

NCAD Suicide Prevention and Response Policy

		This policy is effective from	<u>October 2024</u>
Approval body	<u>Academic Council</u>	Approval date	<u>11 September 2024</u>
Owner	<u>Head of Academic and Student Affairs</u>	Next review date	<u>June 2027</u>

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Suicides are not like other sudden deaths. As well as being devastating for family and friends, suicides at college profoundly affect the student and staff community.
- 1.2. NCAD aims to adopt the best possible awareness of suicide prevention and to take all reasonable steps relating to the safety and welfare of the College community.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all members of the College community. It is specifically aimed at staff and students who may encounter a person who is experiencing suicidal thoughts. This may be through teaching, research, professional services or outreach activities. It may be on campus, off campus or in one of our placement providers.

2. Aims

- 2.1. This policy is to explain NCAD's approach to suicide prevention and to direct people to relevant guidance.
- 2.2. The policy aims to:
 - Help to prevent and de-stigmatise suicide by providing tools and putting into action strategies that help prevent suicide.
 - Provide guidance to allow people to intervene, to identify and to support anyone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.
 - Provide guidance to make sure that anyone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts is directed to help.
 - Create a culture where people feel safe to disclose difficulties or distress.
- 2.3. NCAD aims to create a culture where vulnerable people are noticed and supported. Anyone who discloses suicidal feelings will be responded to quickly, sensitively and appropriately.
- 2.4. This policy is aligned with the NCAD Critical Incident Procedures and Business Continuity Planning Policy.¹

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1. Everyone at NCAD should make sure that they have read the policy. They should make sure that they understand their responsibilities relating to suicide prevention and response.

¹ The NCAD Suicide Prevention and Response Policy contains some parallel information to the NCAD Critical Incident Procedures and Business Continuity Planning policy. The two policies must be reviewed in tandem to ensure that information is accurate and current in both.

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V1	11 September 2024	N/A	N/A

- 3.2. NCAD has made training and support materials available to staff on Workvivo. All staff should familiarise themselves with the training materials on supporting student wellbeing and identifying and responding to distressed or at-risk students.
- 3.3. Everyone at NCAD has a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the other members of the NCAD community. Staff must make sure that concerns about suspected, attempted or completed suicide in the College community are taken seriously and responded to quickly and appropriately.
- 3.4. The College has designated suicide prevention and response roles, with specific responsibilities as follows:
- 3.5. The members of the College Management Team with overall responsibility for suicide prevention and response at an institutional level are the Director, the Head of Academic Affairs and the Registrar and Head of Corporate Services.
- 3.6. The Director is responsible for the running of the College. In the event of an incident, the Director has overall responsibility.
- 3.7. The Head of Academic Affairs leads and coordinates the response in the event of an incident involving students.
- 3.8. The Registrar/Head of Corporate Services leads and coordinates the response in the event of an incident involving students.
- 3.9. The HR manager is the primary contact from the College with families of staff members.
- 3.10. The Head of Academic Affairs is the primary contact from the College with the families of students. This responsibility may be delegated or shared if it is appropriate.
- 3.11. The Director, Head of Academic Affairs and Registrar/Head of Corporate Services are responsible for overseeing suicide prevention and response concerns in NCAD. They are also responsible for reviewing the policy regularly, making sure it is fit for purpose.
- 3.12. You should report concerns about the attempted, suspected or completed suicide of a student to the Student Experience Manager and the Head Counsellor.
- 3.13. You should report concerns about the attempted, suspected or completed suicide of a staff member to the Registrar and to Human Resources.
- 3.14. The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for monitoring this policy from a risk assessment perspective. They are responsible for recommending changes to make sure it meets regulatory requirements.

In the event of an incident, only designated personnel may communicate with the media on behalf of the College. This will usually be the Director or the Marketing Officer. They are responsible for monitoring posts on social media about an attempted, suspected or completed suicide, to clarify false information and to monitor responses generally. This responsibility may be shared if it is appropriate.

The Student Experience Manager, Head Counsellor and NCAD Students' Union, reporting to the College Management Team, will manage the following:

- **Suicide Prevention:** Arranging training in suicide awareness, how to have conversations and how to intervene.
- **Suicide Intervention:** Co-ordinating an immediate response during a crisis situation, supporting people who are in distress or experiencing suicidal thoughts.

- **Suicide Postvention:** Supporting people following an incident of suicide. They will make sure that an individual approach is taken for anyone identified as being at risk of contagion, including referring them for mental health support if needed.

4. Training

- 4.1. All NCAD staff should complete training around suicide awareness, suicide prevention, early intervention and suicide postvention.
- 4.2. NCAD will offer specific training to anyone who is likely to be in contact with 'high risk' people, for example Attendants and Faculty staff (both academic and professional services).
- 4.3. NCAD will offer optional extra training in suicide awareness to Students' Union officers, Class Representatives, Student Mentors and other interested students to raise awareness of how to have conversations with someone experiencing suicidal thoughts and how to intervene.

5. Procedures: Interventions

5.1. Early Intervention

- 5.1.1. NCAD will take appropriate steps during the recruitment and admissions process to make sure that students are aware of the Suicide Prevention and Response policy.
- 5.1.2. Everyone at NCAD should make sure that they understand this policy. Everyone is responsible for creating a supportive culture that supports people who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts.

5.2. Early Intervention – High Risk Groups

- 5.2.1. NCAD recognises that some groups are at a greater risk in terms of suicide and suicidal thoughts. The following are potentially in a high-risk group:
 - Men
 - People with a history of self-harm
 - People experiencing/with experience of victimisation, abuse or trauma including bereavement, bullying
 - Asylum seekers and refugees
 - LGBTQIA+ people
 - People struggling with their sexuality identity or appearance
 - People transitioning from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Community Mental Health teams with diagnosed depression.

