



# Human Resources Management: Bereavement Protocol

Type of document	Bereavement Protocol
Aim	To provide direction in the process and procedures to be followed, including roles and responsibilities of faculties, departments and divisions, in the event of the death of a staff member.
Accessibility	General (external and internal)
Implementation date	1 July 2020
Review date/frequency	As the need for amendments arises
Previous revisions	None ( New protocol)
Owner of this protocol	Vice-Rector: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel
Institutional functionary (curator) responsible for this protocol	Chief Director: Human Resources
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Approved by	The Institutional Committee for Business Continuity (ICBC)
Keywords	

## **The essence of the protocol**

To provide direction in the process and procedures to be followed, including roles and responsibilities of faculties, departments and divisions, in the event of the death of a staff member.

## **1. The University's philosophy regarding death of a staff member**

The death of a staff member represents a loss for the University community as well as for the family and friends of the deceased. The aim of this document is to ensure that appropriate support is rendered to relevant role-players and that the SU community has the opportunity to mourn and commemorate the loss of a staff member.

## **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this protocol is to provide direction on the processes and procedures to be followed, including roles and responsibilities of faculties, departments and divisions, in the event of the death of a staff member. It is imperative to coordinate such actions expeditiously and in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner with regard to the feelings, religious and cultural practices of the family, relatives, friends and colleagues of the deceased.

## **3. Principles and Values**

In the development and review of this protocol, the following apply:

- 3.1** The protocol is aligned with Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024, and specifically with the values of the University, namely excellence, compassion, accountability, respect and equity.
- 3.2** This protocol aims to secure service of appropriate high quality to all role-players.
- 3.3** This protocol seeks to provide coherent, coordinated and swift responses.

## **4. Procedure**

The Institutional response to a death of a staff member entails a series of administrative actions, including appropriate notification of the Stellenbosch University community and to effect the necessary processes to be followed. The particular notifications required depend on the nature of the affiliation of the deceased.

### **4.1 South African Citizens**

To ensure that the appropriate offices are notified of actions that need to be taken with regard to university staff, responsibilities are coordinated as follows:

- 4.1.1** The line manager of the environment informs the Human Resources Practitioner (HRP) of the death as soon as the relevant information is available;

4.1.2 Where service benefits are applicable, the Remuneration and Benefits Office will contact the family to obtain the necessary or related documents.

4.1.3 The Line Manager should inform the immediate environment, colleagues and any students working directly with the deceased or being supervised or mentored by the deceased, through electronic or direct contact (if circumstances allow).

4.1.4 The Office for Employee Wellness should offer staff members affected counselling and debriefing.

4.1.5 The office of the Vice Rector Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel informs the University community (including students who may be affected) of the death of the staff member by means of a circular.

4.1.6 In the event of a memorial that is arranged by the family, the line manager informs the staff who may want to attend.

4.1.7 Based on the discussion the line manager had with the family, the SU management may conduct a visit.

4.1.8 The department/ environment can prepare a letter of condolence, and/or prepare an obituary notice.

4.1.9 The Corporate Communication Division makes a ceremonial candle or other relevant token of sympathy available to colleagues of the deceased who will attend the memorial/visit the family.

4.1.10 SU does not provide financial support for staff to travel to the memorial/funeral

4.1.11 In case of death while on official duty, the line manager reports to the Occupational Health and Safety Chief Inspectors regarding the incident.

## **4.2 Foreign National Staff**

To ensure that the appropriate offices are notified of actions that need to be taken with regard to so-called foreign national staff, responsibilities are coordinated as follows:

4.2.1 The Line manager of the environment informs the SU International Office who will liaise with the appropriate embassy.

4.2.2 Where service benefits are applicable, the Remuneration and Benefits Office will contact the family to obtain the necessary or related documents.

4.2.3 The SU International Office and HR Practitioner informs the family (if notice did not originate from the family in the first instance) and coordinates all communication with the family

of the deceased.

4.2.4 The Head of the environment is to inform all colleagues who worked directly with the deceased, including students who may have been supervised or mentored by the deceased.

4.2.5 Counselling/debriefing should be provided to affected staff through Employee Wellness office

4.2.6 The Office of the Vice Rector Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel informs the University community (including students who may be affected) of the death of the staff member by means of a circular.

4.2.7 Appropriate support should be rendered by the offices of Stellenbosch International and Human Resources with regard to the repatriation of the body and funeral arrangements.

4.2.8 If a memorial is conducted by family or friends, the line manager informs staff who may want to attend.

4.2.9 If the memorial is in Southern Africa, then the University may send a staff member, identified by line manager.

4.2.10 SU does not provide financial support for staff to travel to the memorial/funeral.

4.2.11 The International Office obtains a death certificate and related documents, and submits the documents to the HR Division.

4.2.12 In case of death while on official duty, the line manager reports to the Occupational Health and Safety Chief Inspectors regarding the incident.

## **5. Review of the Protocol**

This document will be reviewed as the need arises.