

Context and Purpose

The death of a staff member is always challenging and has the potential to significantly impact the UniSA community. Each incident is different, and judgment and sensitivity are always necessary.

This Guideline outlines UniSA's approach to managing and responding to the death of a staff member, and may also apply to other members of the UniSA community e.g. adjuncts, volunteers, and/or family members of staff.

A checklist has been created to guide staff in navigating the death of a staff member with appropriate care and sensitivity.

Checklist

Initial Response			
Assignee	Action	Complete	Date completed
Notification dependent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the Director/Executive Dean is notified, they should notify the Executive Director: People, Talent and Culture (ED: PTC) and Strategic People Partner (SPP), If the ED: PTC is notified, they should notify the SPP and Director/Executive Dean, If another member of the UniSA community is notified, they should notify their line manager or senior lead in their Unit 		
ED: PTC	<p>When notified of the death of a staff member, the ED: PTC will coordinate with the SPP and the Local Area leadership to determine how best to respond and support staff. ED: PTC will also notify other appropriate staff members including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vice Chancellor Relevant Enterprise Leadership Team members Chief Financial Officer to ensure that any invoices or other communication are held until next of kin details are advised Communications and Marketing re media communication (if relevant) Manager: Safety and Wellbeing and/or Facilities Management Unit (FMU) (if the incident occurred in the workplace) <p>Where a death has occurred while staff are on an extended break from the University (e.g. Christmas), the Local Area leadership and the ED: PTC will use discretion to judge how best to communicate with staff.</p>		
SPP	<p>Work with the ED: PTC to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work history to identify other staff members who may need to be notified Emergency contact details Coordinate on-site support for local areas as appropriate (Employment Assistant Program for staff/ Student Engagement Unit for students) 		

ED: PTC	Notify the Manager: Payroll Services to enact the local Payroll Services Standard Operating Procedure regarding payment and superannuation finalisation. This includes contact with the emergency contact to identify next of kin details to enable the SOP to be enacted.		
Local Area leadership or SPP/ ED: PTC if required	Confirm family preferences for privacy regarding messages of condolences/and expressions of sympathy and providing details about the incident.		
<i>For a workplace incident: If the incident occurred in the workplace or during normal duties</i>			
ED: PTC	<p>Manager: Safety and Wellbeing should be advised as a priority to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SafeWork SA are notified • FMU are notified and the site is isolated, irrespective of whether it is considered a work-related incident (where appropriate) • The incident has been reported in the Incident/Hazard Reporting and Investigation system 		
<i>If the incident involves a staff member who identifies as Aboriginal</i>			
ED: PTC	If it is known that the staff member identified as Aboriginal, the Pro Vice Chancellor: Aboriginal Leadership and Strategy and the Consultant: Aboriginal Employment will be notified and invited to advise on the communication strategy and cultural protocol.		
<i>Initial Communications: Communication templates can be found below in Appendix A</i>			
Local Area leadership	<p>With the support of the ED:PTC to arrange appropriate communication as quickly as possible to the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff members immediate workgroup, ideally in person • Other staff and relevant colleagues • Advise for appropriate communications to be shared with students via Registrar and Director: Student & Academic Services • Review professional commitments (teaching and appointments) and make necessary arrangements 		

Within 48-72 Hours			
Assignee	Action	Complete	Date completed
SPP	<p>Work with the relevant PTC contact to organise any outstanding HR matters (as applicable) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave bookings • Casual timesheet claims • Workers' compensation • Notification of Immigration Consultant to contact DIBP (if visa holder) • Complete end of employment process including Exit Checklist 		
Local Area leadership	<p>Manage the following in an appropriately timed manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redirect telephone and mail communications • Arrange out-of-office for voicemail and email (including delegate access to inbox if required) • Contact the ISTS Help Desk to remove staff members' names from the email distribution lists and other communications • Update Staff Directory 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request Chancellery action regarding the personal notice and acknowledgement to the family on behalf of UniSA 		
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Additional actions for Local Area (with SPP support as required)			
Assignee	Action	Complete	Date completed
Local Area leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection or delivery of personal belongings (timing will depend on discussions with next of kin) Collection of University property from family (refer to Exit Checklist) Removal of staff name from office door, pigeonhole Contact relevant areas to remove access from corporate systems (Medici, Finance 1, EPiServer, etc) Finalise Professional Development Fund (if applicable) Local Area (or SPP/ED:PTC) to confirm family preferences around funeral/memorial services for staff 		

Related Documentation:

- > [Incident/Hazard Reporting and Investigation \(unisa.edu.au\)](https://unisa.edu.au)
- > [Deceased Students \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

Officer Responsible for Update and Review: Executive Director: People, Talent & Culture

Commencement Date: February 2024

Review Date: TBD

History:

- > New: February 2024



Internal Communications Templates

Internal email example for notification to key stakeholders:

Dear colleagues,

We have been advised this afternoon of the death of <staff member's>, <staff member's position title and area>, on (insert date). <Staff member> has worked with the University since XXXX.