6. Procedures: dealing with Incidents in relation to suicide on or off campus

- 6.1. You should treat an attempted, suspected or completed suicide as an emergency health and safety concern. If you find a person who is seriously injured either on or off campus, you should immediately contact the emergency services by calling 999 or 112.
- 6.2. If you receive information about an attempted, suspected or completed suicide, you should contact the appropriate member of the College Management Team and the Attendants

once you have contacted emergency services. See Appendix 1 of this policy for contact details.

- 6.3. A person who is experiencing suicidal thoughts might express this in a variety of ways or in a range of settings. For example, a person may:
 - Verbally express or display signs of suicidal thoughts;
 - Witness or hear about someone else expressing suicidal thoughts;
 - Show signs of serious self-harm.
- 6.4. If a person expresses suicidal thoughts, it is important that they are able to talk to someone and ask for help.
- 6.5. It is always essential to act quickly, sensitively and professionally. You should treat a concern of this nature like any other health emergency.
- 6.6. A person who is experiencing suicidal thoughts should not be left alone. You should not promise confidentiality in cases where someone's life is at risk. In situations like this, confidentiality can be waived.

7. Procedures: Dealing with an immediate emergency

- 7.1. If you suspect a person is in immediate danger of harming themselves or attempting suicide, you should call an ambulance by phoning 999 or 112.
- 7.2. If it is not possible to call an ambulance, you can arrange to escort the person to the nearest emergency department. You can use the HSE website to find the nearest emergency department: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/emergency-departments/>
- 7.3. If the person you are concerned about is on campus, you should inform the Attendants. They will make sure that the ambulance is directed to the specific location when it arrives.

8. Procedures: Dealing with individuals who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts – intervention and support

- 8.1. One of the best things you can do if you think someone may be experiencing suicidal thoughts is to encourage them to talk about their feeling and to listen to what they say. We recommend you:
 - Reassure the person that they are not alone;
 - Explain to the person that you are there to listen;
 - Encourage the person to talk;
 - Ask the person questions about how they are feeling;
 - Explain to the person that you are alerting a trained member of staff to help provide professional support with how they are feeling.
- 8.2. A person may be at risk if they are feeling suicidal and they:
 - Have made a plan about how they will kill themselves;
 - Have access to a method to kill themselves;
 - Are impulsive, or act impulsively;
 - Have previously attempted suicide;
 - Have close contact with someone who attempted or who died by suicide;
 - No longer fear death;
 - Are visualising dying or after their death.

- 8.3. If you are concerned about a student, contact the Head of Academic Affairs and the Head Counsellor. Let the student know you are doing this.
- 8.4. If you are concerned about a member of staff, contact the Registrar and Human Resources. Let the staff member know that you are doing this.
- 8.5. If possible, the person you are concerned about should be involved in all discussions, decision-making and any communications relating to the issue.
- 8.6. If there is an immediate emergency, follow the guidance in Section 7.
- 8.7. If there is a concern related to suicide, NCAD has a duty of care to both the person concerned and to the person who is made aware of the attempted or suspected suicide. It can be difficult to understand feelings and thoughts of suicide. Hearing about a suicide or another person's suicidal thoughts can be upsetting and overwhelming.
- 8.8. If you are a student and you need more advice and support, you should contact the NCAD counselling service.
- 8.9. If you are a staff member and you need more advice and support, you should contact the Employee Assistance Programme.

9. Procedures: Responding to a suicide in the College setting – Postvention

- 9.1. The term postvention refers to actions taken following a suicide that aim to support the people who are bereaved. Postvention aims to reduce the risk of further suicides by making sure lessons are learnt to reduce risk in future.
- 9.2. This section is a brief overview of Postvention procedures. A fuller description may be found in the NCAD Critical Incident Procedures and Business Continuity Planning policy.

10. Procedures: Post-incident review

- 10.1. The College Management Team will determine the nature of a post-incident review following a completed suicide or an attempt of suicide. This review will be managed by the Student Experience Manager.
- 10.2. A review allows the College to assess if the policy and the College's response to an incident was effective. The Registrar and Head of Corporate Services will consider any recommendations that come out of the review.
- 10.3. The family of the person who has completed suicide will be offered the opportunity to help the College learn lessons from the loss of a loved one.
- 10.4. The Student Experience Manager and Head Counsellor will identify members of the College community who have been involved with a person who has completed suicide and offer them appropriate support.

11. Managing the press and social media

- 11.1. Research shows that media reporting can have a negative impact on communities that have been affected by suicide. It can encourage imitative behaviour or cause a higher occurrence of suicidal thoughts in vulnerable groups. Press intrusion can worsen people's

grief at a very difficult time in their lives. It is important for media reporting to be sensitively managed and for the families to be supported.

- 11.2. The Director's Office or nominated person will lead all communication with the local and national press. They will monitor the reporting of an attempted, suspected or completed suicide on widely used social media platforms and risk assess if a response is required.
- 11.3. Best practice guidelines, i.e. [Samaritans Media Guidelines for the Reporting of Suicide](#), will be applied when communicating with the local and national press.
- 11.4. The College will work with the local public health authorities to provide support and direction when dealing with concerns relating to local media and press.

Appendix 1:

Contact details for staff members to inform NCAD that an incident has occurred on or off campus

Office	Name	Email address	Phone number
Director	Sarah Glennie	director@ncad.ie	086 811 9377
Head of Academic Affairs	Siun Hanrahan	hanrahans@ncad.ie	087 608 3006
Head of Corporate Services	Gerry McCoy	mccoyg@ncad.ie	087 271 2777