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MISSING STUDENT POLICY

Contents

[Missing Student Flowchart 1](#_Toc125634485)

[1. Definition of missing student 2](#_Toc125634486)

[2. Initial expression of concern 2](#_Toc125634487)

[3. Data protection and confidentiality 2](#_Toc125634488)

[4. The procedure 3](#_Toc125634489)

[Initial phase 3](#_Toc125634490)

[Secondary phase 4](#_Toc125634491)

[5. Risk assessment 6](#_Toc125634492)

[6. Notifying the family, police and fellow students 7](#_Toc125634493)

[7. Supporting those affected 7](#_Toc125634494)

[8. Reappearance of a missing student 7](#_Toc125634495)

[9. Death of a student 8](#_Toc125634496)

[10. Student continues to be missing 8](#_Toc125634497)

[11. Debrief 8](#_Toc125634498)

[Appendix A: Contact details 9](#_Toc125634499)

[Appendix B: Missing student investigation proforma 10](#_Toc125634500)

[Appendix C: Missing student – follow-up enquiry form 13](#_Toc125634501)

[Appendix D: Missing student risk assessment form 14](#_Toc125634502)

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# Missing Student Flowchart



# Definition of missing student

When a student is not at university during Semester time it can be difficult to determine whether or not they are absent or missing. During the assessment periods and student-directed weeks this is even more challenging.

For the purpose of this document the following definitions are offered:

* **Missing:** A student is deemed to be missing from the university when their absence gives cause for concern, for example the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be at risk of harm.
* **Absent:** A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

# Initial expression of concern

The earlier a student is initially reported missing or absent the sooner action can be taken, therefore students and staff should be made aware of the importance of reporting concerns about a possibly missing student to a relevant member of university staff as soon as possible.

The expression of concern may take the form of:

1. A student speaking to a university staff member/representative
2. One department of the university reporting to another (eg Academic staff reporting to Student Support and Wellbeing or Accommodation staff)
3. The student’s family contacting the university with concerns about the student’s whereabouts
4. Someone outside the university reporting their concern to the university.

There may still be ambiguity as to whether or not the student is missing or absent and the next phase is to gather and coordinate information to clarify the situation. In so doing the university will be discharging its Duty of Care responsibly.

There may be times when a family member, especially a parent, contacts the university because they are concerned they have not heard from their son or daughter. In most cases all that is required is for the student to be contacted and told of their relative's concern with the suggestion that they get in touch with them. With the student’s consent the relatives could be told that a message has been passed on to the student. However, if the student cannot be contacted a risk assessment should be carried out using the information listed below and, depending on the outcome, a decision taken as to the level of risk that exists, and the best course of action to follow.

# Data protection and confidentiality

The processing of personal data about students is subject to the terms and conditions of current data protection legislation. Where there is genuine concern about a student's welfare then information can be shared if this is in the vital interests of the student concerned. However, all parties to the information have to be made aware of the need to maintain confidentiality wherever possible.

In addition, there are some professional groupings within the university who are bound to the Code of Ethics of their profession, particularly staff associated with Student Support and Wellbeing. In responding to critical incidents and related matters the Director of Students, Support and Information Services will seek and impart information as needed.

Whilst there is a clear expectation that personal disclosures are treated confidentially when a student is thought to be missing and possibly at risk, any information which might be pertinent to the investigation should be shared between appropriate staff of the university. The decision as to when to involve any external agencies or individuals should be taken by the person leading the investigation (the lead coordinator) in conjunction with key staff involved. In most instances this will be the Director of Students, Support and Information Services or senior Estates or Accommodation staff in consultation with their line manager.

**In order to avoid unnecessary distress to the student's family, in most circumstances they need not be contacted until initial enquiries have been completed and as much clarity as possible about the student's absence has been obtained and the risks assessed. However, it is important to maintain a degree of flexibility dependent on the circumstances.**

Those involved should seek the most sensitive means of finding out if the student has returned home (as they may have done this without informing the university), but without causing unnecessary concern to the family, and taking into account all the known circumstances.

Students may go missing and, when contacted, not wish for their whereabouts to be disclosed to relatives or other interested parties. This confidence should be respected.

We need, nonetheless, to be sympathetic to the genuine enquiries of concerned third parties (including parents and other family members) and these can be referred to the lead coordinator, who can advise on data protection issues and can work with the enquirer so that the matter is referred to the Police, if this is necessary.

