

Dealing with the death or serious injury of a member of staff while at University (or undertaking University-related activities)

The death of a colleague can have a significant impact on staff who worked with them. This guidance aims to support those affected, including those who are required to manage the situation.

If a TSS worker, contractor or other agency worker passes away whilst working for the University, this guidance may be used as relevant to the circumstances.

Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for the University's [Incident and Crisis](#) response to be initiated.

Notification of an employee's death

Where the incident occurs on University premises, a member of the public or a member of the University community may report the incident to the Emergency Services (usually including the Police) and also may inform Security Services.

Depending on the situation, the Police or an appropriate member of emergency services should notify the next of kin.

The Police or a member of the University community will inform Security Services, who will inform:

1. Registrar/Nominee
2. Director of Health and Safety.

The following should be contacted by the Registrar/Nominee:

1. Vice-Chancellor and PA to the Vice-Chancellor
2. Chief People Officer
3. Director of Communications and Marketing
4. Chief Property Officer
5. Head of School or Division
6. Staff Counselling Service
7. Chaplaincy

Where the death occurs at home or another non-University location, their next of kin may notify the employee's manager or other colleague. In these circumstances, notification to other people is covered in the guidance below.

Immediate actions for the manager or nominee:

<p>Phone the person who notified of the death to express condolences. (This may be a different person from the “Emergency contact” held on ERP)</p>	<p>When phoning the notifier or next of kin, sensitivity should be shown. For example, check if the notifier is ready to have a conversation; the phonecall may need to be postponed until a later time.</p> <p>In initial communications with the notifier or next of kin, the following should be covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convey condolences and support - Check contact details for the next of kin - Ask permission to give the next of kin’s address to the Vice-Chancellor who will wish to send their condolences. - Clarify the date and cause of death <p>Where the death was unexpected you should check with the next of kin their wishes about how much information may be shared about the circumstances.</p> <p>You should confirm who the next of kin’s point of contact at the University will be (normally the employee’s manager though an alternative such as the HR Business Partner may be appropriate).</p> <p>Notify the next of kin or notifier that you will want to keep in touch about funeral arrangements and there will be some administrative matters such as pensions.</p> <p>Going forwards, consider whether the next of kin needs any specific support with communication and/or campus visits (for example, interpreter/translator services, parking on campus, etc).</p>
<p>Notify the HR Business Partner</p>	<p>The HR Business Partner will help to guide you through next steps.</p>
<p>Communicate</p>	<p>Work with the HR Business Partner to consider communications to team members and other staff (and students).</p> <p>Where possible it is best for the message to be communicated in person to people most affected (eg immediate team colleagues). Remember to also contact those on leave from work, such as maternity leave but do consider the timing and the circumstances of this. Ensure direct reports are told who their new (temporary if necessary) point of contact is.</p> <p>It may be appropriate for the Head of School / Division to send an email to the wider team/unit (including colleagues in other Faculties or Divisions) to notify them of the situation. This should be sent fairly promptly after initial communication has begun. The HR Business Partner can provide suggested text for an email.</p> <p>Send a personal paragraph about the employee to the Vice Chancellor’s PA for inclusion in the University condolence letter (send to the Hub HR team for them to send on).</p> <p>The HR Hub team will formally notify a number of people including the Vice-Chancellor; Registrar; Chief People Officer; Director of Health and Safety; Press Office; Chaplaincy.</p>

	With the HR Business Partner, consider other people that may need to be notified. For example, the Director of Communications (if significant public interest); Director of Legal Services (if circumstances of death are being investigated and involve UoB); Director of Student Life and Wellbeing (if students are affected). Also consider whether any external organisations need to be notified, for example an overseas Embassy or High Commission.
Academic staff only: PURE profile	The employee's PURE profile will automatically disappear overnight when MyERP is updated. Therefore, if the employee's PURE profile should remain live for a specific period of time (e.g. a further 3 months), make the HR Business Partner aware and they will liaise with the Hub to ensure IT are notified.
Network account	Network accounts will remain open for 5 weeks as default, however access to the individual's account may be needed to set up an out-of-office message and/or reassign social media accounts, etc. The manager should liaise with the HR Business Partner to seek approval to gain access to the account for a specified period. Approval is granted by the Secretary's Office (Data Protection team) and once granted this will need to be sent to the IT Service Desk for access rights to be updated.
Staff Counselling	The HR Business Partner can notify Staff Counselling about the affected School / Division. The manager should provide the HR Business Partner with names of those staff potentially most affected (e.g. immediate team members) so those staff can be prioritised if they contact the Counselling Service. The Staff Counselling service may be able to offer bespoke grief session for the School / Division, and they also run regular bereavement sessions (Parting Words).

Secondary actions for the manager or nominee:

Leavers' checklist	Go through the Leavers' Checklist to consider other necessary actions. This includes calculating if any annual leave is to be paid out in the final salary. The HR Business Partner will liaise with the next of kin about pension and payment of final salary.
Direct reports	Where relevant, identify new line management for direct reports. This may initially be on a temporary basis until more permanent arrangements are made. Ensure the HR Hub team is made aware so that MyERP and other systems are updated.
Support for the next of kin	Show as much support as possible to the next of kin when discussing necessary arrangements.

	<p>Try and establish how the next of kin prefers to communicate – via email, phone, or face to face meetings, and allow as much time as possible for them to respond to you.</p> <p>Consider whether they need any specific support with communication and/or face to face visits (for example, interpreter/translator services, parking on campus, etc).</p>
Funeral arrangements	<p>Liaise with the next of kin about the family’s wishes in relation to funeral attendance, donations and similar matters. Ensure colleagues are informed of the family’s wishes.</p> <p>Where flowers are to be sent on behalf of the University, the normal supplier used is Clifton Flowers 10 The Triangle Clifton Tel – 0117 929 9518. The message should read “From the University of Bristol”. The supplier will need to know the full name of the deceased, date and time of the funeral, the address where the flowers should be delivered to and the latest time of arrival that the flowers can be delivered.</p> <p>The University does not normally make donations in such cases (as it is a registered charity itself) but details should be distributed in case any colleague wishes to make a personal donation.</p> <p>Ensure that a card, condolence messages, etc are co-ordinated and sent to the next of kin.</p>
Personal and university belongings	<p>Discuss with the next of kin their preferences for return of the employee’s personal belongings; the next of kin may wish to come onto campus to collect these and meet team members, or for them to be sent. Discussions should also cover the return of the employee’s university property.</p>
Public / media interest	<p>If relevant, liaise with the Director of Communications to prepare a statement for staff (and students) about handling media interest, and / or a media statement.</p>
Wellbeing	<p>Safeguard your own and colleagues’ wellbeing – bereavement support may be appropriate days, weeks or even months after the event.</p>

Additional information

Support for managers and employees

[Chaplaincy](#)

[Staff Counselling](#)

[Carefirst \(Employee Assistance Programme\)](#)

[External support organisations](#)

If relevant, the Student Death Protocol is available at www.bris.ac.uk/cicp/student-death.html.