



**COLÁISTE CHEATHARLACH
NAOMH PÁDRAIG**
**CARLOW COLLEGE
ST. PATRICK'S**

TITLE: LEARNER DEATH PROTOCOL POLICY

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1. Purpose of the Policy

The *Learner Death Protocol Policy* outlines the steps to be followed by the Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) in the event of the death of a learner. The objective is to ensure a compassionate, respectful, and coordinated response tailored to the specific situation, while maintaining efficient communication and addressing the needs of the learner's family, friends, and the College community.

This Policy serves as a guide to ensure that the College responds appropriately and with respect for the deceased learner, their family, and the wider community. All actions should be carried out with care, compassion, and attention to the emotional and practical needs of those involved. While specific actions are outlined, they are not exhaustive and it is recognised that the circumstances surrounding each death are unique and may require different approaches.

The College aims to be supportive to the family, friends and loved ones of the deceased and recognises that its response to the death of a learner will be adapted to accommodate the wishes of the learner's family.

2. Definitions

College Community refers to current full and part-time learners and staff of Carlow College.

College Context refers to instances that occur on Carlow College campus and in the course of College activities whether academic, sporting, social, cultural, Students' Union, or other.

Posthumous Award is an award that may be awarded where a learner dies prior to the completion of their academic programme and can be presented to the family at a conferring or other appropriate ceremony.

Remembrance Service is a service designed to provide a respectful and inclusive space for the College community to remember learners and staff who have died.

3. Scope of Policy

The Policy applies to all current learners and staff of Carlow College.

4. Policy Statement

The death of a learner is a traumatic event that has an impact on family, friends and fellow learners as well as the wider College community. Carlow College, as a community, aims to respond to such an event sensitively, compassionately and in a way that best meets the needs of all concerned.

4.1 Principles

The principles underpinning the *Learner Death Protocol Policy* and related procedures are as follows:

- *Confidentiality:*

The response to each death may vary according to the wishes of the deceased's family and consideration must be given at all times to respecting their wishes regarding what communications, if any, may be made available to the College community and wider public.

The College will at all times be conscious of the sensitive nature of any communication regarding the death of a learner and the impact it may have on the College community and will respect the confidentiality and privacy of the family of the learner.

If the family requests that no formal public statement be issued to staff or learners, then the College will respect this. However, the family must be advised that certain

staff within the College will need to be informed of the death, in confidence, to allow for the necessary administration arrangements for the deceased learner to be handled. It will be the responsibility of the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports to inform the necessary members of staff regarding the death of a learner.

- *Communication:*

The response of the College may vary depending on the manner in which it becomes aware of the death of a learner. All communications will be written in a manner that reflects the circumstances and respects the family wishes with due consideration given to balancing the need for information with privacy concerns. Communications may be released by the College as deemed appropriate by the College's Senior Management. Individual learners or staff should not publish details of a learner's death on social media or any other public forum. A statement will not be released to the media without the family's permission.

- *Support:*

The College recognises the impact that the death of a learner can have on the College community and the duty of care it has to provide support, both immediate and on-going, for the learners and staff affected.

The College will be mindful of the religion, if any, and culture of the deceased and their family and respond in as sensitive and respectful a manner as possible. The Chaplain will identify the learner's religious affiliation, if any, and keep this in mind in any response or remembrance service for the learner. Any response of this kind, on behalf of the College, will be in accordance with the wishes of the learner's family.

4.2 Lead Coordinator

The College may be made aware of the death of a learner in various ways. Irrespective of where the information regarding the death of a learner originates, the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports should be informed immediately as they will be the lead co-ordinator of the College's response.

4.3 Response to the Death of a Student

The Director of Student Services and Learner Supports is the lead co-ordinator of the College's response to the death of a learner. It is important therefore that they be informed

immediately on receiving any notification of the death of a learner, whatever the source of the information may be.

Learners may be the first ones to hear of the death of a fellow learner and they should inform a staff member, who will inform the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports.

