

TYPE:	Administrative
TITLE:	Responding to the Death of a Student
NO.:	ADMIN-245
RESPONSIBILITY:	Vice President, Academic and Students
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
EFFECTIVE DATE:	June 2026

1. Introduction

Durham College is committed to responding to the death of a student with compassion, dignity, cultural humility, and respect for privacy. This policy outlines the institutional response following confirmation of a student's death.

The College recognizes that the death of a student affects classmates, faculty, staff, and the broader College community. The institutional response will be guided by principles of care, equity and respect for the wishes of the student's family or identified contacts.

This policy does not govern emergency response procedures in situations where a student death occurs on campus. Emergency management and crisis response procedures are addressed in separate policies.

2. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure is intended to guide the College in providing a coordinated, timely, respectful and effective response to the death of a student.

3. Definitions

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

4. Policy statements

4.1. This policy and its procedure apply to the administrative response to the death of a student who is currently registered in a program offered by the College, or who was actively registered within the previous calendar year.

5. Procedure

5.1. Any employee who learns of a student death will contact the Dean, Students.

5.2. The Dean, Students will, in turn, notify the Executive Leadership Team, Executive Dean of the faculty in which the student is enrolled, as well as the, Director, Communications, Manager, Enrolment Services and Student Records, and the Director, Office of Campus Safety (OCS).

- 5.3. The Dean, Students, together with the Director, OCS and the Manager Enrolment Services and Student Records, will seek confirmation from a reliable source, confirm the student's status at the College, and obtain any additional details that may be available at that time to aid in the College's response.
- 5.4. Once the death has been verified, the Dean, Students will initiate the College's response to ensure the appropriate departments are notified, and protocols are initiated.
- 5.5. The Dean, Students will serve as the single point of contact for the student's family or identified contacts, and members of the campus community in coordinating the College's response.
- 5.6. Any employee who learns of the death of an alumni will notify the Associate Vice-President, Advancement and Alumni Relations who will coordinate the College's response to ensure the appropriate departments are notified and protocols are initiated.
- 5.7. If the deceased is a recent graduate, within the last calendar year, the Dean, Students will determine if this policy should be invoked.
- 5.8. Office of the Registrar and Finance
 - 5.8.1. The Office of the Registrar will provide relevant student account information, including emergency contact information to the Dean, Students.
 - 5.8.2. The Office of the Registrar will determine whether the student qualifies to receive a posthumous credential at Convocation or a certificate of achievement in memoriam.
 - 5.8.3. The Office of the Registrar will update the student account and assess according to the following:
 - The student account will be assessed (including ancillary fees collected on behalf of the Student Association and registration status), and a refund will be issued where appropriate;
 - The Office of the Registrar will notify Financial Aid and Awards (FAA) once a refund is generated on the student account; and
 - If the student account is in a deficit, the deficit will be recorded as uncollectible debt.
 - 5.8.4. Closure of Academic Records
 - Upon receipt of a death notice, the student's academic file will be closed in accordance with established procedures.

5.9. Student Association – Student Health Benefits

- 5.9.1. If the student health benefits payments have not been transferred to the student association, the College will refund the health benefits amount to the designated family member of the student.
- 5.9.2. If the student health benefits payments have been transferred to the student association, they will be responsible for refunds of this payment where applicable:
 - If the student “opted out” of the Health Benefits Plan and the refund cheque has not been issued, it will be issued to the designated family member of the student;
 - If the student did not opt out, the designated member of the student’s family or identified contacts may be eligible for benefits under the plan; and
 - If the student did not opt out and the designated member of the student’s family is not eligible for benefits under the plan, the student association will approve a pro-rated refund of the Health Benefits payment to the designated member of the student’s family or identified contacts issued by the College’s Finance department.

5.10. Financial Aid and Awards (FAA)

- 5.10.1. The FAA will review files to determine whether the student was in receipt of Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) loans or other awards; if the student has an active OSAP application for the current academic year, a full application hold will be applied to prevent any further processing of the application.
- 5.10.2. Upon receipt of a death certificate, the Director, Financial Aid and Awards will notify the appropriate Ministry, National Student Loans and the Canadian Student Loans Programs, to ensure any outstanding loan funding is not collected, and communication ceases.
- 5.10.3. If the student is in receipt of other scholarships and awards, the file will be reviewed by the Director to determine appropriate action.

