

## SUICIDE SAFER UNIVERSITY POLICY

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### Sources of Support

As outlined in the [Student Charter](#) Richmond American University London seeks to provide culture that promotes positive mental health and wellbeing and supports a proactive and holistic approach, whilst recognizing the needs of the individual. All members of our community have the right to a safe and healthy environment for our whole university community, including faculty, staff, students, and other key partner communities, such as our residences and placement partners.

We know that the content of this strategy may impact emotionally on those reading the document. Support is always available, and you may find the information below useful.

### Samaritans

Samaritans provide confidential, non-judgmental emotional support 24 hours a day to people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair. You can contact Samaritans free by phoning 116 123

### NHS24 Mental Health Hub

Telephone advice and support on healthcare can be obtained from NHS24 by phoning 111. The Mental Health Hub is open 24/7.

### The Listening Place

[The Listening Place](#) is open from 9am to 9pm, 7 days a week and offers face-to-face listening appointments for people who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. You can [self-refer online](#) or call on 0203 9067676

### Shout Crisis Line

[Shout](#) is a free and confidential text messaging service, available 24/7 throughout the UK, for people who are struggling to cope.

### Nightline

Nightline is a membership organization that provides student-run listening and information services out of hours. You can find a link to our membership services at <https://nightline.ac.uk/listening-services/>

[The International Association for Suicide Prevention](#) has information on support available, including a list of crisis helplines for most countries, outside of the UK.

The [Stay Alive App](#) also has information about international resources, including more helplines and 'stay safe' plans, for both the UK and overseas.

## Introduction

1. We work hard to ensure that our policies and practices do no harm, and so contribute to reducing the risk of suicides, while also providing support for those impacted by deaths of those who are, or have been, part of the Richmond community. We strive to enhance support by encouraging an inclusive community; offering clear outreach and awareness, supporting mental health training amongst staff and referring support to our community partners.
2. Preventing deaths by suicide is a nuanced, complex issue, as is addressing poor student mental health more widely. There isn't a simple solution. What can help prevent further student deaths is a focus on wellbeing and mental health across the breadth of students' experiences, accountability measures, support, the embedding of wellbeing and mental health as a fundamental ethos, and the way universities – and the wider health system – aid members of our community who are in distress.
3. There are several factors that may increase the risk of suicide, including, but not limited to: stress encountered at times of transition (such as moving away from home or starting university); age; sexuality and gender identity; ethnicity; substance use; financial pressures; housing issues; physical health, disabilities and impairments; medical concerns; bereavement, isolation or relationship issues (both short and longer term); employment issues; and familial history of suicide.
4. Recognition of this drives Richmond University London to better understand suicide amongst our community, including both current and future patterns, and to implement a robust framework and approach to creating a suicide safer community. Embedding mental health and wellbeing and ensuring that students are supported at all levels of need is a fundamental ethos of the University.
5. Often, suicide prevention work focuses entirely on emotional support, rather than also looking at other practical issues that students, in particular, may face. Richmond's Suicide Safer Strategy places focus on both emotional and practical support through an integrated approach, including signposting to directly supporting and advocating with staff and students to facilitate access to practical assistance, for example, financial and housing advice or study support, as well as to specialist and general counselling and wellbeing services.
6. Our strategy has been informed and developed by colleagues and students across the University and aims to provide a whole University approach aligned with the [Universities UK's Step Change Healthy Universities](#) informed by the UUK guidance [Suicide Safer Universities](#) for both University Leadership and Practitioners. The recognition of heightened stress for students and the need to have special concern for mental health, including curriculum-embedded wellbeing and resources for early intervention through to accessing crisis support is set out in the University's Mental Health Strategy.
7. Within our University Mental Health Strategy, we have built a model which aims to recognise and meet these different levels of need with appropriate provision and resources. We work in partnership with the Registry Services team to support students through to Fitness to Study Programme.

## Aims

1. We are committed to promoting a holistic understanding of the reality of suicide from awareness and risk reduction, education and prevention training, through to support and postvention. This begins with identifying lived experiences which may lead to suicidal thoughts and opportunities for early intervention, providing appropriate support to the whole university community, and understanding the impact of suicide on the individual and those around them.
2. Recognising that we can all support the reduction of suicide in our community, we will work in close collaboration with key internal and external partners to minimise suicide and its impact, with the aim of making Richmond American University London a suicide-safer organisation.