We are in contact with <staff member's> family and understand funeral details will be confirmed in the coming days.

We are working through arrangements at present and will provide an update to relevant stakeholders in due course.

<Insert details of support>

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Internal email example for notification to colleagues:

Dear colleagues

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death yesterday of <staff member>. <Staff member> was a valued colleague who made a substantial contribution to the <local area> over the <insert period of time>. Our thoughts are with his/her/their family at this sad time.

<Staff member's> family have advised (insert funeral details)

OR

The details of <staff member's> funeral will be communicated shortly.

(Insert information about time off for the funeral)

I take this opportunity to remind you of the Employee Assistance Program should you or any of your colleagues want to seek support at this time.

Internal email example to ISTS to authorise access to inbox and drives:

Dear

The University was notified on (date) that <staff member> (Employee ID: 123456 and Username) passed away on (date).

Can you please authorise (name of key IT contact) to liaise with the Director/Executive Dean (name) regarding an out of office message and access to critical research data on <staff member's> computer.

Thank you.

Out of Office Message:

<Staff member> email account is no longer in use. For all enquiries please refer to (insert delegated person's name and contact details). All other enquiries to (insert Director's/Executive Dean's name)

External Communications Templates

External email example to notifier:

Dear xxx,

On behalf of the University, we send our condolences and offer support to you and your family and friends at this time.

In this difficult time, there are a number of administrative matters that we would appreciate your assistance with when you are able to respond. The University will require confirmation of probate to make payment of final monies and entitlements as per <staff member's> request. This will also include <staff member's> superannuation. The University will be able to release the funds once a copy of the will or legal confirmation of the executor and trustee has been received. This will also be the same for <staff member's> personal effects in his/her/their office.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or (insert name of relevant Senior Staff Member) if you have any questions.

External email example for notification:

Dear

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death of <Staff member>. <Staff member> made a substantial contribution to the University and to the field of <xxx> over the last ten years and s/he/they will be greatly missed.

Any communication to the University that you would normally direct to xxx should now be forwarded to (insert delegated person's name).

Additional communication considerations

Acknowledgements and Expressions of Sympathy

Some family members may find comfort in condolences from friends and colleagues of the deceased. Others may prefer their privacy. Accordingly, it is recommended that the family's preferences are followed. It is also important to keep in mind that reactions and response to death vary among cultures.

The Strategic People Partner will ask the identified family contact if and how they would like to receive communication from staff who knew the deceased.

Personal Notices

The University may offer its condolences and recognise the contribution of the deceased staff member by placing a notice in Personal Notices section of *The Advertiser* or other relevant publication. The Strategic People Partner will notify Chancellery of the death of the staff member and coordinate necessary communication. The placing of notices in the press is a decision made by Chancellery and they will arrange the notice, in accordance with their internal procedure 'Protocols for Death Notices' with the assistance of the Strategic People Partner.

Where a staff member has worked in different sites, the Strategic People Partner will liaise with each work area to ensure the staff member's contribution to the University is fully reflected and to determine the most appropriate person to liaise with Chancellery in drafting the notice.

Letter of Acknowledgement

Where appropriate, Chancellery may prepare a letter from the Vice Chancellor to the deceased's family, and/or coordinate floral tributes or charitable donations in lieu, dedicated to the memory of the deceased, on behalf of the University.

Obituary

In addition to the Personal Notices section, some publications have a dedicated Obituary section which contain photographs and detailed biographies of prominent individuals.

At the discretion of the Vice Chancellor, in consultation with the the Senior Manager, Corporate Communications, Chancellery may prepare an obituary for submission to the relevant publisher (e.g. *The Advertiser*).

Media Response

Should the Deputy Director: Organisational Capability, in conjunction with the Executive Dean or Director, determine the situation may have implications for public relations or media coverage, they should make immediate contact with Chancellery and the Senior Manager, Corporate Communications.

Any request for comment from the media must be immediately directed to the Senior Manager, Corporate Communications.

Department of Immigration and Border Protection

The Strategic People Partner is responsible for identifying if the staff member is a holder of a temporary working visa and advising the Immigration Consultant, so that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection can be notified.

External Contacts

Many staff will have developed professional external networks and contacts as part of their formal role at the University. In many situations, it may be necessary to formally advise these contacts of the death of the staff member.