# The procedure

## Initial phase

To best gauge any necessary response to a ‘missing’ student it is helpful if important key information is available as soon as possible. Consequently, a member of staff believing a student is missing, or taking a report about a possible missing student, **should first try and contact them by their known telephone / mobile numbers and email addresses** (details on ChiView).

It is not possible to specify how much time should be spent making an initial investigation and trying to make contact with the student before instigating a wider investigation and involving the Police. Each case is different and causes for concern can vary depending on many factors (including past history, current health and mental health concerns etc). In some cases, where there is very real concern for the student’s safety, it will be advisable to involve the Police at an early stage.

Please note that any member of staff who has concerns about whether a student might actually be missing and what action may be necessary may discuss this with the Director of Students, Support and Information Services, a senior member of Accommodation or other appropriate senior member of staff before taking matters any further. If the concern is raised out of office hours the university’s emergency number 01243 816363 should be called so that an appropriate senior member of staff can be contacted.

**Contact details for appropriate Student Support and Wellbeing, Accommodation and Estates staff can be found in Appendix A: Contact details.**

If the member of staff is unable to immediately contact the student, they should seek to ascertain as much of the following as possible:

* the student’s full name, DOB, student ID, programme, year or any other data that would make unambiguous identification possible[[1]](#footnote-1)
* the student’s current address (semester-time and permanent) and any means of contacting them (eg preferred email address, mobile number, land-line etc) 1
* the names and contact details of those reporting the student as missing1
* where and when they were last seen and by whom
* checking their record of attendance and engagement
* whether the student has been seen recently in lectures etc (by checking with their Academic Department, class mates etc)
* their state of mind when they were last seen, together with any reason why the ‘missing’ student might be vulnerable or there might otherwise be concern for their safety or welfare
* whether they were known, or suspected, to be with anyone else (including name(s), contact details etc) at the point when they went ‘missing’
* whether their absence is typical or out of the ordinary
* details of steps already taken to try and contact the ‘missing’ student, together with any outcomes/updates
* whether the student is known to:
* Student Support and Wellbeing
* Students’ Union
* Accommodation
* Estates
* Security
* any other information that it is felt might be helpful in locating the student or finding out why they have not been seen for a while.

To help in this respect, a proforma is given in Appendix B: Missing student investigation proforma.

If the member of staff is able to contact the student, depending on the circumstances it may be advisable to refer the student to Student Support and Wellbeing, the SU Manager or other appropriate support services.

## Secondary phase

When the investigation needs to be widened, i.e. when it cannot be established that the student is not missing, the member of staff should notify a senior member of staff (if this has not already been done) such as the Director of Students, Support and Information Services or a senior member of Accommodation; out of hours the university emergency number 01243 816363 should be used (contact details can be found in Appendix A).

The senior members of staff who are already aware of the concern will appoint a lead coordinator. This will be the most appropriate university senior manager from Student Support and Wellbeing, Estate Management (Accommodation) or Academic Head of Department. In urgent cases, where a lead coordinator needs to be identified out of hours, the Duty Manager will initially lead the investigation with escalation procedure to Student Support and Wellbeing and/or Accommodation.

The lead will coordinate the activity to avoid duplication of effort and potential confusion and ensure close liaison and co-operation between all those involved including academic staff, accommodation staff, SIZ, Student Support and Wellbeing staff, Estates, Security, the SU and students.

The lead coordinator will consult with appropriate colleagues and decide whether any **immediate action** should be undertaken eg:

* contacting the emergency services
* contacting rescue services (such as the coastguard) if the student is known to take part in certain hazardous activities
* entering a student’s room in university accommodation
* checking with the student’s recorded next-of-kin

An investigation will be initiated including the following actions and incorporating a risk assessment (see section 5). All contacts made and information gathered should be documented when relevant (example proformas are provided in Appendix B: Missing student investigation proforma and Appendix C: Missing student – follow-up enquiry form).

**It may be appropriate for the following tasks to be delegated to a small team:**

1. Where it was not possible to gather all relevant facts in the first phase of the investigation, the following should be contacted to see if they can provide any useful information:
2. those sharing Semester time accommodation and, where appropriate, accommodation staff including Staff Wardens and Accommodation Officers
3. students and staff from their Academic Department(s) who have contact with the missing student including Academic Advisers, Programme Administrators, Heads of Academic Department and Directors of Institutes
4. Student Support and Wellbeing services including Wellbeing Services, Student Engagement, Student Health Service, SVMLO (Sexual Violence and Misconduct Liaison Officer), Disability and Dyslexia Service, the Student Money Team and International Advice
5. Students' Union - particularly if the student is a member of any groups or clubs or takes part in any activities/sports
6. any other known social contacts
7. other support services within the university which the student might use e.g. SIZ, the Skills Team, Library staff and the Chaplain.
8. Depending upon the time factors involved and the perceived risk the following information may also need to be gathered:
9. checking with the Academic Registry to ascertain whether the student has registered for the given semester or whether the student has withdrawn or intermitted
10. checking the student’s attendance and engagement (eg on the attendance system and on Moodle) and checking with the Student Engagement Officer
11. consulting with Academic Tutors/Advisers for information regarding the student's academic progress, non-submission of work, personal circumstances etc.