## Objectives

1. Overseen by the Student Experience Committee, and in line with the University Strategic Plan, we will continually monitor and review the initiatives already in place for supporting our university community through an ongoing action plan, while working to identify further opportunities to take proactive action to reduce suicide. These will be incorporated into an action plan, reviewed twice yearly by the Student Experience Committee, and shared with the University Board.
2. To support the Aims, the University will do the following:
  - a. Increase Awareness – work to reduce stigma around discussing and seeking support for mental ill-health and suicidal ideation or planning. Develop a stronger understanding of how our diverse community view mental ill-health and suicide, to cultivate a culture of openness.
    - i. Richmond is committed to ensuring staff, faculty and students within our community or aware of the importance of positive mental health and a balanced lifestyle. The University is invested in role-specific training, including, for example, targeted Mental Health Awareness training, and training to ensure awareness of resources available to support wellbeing and mental health for colleagues in key student-facing roles.
    - ii. Increase awareness about how structural and societal inequalities, alongside intersectional factors impact on the mental ill-health of our community, and potentially create barriers to seeking support, ensuring that we name these barriers as a first step to eliminating them
    - iii. Actively look for opportunities to develop collaboration with key internal and external colleagues on shared projects and initiatives such as enhanced communications around access to support, including ensuring awareness of external agencies for those who may not feel comfortable accessing in-house support
    - iv. Clear guidance for our whole community on responding to and facilitating support for those at risk.
    - v. Facilitate easy access to clear and informative resources and information for those who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts on how to look after themselves, including crisis support and information and resources for those who are supporting others.
    - vi. Provide spaces for open, safe and supportive conversations around suicide, removing the stigma around help seeking.
    - vii. Encourage all students and staff to look out for and support others who may be feeling suicidal.

- b. Work to reduce risk and increase awareness around prevention and early identification – ensure our community is equipped to identify indicators of suicide and the risk reduction support available.
- i. Routinely monitor external data and information for any regional, national, or international, incidents or risk factors that could impact the mental health of or risk of suicide for our University community and take early action to raise awareness of support.
  - ii. A commitment to the development of appropriate systems to help identify members of our university community who may be experiencing difficulties, through a range of methods and existing systems. This can include but is not limited to improvements in collection and use of attendance monitoring data, information on engagement with digital platforms such as Blackboard and reviews of Mitigating Circumstances forms, as well as work on supporting transition to University for those with a previous history of mental health difficulties.
  - iii. Ensure our community is provided with the resources needed, and have the skills, to signpost to appropriate support services, or understand how to report their concerns, to facilitate a proactive intervention from appropriate services.
  - iv. Ensure that student facing staff, for example, staffing working in the Student Hub, are made aware of resources to support them, including the Employee Assistance Programme as well as a University commitment to develop the provision of advice and guidance resources for staff supporting students who have expressed suicidal thoughts.
  - v. Maintain and appropriately resource internal services to respond to referrals regarding students where there are serious concerns about their safety, mental health or welfare including circumstances where there is lack of engagement and ensuring systems are in place for appropriate escalation to external and statutory services (such as GPs, NHS Crisis Mental Health Teams or Local Authority Safeguarding services) and students' named emergency contacts in line with UK GDPR.
  - vi. Monitor the delivery of services through regular publication and review of data reports against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as agreed through the Student Experience Committee.
  - vii. Make available support to new members of our community to have a connected transition into local health services when arriving in London (e.g. GP or specialist support) to enable them to be linked to appropriate support.
  - viii. Also, to ensure that up to date directories of resources are maintained for students who are studying overseas, or whose non-term time home addresses are outside of the UK and that there are clear procedures in place regarding the escalation of concerns for those students who cannot access UK-based provision
  - ix. Highlight support available to the community via the Safeguarding team.
  - x. Develop adequate signposting to useful resources (internal and external websites)
  - xi. Resources to help those who are managing suicidal thoughts and training for all to help others.

