Guidance on What to Do When a Student Dies

Reviewed by: Director of Student Support and Wellbeing

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What to do when a student dies – at a glance version

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What to do when a student dies – at a glance version

If a body is discovered

**DO NOT TOUCH** or move anything (other than to confirm death)

**If on Campus:**

Inform UCL Security Services - call 222 from any UCL phone
Or Call **020 7679 2108** or extension **32108**.
Calls to 999 on internal UCL phones are diverted to UCL Security Services.

**If off Campus:**

Call Police on 999 and inform UCL Security Services, contact details above.

**If at Halls of Residence or other Student Accommodation:**

For example, if there is serious concern that a student has not been seen for some time and there is reason to believe they might be behind a locked door:

- Make every attempt to contact the student (knocking on door, telephoning). If this fails:
  - Call Police on 999, and inform UCL Security Services (if applicable), see contact details above
  - Contact duty Warden (if applicable)
  - Do not attempt to enter the room
  - Keep non-essential people away from immediate area

For other situations, secure the scene and move students/staff away from the area, if possible. Briefly explain what has happened and take the names and contact details of witnesses and keep them together until the police arrive. The police will take responsibility for the deceased and the scene.

Staff should focus on the support of students affected by the death. Experience has shown that three staff members is the optimum team to assist in this situation, their roles being:

- Staff member 1 – to liaise with the police at the scene
- Staff member 2 – to stay with students/staff involved
- Staff member 3 – to act as a ‘runner’, for example, arranging refreshments.

**DO NOT CONTACT NEXT OF KIN** - the Police do this.

Ensure UCL Security Services has contacted the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing or a representative of the Student Support and Wellbeing Team (student.wellbeing@ucl.ac.uk)
LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

For staff and PhD students - Employee Assistance Programme - 24 hour Staff Counselling Service.
Freephone 0800 197 4510
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/occ_health/eap.php

Info@care-first.co.uk (for enquiries only)

For students – UCL Student Psychological Services
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/student-psychological-services/index_home

Student access to Care First: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/support/wellbeing/care-first

Chaplain and Interfaith Advisor – 020 3108 8942/07890 038722
SECTION 1 – OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

1. Introduction

When UCL is faced with the death of one of its students, it is important that it is managed in a manner that is appropriate to the circumstances, supports the role of those with a statutory responsibility, is sensitive to the distress of those most closely involved and does not raise unnecessary distress or anxiety with the student body.

2. Factors that will influence the level and type of response

The death of a student will most commonly be an unexpected event and this guidance is written on that basis. Where a death is anticipated the grief will be no less profound for those close to the deceased; however, some planning may have taken place and the initial shock associated with an expected death is likely to be less intense.

2.1 Location

The location in which the death occurs will have a significant influence on the degree to which members of UCL are involved in the early stages of dealing with the discovery of the body and notifying the authorities. The location will probably be one of the following:

- In one of the UCL residences
- In a department building or other non-residential part of UCL
- Off campus whilst engaged in UCL activity
- Off campus, whilst living in local accommodation away from their permanent or family residence
- Off campus in their permanent home or in a public place
- Whilst abroad, either on UCL placement or on vacation.

2.2 Circumstances of death

The degree to which members of UCL become involved, in ways other than being supportive of those distressed, may be affected by the manner of death, which may fall into one of the following categories:

- Accidental
- Possible suicide
- Natural causes (with or without infectious implications)
- Crime or suspected crime
- Substance related

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the Coroner to determine the cause of death. Therefore, when giving out any information about the death, care has to be taken not to assign a cause prematurely.
2.3 Circumstances of the student

There are very significant differences in how we respond to, for example, the death of a full-time student living in UCL accommodation and the death of a part-time student living with their family. It is, therefore, important to gather basic facts about the student and their circumstances from the outset and to avoid making any assumptions about what the family may want or expect from UCL. Refer to Appendix 2 for more detailed guidance about cultural issues.

3. When information about the death of a student first comes to UCL

It is most common for a member of the deceased’s family to contact a member of staff, or for news to reach students or staff via social media. It is, therefore, important that death-related information is verified before any further action is taken. To ensure that this happens and that UCL’s Student Death Protocol is enacted, any member of UCL, who is made aware of a death or suspected death should contact UCL Security Services immediately as this is a 24 hour operation and they hold contact details for key UCL staff.

