

TYPE:	Administrative
TITLE:	Student Death Response
NO.:	ADMIN-245
RESPONSIBILITY:	Vice-president, Student Affairs
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
EFFECTIVE DATE:	May 2019
REVISED DATE(S):	
REVIEW DATE:	May 2022

1. Introduction

The Student Death Response policy and procedure assists Durham College (DC) in responding in a sensitive, timely and fulsome manner to the death of a student.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the policy and procedure is to ensure timely and effective communication and response by Durham College in the event of a student death. The college seeks to support the campus community and the student's family and friends during this tragic time.

3. Definitions

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

4. Policy statements

4.1. The Student Death Response policy is to be implemented upon notification of the passing of a student who is currently registered at Durham College or who has been registered within the last calendar year. The policy and procedure are to be used regardless of the cause of death.

5. Procedure

5.1. Records and Fee Management

The purpose is to ensure a timely and consistent approach to the processing of student accounts in the event of a Durham College student death.

5.1.1. During a semester in which the student is registered

In the event of a student death during a semester in which the student is registered, the following process will be followed:

Strategic Enrollment Services will update the student account and assess according to the following:

- a. Tuition, Ancillary Fees* and Levies** will be refunded to the designate of the student's family;
- b. If fees are paid in full for the semester, the refund will be prorated based on the time left in the semester
- c. If fees are paid in full for the fall/winter or the spring/summer academic terms, the refund will be prorated based on the time left in the fall/winter or spring/summer academic terms;
- d. If the account is in deficit, fees will be adjusted to the date of withdrawal;
- e. Any surplus in the account will then be refunded to the designate of the student's family
- f. A deficit will be written off as uncollectible debt.

*Graduation fee will be refunded in full.

**Durham College Students Inc. (DCSI) fee refunds that have been transferred to DCSI will be deducted from the next fee transfer.

5.1.2. During a semester in which the student is not registered

In the event of a student death during a semester in which the student is not registered:

- a. If the account is in a deficit, the deficit will be written off as uncollectible debt.
- b. If the account has a surplus, the surplus will be refunded to the designate of the student's family. The surplus may be from overpayment of fees in a previous semester, deposits or advance payments.

5.1.3. Durham College Students Inc. (DCSI) – Student Health Benefits

- a. If the student health benefits payments have not been transferred to DCSI, the College will refund the health benefits amount to the designate of the student's family.
- b. If the student health benefits payments have been transferred to DCSI, DCSI will be responsible for refunds of this payment where applicable:
 - i. If the student "opted out" of the Health Benefits Plan and the refund check has not been issued, it will be issued to the designate of the student's family.
 - ii. If the student did not opt out and the refund has been issued, there will be no further action.

- iii. If the student did not opt out, the designate of the student's family may be eligible for Death Benefits under the plan.
- iv. If the student did not opt out and the designate of the student's family is not eligible for death benefits under the plan, DCSI will refund a pro-rated portion of the Health Benefits payment to the student's estate.
- c. Check and receipt template will be issued by Financial Operations (international students process will be implemented as above. Financial Operations will issue a wire transfer to the origin of payment or per International Centre form designating refund directive).

5.2. Communications and Marketing

The goal is to distribute the message within one business day from notification and family approval.

5.2.1. Upon notification of the passing of a student, and confirmation of student's status at the college from xxxx, a Communications and Marketing team member drafts the message for internal distribution (see example)

- a. Students name,
- b. School, program;
- c. Funeral and visitation arrangements (if known – if not, mention that a follow-up message will contain the details)
- d. Information as to when flags on campus will be lowered; and
- e. Contact information for confidential EAP.

5.2.2. Content of the message will be adapted to each individual circumstance and according to information available.

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

- a. The communication is signed off by the vice-president, Student Affairs;
- b. A message is shared with UOIT communications team;
- c. Security office (securitysupervisor@dc-uoit.ca and security@dc-uoit.ca; cc the manager, Public Safety and Security) to ensure flags are lowered to half-mast at Oshawa and Whitby campuses as per the Flag-Usage policy and procedure, following distribution of the message to students and employees. In this message, specify exactly when the flags are to be lowered and restored to full mast.

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

- a. Durham College employees; and
- b. Students via their approved College Communication system.