# Risk assessment

When conducting the information gathering task it is important to carry out a comprehensive risk assessment using the following factors. A useful template can be found in Appendix D: Missing student risk assessment form.

**Sussex Police High Risk Categories:**

1. Is there any information that the student is likely to cause self-harm or attempt suicide?
2. Is the person under 18 and vulnerable due to other factors, or an elderly or infirm person?
3. Are there inclement weather conditions that would seriously increase risk to health?
4. Does the missing person need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them?
5. Is the student suffering from any mental or physical illness or psychological disorder that makes it desirable to have them considered a high risk?
6. Do you believe that the person may not have the physical ability to interact safely with others or in an unknown environment, e.g. visually impaired?
7. Has the student recently been involved in a violent, homophobic and/or racist incident or confrontation, or is there a possibility of radicalisation?
8. Has the student been a victim of crime, especially sexual assault, harassment, bullying or violence
9. Has the student previously disappeared AND suffered or was exposed to harm?
10. Is their absence a significant change in their established pattern of behaviour, which cannot be explained, and gives reason that some harm may befall them?
11. Is the person suspected to be the subject of a crime (eg abduction)?

**Additional factors also recommended to be considered by the Association of Chief Police Officers:**

1. Are there any drug/alcohol related difficulties?
2. Are there known to be family/relationship difficulties?
3. Are there any known financial problems?
4. Are they usually resident in the UK and have gone missing abroad?
5. Are they usually resident abroad and have gone missing in the UK?
6. Does the person reporting or the family believe there are other special factors to be considered?
7. How valid is the information provided by the person reporting?

**Other suggested factors include:**

1. How long since the student was last seen by any member of the university community?
2. Do they take part in any hazardous sports or activities?
3. Have they had any recent injuries, especially head injuries?

# Notifying the family, police and fellow students

If the above risk assessment confirms suspicions that a student may genuinely be missing (and especially where there are concerns over potential vulnerability – eg the student has a compromised health status), the lead coordinator will need to decide who to notify. Whenever possible this will be in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience). Possible notifications include:

* Unless there is a clear reason as to why not, the student’s family (recorded next-of-kin) should be informed.
* A discussion will need to take place regarding contact with the Police. The Police may be formally contacted by the family or the university as appropriate. The contact should be made with the Police in the area from which the student was reported missing. In most cases this would be Chichester or Bognor Regis, depending on the campus the student attends.
* The Vice-Chancellor’s Group (VCG), the Chaplain, Marketing and Communications (for dealing appropriately with the media), the Deputy Director of Students, Support and Information Services and the SIZ manager.
* The team involved in the university’s investigation.
* University friends, flat/house mates and class mates of the missing student who have provided information and/or shown concern during the university’s investigation.

Any future liaison with the Police will normally be conducted by the lead coordinator. All information gathered and any action already taken should be shared with them.

Any media enquiries are to be channelled through Marketing and Communications.

# Supporting those affected

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of a fellow student and their own role in the matter, others (for example, friends, classmates, housemates etc) may seek support in relation to their own concerns and feelings, either immediately or some time afterwards. In such cases confidentiality will be bound by the requirements of current data protection legislation. If it is required and possible, such support will be facilitated by the Director of Students, Support and Information Services working with the student’s Academic Adviser and Academic Department as appropriate.

The student’s parents/next of kin may wish to stay at the university or nearby, especially during the early stages of the investigation. The lead coordinator will liaise with Accommodation to arrange for suitable university accommodation if possible, or assist with finding another appropriate place to stay (eg local hotel).

# Reappearance of a missing student

It is extremely rare for missing students not to re-appear at some point. When this happens, taking into account the circumstances of the reappearance, the lead coordinator should directly verify that the student is no longer missing (by face to face contact wherever possible), and find out if they are in need of help and support either to return to, to intermit from or to withdraw from university. The lead coordinator will also advise those departments/staff and fellow students notified under section 6 of this policy that the student is no longer missing.

