
Responding to Suicidal Behaviour by Students Policy

Student Policy

1 Purpose

The Victoria University of Wellington ('the University') is committed to supporting students in a manner which maximises their opportunity to reach their full academic and social potential. This includes the provision of appropriate services and support mechanisms to promote students' mental, spiritual and physical health and well being. The University expects and encourages students to maintain a reasonable concern for their own self-welfare.

There are times when proactive and assertive positive action is required by the University, such as responding to suicidal behaviour by students. As such it has developed a policy of assertive and compassionate response to any form of suicidal behaviour by students and hall residents. The policy aims to better identify and help those students at risk of suicide, and to provide earlier and more effective intervention and support following any suicidal behaviour.

2 Organisational Scope

This is a University-wide policy. It shall apply to all staff, students and Hall Residents at Victoria University of Wellington and any associated bodies who have agreed to comply with this policy (e.g. Chaplaincy and independent halls of residence).

3 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Hall Resident:	Any resident in a hall of residence affiliated to the University.
Staff:	Any employees of the University or Independent Contractor to the University; or an employee of another organisation who is contracted to perform work on University premises.
Student:	Any person enrolled in a personal course of study at the University, or a person who is currently studying at the University under an exchange agreement with another institution.
Suicidal Behaviour:	Any behaviour in which the student threatens or attempts suicide, or engages in efforts to prepare to commit suicide or expresses a preoccupation with suicide.

4 Policy Content and Guidelines

4.1 General

- The policy will identify and help students at risk of suicide by requiring staff to report any suicidal behaviour by students or Hall Residents.

- (b) The policy supports the University's Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention Framework, which is aimed at reducing the number of suicides at the University and at reducing the negative impact of suicide and suicidal behaviour on the University community. The Framework is based on and informed by the New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy.
- (c) The policy supports staff in dealing with students at risk by providing them with a standardised reporting procedure and assisting them in responding to their concerns.

4.2 Responsibilities

- (a) The policy requires all staff to regard seriously any suicidal behaviour.
- (b) To this end, all staff are required to notify the Counselling Service by phone or by filling out a Suicide Risk Notification (see Appendix A) if they become aware of a student or hall resident exhibiting any form of suicidal behaviour. The Suicide Risk Notification is to be sent to the Counselling Service or the Service is to be contacted as soon as possible after the incident.

Note 1: The Suicide Risk Notification form can also be obtained from the Counselling Service website http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/counselling/information/staff.aspx.

Note 2: Where University staff have urgent and immediate concerns about a student's welfare, they should immediately phone Campus Care help line (extension 8888), the emergency services on (dial 111) or the Counselling Service (463 5310). Follow this up by completing a Suicide Risk Notification and send to the Counselling Service.

- (c) The Counselling Service is responsible for ascertaining the criticality of the report and whether or not the behaviour justifies intervention by the University.
- (d) When the Counselling Service determines that intervention is necessary, it may take any reasonable steps that it considers warranted to address safety concerns, including, requiring the student or hall resident to attend a clinical assessment with a University counsellor or an approved private clinician. The latter is at the student's or hall resident's own expense and available only after signing an authorisation allowing the clinician to communicate with members of the Counselling Service.
- (e) Where a student or hall resident has been required to attend a clinical assessment session(s) under (d) above, the student or hall resident is not required to engage in ongoing counselling although they may elect to go beyond the required assessment and participate in counselling. The counsellor must secure the student's or hall resident's permission for the latter through verbal or written consent.
- (f) The purpose of the clinical assessment(s) in (d) above is to support the student or hall resident by providing them with resources to maintain their own safety in the future and to monitor their ability to do so. The counsellor may provide ongoing counselling and/or referral to appropriate medical and psychiatric clinicians, according to the clinical situation and progress, with the consent of the student or hall resident.

4.3 Records of Incident

- (a) All records associated with the reported incident and any associated clinical assessment(s) will be kept at the Counselling Service, and will be subject to their normal privacy procedures.
- (b) The Privacy Act protects all records associated with any clinical assessment.

5 Legislative Compliance

Though the University is required to manage its policy documentation within a legislative framework, there is no specific legislation directing this policy.

6 References

Previous version: [Responding to Suicidal Behaviour by Students Policy](#)

Associate Minister of Health. 2006. *New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy 2006-2016*. Wellington: New Zealand.

Victoria University of Wellington, (2005) *Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention Framework*.

7 Appendices

Appendix A: [Suicide Risk Notification Form](#)

8 Approval Agency

Vice-Chancellor

9 Approval Dates

This policy was originally approved on: 30 September 2005

This version was approved on: 25 November 2008

This version takes effect from: 1 October 2014

10 Policy Sponsor

Provost

11 Contact Person

The following person may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this policy:

Gerard Hoffman
Manager, Student Counselling Service
Ext. 5310