**Death in Service guidance and checklist**

This guidance is for Heads of Department, School or Service, or other staff who may be informed initially, regarding the steps to take in the unfortunate event of the death of one our employees (including retired employees and Emeritus Professors). Where there is a death of a student, refer to Student Support based in the [Student Services Hub](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/contact/default.aspx).

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| **Immediate steps** |  |
| Inform the Head of Department, School or Section. If they are not available to lead the response and act as a main point of contact, the deputy or other senior member of staff should be appointed. |  |
| If the death is on campus, contact the Colchester Campus Information Centre on **2222** or **01206 872222 (for all three campuses).** Do **not** dial 999 yourself. The information Centre will contact an ambulance and the police. Campus patrol or security officers will secure the site, preserve it for any investigation, and note witness details. |  |
| If the death is believed to be work related, ask the Information Centre to contact the Health and Safety Advisory Service or call them directly on 01206 872944. |  |
| Inform HR through [hrer@essex.ac.uk](mailto:hrer@essex.ac.uk). HR will advise you on supporting colleagues and will immediately update systems. Later on, they will need information from you to process pay and pensions (see below). |  |
| Make contact with the next of kin. Appoint a single point of contact in the Department, School or Section to liaise with the next of kin. This would usually be the Head. This avoids confusion and distress at a difficult time for those close to the deceased. |  |
| Inform the Communications Office either using phone extension 2400 or email [comms@essex.ac.uk](mailto:comms@essex.ac.uk). Be aware that you may need to provide your memories of the deceased as part of dealing with any press enquiries or seek feedback from other members of staff who worked with them closely.  Please note: In some cases the death may be announced externally before the Department is notified. This might be through external social media, online news outlets or via reliable online information sites e.g. police and other Government agencies. This may be due to the high-profile of the member of staff or the circumstances of the death. In this situation, a senior member of the Communications Office may take the decision to share the news immediately via the University’s own social media channels. If possible this will follow consultation with the Head of Department, but this might not be possible due to the fast moving nature of social media. |  |

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| **Following the immediate aftermath:** |  |
| **Next of kin** |  |
| Keep in touch with the next of kin:   * provide them with a central point of contact in HR * receive information from them about funeral arrangements * liaise with them regarding any University or public announcements (see the Communications Office below) * arrange for the collection of possessions at the appropriate time. |  |
| Personal possessions must be kept safe until the next of kin is able to collect them. |  |
| **Colleagues** |  |
| Inform colleagues in a planned and sensitive manner. Close colleagues should be informed first, and this is best done face-to-face or if necessary by telephone. Information about the manner of the death must be based on the wishes of the next of kin, for example, if the death was the result of suicide.  This will be a difficult time for colleagues and it is important to allow people time to grieve. Contact [Occupational Healt](http://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/ohs/contact/default.aspx)h for advice. A free, confidential [counselling service](http://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/ohs/health/counselling.aspx) is also available. A [Quick Guide on supporting others at a difficult time](https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/630382/mod_resource/content/0/Quick%20Guide%20-%20supporting%20others.pdf) may also help you.  Responding to a death will not be easy for the Head of Department or appointed lead. Ensure that you seek support from HR or from colleagues and that you give yourself time to grieve. |  |
| Funeral arrangements may be communicated to staff so they can attend. This must be based on the wishes of next of kin. It may be appropriate to send a representative of the Department / University. Requests for time off to attend the funeral should be dealt with sensitively. Cards or flowers from colleagues / the Department may be arranged. |  |
| Inform wider contacts and, if necessary, students. Students who had a close relationship with the individual, e.g. research students, should be informed first and, ideally, face to face. Inform [Student Support](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/contact/default.aspx) so that they are aware and can provide support if necessary. You may also need to deal with committee memberships, circulation lists and, in time, staff boards, websites, etc. |  |
| **Institutional matters** |  |
| Health and Safety. For work related deaths there is likely to be Police or HSE investigation, which may involve interviews with staff and seizure of records or equipment. If you are contacted directly by the HSE or Police, you must contact the [Health and Safety Advisory Service](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/professional-services/health-and-safety-team), so that they can provide support and advice. |  |
| Communication with HR. HR will appoint a single point of contact, which can be communicated to the next of kin. You will need to provide information to HR to ensure that records are updated promptly and the deceased’s final pay can be processed, and pension arrangements dealt with. HR will also provide advice if you need to arrange interim cover, although this will need to be handled sensitively. |  |
| Communication with the Communications Office. Inform the Communications Office about funeral arrangements.The Communications Office will prepare an all staff information subscription list email once immediate colleagues have been informed and will need your input on that. If required, they will also support the writing of an obituary to be used on the Department website and, potentially, elsewhere. The Communications OFfice will liaise with the Vice-Chancellor’s Office regarding the Vice-Chancellor or other senior colleague writing to the next-of-kin, senior representation at the funeral, and the flying of the flag at half-mast on the day of the funeral. |  |
| Department communication and events. Consider what announcements may be made on social media, including Facebook and Twitter, in consultation with the Communications Office and with the next of kin as to timing and content. You should consider what, if any, memorial event may be appropriate in the months that follow the death. |  |
| Inform the [IT Helpdesk](http://www.essex.ac.uk/it/contact/) so that the email and IT account can be managed and eventually closed. An auto-reply may be used in the short term, although this must be done sensitively and after colleagues and close contacts have been informed. You may need to speak to IT about accessing work related emails or documents. The next of kin may need to be given the opportunity to retrieve personal files e.g. research. If the individual was in possession of University equipment, arrangements will need to be made with the next of kin for this to be returned. |  |
| Inform Library Services through [libline@essex.ac.uk](mailto:libline@essex.ac.uk) so that records can be amended and to ensure that no invoices are sent to the deceased. |  |
| Inform REO, if the deceased was in receipt of a research grant through [reo-post-award@essex.ac.uk](mailto:reo-post-award@essex.ac.uk). They will advise on next steps including information that needs to be sent to the funder. |  |
| The [Governance Office](mailto:governance@essex.ac.uk) should be informed of the death of an Emeritus Professors so that the University Calendar can be updated and to ensure we do not make inappropriate contact with the family. |  |

Guidance and checklist creator: Human Resources

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Updated: May 2019, to update Health and Safety information where a death is work related.

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