

# DEATH OF A STUDENT POLICY 2024-2027

APPROVED BY SELT ON 21 November 2024

<b>Applies to:</b>	
Harrogate College	X
Keighley College	X
Leeds City College	X
Leeds Conservatoire	X
Leeds Sixth Form College / Pudsey Sixth Form College	X
Luminate Group Services	
University Centre Leeds	X

## CHANGE CONTROL

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<b>Policy will be communicated via:</b>	CECIL - SharePoint policy site available to all staff	
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## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

The death of a student is a serious matter for the whole of the college community, especially the student's close friends, peers, tutor, and teachers. Therefore, it is important that the college responds to events in a way that acknowledges the loss properly, respecting cultural and religious traditions, while dealing sensitively with the aftermath and supporting the bereaved.

The Luminate FE colleges are committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of its staff and students and will priorities this in all aspects of college life. This includes creating a relational and trauma aware culture and environment that supports

## **2. POLICY AIMS/OBJECTIVES**

This policy provides guidance and a step-by-step checklist for who needs to do what, and when in the event of a student death. For the purpose of this policy, the term "student" refers to a person who is enrolled but not yet embarked on their course, a current student or a former student. Much of the procedure may equally be relevant to the death of a member of staff, although the Human Resources department would lead in this case.

A coordinated response is essential both to support staff and students affected by the death and to ensure that the student's family receives appropriate support and consideration. These guidelines will outline the essential stages in dealing with a student death.

Where a student has died by suicide this policy should be used alongside the Suicide Prevention Policy which details the steps to be taken in respect of postvention after a known death by suicide within the college community.

## **3. INITIAL NOTIFICATION**

The report of death may come from a student or someone else who says they are a relative or friend, in person, by mail or e-mail or via a telephone call. Information about a student death may arrive on the desk of any member of the academic or support staff. The death should be reported immediately to the relevant Principal/Curriculum Director who will first verify the information.

For students who are under 18 or are vulnerable adults (usually up to 25 years) contact should be made with the Child Death Overview Panel of the Local Safeguarding Children Board where the student lived who will provide further information and clarification. This contact may also assist with verification (below).

At times there may be a delay in the confirmation of the death. The Principle/Curriculum Director can contact the College Police Officers to ask if they can verify the death.

## **4. VERIFICATION OF DEATH**

It is essential to verify that the report is true before taking any action. Whether or not the report is true, it would be insensitive to contact the student's home to verify. The local police will usually be able to verify the death of a person; it is not a confidential matter. However, it is important not to speculate on the cause of death until the facts are known.

Once verified, the relevant Principal/Curriculum Director will ensure that the student's Head of Department, Deputy Director Student Life (Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Behaviour), and Head of Marketing are all informed.

If the student is an apprentice the Principal/Curriculum Director will contact the workplace and inform them of the circumstances.

## 5. ACTIONS UP TO AND INCLUDING THE FUNERAL

### 5.1 Identify one person to liaise with the family

Once the death has been verified, the Head of Department should identify the most appropriate person to liaise with the bereaved family. This Liaison Person could be any suitable member of staff. Their role would include trying to establish if there are any known siblings or other close relatives enrolled at the college as specific support may need to be offered to these individuals.

### 5.2 Breaking the news to relevant parties

The Head of Department in consultation with the Principal/Curriculum Director will decide who the appropriate person is to break the news to the deceased student's tutor, teachers, friends, and classmates.

- Appendix 1 provides guidance on when and how to break the news
- The identified person should be supported by the Head of Department
- HOD's can contact the Wellbeing Team if they need support with structuring the conversation
- During this process staff may identify specific vulnerable students, they may require regular check ins, if you have any concerns about their welfare it may be necessary to contact the safeguarding team

### 5.3 Practical elements

It's important to maintain routines, however it is recognised that students may need time out of routines in the initial aftermath to process this. Special accommodations may need to be made in respect of college work or if students and staff need support with attending the funeral?

For a range of critical incidents, including the death of a student, we are able to draw upon the support of the local authority Education Psychology Service, where it is helpful to do so. A decision will be made collaboratively by the team supporting with the case including the Campus Principal, Deputy Director of Student Life and Head of Wellbeing and Relational Practice.