In the event that the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports is unavailable, the responsibilities of the role will be carried out by a nominated deputy.

The Director of Student services and Learner Supports will confirm the details and circumstances of the death and verify the information received.

The Director of Student Services and Learner Supports and / or College Chaplain will act as the liaison person between the College and the deceased learner's family.

The main stages in the response of the College to a learner death, which can vary depending on the circumstances of the death, are:

- verification of the death and establishing the personal details of the deceased;
- the communication of the news to the appropriate members of the College community and departments of the College;
- arrangements for the lead up to the funeral or remembrance service; and
- the provision of support for friends and peers of the deceased in the College

4.3 *Death On / Off Campus*

If a learner dies while on campus, or when off campus but undertaking an activity that forms part of their studies such as a work placement or field trip, the death will be handled initially by the emergency services and / or An Garda Síochána. In such cases, it is the responsibility of **An Garda Síochána to notify the learner's family.**

If a learner dies while studying abroad, the Department of Foreign Affairs or an embassy will usually contact the College to inform them of the death of a learner.

If the deceased learner is an international learner or involved in an activity co-ordinated by the College, the International Office will notify the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports. If an international learner dies while in Ireland or abroad, the International Office will work with the relevant liaison person who accompanied the deceased international learner to Ireland, and/or complete necessary notifications, to help with any arrangements that may be necessary.

In all cases for the above, the *Critical Incident Policy* will be invoked.

4.5 *Learner Funeral*

As with all the previous stages, the wishes of deceased's family will be respected at all times. The College will normally be represented at funerals in Ireland by the College Chaplain. The Chaplain can offer to participate in or help with the funeral, or facilitate classmates of the deceased to participate, if the family wishes for them to do so.

4.6 *Post Funeral Protocol*

The College will follow the relevant College policies, procedures and guidelines when dealing with the following:

4.6.1 *Remembrance Service*

The College as a community may wish to celebrate the life of the deceased learner at an appropriate time following the funeral. The family of the deceased learner may be invited to the College to a remembrance service and the Chaplain will liaise with the deceased learner's classmates, learners and staff to arrange this.

If the family does not wish to attend such a service and the deceased learner's classmates wish to commemorate the learner themselves, the Chaplain may facilitate this, again while being sensitive to the wishes of the bereaved family members.

4.6.2 *Posthumous Award*

Following an appropriate amount of time after the death of a learner, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar will examine if a posthumous award to the learner is possible. Where a learner dies prior to graduation, the family may be invited to the graduation ceremony to receive the award. Alternatively, the family may prefer to attend a small, private ceremony at a later time or to receive the award by post.

4.6.3 *Academic and Administrative Procedures*

The Director of Student Services and Learner Supports will ensure that the necessary staff within College departments, e.g. Admissions, Academic Administration, IT / SRMS, Examinations Office are notified of the learner's death so that the deceased learner's records and accounts are closed or handled appropriately.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Director of Student Services and Learner Supports

The Director of Student Services and Learner Supports is the lead co-ordinator of the College's response to the death of a learner. They will consult with other staff members as appropriate and will oversee all required actions related to the death.

5.2 College Chaplain

The College Chaplain will work under the guidance of the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports. They will make arrangements in the lead up to the funeral or remembrance service.

5.3 College Counselling Service

The College Counselling Service will work under the guidance of the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports to provide support for friends and peers of the deceased in the College.

5.4 International Office

The International Office will work under the guidance of the Director of Student Services and Learner Supports to provide assistance, and lead on tasks specifically assigned by this policy, related to international learners.

6. Referenced Policies

Carlow College has a number of other policies that should be read in conjunction with this protocol:

- *Critical Incident Policy*
- *Health and Safety Policy*
- *Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy*

Policy: *Learner Death Protocol Policy*

Date Approved: 23 October 2024

Owner: Office of the Registrar

7. Monitoring and Review

The Policy will be monitored annually by the Office of the Registrar and Director of Student Services & Learner Supports; it will be formally reviewed in three years