The Director of Student Support and Wellbeing will take responsibility for coordinating UCL’s response and will be kept updated by colleagues with matters as they progress. There will be liaison with senior management as required.

4. Impact of a student death

The death of a student and the work that happens subsequently can have an impact on those involved. In the event of death by possible suicide, it is quite normal for staff and students alike to start to question if they could have done more to prevent the death and it is important to acknowledge that this is a normal reaction. If affected by the death of a student, counselling is available:

Staff and PhD students - Employee Assistance Programme - 24 hour Staff Counselling Service.
Freephone 0800 197 4510
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/occ_health/eap.php
Info@care-first.co.uk (for enquiries only)

For students – UCL Student Psychological Services
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/student-psychological-services/index_home
Care First- https://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/support/wellbeing/care-first

Chaplain and Interfaith Advisor – 020 3108 8942/07890 038722

It is known that psychological debriefing immediately after a death is unlikely to be helpful. This contradicts what was previously thought where counsellors would be asked to provide immediate follow-up care. Instead, it is best to make the bereaved aware of what support is available and let them access that support when they are ready.
5. **Communicating the news to others**

When someone has died it is the responsibility of the Police (or sometimes the hospital if the death has occurred there) to inform the immediate family. This task may be assigned to the consulate or embassy if the next of kin is abroad. This task should not fall to UCL.

This is the priority: it is important that we do nothing to interfere with this process and that we do not release information prematurely. This is increasingly important as online social networking accelerates the rate of communication.

The only people who have a right to information following a death are the next of kin; handle any request for information sensitively.

5.1 **Notification of staff**

Relevant staff (see list below) will be contacted by the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing for the purposes listed below. There are principles that will be adhered to in this process. Information relayed will be factual and will ordinarily be restricted to material agreed by the external notifying agency (for example, the Police or overseas consulate) or the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing. The aim will be to dispel rumours wherever possible and to avoid speculation where matters are still being investigated. The timing is important; the Police might need time to inform the next of kin before the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing can tell colleagues at UCL.

The notification will contain the following basic information:

- Name of deceased
- Student number
- Programme and year of study
- Basic facts about the death, as appropriate
- A hyperlink to a copy of this protocol for reference, noting that staff must log in to access the document.
- Name and contact details of the representative from the Student Support and Wellbeing Team who will act as the coordinator and the person to whom all enquiries should be directed.
- A request that no-one should contact the next of kin without consulting the representative from the Student Wellbeing Team.
- A request that any press enquiries should be referred to The Head of Media Relations.

The following relevant staff will be contacted:

- Provost
- Vice Provost (Operations)
- Director of Careers
- Director of Communications and Marketing
The student record is closed and no further communication is sent by any area with which the student has had contact.

A holding message may be sent when it has become common knowledge that a student has died but it is not possible to formally confirm this. Such a message will confirm that UCL has been made aware of a possible student death but will not identify the individual student concerned. The message will remind students and staff of the support available to them as well as confirming that further information will be made available in due course.

6. Media enquiries

All media enquiries should be directed the Head of Media Relations who will prepare a brief statement to release to enquirers.
7. Liaison with the Police or Coroner’s office

In the event of a sudden death, the Police have two quite distinct roles. They may be part of the initial emergency responses and they gather evidence which will be reported to the Coroner and also may be used if any criminal proceedings ensue.

If the death has been sudden or unexpected, the death will be reported to the Coroner, who may carry out an inquest.

Once the Coroner has opened the inquest, an Order for Burial (form 101) or Certificate for Cremation (Form 6) is issued to enable the funeral to take place. The inquest will then usually be adjourned to a later date. The Coroner will also issue a Certificate of the Fact of Death, to allow organisations (for example, Banks) to be advised of the person’s death. The full inquest usually takes place within 6 months.

If the death was not unexpected (for example, the person died at hospital or at home after an illness), a medical certificate, signed by a doctor, can be obtained showing cause of death which will enable the death to be registered.

Liaison on behalf of UCL with the Police and the Coroner’s office will usually be by the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing and UCL’s Legal Services.