- xii. Highlight ongoing MHFA and other mental health and suicide awareness training and resources.
  - xiii. Continue to work with multi-agency groups to focus on suicide prevention, including liaison with other universities.
- c. Intervention – proactive interventions with clear and accessible pathways and appropriate safeguarding action.
  - i. In collaboration with internal and external support services, monitor key information about our university community to help identify members who are at risk of suicide.
  - ii. Expedite appropriate safeguarding action by ensuring those identified as being at risk or in need of support, including where there is lack of engagement are linked to appropriate channels of support through the University's student support team. This may include the Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health, Emergency Services or GP/health services or the student's named emergency contact when there is risk to life.
  - iii. Commit to continual improvements around appropriate collection and use of data to identify those whose mental health is impacted by structural & societal inequalities and intersectional factors and to use this information to develop or redesign services.
  - iv. Respond to those seeking support from internal support services, within agreed timeframes according to current SLEs and KPIs, and ensure that they are receiving necessary support. This may include referrals to external support services.
  - v. Ensure that all Student Services teams involved in assessing risk are using robust risk assessment methods which are clearly governed, and this is defined in department policy and guidance where relevant.
  - vi. Track and review referrals to ensure colleagues and students are receiving effective support in line with SLEs and KPIs.
  - vii. Provide additional support by utilising existing key university systems such as the Fitness to Study Programme.
- d. Postvention: Compassionate and robust postvention support both short and long term for the university community, along with clear communication and additional safeguarding.
  - i. A debrief facilitated by a consultant of the university unconnected with the case will be conducted in all instances where the circumstances of a student's death might require investigation by a coroner.
  - ii. Where necessary, external agencies will be invited to lead on this work in collaboration with Student Affairs and/or Human Resources.
  - iii. In collaboration with the President's Office and the Communications team, there will be a message to affected communities and loved ones e.g. family, students, and colleagues and support will be offered
    - a. Consideration as to those most likely to be impacted (e.g. those on the same programme as the student, those who may have known them through shared accommodation or involvement with University Clubs and Societies) is a key aspect of further discussions and strategy meetings organised by Student Affairs following notification of a student's death.
  - iv. Implement learnings and findings that are identified following a death within our community.
  - v. Ensure support is proactively offered to impacted members of our community at key times e.g. directly following a death anniversary dates, calls to inquest.
  - vi. Annually review support mechanisms, resources, procedures, and environmental factors to
  - vii. minimise the possibility of suicide amongst the King's College community.

## Governance

1. This strategy will remain a live document to ensure further opportunities to identify proactive action are taken, the most appropriate support agencies are up to date and risk factors are continually monitored.
2. Further documents including an action plan, procedures and guidance will be created by the Student Affairs team and presented to the Student Experience Committee.
3. Reports on data from our Student Affairs teams, including any patterns or trends which indicate the need for us to consider how support is resourced or structured will be presented to the Student Experience Committee and in turn to the University Board.
4. Activity in relation to this policy and associated Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy, including actions being overseen by the Student Experience Committee will be regularly reported to the Academic Board, particularly in relation to where there are implications for assessment frameworks or Richmond's wider educational offer.
5. Monitoring and reporting on compliance
6. The following monitoring will be undertaken to determine how effectively the policy is implemented and where any results will be reported:

| What will be monitored?                                                                                                                   | Frequency | Method       | By Whom                  | Reported to                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Review and report on the effectiveness of the Suicide Safer University Strategy and associated action plan                                | Annual    | Consultation | The student support team | Student Experience Committee |
| Ensure join up with related strategies (Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Step Change – Mentally Healthy Universities/Mental Health Charter) | Annual    | Consultation | The student support team | University Board             |
| Keep updated on sector best practice, policy and strategy and apply these to any action plans.                                            | Annual    | Consultation | The student support team | Student Experience Committee |

#### Approval

Approved by: The Student Experience Committee, June 2025

Effective from: September 2025 (with informal implementation prior to this date) Review due:  
Annually (September 2026)

Executive sponsor: Allison Cole-Stutz, VP Student Affairs

Policy owner: Head of Student Support & Access

## VERSION MANAGEMENT

| <b>Responsible Department:</b>        |                                                           |                                                                                                                             |                  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Approving body:</b> Academic Board |                                                           |                                                                                                                             |                  |
| Version no.                           | Key Changes                                               | Date of approval                                                                                                            | Date of effect   |
| 2                                     | Update to Safeguarding Leads and some community resources | 3 June 2025                                                                                                                 | 1 September 2025 |
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|                                       |                                                           | <b>Restricted access?</b><br><i>Tick as appropriate</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |                  |



