

**PROCEDURE:** Death of a Current Member of Staff

**Related College Policies:** [Policy on the death of a current staff member](#)  
[Special Paid Leave including Compassionate Leave](#)

**Other guidance:** [Employee Assistance Programme](#)  
[Occupational Health](#)  
[ACAS Guide to Bereavement in the Workplace](#)

**Effective Date:** 5 December 2019

**Supersedes:** March 2016

**Next Review:** 31 July 2023

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## 1. Purpose & Scope

1.1 This procedure is intended to support the policy on the death of a current member of staff.

## 2. Death of a current staff member on campus

2.1 If anyone discovers an unresponsive person on KCL premises, they should first call the emergency services to request an ambulance. They should then notify security.

### 2.2 Security Contacts

- Institute of Psychiatry, call ext. 0001 (020 7848 0001)
- Guy's, Strand, Waterloo campuses, call ext. 2222 (020 7848 2222)
- NHS Trust buildings, call ext. 3333 (020 7188 3333)
- Denmark Hill West, call ext. 5555 (020 7848 5555)

2.3 Work with security to ensure the area is kept clear for emergency services to attend. Depending on the decisions of the emergency services, the body may be removed relatively quickly on confirmation of death, however, if further investigation is required the emergency services will remain on site for a number of hours before the body is removed.

2.4 A table of responsibilities is shown in Annex A.

## 3. Death of a current staff member off-campus

3.1 If an employee's death occurs away from campus, the university may receive the information either directly from another employee or a student, or via another contact.

3.2 Get the name of the person informing the University, their relationship to the deceased and their contact details

3.3 Get the name of the deceased and place of work; and

3.4 Inform the notifier that Directorate Lead/ Executive Dean or another delegated member of staff will be in contact with them.

#### 4. Specific Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Director of HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the overall response to the fatality.</li> <li>• Notify Directorate lead/ Executive Dean/DA/FOO of the fatality if relevant to their department/directorate</li> <li>• Liaise with the next of kin, Police, Coroner's Office, legal representatives, as appropriate</li> <li>• Direct the actions of the HR Team</li> <li>• Liaise with Corporate Communications for internal and external messaging</li> <li>• Lead any wash-ups and review processes following an activation.</li> </ul>
HR team –People Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate personal information on the fatality including role title/home department/directorate</li> <li>• Liaise with employee services team to amend personnel records</li> <li>• Ensure that all internal administrative enquires are referred to ensure that no University communications, including invoices, are sent to the deceased's address</li> <li>• Liaise with IT on access to email accounts, shared drive folders, etc.</li> <li>• Liaise with security to amend building access entitlement</li> <li>• Contact the Library Associate Director – Business Operations to amend library records, loans etc.</li> <li>• Liaise with KHP if the staff member was a joint appointment.</li> </ul>
Campus Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the scene of the Fatality and respond to the needs of other building users in terms of ensuring the safety in the vicinity, entrances and exits/alternative routes</li> <li>• Liaise with HR should the incident involve a contractor</li> <li>• Liaise with Health and Safety Services</li> <li>• Provide all paperwork relating to a contractor appointment and work plan to H&amp;SS</li> <li>• Liaise with contracting company to provide information to Director of Human Resources.</li> </ul>
Corporate Communications  PR 24-hour contact No. 07711-466702	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree immediate statement if enquiries come in, defining facts and limiting what is said to whom</li> <li>• Ensure switchboard direct all enquiries to the Corporate Communications</li> <li>• Handle, or delegate the handling, of all media enquiries</li> <li>• Work with Directorate/Faculty/Principal's Office to create internal and external messaging and agree channels.</li> <li>• Where practicable, if necessary, assist with shielding the relatives from the media</li> </ul>

Director of Health and Safety Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify any risks to staff/students in the immediate area following the discover</li> <li>• Assess Health &amp; Safety implications of any incident</li> <li>• Formal report the incident if required and lead an H&amp;SS internal investigation.</li> <li>• Advise on the implementation of closures or changes in practice where necessary</li> </ul>
Principal's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify SMT</li> <li>• Contacting the person who notified the University of the death/Next of Kin, to express sympathy</li> <li>• Responding to the death of former staff members</li> </ul>
Payroll and Pensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On receiving confirmed information, will amend payroll and pension records.</li> <li>• Liaise with the Director of HR regarding further entitlements for next of kin.</li> </ul>
Head of Directorate/Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform staff and students at a local level (see below)</li> <li>• Ensure staff and students are suitably supported following a fatality</li> <li>• Review teaching activities and reallocate personal tutoring/supervision arrangements appropriate</li> </ul>
Dean and Chaplaincy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify if the staff member was known to the Chaplaincy</li> <li>• Provide pastoral support to staff and students</li> <li>• Liaise with the department and the Head of Counselling, including in the breaking of the news</li> <li>• In conjunction with the Director of HR (or nominee) to be responsive to, and consult with the family and department and School on University inputs to a funeral or memorial service/event</li> <li>• Ensure that cultural requirements relating to burial and funeral arrangements are taken into account and respected</li> </ul>
Occupational Health and EAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure staff support providers are aware of the situation and service have been signposted in any communications.</li> </ul>
Legal/Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review any incident notes/H&amp;SS reports and advice on any legal or insurance-based issues/implications</li> <li>• Legal Counsel will need to review any communications where there is the potential for an external investigation into an unexplained fatality on campus.</li> </ul>

