Aider to create a schedule of communications, linking to awareness days and key dates. ➢ Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA) prevention awareness training available to all students via website at https://ucq.ac.uk/safeguarding-and-prevent-training/ ➢ Employer reviews to include Health and Wellbeing as part of Safeguarding and Prevent agenda items. ➢ Safeguarding and Prevent agenda items to include Health and Wellbeing.	Ongoing	VP
1.9 Provide a range of easily accessible and culturally appropriate support for those experiencing difficulties.	a. Effective support available to staff and students. b. Single point of reporting for those with difficulties, in line with Safeguarding reporting processes.	➢ All resources, including support, reporting, signposting and training links, freely available on the single comprehensive source of information on the UCQ website at https://ucq.ac.uk/safeguarding-and-prevent/ ➢ Liaison with Staff/Student Liaison Committee to identify key groups and develop inclusivity of service.	Achieved	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
1.10 Signpost support available from the university, including in curriculum departments and operational functions. 1.11 Signpost support available externally, which includes NHS and voluntary sector.	a. Development of an effective referral pathway b. Ensure appropriate training and support is available to staff and students c. Ensure employee/student's voice is being captured to measure impact of support measures.	➢ Referral pathway clearly communicated to all staff and students. ➢ Website to be used as signposting tool to external support services and training. ➢ Staff and students have access to appropriate training and support. ➢ Mental Health included on staff/student surveys.	Ongoing	VP
1.12 Prevent and act against bullying and all types of discrimination and harassment.	a. Embed UCQ culture across organisation b. Embed UCQ policies and procedures, ensure effective reporting mechanisms. c. Ensure effective support and training for staff and students. d. Prevent agenda promoted throughout the organisation, including British Values.	➢ UCQ culture discussed throughout the organisation, from recruitment to annual appraisals. ➢ Ensure students are informed of expectations, in line with cultures, including policies, procedures, misconduct and reporting, escalation. ➢ Accessible training available to staff and students.	Ongoing	VP
1.13 Restrict access to locations and materials that can be used for suicide.	a. Effective health and safety in place, including risk assessments. b. Effective online safety including firewalls/filters for those accessing UCQ IT facilities. c. Effective annual training programme for all staff d. Increase employer/apprentice awareness of Health and Wellbeing	➢ Cyber essentials plus accreditation ➢ ISO27001 standard achieved ➢ Annual CPD includes H&S and online safety and security. ➢ Employer reviews to include Health and Wellbeing. ➢ Regular Health and Safety meetings with local authorities' estates team.	Achieved	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
1.14 Encourage good communication between all elements of the university involved with student welfare (i.e., if concerns are raised in halls of residence, ensure schools/personal tutors are aware).	a. Effective referral pathways in place b. Effective communication ensures cohesive approach to support.	➢ Referral pathway ensures rapid responses and reporting. ➢ Internal meetings to incorporate health and wellbeing within Safeguarding and Prevent agenda items.	Achieved	VP

2. Intervention

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
2.1 Recognise signs of vulnerability: use alert systems to detect patterns of difficulty, such as not engaging in academic work, running into academic difficulties or dropping off the academic radar, not paying rent, fees or fines; disciplinary issues, not engaging with other students or staff or not being involved in community activities. 2.2 Train all student-facing academic, professional services and operational staff across the organisation and provide refresher training in suicide awareness, how to have conversations and how to intervene.	a. Effective reporting processes, to ensure all concerns are promptly reported and recorded. b. Regular staff training to raise awareness of vulnerabilities, reporting mechanisms and responding to concerns.	➢ Programme team meetings to consider where poor academic performance, lack of engagement, attendance or discipline may be cause for concern, to ensure possible signs of vulnerability are discussed and actioned. ➢ Student records provide data to support discussion at meetings. ➢ Referral pathway ensures rapid responses and reporting. ➢ Internal meetings to incorporate health and wellbeing within Safeguarding and Prevent agenda items to raise awareness and capture concerns. ➢ Staff to undertake the 20 minute Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA) training – available at: https://www.relias.co.uk/hubfs/ZSA-GatewayModule-10012020/story.html ➢ Students to be sign-posted to training and support available on the website https://ucq.ac.uk/safeguarding-and-prevent-training/	Ongoing	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
2.3 Provide and publicise resources such as 'use of language', 'spot the signs', 'it's safe to talk about suicide', and others to the wider university community	Improve use of mental health first aiders to actively engage staff and students and raise awareness.	➢ Monthly MH First Aider/BHW meetings to focus on student and staff communications and promotion campaigns including 'use of language' and 'it's good to talk' etc. ➢ Plan an annual calendar of communications and campaigns. ➢ Bi-Monthly marketing meetings to incorporate MHA campaigns. ➢ Fully use the website and social media to promote campaigns and positive mental health.	Ongoing	VP
2.4 Consider your institution's policy and practice on information sharing agreements, disclosure and consent	Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and Prevent and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is a key factor identified in many serious case reviews (SCRs), where poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take action to keep children and young people safe.	➢ Publication of information sharing statement at https://ucq.ac.uk/information-sharing-agreement/	Completed	VP
2.5 Develop, implement, and regularly review support pathways within the	Clear and effective referral pathway to student welfare.	➢ Wellbeing referral following any disciplinary process for alcohol or drugs. ➢ Regular and scheduled communications from Mental Health First Aider.	Ongoing	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
university for distressed students				
2.6 Establish clear and collaborative local care pathways into statutory mental health services and NHS crisis intervention teams	Effective networking and collaboration with local agencies to enable support.	➢ Attendance at safeguarding and prevent forums ➢ Links with local adult safeguarding boards and social services ➢ Signposting to external agencies	Ongoing	VP