8. Liaison with the student’s family

In order to offer what support we can to the family and to be able to make arrangements for those who wish to attend the funeral, it is important to establish a single family contact. Occasionally the family will not want any contact with UCL.

Ideally the family contact is a member of UCL staff who knew the student: experience has demonstrated that families appreciate this most. Usually it is best for this to be a senior member of staff in the department who has had some teaching or other contact with the student. Sometimes it can be the supervisor, but if they had a close relationship with the student, that may be asking too much of them.

Sometimes the Dean or a member of the Student Support and Wellbeing Team will take on this role.

The key responsibilities of the family contact are:

- To establish if there is anything the family require, for example, help gathering personal possessions or to visit the department or another part of UCL.
- To clarify funeral arrangements and whether the family would welcome students and staff attending the funeral.
- To be a conduit for any practical information, for example, returning fees or providing a transcript and/or certificate for a posthumous award (see section 10).
- To note the names of any students known to the family; they may know about close friends of the deceased, and vice versa.
Sometimes the family contact may be asked to talk to the family about holding a memorial event; whether they are comfortable about it taking place, they wish to attend and whether there are any particular religious beliefs to take into account.

9. Support for students and impact upon studies

When a student dies there will typically be a close circle of friends and possibly a partner who are deeply affected, then a wider circle who are shocked and upset. The circumstances of the death may intensify the emotional responses, for example, if it is believed that the death may have been preventable.

These emotional reactions are normal and it is important to treat them as such, whilst remaining empathetic and supportive. Typically, this involves other students or staff, and sometimes their own family members, being with the students initially whilst they adjust to the news. This is often a role the Faculty is best placed to take on.

It is sometimes helpful to explain the course of events to students. For example, it may be necessary to explain the role of the Coroner in determining cause of death if students are asking questions or there are rumours circulating. The UCL Chaplain and Multi-Faith Advisor may be able to help with that. Often sudden deaths raise questions for which there are no satisfactory answers.

One of the practical tasks we can offer to undertake on behalf of the students most affected is to inform their departments about what has happened and their relationship with the deceased. The students should also be advised to contact their department within a day or two to sort out any work for which they need to submit mitigation.

10. Posthumous academic awards

When a student dies part-way through their studies it should be established whether they are eligible for an academic award for work already completed, or whether the student has successfully completed sufficient work for a posthumous aegrotat degree to be awarded, in line with the relevant UCL regulations and procedures.

The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that a decision is reached as to what, if any, level of award is appropriate; Student and Registry Services can advise on the process for reaching this decision, which requires a recommendation to the Director of Academic Services of UCL, where an aegrotat degree is recommended by the department.

When a posthumous award is made, the student’s next of kin should be consulted about how (if at all) they wish to receive the certificate. A family representative may collect the certificate from UCL in person or it can be sent by post. The timing of the presentation of the certificate should be guided by the preferences of the next of kin.
11. Funeral arrangements

The next of kin is formally responsible for organising the funeral and it usually takes place near the family home. Often family members are very pleased to see students and staff but that remains their choice. UCL may often be represented by the Head of Department and/or another colleague.

Although it is not UCL’s responsibility to organise the funeral, if the family is seeking help then Levertons is the nearest funeral director to UCL. Their website has information about practical arrangements and the cost of a funeral: www.levertons.co.uk.

If the student followed a particular religion or had a connection with a place of worship, it is possible that the funeral could take place there. However, most funerals in the UK take place in a crematorium.

When a body is cremated, the ashes will usually be available the day after the funeral. If they are not taken by the next of kin, they can be scattered on the garden of remembrance in the crematorium.

The Chaplain and Multi-Faith Advisor to UCL is a Church of England (Anglican) priest who can take funerals, or can put you in touch with a minister of another faith to take the funeral.

11.1 Repatriation of a body or ashes

Repatriation of a body is best organised by a funeral director (in conjunction with the embassy and/or airline).

If ashes are to be taken to another country to be scattered, it is best to check with the airline about their policy on whether ashes need to be checked as hold luggage or whether they can be carried as hand luggage.