## 5. Communicating the death of a staff member

- 5.1 It is of vital importance that only known facts are communicated in the first instance, especially via email.
- 5.2 Information should only be provided to individuals on a 'need to know' basis.' Individuals other than those identified in the above table may be added to the contact list with the approval of the Director of HR.

Informing staff and students of their colleague's death needs to be done sensitively and as quickly as circumstances allow. This can be done in a variety of ways depending on the groups involved. The Counselling Service and/or the Chaplains should ideally be present when the news is broken but they can at the very least advise on conducting this type of meeting.

- 5.3 Where possible the University will attempt to contact staff and students at the earliest opportunity to inform them that a death has occurred during a vacation and supply a point of contact within the Faculty should they want more information.
- 5.4 The Principal's office will be responsible for any messaging relating to the death of a current staff member. However, the Office may delegate responsibility to the Senior Vice Presidents/Principals/ Directorate or Faculty lead as appropriate. Before sending any messaging, this should be confirmed with the Principal's Office. The Principal's Office will be responsible for any messaging relating to a retired staff member.
- 5.5 Corporate Communications will assist in creating an appropriate communication piece for internal and external channels.

## **6. Attending the Funeral or memorial service**

- 6.1 The responsibility for the funeral rests with the family, and their wishes take priority. Some families prefer a small private ceremony, especially in the event of tragic or suspicious circumstances, and thus it may not be possible for staff or students to attend. Alternatively, the family may be glad if representative staff and students attend, with, where possible, the assistance of the university.
- 6.2 Sometimes it may also be advisable for a member of staff, who did not know the deceased, to accompany affected students to the funeral in order to offer support, while at other times someone who did know him/her is appreciated.
- 6.3 It is also possible to hold a memorial service at the university at the same time as the funeral for those who cannot travel or attend the funeral itself, or at a later date - the Chaplains can advise the Department on what might be suitable, taking into account the beliefs/faiths of all concerned.
- 6.4 Staff members who wish to attend the funeral, they should seek the approval to attend from their line manager, which shall not be unreasonably withheld. Information on special paid leave including compassionate leave can be found here <https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/hr/assets/pdf/SpecialPaidLeave.pdf>

## **7. Supporting staff and students**

- 7.1 The death of a staff member may have an impact on their colleagues and students. Staff members should speak to their line managers if they need any additional support. They can access the Employee Assistance Programme via the HR pages and speak to the Chaplaincy.
- 7.2 As time passes and as university records are amended, staff and students may continue to be affected by the death. Staff should be prepared to give appropriate accommodation to affected students and manager may need to consider amending staff duties or changing staff locations if necessary.
- 7.3 Students should contact student services to access support and information. Issues relating to any potential impacts to their studies should be directed to their personal tutor in the first instance.

## **8. Collection of Possessions**

- 8.1 Collection of the possessions of the deceased, including clearing their desk/office, will be a distressing time, particularly for the next-of-kin. The situation will need to be handled sensitively and with respect to the wishes of those directly involved. Chaplains or Counsellors can be available if required.

## **9. Case Conference**

- 9.1 At the appropriate time following the death of a current staff member, a Case Conference will be called to bring together all staff who were close to the incident to assess if there is any learning that the University can take from the incident. The focus of the meeting will be to identify opportunities to improve the support given to staff and students. In the event that the death occurred on campus, a broader investigation may be required. The terms of reference of any such review will be set by the Senior Vice-President (Operations). Key findings will be provided to the Senior Vice-President (Operations) and considered by SMT as deemed appropriate.

## Staff Death on Campus: Table of responsibilities

On Discovery of an unresponsive person  
Call the Emergency Services on 999  
Notify Security

First person on site should then notify  
Director of HR (incident Lead) & Campus Operations Manager  
Who will then inform those listed below. (See Action card for further details)

Corporate Communications

Principals Office & SVP-Ops

HR People Partner

DA/FOO/ Executive  
Dean/Directorate Lead

Dean and Chaplaincy

Health and Safety Services

Payroll

Occupational Health/ EAP

Legal/Insurance