Leeds, Phone: 0113 378 5163, Email: [education.psychology@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:education.psychology@leeds.gov.uk)  
Bradford, Phone: 01274 439444,  
Harrogate, Phone: 01609 532744, Email: [karen.jessup@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:karen.jessup@northyorks.gov.uk)

### 5.4 Ensuring support is available for student

The Principal/Curriculum Director and the Deputy Director of Student Life will work with the Wellbeing Team to identify an appropriate offer of support and provide information on how to access on-going support internally from the college Wellbeing Team and from external support agencies.

- Referrals to the Wellbeing Team will be prioritised, but it is important to ensure that the student is ready to talk about their grief
- **2-4 weeks** after the death, time should be set aside to revisit the conversation with the students, decide who will lead the conversation, when and where it will take place and that the students are aware and available to attend
- Harnessing natural support is essential during this time and encourage students to speak with friends, family or those that they have a good relationship with
- Staff can refer to and signpost students to additional bereavement support
- Staff can refer to the Cruse's 5 stages of grief to deepening your understanding of where the students maybe in their grief cycle

### **5.5 Ensuring support is available for staff**

It is essential that staff are supported throughout this difficult time. Things to consider:

- The line manager should have regular Keep in Touch meetings preferably fortnightly initially with particular staff members to have a wellbeing check in and to see how they are doing
- Share with staff members who the Wellbeing Champion is for their department
- The HOD's can set time aside for staff peer support - for peer support guidance, contact the Head of Wellbeing and Relational Practice
- Share the information and how staff can access the Employee Assistance Programme
- Refer staff to the Wellbeing Hub on CECIL

### **5.6 Letter of condolence**

The college will send a letter of condolence to the family. It could include a request for information about funeral arrangements to avoid having to trouble the bereaved family with a phone call. The condolence letter should be signed by the Principal/Curriculum Director. (See appendix 2 for guidance)

### **5.7 Notification for administrative purposes**

The Head of Department will notify representatives of the College Information Systems, College Administration, Student Finance, Examinations, Library and Admissions teams of the student's death to ensure that all communications are blocked that would be addressed to the student and his/her family. All central records relating to the student will be suitably annotated to record their death or remove them, as appropriate. The student's tutor will inform any work placement currently being undertaken or due to be undertaken by the student.

### **5.8 Book of condolence**

A book of condolence may be made available to all staff and students to sign where the student group feels this is appropriate. Initiation of this would normally be through the student group.

### **5.9 Media Contact**

Any calls or enquiries from the media should be referred to the Communications team.

Promotional material featuring the deceased student

If the student was featured in any promotional material from the college such as photography on social media, case study on the website or in the prospectus, it's important that the liaison person speaks to the family about this to ascertain whether they would like us to remove the student or keep them on our materials. This will also depend on the nature of the death. The Communications team will be able to advise on a case by case basis.

### **5.10 Funeral**

The timing of the funeral may vary, for instance, some faith traditions hold funerals very quickly following a death, while others do not. Advice can be sought from the Equality and Diversity Manager on these issues. In addition, a funeral may be delayed awaiting the outcome of a post mortem in some instances.

If appropriate, the Liaison Person will contact the family to ask if a member of staff and/or fellow students would be welcome to attend the funeral; if so, they will consult with the Principal/Curriculum Director about who would be appropriate to attend the funeral representing the college. The wishes of the family will also be sought on the appropriateness of flowers; charity donation or other contribution the college could make.

If appropriate and agreed with the family, students who were close to the deceased will be allowed to miss classes, if necessary, to attend the funeral.

### **5.11 Memorial**

The possibility of holding a memorial event in college should be considered. The Liaison Person should firstly consult with the family regarding their wishes in relation to holding an event of this kind, and then with relevant parties such as the student's tutor. If appropriate, the Equality and Diversity Manager could be involved in this.

The Liaison Person will arrange a suitable location and work with the Communications team to support the event. The nature of the event should be relevant to the deceased student and those attending, for example the music that the student liked, motifs of relevance like their favourite sports team, words spoken about them by a friend.

### **6. ONGOING SUPPORT**

Students who were close to the deceased may need continuing support following the event; in addition, emotional and/ or behavioural difficulties may arise at some time after the event. Tutors can help by being vigilant and sensitive, and/or by giving individual support, but if difficulties seem serious or persistent, they can refer for on-going support, as appropriate to their needs. The college Wellbeing Team is available to support students with bereavement and associated issues, signposting on to other agencies and support groups, where appropriate.