12. Memorial service/event

When the funeral is some distance away and for practical reasons not many students or staff are able to attend, a memorial event may be appropriate, typically in the following few weeks. It does not have to be religious, but it is usually helpful to have someone conduct the event. Family are usually invited; attendance varies.
13. International considerations

13.1 When an international student dies

When an international student dies, there are a number of practical dimensions to be addressed:

- Communication with the family may require a translation service.
- The appropriate consulate or embassy may need to be involved; advice should be taken from the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing.
- The repatriation of bodies is subject to strict regulation, so if this is to happen a funeral director will need to be involved at an early stage.

13.2 When a UCL student dies outside of the UK

When a student dies overseas, the responsibility for investigating and determining the cause of death generally rests with the country in which the death occurs.

The family is likely to have been in touch with the British consulate or embassy for assistance with the administrative requirements.

If the student is on UCL business, the UCL insurance policy may cover some aspects of the costs of repatriation of the body. Where relevant, the insurance company will appoint a caseworker to facilitate this process. It is important that no assurances are given that UCL can cover these costs, which can be considerate.
SECTION 2 – RESPONSIBILITIES OF ROLE-HOLDERS

The following section describes the responsibilities of the key individuals and services:

First Contact

Any member of staff, learning about the death of a student from a family member, friends, member of the public, the Police or any other agency should:

- Take note of the information provided and the name and contact details of the person providing the information
- Contact the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing
- Ensure they do not initiate contact with friends or family of the student who has died.

Health, Safety and Security

If the death occurs on UCL property, UCL Security Services will inform the Police and secure the scene of an incident until advised that this is no longer necessary by the Police or other external authority.

When informed of any student death, the Head of Security Services should contact the Head of Safety and the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing. The Director of Student Accommodation should be informed, too, if the student death has taken place in UCL managed student accommodation. Initially, no-one else within UCL should be told unless directed by one of these role holders.

UCL Security Services will take responsibility for working with the Police to maintain clear and direct lines of communication. Normally the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing and UCL’s Legal Services will liaise with the Coroner’s office.

Director of Student Support and Wellbeing

The Director of Student Support and Wellbeing will act as the UCL co-ordinator and in that capacity will undertake the following:

i) Liaison with the Next of Kin:
   - Retrieve the current address and next of kin details from the student record
   - Identify if the deceased had any siblings at UCL
   - Ensure the next of kin has the contact details of the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing
   - Make appropriate arrangements if the next of kin wishes to visit UCL
   - In conjunction with the UCL Accommodation Office, make appropriate arrangements for the collection of the deceased’s belongings.

ii) Letters of Condolence:

   Draft a letter of condolence on behalf of the Provost
   If required, work with the Dean on their condolence letter to ensure it dovetails with the condolence letter from the Provost.
iii) Identification of Close Contacts:

- Identify close contacts by checking with the faculty, house/flatmates, UCLU, sports clubs and societies as appropriate. It will not be possible to identify everyone who is likely to be affected. Consider how these close contacts should be informed of the death.
- Ensure that the Dean for each of the close contacts is aware of the death and that the close contacts may be affected in terms of their academic work, attendance and manner.
- Pass the names to Student Psychological Services and the Chaplain and Multi-Faith Advisor.

iv) Liaison with Statutory Services:

Identify who is already involved and who is likely to be involved, including the Coroner, the Police, ambulance service, hospital, consulate/embassy.

Contact the relevant statutory services to offer to act as the point of contact on behalf of UCL.

v) Funeral Arrangements:

- Liaise with the next of kin about funeral arrangements
- Liaise with the Dean to identify a suitable individual to represent UCL at a funeral (if permitted by the next of kin)
- Communicate the funeral details to the close contacts (if permitted by the next of kin)
- In the unlikely event that there is no next of kin (or representative of the next of kin) in the UK who can take the lead on making necessary arrangements, ensure wishes regarding treatment of the body are ascertained and repatriation, financial and funeral arrangements are satisfactory.

vi) Instigate Memorial Arrangements:

- Pass on suitable close contacts in the Faculty, halls, social groups, etc, to the Chaplain and Multi-Faith Advisor who will take the lead on offering to arrange a suitable memorial service.

vii) Create a student death record:

Create a student death record, recording the key facts, condolence letter(s) and other communication in a password protected folder.

