Death of a Faculty Member – Guidelines for Response

The guidelines provided here are to assist the Department/School or Faculty during the challenging times of a faculty member’s death. These are emotionally trying experiences for all University members involved and the guidelines seek to ensure that practical matters are dealt with in a timely manner. Please contact your Faculty Relations Advisor for additional advice or for clarity on any points that may vary for your circumstances (or that are not covered here).

Ideally, Steps 1 to 4 should occur within 24 hours of the University receiving news of the employee’s death.

1. **Dean and Department Chair/Director to be informed**
   Depending on the person who was first informed, the Dean and Chair/Director or applicable University Administrator should be advised.

2. **Department and Faculty to be informed**
   An applicable University Administrator such as Dean or Chair/Director should lead all communications moving forward, and should inform the Department/School and Full faculty (potentially including retired faculty and retired staff lists) in a sensitive and private manner before others in the university community are informed.
   It is advisable that a senior member of the Faculty (such as the Dean) be the main point of contact to avoid confusion with external inquiries, inquiries from next of kin, and questions coming from faculty members, staff, and students.
   Faculty members and staff may access the Employee & Family Assistance program for services to cope with the loss.

3. **Faculty Relations and Human Resources to be informed**
   Please provide both offices with at least an email confirmation of the date of death. A copy of the Death Certificate will be required by Faculty Relations and Human Resources in the proceeding weeks. Allyson Dallas, Coordinator, Pensions & Benefits (Human Resources) will communicate directly with the appropriate party(ies) to obtain this document and discuss life/pension entitlement and health benefit maintenance.
   *Per Article 43, section 43.73, “Upon the death of an employee, spouses and dependents will continue to receive applicable health, extended health and dental benefits for a period of 12 months.”*
   Contact the Faculty Relations Advisor for your area. Faculty Relations will work with Payroll to ensure that pay is stopped at the appropriate date.
   Contact Allyson Dallas, Pensions and Benefits Specialist, (778) 782-3451 or amdallas@sfu.ca.
   Contact Barbara Scott, Pensions and Benefits Specialist, (778) 782-5149 or pensions@sfu.ca.

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The faculty member’s library card/SFU ID and parking pass will be made inactive once the final pay is processed.

4. **Students to be informed**
   The Faculty will need to follow-up with students either by email or in-person, depending on timing.

   **Health and Counselling Services** will be notified by Faculty Relations so that students coping with this loss may access the help they need.

5. **Prepare Notice of Death/Condolences**
   Your Department/School or Faculty may want to prepare a notice of the death/condolences and any other pertinent information for your website and wherever/to whomever else such information should be shared, and so that Faculty Relations can send out an all-faculty/all-staff email. Such notice may include the following suggested content:

   - Date, location, and cause of death
   - Birthplace and birthdate
   - Academic title
   - Degrees awarded
   - Length of time at the University
   - Major accomplishments
   - Significant awards and titles
   - Memorial service information
   - Where to send memorial contributions
   - Contact information for someone on campus who can answer relevant questions

   Should the Faculty see it fit to send a representative to the memorial service, you may also want to mention this in the notice of death/condolences.

6. **VP, Academic, President, and Research Services Offices to be informed**
   Faculty Relations will inform each of these offices to ensure that pay, benefits, and research grants are managed promptly.

   The President’s office will send a letter of condolence to the family.

7. **University Communications to be informed**
   University Communications will be informed by Faculty Relations. The unofficial rule of thumb has been to publish a legacy piece in SFU News for executive level staff/faculty who have made significant contributions to the University during their tenure here.

8. **IT Services and Phones to be informed**
   IT Services should be contacted (itshelp@sfu.ca and phones@sfu.ca) to have phone, emails, and computing ID inactivated. For privacy reasons, access to phone or email is not possible.
Usually, a Department/School or Faculty elects to inactivate the faculty member’s phone number. If inactivated, the number is taken out of service and, if dialed, a contact will receive fast beeping as a reply. Departments tend to take the number out of service.

It is an option to have the faculty member’s local remain active; when called, the line immediately transfers to another number or to a voicemail inbox. There is a $29 monthly charge for this.

The employee’s email account will be retained for one year before it becomes “inactive”. An automated message can be put on email with information to redirect the individual trying to contact the faculty member.

9. **Employee’s Possessions and University Property to be Returned**
   The Department will need to arrange with the next of kin for:
   1) collection of items at the University and
   2) the return of any University property that might be offsite.

10. **Departmental Records to be Filed**
    Department records should be kept for the usual period as with all other employees, but may be shifted to an “inactive” filing area with other terminations.