5.3. IT Services

5.3.1. Student electronic accounts will be frozen upon notification of a death as per the Student Death Response Plan checklist. These include:

- a. Network
- b. Email
- c. DC Connect
- d. Banner
- e. MyCampus

5.3.2. Email records in the student's Durham College email account will only be released to the executors of a student's estate with a formal request through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:

- a. Release of records will only be made after all information that identifies other parties is removed and the records have been reviewed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Coordinator.
- b. A preliminary scan of the student's email account will be made to determine the number of records that will need to be reviewed. The preliminary scan will be completed without charge. If the student's account is above 100 records, the parties who have made the request will be informed in advance of the number of records and charges that may apply for recovery.

5.3.3. Records will not be released if a student dies intestate.

5.4. International Office

5.4.1. Checklist:

- a. Notify International Student Health Insurance Provider. The Student Health Provider will normally be responsible for coordinating with the funeral services (repatriation), obtaining the death certificate, and liaising with the family regarding repatriation arrangements.
- b. Notify the embassy or consulate of the student's country here in Canada. When it is unclear regarding diplomatic representation, contact Global Affairs Canada for more information.
- c. Notify partnering institution where applicable.

- d. If the college is notifying the family of the death, identify and engage translator as necessary to assist in family communication. In the case of accidental or illness-related death, the police service or hospital may be responsible for official notification of death.
- e. Assist the family in making travel arrangements and obtaining visas where appropriate.

5.5. Health Centre

- 5.5.1. The director, Campus Health Centre will be the contact person working with the vice-president, Student Affairs or designate regarding the student death.
- 5.5.2. In the event that the director is not immediately available, a designated contact person may be assigned by the vice-president, Student Affairs.
- 5.5.3. The Health Centre contact person is responsible for assessing the counselling needs of all students involved, and for recommending appropriate counselling support.
- 5.5.4. Health and counselling student records will be searched to determine if the deceased student has ever registered with the Centre. Any Health Centre staff person who was assigned to work with the student will be notified by the contact person.
- 5.5.5. Health Centre staff members will be alerted and briefed as soon as possible regarding the incident by the contact person.
- 5.5.6. Arrangements will be made for staff to be immediately available in order to respond to the counselling needs of students arising from the incident (ie. Appointment schedules will be cleared, scheduled absences from work may be modified, if necessary).
- 5.5.7. If the nature of the counselling support needed exceeds the capacity of the College's services resources, the contact person will arrange for the assistance of additional service providers through the student counselling/bereavement service provider, Aspiria, and beyond if necessary. Faculty and staff can contact the employee assistance provider, Shepell FGI, at 1.866.833.7690.
- 5.5.8. All students (including roommates and resident assistants, if applicable) will be advised that counsellors and outreach workers are available for individual or group crisis intervention and grief counselling support.
- 5.5.9. Counsellors will be available and present at any memorial function arranged by the College.

- 5.5.10. Recognizing that the grieving process does not have any pre-determined timelines, counselling services will respond to all requests for counselling support related to a student death as a priority request for services.
- 5.5.11. Counsellors and outreach workers may be requested to temporarily assist individuals who are affected by the event but are not students (eg. staff, next of kin) in order to help them find suitable supports as needed.
- 5.5.12. The director will conduct a file review if the deceased was registered at the Health Centre for general or mental health support. The director will report to the vice-president, Student Affairs that the file review has been completed and the report will be placed in the deceased's health/counselling file. At the recommendation of either the director or the vice-president, Student Affairs, an external review of the file may be conducted.

5.6. Residence Services

- 5.6.1. In the event that a student has died within residence, the following steps will be taken:
 - a. If a customer service representative/residence assistant becomes aware of a student who has died, they are to contact the on-call manager;
 - b. The on-call manager will contact security at extension 2400 as well as EMS via 911;
 - c. The director, Residence Operations (DRO) or designate will then notify the vice-president, Student Affairs or equivalent of the appropriate institution of the name of the student who has passed away and any students, student staff, and roommate(s) involved;
 - d. The DRO or designate will decide with the vice-president, Student Affairs who will notify the primary or secondary contact;
 - e. The DRO or designate will work with the vice-president, Student Affairs to create a communication strategy to notify the residence community (method/timeframe/messaging);
 - f. The residence life manager (RLM) will contact the residence outreach worker to notify them of the student's death.
 - g. Together, the RLM will liaise with the residence outreach worker to provide support within the Campus Health Centre for students who may be affected by the passing of a member of the residence community.
 - h. The DRO or designate will contact Campus Living Centres' benefits provider and make available counselling services for any staff members who may be affected by the death of a member of the residence community.

