

Union School of Theology Suicide Safer Policy

Approved by Union School of Theology (UST) Academic Board [September 27th 2022]

Next policy review date [October 2023]

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This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding and harassment policies

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Union School of Theology is committed to establishing student communities in which suicide and attempted suicide are minimised through the availability of appropriate support mechanisms.

1.2 The School recognises three important aspects to its approach: prevention, intervention and postvention.

1.3 UST's Suicide safer policy is part of its wider commitment to its student body, as evidenced in its pastoral care and wellbeing framework. Key principles within that framework which govern our suicide-safer policy are Community of Communities; Culture of Mutual Care; Communication and Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Suicide is always a tragedy as humans are made in the image of God to be in communion with God.

2.2. UST is aware of the patterns of suicide as documented in relevant research.¹ UST recognises the relatively higher suicide rate among male students (approximately twice as many as female), and that the first year of undergraduate study is the time at which most suicides occur, relative to other years of study.

¹ [Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales: Experimental Statistics - Office for National Statistics](#)

- 2.3. UST recognises a possible relationship between self-harm and suicide, and is aware that this is more likely to occur among young females.²
- 2.4. UST has sought to develop its approach to suicide prevention by referring to recent significant research in the field.³ Specifically, it notes the recommendation to promote good health; to train staff; to have in place appropriate personnel to counsel and support students; and to ensure that UST, as a whole, is committed to developing a suicide-safer environment.
- 2.5. UST recognises that the factors contributing to suicidal thoughts are varied and complex, including personal issues (e.g. insecurity), relationship issues (e.g. family tensions) and wider societal and community issues (e.g. isolation, poverty).

3. PEOPLE ENGAGED WITH THE POLICY

- 3.1. UST is committed to ensuring that all student-facing staff are given training to enable them to play their part in enhancing student wellbeing.
- 3.2. In terms of intervention, UST is committed to ensuring it has specialist staff on hand with whom staff can liaise and with whom students can communicate directly. Specialised staff will seek to support and help, or point to external helps and support as necessary.
- 3.3. In terms of postvention, UST is committed to the provision of support to the immediate family as well as to its learning communities. It is committed to following communication protocols available from such organisations as Victim Support and the Samaritans.

4. COMMUNICATION AND PATHWAYS

- 4.1. UST communicates its commitment to its students' wellbeing in a number of relevant locations (Website, student handbook, library) which document the support mechanisms in place for students who are struggling with mental health and wellbeing issues.
- 4.2. When necessary, staff will seek to ensure that students provide them with named individuals who can be contacted in the event of serious mental well-being concerns, for notification and support.
- 4.3. The pastoral dean is responsible for overseeing mental well-being of students, liaising with welfare officers and ensuring that those who need to be aware of issues are informed appropriately (e.g. module lecturers).
- 4.4. A designated welfare officer will be responsible for ensuring that a risk assessment and a safety plan is put in place for any student deemed to be at risk of immediate self-harm.

5. OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

² <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2017/2017>

³ https://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/umhan/file_asset/file/450/RCP_mental-health-of-higher-education-students-cr231.pdf

In addition to developing school-internal support mechanisms, UST recognises that the following external agencies may also be able to offer help to some students:

Student Minds

[Student Minds - Home](#)

Papyrus

[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)

The Samaritans

[Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)

NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>

6. POLICY REVIEW

UST will annually review this policy and the effectiveness of its provision.

Version	Author	Review Date	Reason for change	Equality Impact Assessment check (and comment)	AB Approval date *
1	Iain McGee	Sept 2023	New policy	Checked	Sept 2022