



# Deceased Student Procedure

## Purpose

The purpose of the Deceased Student Procedure is to provide clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of staff when a student has died.

## Scope

This procedure applies to staff that administer student information and other systems relevant to current students, including research and non-award.

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## 1. Protocol

When a member of UNSW staff is informed of a student’s death, they should immediately advise the Head, Student Life in the Office of Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Success within the Division of Education and Student Experience, who will confirm the deceased student report. The Head, Student Life will notify the Head, Student Lifecycle in the Office of the Registrar and Student Services within the Division of Education and Student Experience.

The Head, Student Lifecycle will apply a deceased flag to the student record in the student information management system (SiMs) and update the mailing address to ensure that any future correspondence automatically sent to the student will be diverted to the Student Lifecycle team.

The Head, Student Life will provide advice to other areas including notification of any formal media released as follows:

- The relevant Head of School, Associate Dean for Education, Director, Wellbeing, Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Success, Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, Director, Future Students, Registrar and Director, Student Services, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience, and the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for all deceased students.
- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training, Dean of Graduate Research where the deceased student is a higher degree research candidate.
- The Student Administration Services Manager at UNSW Canberra where the deceased student is a UNSW Canberra civilian student, and the Rector at UNSW Canberra where the deceased student is a UNSW Canberra Defence-funded student.
- The Director, Nura Gili where the deceased student is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student.
- The Scholarships Team where the deceased student is a sponsored student to halt payment of fees or in some cases, stipends to the student's account.
- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global where the deceased student is an international student.

The Head, Student Life will liaise with the next of kin and draft a letter of condolence and arrange for support for any affected family member or friends in the UNSW community. The Head, Student Life will provide the

condolence letter and other official documentation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience for review. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience will forward the reviewed official documentation and condolence letter to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor to send to the next of kin. The formal communication is sent from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. However, when staff have engaged in significant research or educational activities with the deceased student, they may express their condolences informally, using a sensitive approach in coordination with the Head of Student Life.

Staff or students who are grieving following the death of the student may seek support using the contact information provided at the end of the [Code of Conduct and Values page](#).

## 2. Media and UNSW-wide Communications

The Media Office will be briefed by the Head, Student Life. If required, the UNSW Media Office will respond to the media, issue any formal statements, and coordinate the media presence.

## 3. Enrolment and Refund of Tuition Fees

If the student is enrolled in the Term in which they have died, unless they have completed all assessment tasks and been awarded a final mark and grade:

- the enrolment for that term will be dropped from the student's record
- the student will not be liable for tuition fees for their enrolment for the Term in which they have died.
- Refunds will be sent to the next of kin or the deceased student's estate, whichever is appropriate.
- Where the fees were paid directly to UNSW by a sponsor, then any refund will be in line with the contract between UNSW and the sponsor.

## 4. Issuing of Credentials

If the student did not complete their studies before they died, the Student Lifecycle team will produce a Certificate of Attainment.

If the student did complete their studies before they died, or is eligible for a posthumous degree in line with the [Graduation Procedure](#), the Graduations and Prizes Team will arrange the conferral of a posthumous degree.

The Graduations and Prizes Team Manager will oversee the preparation and management of all credential documents, including, transcripts, Certificates of Attainment or Testamurs, as applicable. Prior to providing documentation of credentials, the Head, Student Life will seek advice from the next of kin to identify if they would like to receive documentation. These documents will be sent from the Head, Student Life to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience for review and to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor to send to the next of kin of the deceased student unless the Graduations and Prizes Team are otherwise informed by the School or such other arrangements as deemed appropriate by the next of kin and UNSW. The next of kin of the deceased student may wish to attend a graduation ceremony to receive a posthumous award, or the Head of School may choose to present a posthumous award at a separate event/occasion.

## 5. Higher Degree Research Candidates

Posthumous higher degrees by research (HDR) may be considered depending on the stage of the research completed and whether there have been any research outputs generated from the research. In consultation with the supervisors and School Postgraduate Coordinator, the Dean of Graduate Research will determine whether a degree should be awarded and what obligations to the library may be required.

In cases where a posthumous higher degree is recommended by the Dean of Graduate Research, the Graduations team will be notified for inclusion as an award in the appropriate conferral session.

## 6. Responsibilities

### 6.1. *Student Lifecycle*

Student Lifecycle is responsible for:

- Updating SiMS

- Production of credentials to be presented to the next of kin
- Arranging any refunds required
- Organisation of the presentation of the posthumous degree at a graduation ceremony (if required)

## 6.2. *Student Life*

Student Life is responsible for:

- Centrally coordinating all activities
- Advising key UNSW staff
- Confirming the deceased student report
- Contacting the next of kin of the deceased student to express the condolences of the University and confirming the next of kin details so that relevant information can be sent to the next of kin.
- Confirming to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Success, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience and relevant Dean that the next of kin has been contacted.
- Reaching out to the Head of School to request anecdotal information on the student to be included in the letter of condolence.
- Preparation of a draft condolence letter to be sent from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.
- Providing draft communications to the Dean and/or Head of School to send to the deceased student's peers and to staff advising of support services available.
- In some instances, there may be other next of kin or close friends who are students. If this is the case, the Head, Student Life will ask the Student Support Team to reach out to affected next of kin and friends within the UNSW community.
- Update the enrolment status of the student in PRISMS where appropriate.
- Liaising with the Director Wellbeing in the event of the death of an international student, to determine whether the student's health care provider/insurer should be engaged and to agree upon responsibilities in case management.
- Contacting the Arc CEO to confirm if the deceased held an executive position in any of the Clubs or Societies and if so, to ensure the student is removed from all the mailing lists and Club members are provided with information about support services.
- Contacting the UNSW Fitness and Aquatic Centre to ensure the student is removed from mailing and billing lists.
- Contacting the Director, Wellbeing and Head, Psychology and Wellness in the event the death was suspected suicide.
- Liaising with the Head, UNSW Colleges in the event the student was a UNSW or affiliated college or apartment resident, to agree any engagement with the next of kin and communication to other college or apartment residents.

**Version:** 2.0

**Effective:** 14 October 2024

**Responsible:** Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience

**Lead:** Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Success, and Registrar and Director, Student Services



## Appendix

### Legislative compliance

This policy does not have any relevant legislation that UNSW is required to comply with.

### Supporting documents

- [Academic Progression and Enrolment Policy](#)
- [Graduation Procedure](#)
- [UNSW Major Incident Plan](#)
- [Thesis Examination Procedure](#)

Definitions and acronyms	
Certificate of Attainment	A document which outlines the academic achievements of a deceased student signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience.
Conferral	The act of bestowing a degree upon a person qualified to receive it. Of all the University's awards, only degrees can be conferred.
SIMS	Student information management system.
Term	Term is the collective noun for all types of academic calendar periods of study at UNSW, (e.g., Term, Semester, Hexameter) in which Teaching Periods are defined, students enrol and for which students are charged fees or student contributions. These time periods differ based on campus and level of study.
Testamur	The official certificate of a student's completion of a degree or award.
Transcript	A certified record of a student/graduate's full enrolment history which includes all courses attempted, results achieved, and awards conferred, across all careers.
Tuition Fees	Fees payable by domestic and international fee-paying students for enrolment in a unit of study (course).
Certificate of Attainment	A document which outlines the academic achievements of a deceased student signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience.

### Version history

- **Version 1.0** approved by DVC Academic and Student Life on 19 August 2022 effective 19 August 2022. New Procedure.
- **Version 2.0** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience on 11 October 2024 effective 14 October 2024.