Students who are resident on campus or in university managed properties and who are not able to return immediately to their accommodation, may have particular needs in relation to access to, and the longer-term safekeeping of, their belongings, as well as concerns over their tenancy licence and accommodation charges. The responsibility for liaison with the student, or their representative, in this respect will lie with the Accommodation Office.

If the missing student has returned, or wishes to return, to university it may be advisable to consider Fitness to Study. In such a case the appropriate Policy and Procedures will be followed.

It is possible that a student who has been missing and has returned to their studies at the university will need ongoing support and access to appropriate Student Support and Wellbeing services, for example Wellbeing Counselling. It may also be advisable to consider raising a SARA (reasonable adjustments) or Support Plan.

If appropriate, prevent and safeguarding concerns should be considered in partnership with relevant external services.

# Death of a student

In the unfortunate circumstance that the student is found dead, guidance under the ‘Death of a Student’ Policy should be followed.

# Student continues to be missing

If the student continues to be missing despite the Police investigation, the lead coordinator will need to decide, in discussion with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience), the point at which the university will take no further action. This could be multi-stage depending upon current known circumstances and the stage of Police investigation. All members of staff and students who have been involved with the investigation or who are otherwise concerned should be notified of this decision.

A decision also needs to be made about the student’s effects in these circumstances. The lead coordinator should contact the student’s next-of-kin to notify them of the decision and will arrange with Accommodation a suitable time for the effects to be removed. The lead coordinator can offer assistance with this, and may help with finding accommodation for the next-of-kin should they need this.

# Debrief

After the reappearance of the student or when there is no further action that the university can take, the lead coordinator will arrange a debrief meeting of the main contributors to the university’s investigation (including members of Student Support and Wellbeing, Accommodation, Security and Academic Staff). This will include a review of the actions taken and the procedures followed and a record will be made of any recommendations for future potential investigations. This policy and the guidelines it contains will also be reviewed and amended as appropriate.

# Appendix A: Contact details

**University emergency number**

* **University emergency (24/7) 01243 816363**who will call all the required university support services including the Duty Manager and Security

**Student Support and Wellbeing**

* Director of Students, Support and Information Services 01243 816459
Dave Corcoran - D.Corcoran@chi.ac.uk
* Chaplain 01243 816041
Rev’d Dr. Alison Green - Alison.Green@chi.ac.uk
* Student Wellbeing and Disability and Dyslexia Service Manager 01243 816366
Clare Marczak - C.Marczak@chi.ac.uk
* Wellbeing Services
Wellbeing@chi.ac.uk
* Student Engagement 01243 816092
StudentEngagement@chi.ac.uk
* Student Health Service 07739 983703
studenthealth@chi.ac.uk
* SVMLO (Sexual Violence and Misconduct Liaison Officer) 01243 816111
Becky Pothecary – R.Pothecary@chi.ac.uk
* International Advice 01243 812194
international@chi.ac.uk

**Estate Management**

* **Contacts in hours:**

David Baily - Director of Estate and Facilities Management 01243 816276

Charles White - Head of Campus and Residential Services 01243 816081

Joe Ayres - Accommodation Manager 01243 793417

* **Contacts out of hours:**

University 24/7 emergency number 01243 816363
(including Duty Managers and Security)

Accommodation 24/7 Phone Numbers:

* BOC 01243 793477
* BRC 01243 793488
* Stockbridge 01243 533356
* Fishbourne 01243 790279
* Villa Maria 01243 793477
* Prince of Wales 01243 793477
* 19 Millfield Close, 37 Lewis Road, 47 Spitalfield Lane 01243 793477

# Appendix B: Missing student investigation proforma

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| --- |
| **Cover Sheet** |
| **Missing student details:** |
| Student’s name  | Student No |
| **Initial investigator:** |
| Name  | Department and role |
| Contact No: |
| **Lead coordinator:** |
| Name  | Department and role |
| Contact No: |
| **Police details:** |
| Police Contact Name | Log No: |
| Contact No: |
| **Outcome:** |
|  |
| **Notes:** |
|  |