### **7. APPENDIX 1 GUIDELINES ON BREAKING THE NEWS**

Staff should be aware of how to break bad news in person to someone who has been close to the deceased.

#### **Breaking the news to groups of students or classmates of the deceased:**

Where groups of students are to be told, the news should be given by a staff member who is confident to do so and has a good relationship with the students. In the case of students on Foundation Learning programmes or other very vulnerable students, it may be necessary to inform parents and carers beforehand. The news should be given in a calm and clear way following the guidance given for informing the individual below.

#### **Breaking the news to individuals:**

The news should be given by someone with a prior relationship with the student or member of staff being told. It is preferable to be face-to-face in a quiet room where the person is seated. They should be warned that there is some bad news and then told directly and clearly. Be aware that they will be in shock for a while, and need time for the news to sink in. They are unlikely to take in any information that they are given after being informed of the death.

The presence of a close friend or colleague to give them support is important. It may be appropriate to ask them not to speculate on the cause of death until more information becomes available. Students and staff should be made aware of the support available from the college wellbeing service; this may include referral to external specialist agencies, if appropriate.

## **8. APPENDIX 2 GUIDELINES TO DRAFTING A LETTER**

Guidelines to consider when drafting a letter to significant others (for example, parents/carers, partner, spouse) on the death of a student. The following guidelines are intended to be helpful when composing a letter of condolence on the death of a student.

Any letter should be written as soon as possible after official confirmation of the student's death and should be addressed to the closest known relative(s) of the student. The Communications team can help with drafting the letter.

In expressing sympathy, avoid using euphemisms for the student's death. Where appropriate a brief mention of the circumstances of the student's death could be included. For instance, I / We were very sorry to hear of (student's name)'s (sudden) death (yesterday, on Saturday, on 4th March etc). I am / We are aware that it will be no consolation at such a difficult time but would like to assure you that you are in our thoughts.

Some reference to the student's personal qualities and/or attributes as a student could be made, in terms of the loss to fellow students and staff who knew him/her and how he/she will be missed.

Rather than having to trouble the bereaved relative(s) with a phone call, the request could be made that they or their representative might let the college know of any arrangements for funeral/memorial service. For example, I / We would be grateful if you could let us know of any arrangements which may be made for the funeral, as I am sure there will be students and staff who would like to attend.

Please let us know if we can be of any assistance at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

Principal/Curriculum Director

Leeds City College/Harrogate College/Keighley College





<p><b>Inform key personnel</b>  Deputy Principal, Teaching &amp; Learning, Curriculum VP  Head of Department  Campus Manager  Senior Tutor  Head of Communications  Deputy Director of Student Life (Safeguarding, Wellbeing &amp; Behaviour)  Workplace (if student is an apprentice)</p> <p><i>(It may help to have a CIS printout with a photograph of the student)</i></p> <p>Immediately flag student's records that no further correspondence should be sent without prior authorisation from the Principal</p>	Principal/ Curriculum Director /HOD	Immediate	
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<p><b>Student Records</b>  Cancel ID card  Inform Finance – request confirmation that no further invoices will be sent  Inform Library  Inform Examinations section who will make any necessary arrangements with exam boards and awarding bodies  Inform relevant Curriculum Admin team  Inform student funding bodies, as appropriate  Inform Admissions if prospective student and to archive student's central file  Inform any work experience placement/sponsors/employers (phone and then send a follow up letter)</p>	HOD in liaison with relevant Campus Admin Team	Immediate	
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<p><b>Liaison Person</b>  Identify the most appropriate person to liaise with the bereaved family.</p> <p>The Liaison Person is:</p> <p>Name.....</p> <p>Contact Details.....</p>	Principal/ Curriculum Director	Immediate	
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<p><b>Informing Students and Staff</b> In consultation as appropriate with the Head of Department / Equality and Diversity Manager and Communications team put in place arrangements for informing affected students and staff.</p> <p>Check whether the student has relatives enrolled at college.</p>	<p>Head of Department / Deputy Director of Student Life/ Equality &amp; Diversity Manager Communications Team</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	
<p><b>Student and Staff Support</b> Liaise with college Wellbeing Team / Human Resources on appropriate bereavement counselling and wellbeing support for students and / or staff.</p> <p>Promote signposting support to staff and students.</p>	<p>Deputy Director of Student Life HR Manager Workforce Wellbeing Coordinator</p> <p>Refer to 5.4 &amp; 5.5 of the policy</p>	<p>Immediate and on-going as required</p>	