When the Director of Student Support and Wellbeing is on leave or otherwise unavailable, a nominated representative of the Student Support and Wellbeing Team will assume responsibility for these duties.

Press Office

If necessary, the Press Office will:

- Prepare a press release and respond to all media enquiries
- Keep the Vice-Provost (Operations), the Registrar and Head of Student Services and Director of Student Support and Wellbeing informed of media interest.
SECTION 3 – APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Useful Contact Details

UCL Security Services

In an emergency call 222 from any UCL phone

Emergency Contacts

To contact UCL Security 24/7 Call 020 7679 2108 or extension 32108

To contact the Police in an emergency Call 999

To contact the Police for a non-emergency: Call 101

The nearest Police Station to the main UCL Campus is:

Holborn Police Station
10 Lambs Conduit Street
London
WC1N 3NR
Telephone: 101
http://content.met.police.uk/Team/Camden/Bloomsbury

UCL Security Services hold out of hours’ numbers for key members of staff.

During office hours

Head of Safety - Paul Stirk 07747 473316 (ext 58613)
Security Manager – Mark West 020 7979 5994 (ext 45994)
Director of Student Support and Wellbeing – Denise Long 020 3108 8936 (ext 58936)
Chaplain and Interfaith Advisor – The Rev’d Charlotte Bradley 020 3108 8942/07890 038722

Counselling

For staff and PhD students - Employee Assistance Programme - 24 hour Staff Counselling Service.
Freephone 0800 197 4510
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/occ_health/eap.php

Info@care-first.co.uk (for enquiries only)

For students – UCL Student Psychological Services
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/student-psychological-services/index_home

Student access to Care First: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/support/wellbeing/care-first
Appendix 2

World faiths – a perspective on death, dying and bereavement

When a student dies at university, especially if the death is sudden or unexpected, it may be very important for the family to know that the body has been treated appropriately according to their faith and/or cultural background. Similarly, when students suffer a bereavement but are, for reasons of distance or time, unable to attend the funeral, care must be taken to ensure that it is possible for them to access the right spiritual and/or cultural support, and perform any rituals of remembrance that may be required of them. This appendix endeavours to look at some of the possible issues which may be experienced by students or their relatives from particular cultural and faith groups, in order to resource the university to respond appropriately.

Bereavement manifests itself in many ways. The bereaved person may need time and space to perform certain rituals, to tell the story of their loss (sometimes repeatedly) and to be assured that their relationship with the person who has died continues in some way. This will be true even for those of no explicit faith background. Faith, or the customs associated with faith, may provide particular comfort as performing accepted rituals gives a sense of ‘doing the right thing’ by the deceased, and provides structure to begin to manage the bereavement experience.

Most current bereavement theory has been researched and written from within a Western and broadly Christian cultural framework which may fail to meet the needs of other individuals or groups. A person’s culture or faith may affect the response to bereavement; what looks callous or uncaring to one culture may be a deep sign of respect to another. Conversely, reactions which appear extreme or inappropriate in a Western context may be culturally necessary; for example, in Chinese and Hindu families it is a sign of respect to respond to a death with loud wailing. Some students may find themselves caught in tension between the custom of their family, faith or ethnic community, and the expectations of other students or university staff about what is appropriate.

Faith and culture can deeply influence beliefs about the value of life itself. For those with a religious faith, their attitude to a bereavement will be affected (consciously or not) by their beliefs about life after death. Most faiths share a basic belief that this life is not the end of a person’s existence but they vary a great deal in what they believe happens to the soul after death. It is also important to remember that within these general parameters, individual members of faith or cultural groups will respond differently to the same situation. The majority of British people consistently claim to believe in some form of life after death and/or the prospect of reunion with the deceased in some unspecified way, even where they adhere to no formal religion. This belief is a comfort to many in time of bereavement. Praying for the deceased person (perhaps but not exclusively at the time of the funeral, for those unable to attend) is a way of stressing that bonds of love and care do not end with death. It may also be something tangible to do in a situation of extreme powerlessness and vulnerability.

