

RVC Missing Student Policy & Procedure

Purpose

The College accepts its responsibility to have due regard to the need to ensure the health, safety and welfare of students. It aims to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment in which students can study and sometimes reside. This support includes taking necessary actions, where appropriate, to address any cause for concern regarding the absence of individuals.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define how the College ascertains whether a student is missing and if so, what action should be taken.
- Set out administrative responsibilities in the event of a missing student;
- Ensure that the response to such an event is appropriate, timely and effective;
- Ensure that the College communicates effectively with the family and all public authorities involved in the incident
- Ensure that the College acts in a supportive way to all involved.

Definitions

The College will use the definition of ‘missing person’ as proposed by the Association of Chief Police Officers of the United Kingdom. This is to ensure that decisions around ‘missing’ are soundly based around risk and the rationale for those decisions are suitably documented. The definition below has been adopted for the purpose of this policy:

Missing - “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.”

Scope

Undergraduate and Postgraduate students at the Royal Veterinary College

Roles and Responsibilities

- Student responsibilities

All students should be aware of the events and activities associated with their courses where their attendance is required. Students also have a responsibility to notify a member of RVC staff if they are concerned about someone.

- Staff responsibilities

Tutors, Module Leaders and Accommodation staff should play an active role in monitoring the attendance and wellbeing of students allocated to their care, and should report any concerns to the appropriate Senior Tutor/year leader/Course Director and/or the Advice Centre without delay.

Policy

The College is committed to responding to the reports of an absent or missing student in a dutiful and respectful manner. The College will be guided by the following principles when responding to such incidents:

- a. The College will act in a timely and sensitive manner to the report of a missing student. It will contact course teams and relevant student support teams, to gather information about previous engagement and academic progression. Where appropriate, other sources of information will also be sought.
- b. The Advice Centre will take the lead on establishing the level of risk posed to ensure that decisions around 'missing' and are soundly based around risk.
- c. The College will seek to collaborate and cooperate with external agencies to facilitate any investigations or administrative activities related to the reporting of a missing or absent student, and seek to establish a decision on a reasonable response with them.
- d. Care will be extended to those closely involved with the student, including the family or next of kin, friends and staff members that may have raised the enquiry, as appropriate
- e. The College will act discretely when dealing with information relating to the student and the incident and will work in line with data protection/GDPR requirements at all times. Any public statements made for or on behalf of the College will only be released after they have been checked for accuracy and approved by External Relations. Any staff involved in responding to the incident will use discretion at all times.

1. Procedure for responding to a report of a missing student

1.1 Initial report and investigation

Concerns about an absent or missing student may be raised in the following ways

- a student speaking to a member of the College's staff
- a member of staff reporting their concern to another member of staff, particularly to those staff members who have a designated responsibility for student support
- the student's family expressing their concern
- someone outside the College reporting their concern to a member of the College community.

The member of staff who is concerned or has received a reported concern should immediately report this at the local level within the student's course area. An initial investigation should be carried out to try and locate the student. This may include:

- emailing, telephoning and writing to the student
- contacting their friends, housemates and fellow students
- reviewing their social media activity

At this stage, this should not include contacting parents, emergency contacts or other third parties external to the College. All investigations should be carried out discretely and without causing undue alarm.

There may be times when a family member contacts the College because they are concerned they have not heard from their relative. In most cases all that is required is for the student to be contacted and told of their relative's concern with the suggestion that they make contact with them. You should not disclose any information about the student to the relative on confidentiality grounds. However if the student cannot be contacted an initial investigation as above should be carried out and, depending on the outcome, escalation to the Director of Learning and Wellbeing outlined in 1.2 may be appropriate.

1.2 Escalation to Director of Learning and Wellbeing (or nominee)

If these initial enquiries fail to locate the student or concerns remain, the matter should be escalated to the Director of Learning and Wellbeing (or nominee) who will coordinate the College's response to the situation. The Director of Learning and Wellbeing (or nominee) will liaise with the Head of Security and make further attempts to locate the student and assess the possible level of risk involved. This may include:

- searching the student's College accommodation, for clues to their whereabouts e.g. Room check / enquiries with neighbours, Campus searches / CCTV, Incident reports
- examining student records to see if the student is already known to any College support services
- asking the School, Students' Union, Security, IT Services and the Library for any additional evidence of the student's whereabouts
- establishing last known contacts and whether the student evidenced any unusual patterns of behaviour

If the Director of Learning and Wellbeing (or nominee) considers there to be grounds for concern about the student's wellbeing s/he will use the student's emergency contact number to contact family/friends.

1.3 Report the student as a missing person

If, as a result of these enquiries, the location and wellbeing of the student cannot be confirmed, the Director of Learning and Wellbeing (or nominee) will then report the student as missing to the Police and other external agencies as necessary (e.g. Home Office, relevant Embassy, Consulate or High Commission), and become the main College point of contact for the Police.

The Director of Learning and Wellbeing will inform relevant senior colleagues (e.g. Senior Tutor, the relevant Course Director, College Secretary, Head of External Relations and the Academic Registrar) to ensure any subsequent incoming enquiries can be dealt with appropriately.

1.4 Support the found student

Once the student has been located and their safety and general wellbeing ensured the Director of Learning and Wellbeing will update the members of staff listed in 1.3 and the person who raised the initial concern. Support to help address any underlying difficulties will also be offered through signposting to relevant support services.