University of St Andrews - Student Services

When a Student is reported "Missing"

1. **Scope:** This document is to clarify the procedure for members of University staff who receive a report from someone that a student from our community may be “missing”.

2. **Due regard:** Any report of that a student is missing will be taken seriously in the first instance. Fortunately, the usual outcome that the student, as is their right, has only removed his/herself from the university community without informing anyone and is quite well. Our focus, however, must be to ensure that the student is safe.

3. **Source of Report:** The report may come from a variety of sources - e.g. Tutors, Parents, Friends, Flatmates, G.P.s., members of the public, parents. On occasion, the Police will have received the report before any member of university staff has heard of it. Sometimes friends will report through a Warden.

4. **First referral:** The report, in the first instance, should go to the ASC (01334 462020), Student Services (01334 462720) or, if at night or at the weekend, to the University Out of Hours Security Service (01334 476161) who will contact the duty Student Services’ Manager for guidance.

5. **Second referral:** That Student Services’ Manager will notify the Director of Student Services or, in his/her absence, another member of the Student Services Management team. Telephone (01334 462020). This referral should take place immediately after point 4 above and certainly within 15 minutes.

6. **Information gathering:** In consultation with the Director of Student Services (or his/her delegate), the member of staff who takes the initial call and the Student Services’ Manager should jointly oversee the action of making some basic enquiries.

The following list contains suggestions but is not exhaustive:

- Is the student known to Student Services already?
- Does the student have a medical condition?
- Has there been any notification (even prior to arrival) that this student is particularly vulnerable?
- Why is the report coming through now – i.e. why does the reporter feel that the student’s behavior is out of character and causes them to now have concerns?
- When was the student last seen? (Academic staff contact, Friends, Access control)
- By Whom?
- What was the student wearing?
- Anything significant about the student’s demeanour? (distressed/hyper/ill?)

7. **Risk Assessment**: In consultation with the Director of Student Services or a member of the management team, an assessment of gathered information should establish the "status of vulnerability" of the student, always retaining the University focus of protecting the vital interests of the student. The decision will be based on the student’s past history, medical records, statements from close contacts and reports on recent behavior\(^1\). This is a difficult decision and therefore made jointly by at least two senior members of staff.

8. **Not currently “At Risk”**: If there is all reasonable reason to believe that the student is elsewhere with deliberately, no past history of medical risk, or if an inspection of the room where they stay would indicate they have left deliberately, then the situation can be further monitored for a period of 24 hours. At the end of that time there will be a further case review.

9. **Feared to be “At Risk”**: If a risk is identified, the vital interests of the student will always be paramount and further actions will be enabled by the Director. These could include:

   - Further investigations of student contacts
   - Contact with the student named “Emergency Contact” (always undertaken by the Director or Deputy Director)
   - Notification to the Police, with the option of following on with contact to the Emergency Contact to inform them of the involvement of the Police at this point.

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\(^1\) Vulnerability will not be assessed purely on the basis of the length of time the student has been missing. A student who has disappeared over a weekend with an overnight bag and no other problematic signs would not be seen immediately as being at risk. However a student forgetting essential medication in bad weather with inappropriate clothing for as little as two hours may appropriately be identified as vulnerable.
10. **Emergency Contacts:** The decision of when to use the Emergency Contact should be taken by the Director or his or her/delegate and must take into consideration the speed of Social Media and the risk of the family being told inappropriately in an alternative format. If the Police are not already involved at this point, referral could be negotiated as a joint initiative and/or either party could undertake it independent of the other.

11. **Police Liaison:** If contact is made with the Police, Student Services, on the University's behalf, will offer assistance and co-operation. Permission to reveal a student's personal details, including a photograph, to the Police will involve the usual route of data release enacting the need to protect the vital interests of the student.

12. **Ongoing communication:** Members of staff involved in the case should be kept informed of the progress of the enquiry. This includes all relevant staff in units throughout the University.

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