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| --- |
| **Phase 1** |
| **Missing student details:** |
| **Attach ChiView Student Details Print or complete:** |
| Programme of study | Year |
| University/Semester time address | Mobile number |
| Landline number |
| University email | Home email |
| Other know contact details (social media eg twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp)  |
| Address (permanent) | Mobile number  |
| Landline number |
| Where and when last seen and by whom? |
| When last seen, were they with anyone? If so, name and contact details |
| Is their absence typical or unusual (give details)? |
| When last seen, what was their state of mind and is there any reason to consider them vulnerable or to be concerned for their safety or welfare? |
| Is the student known to: | * Student Support and Wellbeing
* Students’ Union
* Accommodation
 | * Estates
* Security
 |
| Any other information that it is felt might be helpful in locating the student or finding out why they have not been seen for a while |
| **Person reporting the missing student:** |
| Name  | University/Semester Time Address |
| Mobile No | Email address |
| **Actions already taken:** |
| Action | By whom | Date/time | Outcome |
| **Person completing form:** |
| Name | Position |
| Contact phone | Email |
| Signature | Date |
| **Phase 2** |
| **Contact the following for pertinent information: (log details on follow up enquiry form):** | **Done?** | **By whom?** |
| **Accommodation**: those sharing Semester time accommodation and, where appropriate, accommodation staff including Staff Wardens and Accommodation Officers | 🞎 |  |
| **Academic Department(s):** students and staff who have contact with the missing student including Academic Tutors/Advisers, Programme Administrators and Heads of DepartmentConsult with Academic Tutors/Advisers for information regarding the student's academic progress, non-submission of work, personal circumstances, latest SAM attendance records etc. | 🞎🞎 |  |
| **Students' Union:** is the student a member of any groups or takes part in any activities/sports  | 🞎 |  |
| **Other known social contacts**  | 🞎 |  |
| **Student Support and Wellbeing**: including Wellbeing Services, Student Engagement, Health Service, SVMLO, Disability and Dyslexia Service, Student Money Team, and International Advice | 🞎 |  |
| **Other university support services**: e.g. SIZ, Skills Team, Library services and the Chaplain | 🞎 |  |
| **Academic Registry**: to ascertain whether the student has registered for the given semester, or whether the student has withdrawn/ intermitted | 🞎 |  |
| **Risk Assessment follow up** |
| Risk assessment completed by: | Date completed |
| Outcome of risk assessment (confirmation or otherwise that student is missing) |
| **If the student is confirmed missing** |
| Confirm with Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) that next of kin to be notified - or Lead Coordinator to make executive decision | 🞎 |
| **Next of kin** |
| Name | Relation to missing student |
| Contact phone | Contact by | Date and time |
| Outcome |
| Who to notify Police | University🞎 | Next of kin🞎 |
| **Other notifications** |
| * VCG
* Chaplain
* Marketing and Communications
 | * SIZ
* Academic staff
* Friends, classmates, housemates
 |
| Signature | Date |

# Appendix C: Missing student – follow-up enquiry form

|  |
| --- |
| **Missing student – follow up enquiry** |
| **Missing Student Name** | **Student No** |
| Follow up by | Date |
| Contact Name | Relation to missing student |
| Phone | Email |
| Information obtained |

# Appendix D: Missing student risk assessment form

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Missing Student Name** | **Student No** |
| Risk assessment completed by | Date |
| Is there any information that the student is likely to cause self-harm or attempt suicide?  |
| Is the person under 18 and vulnerable due to other factors, or an elderly or infirm person?  |
| Are there inclement weather conditions that would seriously increase risk to health? |
| Does the missing person need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them? |
| Is the student suffering from any mental or physical illness or psychological disorder that makes it desirable to have them considered a high risk? |
| Do you believe that the person may not have the physical ability to interact safely with others or in an unknown environment, e.g. visually impaired? |
| Has the student recently been involved in a violent, homophobic and/or racist incident or confrontation, or is there a possibility of radicalisation?  |
| Has the student been a victim of crime, especially sexual assault, harassment, bullying or violence? |
| Has the student previously disappeared AND suffered or was exposed to harm?  |
| Is their absence a significant change in their established pattern of behaviour, which cannot be explained, and gives reason that some harm may befall them? |
| Is the person suspected to be the subject of a crime (eg abduction)? |
| Are there any drug/alcohol related difficulties? |
| Are there known to be family/relationship difficulties?  |
| Are there any known financial problems? |
| Are they usually resident in the UK and have gone missing abroad?  |
| Are they usually resident abroad and have gone missing in the UK? |
| Does the person reporting or the family believe there are other special factors to be considered? |
| How valid/reliable is the information provided by the person reporting? |
| How long is it since the student was last seen by any member of the university community (date and time if possible)? |
| Do they take part in any hazardous sports or activities?  |
| Have they had any recent injuries, especially head injuries?  |
| Signed | Date |

1. This is ideally the minimum essential information that would be required to progress any follow-up investigation promptly. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)