

	<p>REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS</p> <p>THIS REPORT IS BEING SENT TO:</p> <p>The Department for Education</p>
1	<p>CORONER</p> <p>I am Nicholas Graham, HM Area Coroner for the coroner area of Oxfordshire.</p>
2	<p>CORONER'S LEGAL POWERS</p> <p>I make this report under paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.</p>
3	<p>INVESTIGATION AND INQUEST</p> <p>On the 30 January 2024 an Inquest was opened into the death of Alexander Rogers, a student at Copus Christi College, Oxford. On 6 November 2024 I concluded an Inquest into his death after a 2-day hearing.</p>
4	<p>CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH</p> <p>Alexander took his own life when he jumped from a [REDACTED] Oxford into the River Thames suffering a fatal head injury. In the preceding days, he had been ostracised, which included what was described as 'name calling', 'targeted behaviour' and exclusion and rejection following allegations made against him about his conduct. I reached a formal conclusion of Suicide.</p>
5	<p>CORONER'S CONCERNS</p> <p>During the course of the Inquest the evidence revealed matters giving rise to concerns. In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken.</p>

In the circumstances it is my statutory duty to make this report to you.

The **MATTERS OF CONCERN** are in relation to the following:

Coroner's Concerns:

In accordance with guidance to Universities, the College had commissioned an independent Serious Incident Review conducted by [REDACTED], a specialist in mental health, and that Review identified evidence of a concerning practice of social ostracism among students, often referred to as a 'cancel culture'. Her evidence was that this behaviour, where individuals are isolated and excluded from social groups based on allegations or perceptions of wrongdoing, poses a significant risk to student mental health and well-being.

Both [REDACTED] and the Director of Student Welfare at Oxford University, [REDACTED], were of the view that this practice was likely in evidence in other higher education institutions although there was some uncertainty as to its prevalence.

[REDACTED] has made a number of recommendations specific to the College and University which they are implementing with some diligence.

It was acknowledged this was a complex and highly-sensitive issue in student life. Accordingly, I have attached a redacted extract from the [REDACTED]'s Review which sets out the evidence-base for this culture and its potential effects and risk, together with her proposals as to how it may be addressed through awareness raising and education.


I did not find on the balance of probabilities that this culture specifically caused or contributed to Alexander's death, but it did give rise to a concern that circumstances creating a risk of future deaths could occur.

The specific matters of concern are:

- **Prevalence of social ostracism:** Evidence suggests that social ostracism is a recognized practice within student communities, with multiple cases observed and acknowledged by both students and staff. The evidence was that this may be an issue more broadly for Universities in the UK.
- **Social ostracism as 'self-policing':** Students appear to employ social ostracism as a means of 'self-policing' their community, often in response to allegations of serious misconduct. This occurs in the absence of formal processes and without proper investigation or evidence.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative impact on mental health: Social ostracism can have severe and lasting negative impacts on mental health. It can lead to feelings of isolation, shame, guilt, and worthlessness, all of which are recognized risk factors for suicide. • Lack of trust in formal processes: The prevalence of social ostracism may be linked to a lack of trust in formal channels for reporting serious concerns. Students may perceive these processes as ineffective, unfair, or biased, leading them to seek alternative means of addressing perceived wrongdoing. • Normalization of exclusionary behaviour: There is concern that social ostracism has become normalized within student communities, with individuals viewing it as an expected and accepted response to certain allegations or behaviours. This normalization hinders the development of healthy and supportive social environments.
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6	<p>ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN</p> <p>In light of the above concerns, action should be taken to prevent future deaths related to the detrimental mental health effects of social ostracism in the higher education sector. It is believed that the Department of Education has the power to take such action.</p>
7	<p>YOUR RESPONSE</p> <p>You are under a duty to respond to this report within 56 days of the date of this report. Your response must detail the action taken or proposed to be taken, setting out the timetable for action. Otherwise, you must explain why no action is proposed.</p>
8	<p>COPIES and PUBLICATION</p> <p>I confirm that a copy of this report and your response will be sent all interested persons, including the family of Alexander Rogers, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and the University of Oxford. The Chief Coroner will also receive a copy and may publish the report, in whole or in part, as well as any response received.</p> <p>The Chief Coroner may publish either or both in a complete or redacted or summary form. He may send a copy of this report to any person who he</p>

	believes may find it useful or of interest. You may make representations to me, the coroner, at the time of your response, about the release or the publication of your response by the Chief Coroner.	
9	<u>Signed</u>  Mr N Graham HM Area Coroner for Oxfordshire	<u>Date</u> 8 th November 2024