For members of some faiths (for example, Jewish or Muslim) the way in which the deceased’s body is treated, and the rites which are performed at the time of death and at burial/cremation,
may be held to make a difference to the eventual destination of the soul; in the case of the Chinese community, if the normal rituals are not performed it is thought to bring shame and ill fortune upon the family of the deceased. For other faiths (for example, Hinduism), the person’s fate after death will be determined by how they have acted in life, and the sense that it is wrong to protest or interfere with this _karma_ can affect the extent to which it is felt appropriate to express grief. It is not uncommon for people of faith, perhaps especially those from cultures where death is more ‘everyday’ and less sanitised than it is in the West, to express the view that the death must have been God’s will and, therefore, be unwilling to speak openly about grief in case it is construed as protest against the divine order. To encounter this attitude may be a particular shock to university staff in the event of the death of a student or young person, where a sense of outrage or wrongness at a premature death would be considered normal.

NB: When Jews and Muslims die, time may be an extremely important factor, as burial is supposed to take place within 24 hours. This may have implications for those involved with issuing a death certificate, especially if the death occurs over a weekend, or if a post mortem needs to take place. The need to observe the correct proprieties within a short timeframe may preoccupy the family of the deceased to such an extent that they do not appear to want to engage with what other cultures might see as the required ‘norms’ of grieving.

Decisions about how much a bereavement may count as a mitigating circumstance have to be taken on a case by case basis. Judgements as to how far bereavement has affected a student’s performance may need to take into consideration the requirements of their faith or culture, for example, a male Jewish student in the first year after the death of a parent would be under extra ritual obligation, on top of the pressures such a situation would be expected to place on any individual.

Whatever their faith or cultural background, there will be a wide range of ‘normal’ practice depending on the individual’s degree of adherence, their denomination and background. It will always be good practice to be guided by what the individual or family says they need. It may not be in the university’s power to provide for those needs itself, but it is important for those university staff who are likely to deal with bereavement to have an awareness of the issues which may arise, and how they might access the necessary services to deal with them.

**Some specific points to be aware of in different faiths/cultures**

**Buddhist/Taoist**

- The Chinese funeral customs described below belong largely to the Buddhist/Taoist tradition.
- Christianity is growing very fast in mainland China. For information and support: [https://ccil.org.uk/en/](https://ccil.org.uk/en/)
- Cremation is uncommon in China.
- In Buddhism, it is thought that not only will ‘improper funeral arrangements’ bring shame on the deceased’s family, they will also imperil the next stage of the soul’s journey to rebirth.
- Respect is shown by younger to old people in China, but not the other way round. It is, therefore, normal for the funeral of a child or young person to take place in silence, and with minimal ceremony.
Both the house and the body of the deceased must be carefully prepared.

Gifts of food are placed by the coffin. Paper money and paper models of other possessions are burnt. Buddhist or Taoist scriptures are chanted.

Prayers will continue for at least 7 days after the funeral, and if possible for 49 days.

The deceased’s soul is expected to return to its former home after a week. The family should stay at home to await the soul’s return. It may, therefore, be very important for a family to see a student’s room after a death, in case the soul returns there.

**Christianity**

- Christians believe in eternal life. The resurrection of Jesus Christ symbolises the ultimate triumph of life over death for all human beings.
- As death approaches, or just after death, prayers may be said and the dying person anointed with oil. These are often called ‘The Last Rites’ and are most familiar in, but are not restricted to, the Roman Catholic tradition.
- In some cultures, for example, Afro-Caribbean and Indian, the coffin will be left open during the funeral service and the congregation will be invited to pay their respects. At Eastern Orthodox funerals, a flower may be placed on the coffin.
- Christian funerals take many forms. A funeral for a ‘practising’ Christian will take place in church, followed by cremation or burial. A ‘nominal’ or ‘cultural’ Christian ceremony is more likely to take place in a crematorium.
- Christian funerals have become increasingly tailored to the personality of the deceased and may include music, readings and a eulogy reflecting their life. An explicitly Christian funeral will also include Scripture readings, prayers and possibly also hymns. In some Christian traditions, the funeral will also include a celebration of Holy Communion (Jesus’ last supper with his disciples).