<p><b>Letter of Condolence</b> Draft letter of condolence from Principal, with support from the Communications team, if required, including a request for information about the funeral.</p> <p>Note: This should be the only official letter from the college – all others should be of a personal nature</p> <p>Establish: Whether or not the family needs support from college and make arrangements accordingly.</p>	<p>Principal/ Curriculum Director in liaison with relevant Campus Admin Team</p>	<p>once all facts are known</p>	
<p><b>Students Possessions</b> Arrange to return any possessions to student's family</p>	<p>Liaison Person &amp; Personal Tutor</p>	<p>Timing on advice from Liaison Person</p>	
<p><b>Press Release</b> Prepare press release or response to media</p>	<p>CommsTeam</p>	<p>If required</p>	

<p><b>Book of Condolence</b> If appropriate, open Book of Condolence and publicise its location; send to bereaved family on completion.</p>	Principal/ Curriculum Director	Immediate	
<p><b>Funeral</b> What are the funeral arrangements: _____ _____ _____</p> <p>Identify who will represent the college: _____ _____</p> <p>Are flowers appropriate, or a donation to a specific charity – make arrangements accordingly</p>	Liaison Person	As appropriate after verification of death  To coincide with the funeral	
<p><b>Memorial Event</b> Consider if a Memorial Event is appropriate and co-ordinate arrangements for this</p>	Liaison Person	If required	
<p><b>Bereaved Family Support</b> Establish whether on-going support of college is needed by bereaved family - especially any family members enrolled in college.</p>	HOD in conjunction with the Wellbeing Team	After funeral has taken place	

Signed..... Date.....  
Name ..... Post.....

## 10. APPENDIX 4 BEREAVEMENT AND DEATH BY SUICIDE SUPPORT

In cases of death by suicide, addition to following the steps in above, it may be appropriate to seek advice and support from the organisations below.

### Targeted bereavement support (CYP) in Leeds

[Targeted bereavement support for children/young people \(CYP\) in Leeds](#)

#### Samaritans

See <https://www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-education/step-step-stepbystep@samaritans.org> or call 0808 168 2528.

Read 'Help When You Need It Most' a Step-by-Step guide on how to prepare for a respond to suicide in schools and colleges.

[https://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/HWWNIM\\_Feb17\\_Final\\_web.pdf](https://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/HWWNIM_Feb17_Final_web.pdf)

#### Cruse

Bereavement Support

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/understanding-grief/grief-experiences/traumatic-loss/coping-when-someone-dies-by-suicide/>

#### Cruse Bereavement Support Help for those who don't speak English

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/understanding-grief/understanding-grief-information-in-other-languages/>

#### PAPYRUS

Prevention of Young Suicide

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/suicide-bereavement-support/>

#### NHS

Help is at hand

<https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/suicide/documents/help%20is%20at%20hand.pdf>

#### Mind

Bereavement information and support

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/>

#### Support after Suicide

<https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

#### AOC Charlie Waller Trust

Talking about suicide A guide for college staff

<https://charliewaller.org/resources/talking-about-suicide>

#### Staff Support

##### Employee Wellbeing Program

The EAP service offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7. Our EAP will not only offer reactive support when needed, but also proactive and preventative support to help with life in general. This includes life support, bereavement support, legal advice, medical information, and cognitive behavioural therapy.

Your online portal can be found here: <https://wisdom.healthassured.org/login> You need the Unique Code to sign up: **MHA266016**

Use your staff email to create your own login account.

**You can also call them for free on the 24-hour confidential helpline: 0800 028 0199.**

**App:** Health Assured also have their app 'Wisdom'

**Unique App Code:** MHA26601

Use your staff email to create your own login



## 11. APPENDIX 5 TRANSITION RITUALS: A FAITH-BY-FAITH GUIDE TO RITES FOR THE DECEASED

<https://www.beliefnet.com/wellness/health/health-support/grief-and-loss/2001/05/transition-rituals.aspx>

### **Baha'i**

Belief about death

Death is regarded as a 'messenger of joy' for the deceased. Baha'is believe the soul lives on after the body's death and embarks on a spiritual journey.

#### **Funeral practices**

Baha'i dead must be buried within an hour's travel distance from the place of death. Baha'is do not embalm or cremate their dead. The dead body is washed and wrapped in a shroud. Baha'is are often buried wearing a Baha'i burial ring. The only ceremonial requirement of a funeral is the recitation of the Prayer for the Dead.