3. Postvention

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
3.1 Contact the bereaved, offering to meet and provide compassionate support	➢ Effective and robust policies and procedures ensure organisational-wide approach. ➢ Effective training provided to support staff.	➢ Develop a sudden death procedure for staff and students outlining process and available support ➢ Safeguarding team to undertake training on dealing with bereavement, support and signposting (cruise.org.uk).	Completed Completed	VP
3.2 Support affected students and staff – ensure individual approaches for anyone identified as being at risk of contagion, including rapid referral for community mental health support where and when needed 3.3 Agree internal communications, including staff and students, as appropriate	➢ Effective communication and support for staff and students to raise awareness and ensure rapid referral. ➢ Effective policy/procedure in place ➢ Effective training and support for staff and students.	➢ Sudden death policy/procedure distributed to all staff and students. ➢ Signposting for staff/students to external support agencies including Papyrus. ➢ Effective reporting, as required, to HESA and OFS. ➢ Strategy to coordinate and communicate incident response, taking family wishes into consideration and coroner report.	Completed Ongoing	VP
3.4 Legacy and anniversaries– find the best way to celebrate the life of the deceased, without glamorising suicide	Policies/procedures to incorporate legacy and anniversary memorial	Sudden death policy/procedure/flow to incorporate possible memoriam	Completed	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
3.5 Alert local and public health services, as appropriate	Effective policies/procedures outline response to incident.	Sudden death policy/procedure to incorporate alerting local and public health services.	Completed	VP
3.6 Be prepared for external communications – support the media in delivering sensitive reporting of suicide and call out bad behaviour	➢ Effective communication and support for staff ➢ Effective policies and procedures ➢ Effective training for staff.	➢ Pre-prepared incident report statement for external communications ➢ Pre-prepared incident report statement for internal communications. ➢ Monitor social media platforms	Completed	VP
3.7 Provide information of available support	➢ Effective communication and support for staff ➢ Effective support available for staff and students.	➢ Bereaved to be referred to Papyrus or other support services. ➢ Website to link to external support	Ongoing	VP
3.8 Support continuous quality improvement of suicide prevention strategies and action plans – facilitate research, data collection and monitoring to get to the bottom of what has happened, and lessons learned through carrying out a serious incident review	➢ UCQ's safer suicide strategy and action plan to feed into the wider Welfare Strategy. ➢ Effective recording, reporting and monitoring to inform continuous improvement. ➢ Findings from serious incident reviews will be reported to Board of Governors and used to inform policy and practice updates.	➢ Serious incident reporting process formalised. ➢ Ensure website is continually updated with appropriate training and support. ➢ Capture student and employee voice to provide trend analysis to inform improvements. ➢ Provide required data to OFS ➢ Continuous improvement to policy and practice.	Completed Ongoing	HDQ
3.9 Consider holding open meetings with affected communities e.g. students in a	➢ Effective communication and support for staff and students	Meetings to be planned with affected students, following incident to offer a	As required	VP

UUK Guidelines	Aim	Objectives	By When	Strategic Lead
particular university department's year group or student halls		safe space for discussion, support and guidance.		

8. Initial equalities impact assessment

Department:	**Completed by:**	**Date of initial assessment:**
All	Michelle Elliott, Vice Principal	28/10/2021
Area to be assessed:	SA-019	
Existing or new policy/procedure:	New	

What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy? (please list only)

External guidance and requirements:

- Suicide-Safer Universities, Universities UK and Papyrus (2018)
- Office for National Statistics
- Samaritans

Internal guidance and requirements:

- Consultation with Safeguarding, Prevent, Health and Welfare (SPHW)
- Consultation with SLT
- Consultation with Student Representatives/Student Champions
- Consultation and approval by Board of Governors

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure	This strategy sets out University Centre Quayside's commitment to creating a suicide-safer community. We aim to minimise suicide and attempted suicide in so far as is possible, recognising that Universities play a key role. This strategy and action plan outlines UCQ priorities although it cannot cover all eventualities and it is recognised that sadly not all suicide is preventable.		
2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?	All students and staff		
The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:- (1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization (2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and (3) Foster good relations between different groups	**3. Could the policy/procedure have a disproportionately negative effect impact in terms of the aims set out in (1) to (3) of the Act on any of the protected characteristics?:-** **High** **Medium** **Low** **No effect**	**4. Briefly explain how the policy/procedure furthers or prevents the aims set out in (1) to (3).**	**5. If there is a disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristics, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality or any other reason? If yes, please explain.**
Protected **Age**	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
Disability	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

	Gender	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Gender reassignment	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Pregnancy and Maternity	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Race	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Religion or Belief	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Sexual Orientation	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?		Not applicable as no PC impact identified
7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?		None required
8. Based on the information in sections 1 to 7, should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment? (recommended if one or more 'High' under section 2)		No
Assessor signature:	**Approved by:** **Michelle Elliott**	**Date approved:** 02/12/2021