**Hindu**

- The dying person should be placed on the floor. Special leaves and Ganges water should be placed in the mouth by a Hindu priest and mantras chanted.
- It is a sign of respect for as many people as possible from the extended family to visit the dying person, and to comfort the bereaved. Loud wailing is a conventional public expression of grief.
- The body is ritually washed and dressed in a white cloth. Embalming is not permitted.
- Hindu funerals take place by cremation, believed to release the soul from ‘entrapment’ in the body.
- It may be that the family will want to accompany the body from the crematorium chapel right into the furnace room itself, as the nearest equivalent of watching the cremation outside, as is normal practice in India.
- An offering of food will be made before the cremation and placed in the coffin.
- Hindus believe in reincarnation. One’s conduct in life affects the next incarnation.
- Shraddha, an 11 day ritual to ensure the safety of the soul, takes place after the funeral. Rice balls called pindas are ritually offered each day.
- The ashes should be placed in a river (traditionally the Ganges) along with garlands of flowers.
• Official mourning (which lasts about a month) makes the bereaved ritually unclean, and prohibits them from taking part in some normal social activities.

Islam
• If there is a warning that death is imminent, the Shahada (declaration of faith) should be said with the dying person, or on their behalf if they are unable to speak.
• Muslims normally insist on burial. Shipping a body overseas would require embalming, which is contrary to Muslim law as it may involve alcohol.
• It is usually preferable to avoid a post-mortem unless absolutely required by law, as it is thought to be a violation of the body. Similarly, Muslims prefer to avoid leaving the body in a mortuary.
• The burial should take place within 24 hours if at all possible, or as soon after death as possible.
• The body must be washed, dressed and prepared for burial by members of the same sex (relatives if possible) and the correct prayers said. It is preferable to do this at home, in a mosque or the funeral parlour rather than in the mortuary.
• The funeral service is normally attended by males only. Some Muslim burials will take place without a coffin.
• The Hendon Mosque and Islamic Centre has a very comprehensive website covering all areas of procedure: http://www.hendonmosque.co.uk/funerals/.

Judaism
• Customs vary across the different traditions, for example, Liberal, Orthodox. Not all Jews believe in bodily resurrection, but all believe in the immortality of the soul.
• Contact with the body of a dead person contaminates the living.
• A Jewish burial society (Chevra Kadisha) can be called in to provide the proper ritual care for the body after death: https://www.theus.org.uk/arrangingaburial.
• On hearing of the death of a close relative, tearing your clothes is a normal response which demonstrates respect.
• Cremation and embalming are forbidden.
• Post mortem may take place if it is a requirement of the law of the land. Organ donation is permissible within certain circumstances.
• The burial should take place as soon as possible after death.
• A coffin will not always be used, so that the body may be closer to the earth. If there is a coffin, it will always be closed.
• The support of the community for the bereaved is very important. An intense seven day mourning period (Shiva) will take place after the burial, in which members of the community visit the family and prayers are said. Normal activities, including study, shaving and bathing, do not take place during this period.
• Formal mourning continues for 11 months. If a parent dies, the eldest son will have particular responsibility for reciting the mourner’s Kaddish every day during that time.
Sikh

- Sikhs believe in reincarnation. Mourning is, therefore, discouraged.
- At the moment of death, passages from the Sikh scriptures (Guru Granth Sahib) should be read.
- The body is bathed in yoghurt, washed and dressed in clean clothes, as well as the ‘5 Ks’ which symbolise the adult baptised Sikh (uncut hair, dagger, comb, special underwear and a steel bracelet), while prayers are recited.
- The body may be taken home for public viewing before the funeral, as a reminder of the transience of life.
- Sikh funerals take the form of cremation; to destroy the physical body frees the soul for its next stage of life. Families may wish to accompany the body from the crematorium chapel into the cremator.
- The funeral service will consist of a prayer for the salvation of the soul, a short eulogy, the Sohila (‘bedtime’ prayer) and Ardas (formal prayer).
- Ashes are usually disposed of in the river where this is permissible, but may otherwise be buried. Sikhs generally prefer not to erect permanent memorials to the deceased.
- A ten day recitation of the Sikh scriptures should take place after the ceremony, either at home or at a Sikh temple (Gurdwara). Family members take part in the recitation. Charitable donations are made and hospitality offered.