

TYPE:	Administrative
TITLE:	Communicating the Death of an Employee or Retiree
NO.:	ADMIN-219
RESPONSIBILITY:	Chief Administrative Officer and Associate Vice President, Communications and Marketing
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
EFFECTIVE DATE:	October 2023
REVISED DATE(S):	
REVIEW DATE:	October 2026

1. Introduction

This policy and procedure provides a framework to guide Durham College (DC) when communicating the death of an employee or retiree to the college's stakeholders, including employees, students, retirees and Board of Governors (Board).

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure timely and effective communication of the death of a current employee, retiree or member of the Board. Creating a well-defined framework ensures information is shared with stakeholders in a respectful, co-ordinated and consistent manner. The college seeks to provide support to the campus community and the deceased's family during a difficult time.

3. Definitions

Refer to [Durham College's Standard Definitions](#).

4. Policy statements

- 4.1. This policy and procedure is to be implemented upon notification of the passing of a current employee or retiree.
- 4.2. A critical component to ensuring the timely announcement of a death is the flow of information and co-ordination of activities across various departments. Due to the unpredictable nature of these announcements, employees are expected to be flexible and responsive when disseminating information or taking action related to the communication of a death.
- 4.3. A message will be distributed to the campus community within one business day of DC being advised and once family approval to communicate the passing is received.

- 4.4. Employees and students will be advised of the death, as appropriate. Announcements will be distributed to employees via campus-wide email and posted to ICE. Students, as applicable, will be advised via DC Mail and a post on MyDC.
- 4.5. Flags at the Oshawa and Whitby campuses will be lowered to acknowledge the passing of a current employee, Board member or college past president(s), for a period of 24 hours following the distribution of a message.
- 4.6. Death announcements will reflect the values of DC and demonstrate respect for the deceased and their family.

5. Procedure

5.1. Death of an Employee

5.1.1. Notification

The HR employee who receives the notification should immediately advise the following individuals or groups:

- HR team for information
- Immediate supervisor of the deceased person
- Vice-President representing the deceased person's department or Faculty
- Office of the President
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Associate Vice-President, Communications and Marketing (C+M)
- Director, Communications
- Associate Vice-President, Office of Development and Alumni Affairs
- Board Secretary

For individuals no longer employed by the college, notification should be sent to the HR department, who will advise C+M to determine actions to be taken.

5.1.2. Message Preparation

A C+M employee will draft a campus-wide message on behalf of the President that includes the following:

- Person's name and title
- Faculty or department
- Details of their time spent at DC
- Link to funeral and visitation arrangements, if known

- Information as to when the flags at the Oshawa and Whitby campuses will be lowered and raised (in the case of a current employee)
- Contact information for confidential EAP support

5.1.3. Message Distribution

The draft message will be reviewed and approved by the Associate Vice-President, C+M or designate prior to distribution. The message will be posted to ICE and sent Campus-wide on behalf of the President to:

- DC employees (via C+M)
- DC Board of Governors (via Board secretary)
- DC retirees (via retiree liaison in HR)
- DC students, if applicable (via C+M, or via the Faculty, if appropriate)

5.2. Death of a Retiree

5.2.1. Notification

HR is the official point of contact with the family of the deceased. The HR employee who receives the notification of the passing of a retiree should immediately advise the following individuals or groups:

- HR team for information
- Durham College Retirees' Association (DCRA) executive via retiree liaison
- Office of the President
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Associate Vice-President, Communications and Marketing
- Director, Communications
- Appropriate Vice-President relevant to the deceased
- Board of Governors secretary (as appropriate)

Once the HR team has been advised, they will identify a point of contact for the family.

5.2.2. Message Preparation

A C+M employee will draft a Campus-wide message on behalf of the President that includes the following information provided by the HR department:

- Retiree's name and role at DC

- Faculty or department
- Details of their employment at DC, where available
- Link to funeral and visitation arrangements, if known
- If the deceased is a past president, information as to when the flags at the Oshawa and Whitby campuses will be lowered and raised
- Contact information for confidential EAP support

5.2.3. Message Distribution

The draft message will be reviewed and approved by the Associate Vice-President, C+M or designate prior to distribution. The message will be posted to ICE and sent campus-wide on behalf of the President to:

- DC employees (via C+M)
- DC Board of Governors, if appropriate (via Board secretary)
- DC retirees (via retiree liaison in HR)

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1. Human Resources

- 6.1.1. The HR employee who received notification will inform the appropriate individuals or groups as specified.
- 6.1.2. The HR employee who has been designated the point of contact with the family of the deceased will also be the liaison with the C+M department. The HR employee will share relevant details for the message with C+M and will obtain permission from the family to distribute a message.
- 6.1.3. The retiree liaison will ensure that the campus-wide message is distributed to all retirees, as appropriate.

6.2. Communications and Marketing

- 6.2.1. A C+M employee will prepare the draft message and obtain approval from the Associate Vice-President, C+M or designate.
- 6.2.2. A C+M employee will distribute the approved message to employees through an ICE posting and campus-wide message.
- 6.2.3. The director, Communications will notify Ontario Tech University Communications and Marketing, if required.

6.2.4. The director, Communications will notify Security when the flags need to be lowered and returned to full mast.

6.3. Security

The security office will lower the flags to half-mast and raise the flags to full mast as per the directions provided by the director, Communications.

6.4. Corporate and Board Secretary

The Corporate and Board secretary will distribute the approved message to Board members as appropriate.

7. **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act considerations**

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards have been considered in the development of this policy and procedure and it adheres to the principles outlined in the College's commitment to accessibility as demonstrated by the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

8. **Non-compliance implications**

Non-compliance with this policy and procedure could negatively impact the current and prospective College community with both external stakeholders and the media, which could lead to significant financial loss and damage to the College's reputation.

9. **Related forms, legislation or external resources**

- None