5.11. Communications and Marketing

- 5.11.1. Upon notification of a student’s death, and confirmation of the student’s status at the College from the Office of the Registrar, the Dean, Students will notify Communications and Marketing so they may draft a message for distribution that includes the following information:
 - Student’s name, Faculty, year of study and program;
 - Links to funeral and visitation arrangements (if known);

- Information as to when DC-branded flags on campus will be lowered; and
- Contact information for confidential mental health supports and services for students and employees.

5.11.2. A sentence in the message will be personalized for each individual based on the available information.

5.11.3. Prior to distribution, Communications and Marketing will ensure:

- The communication is approved by the Dean, Students and the President;
- A message is shared with the College's campus partner institution, Ontario Tech University's Communications team; and
- The OCS is notified when to lower the DC flag to half-mast at Oshawa and Whitby campuses per the Flag Protocol policy and procedure.

5.11.4. Communications and Marketing will distribute the message on behalf of the President to:

- DC employees; and
- DC students via their DC email address

5.12. IT Services

5.12.1. The Dean, Students will notify IT Services to deactivate the student's access to all college systems and accounts.

5.12.2. Upon receipt of a formal request under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the institution may disclose records relating to a deceased student where such disclosure is authorized by law.

5.13. International Education Office (IEO)

5.13.1. In the event of an International student's death, the Dean, Students will work with the IEO to ensure the following:

- Notification of the embassy or consulate of the student's country in Canada. When diplomatic representation is unclear, contact Global Affairs Canada for more information.
- Notification of partnering institution, where applicable.
- Identify and engage a translator(s) as necessary to assist in family communications.
- Assist the family in making travel arrangements and obtaining visas where appropriate.

5.14. Campus Health and Wellness Centre (CHWC)

- 5.14.1. Upon receiving the notification of a student death, the Director, CHWC will review the student's health records to determine if the student had ever registered with the CHWC. Any employee who was assigned to work with the student will be notified by the Director, CHWC.
- 5.14.2. CHWC employees will be alerted and briefed as soon as possible regarding the student death.
- 5.14.3. Upon request, the Director, CHWC, will make arrangements for CHWC employees to be immediately available to provide mental health supports to students arising from the student death.
- 5.14.4. If the nature of the mental health needs exceeds the capacity of the on-campus services, the CHWC will provide additional community support information and offer referrals on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.14.5. Mental health supports will be made available at any memorial function arranged by the College in support of students and their wellness needs.
- 5.14.6. Recognizing that the grieving process does not have any pre-determined timelines, the CHWC will respond to all requests for support related to a student death as a priority request for services.
- 5.14.7. The Director, CHWC will conduct a file review if the deceased was registered at the CHWC for general or mental health support. The director will inform the Dean, Students that the file review has been completed. At the recommendation of either the Director or the Dean, Students, an external review of the file may be conducted.

5.15. Human Resources

- 5.15.1. Full-time employees are able to directly access confidential supports through the College's EFAP.
- 5.15.2. Contract or part-time employees may request access by contacting the Director, Organizational Effectiveness in Human Resources.
- 5.15.3. A supervisor may request grief support for their team by contacting the Director, Organizational Effectiveness.

5.16. Residence Services

- 5.16.1. The Residence will review the student's account and ensure:
 - If the account is in a deficit, the amount owing will be recorded as uncollectible debt;
 - Any eligible refunds will be coordinated with the College; A

privacy alert will be applied to the student's account with Residence; and

- If required, the Residence will arrange for the packing and shipping of the student's personal effects.

5.17. Alumni Relations

- 5.17.1. The Dean, Students will notify the Alumni Relations of a student's death so they can adjust their contact database in the event a student has previously graduated
- 5.17.2. Upon confirmation of the death of an alumni, Alumni Relations will notify the President's Office and the senior academic administrators as appropriate.
- 5.17.3. If appropriate and timely, the president and/or associate vice-president, Advancement and Alumni Relations, will send condolences to the next of kin.
- 5.17.4. Alumni Relations will ensure their contact database is updated.
- 5.17.5. Alumni Relations will notify the Office of the Registrar to close the student's academic record as appropriate.
- 5.17.6. Alumni Relations will notify IT Services to ensure network access is deactivated.

6. 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 Accessibility Plan.

7. Non-compliance implications

Implications of this policy and procedure not being implemented as described include:

- Unapproved communications regarding a student death;
- Audit implications for institutional records;
- Failure to process OSAP correctly has negative implications for student's next of kin; and
- Reputational implications for the institution from mismanagement of a sensitive issue.

8. Related forms, legislation or external resources

- Student Death Response Plan Checklist
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act