5.6.2. Personal Affects within Residence

- a. Once the primary or secondary contact have been notified, the RLM or designate will liaise with the family to facilitate access to the student's personal affects.
- b. If required, the residence will arrange for the packing and shipping of the student's personal affects.
- c. The residence will flag the student's account within its operating system and ensure:
 - i. Any refunds to be issued are coordinated with the institution;
 - ii. No attempts to contact the family concerning this student's account will be attempted;
 - iii. When queried, a privacy flag will appear to ensure no information is given concerning the student to anyone without express consent from management.

5.6.3. Roommates/Residence Suite

- a. The RLM or designate will ensure the roommate of the student who has died is placed into direct contact with the residence outreach worker.
- b. The roommate of the student who died will be given the option to relocate to another suite within the building.
- c. The residence staff will assist in helping the roommate to pack and relocate to another suite.

5.7. Alumni Affairs

- 5.7.1. Upon notification of the death of an alumnus, the Alumni Affairs office will notify the President's Office and the dean and associate dean(s) for the relevant school.
- 5.7.2. The President and/or associate vice-president, Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, will send a sympathy card to the next of kin.
- 5.7.3. The Alumni Affairs office will determine from the Financial Aid and Awards office if there is a potential that the alumnus has outstanding OSAP loans. If this is a possibility (a recent graduate for example) the Alumni Affairs office will send a letter to the next of kin with contact information and process to eradicate any outstanding loans.
- 5.7.4. The Alumni Affairs office will ensure the Raiser's Edge record is up to date to ensure no further correspondence.
- 5.7.5. The Alumni Affairs office will notify Strategic Enrolment Services to close the registration record and mark "deceased".

5.7.6. The Alumni Affairs office will communicate alumni deaths to fellow alumni through the alumni news section of *Reflections*.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1. Any staff or faculty member who becomes aware of a student death prior to having received formal communication from Durham College, is responsible for notifying the vice-president, Student Affairs by email and telephone immediately.
- 6.2. The vice-president, Student Affairs is responsible for initiating the Student Death Response Plan, which consists of completion of the Student Death Checklist and initiation of all associated procedures.
- 6.3. The checklist will become part of the student's permanent file.
- 6.4. Individual departments including, but not limited to, Communications and Marketing, Strategic Enrolment Services, ITS, Health Centre, Access and Support Centre, Office of Campus Safety, Financial Aid and Awards, and DCSI, are responsible for completing departmental procedures as necessary to meet the criteria of this policy and procedure.

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 Accessibility and Notice of Service Disruption policy and procedure (ADMIN-203).

8. Non-compliance implications

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

- Unapproved communications about a student death;
- Communications about the wrong student;
- Audit implications for institutional records;
- Failure to process OSAP correctly with future implications for student's next of kin;
- Reputational implications for the institution from mismanagement of a sensitive issue; and
- Potential impact on a criminal investigation.

9. Communications plan

9.1. Short-term:

- 9.1.1. Policy and procedure will be presented for information to DCLT, Academic Leadership Team (ALT); associate deans, Student Affairs leadership team; and associate vice-presidents of all departments involved in implementation of the policy and procedure.
- 9.1.2. Announcement placed on employee intranet (ICE) with accompanying policy and procedure for campus awareness.

9.2. Long-term:

- 9.2.1. Policy and procedure will be posted on ICE.
- 9.2.2. New staff and faculty will be made aware of the policy and procedure as part of their orientation.
- 9.2.3. Policy and procedure will be included in training with DCSI student leaders on an annual basis.
- 9.2.4. Debrief will occur within 30 days of the policy and procedure being implemented and the checklist being placed on the deceased student's file. Any changes will be duly processed and sent to all parties involved in implementation of the Student Death Response Plan.

10. Related forms, legislation or external resources

None.