#### **Mourning rituals**

There are no Baha'i mourning rituals.

### **Buddhism**

#### **Belief about death**

Death of the physical body is certain, but only a part of an ongoing process of re-incarnation until one receives enlightenment. After death it is believed that the dead person goes through a transformation in which they discover death and prepare for their rebirth (if there is one).

#### **Funeral practices**

In early times and commonly today, Buddhists cremate the bodies of their dead. The first seven days after death are the most important for final and funereal prayer.

#### **Mourning rituals**

Prayers are said weekly, during a 49-day funeral period. It is during this period that the prayers of the mourners are believed to help the deceased during the post-death transformation and awaken their spirit to the true nature of death.

### **Catholicism**

#### **Belief about death**

Catholics see death as a passage from this life to the new, everlasting life promised by Christ. The soul of the deceased goes on to the afterlife, which includes Purgatory as well as Heaven and Hell. According to Catholic belief, the bodies of the dead will be resurrected at the end of time.

#### **Funeral practices**

The Catholic funeral service is called the Mass of the Resurrection. During it, Jesus Christ's life is remembered and related to that of the deceased. Eulogies are not allowed during the funeral mass but may be delivered at a wake or other non-religious ceremony. There is also a final

graveside farewell, and additional traditions depending on the region. The Church encourages Catholics to be buried in Catholic cemeteries. In 1963, the Vatican lifted the ban on cremation for Catholics. However, the remains must be interred, not scattered or kept at home.

### **Mourning rituals**

The community and the church support mourners through the funeral mass and through non-religious services like wakes.

## **Eastern Orthodox**

### **Belief about death**

Orthodox Christians believe death is a necessary consequence of human life, due to original sin. Death is necessary to achieve everlasting life.

### **Funeral practices**

The Eastern Orthodox hold a special vigil over the dead called the parastasis or panikhida, as a time of contemplation on death. The funeral service includes hymns, chants, and bible readings. Burial is preferred but the Orthodox Church allows cremation if the law of the country requires it. Mourning rituals

Orthodox Christians pray special prayers for the departed asking God to have mercy on the souls of the dead.

## **Hinduism**

### **Belief about death**

Hindus believe death is part of the continuing cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. The soul of the dead transfers to another body after death.

### **Funeral practices**

Hindus generally cremate their dead. In preparation for cremation, the body is bathed, laid in a coffin, adorned with sandalwood paste and garlands, and wrapped in white cloth. In the cremation ceremony, the body is carried three times counter clockwise around the pyre, then placed upon it. The chief mourner hits the cremation switch.

### **Mourning rituals**

The days of mourning are considered a time of ritual impurity. Mourners cover all religious pictures in the house and do not attend festivals or visit swamis or take part in marriage ceremonies. Mourning period length varies, though Hindu scriptures caution against excessive mourning.

## **Islam**

### **Belief about death**

Muslims believe that there is another world after death for which the believer should prepare during their lives on earth.

### **Funeral practices**

The corpse is bathed, wrapped in a plain cloth (called a kafan). The deceased is buried in the ground after the funeral service. Only burial in the ground is allowed according to Shari' ah (Islamic law).

### **Mourning rituals**

Mourners gather and offer Janazah, prayers for the forgiveness of the deceased. Once the body is buried, Muslim mourners offer one final Janazah prayer.

## **Judaism**

### **Belief about death**

Jews believe death in this life will eventually lead to resurrection in a world to come.

### **Funeral practices**

The dead are buried as soon as possible. The body is washed to purify it, dressed in a plain linen shroud. The casket, a plain wooden coffin, remains closed after the body is dressed. The body is watched over from time of death till burial, as a sign of respect. The kaddish, a prayer in honour of the dead, is said.

### **Mourning rituals**

There is an intense seven-day mourning period, called shiva, following the burial. Mourners traditionally rent their garments as a symbol of grief. Today, people often wear a black ribbon instead of tearing their clothes. Mourners also cover mirrors, sit on low stools, and avoid wearing leather. The full mourning period lasts a year, after which mourners observe the dead's yahrzeit, or yearly anniversary of the death.

## **Lutheran**

### **Belief about death**

Many Lutheran groups believe that death goes against what is naturally intended for us by God. It is thought that because of humankind's rebellion against God, death was created as a punishment.

### **Funeral practices**

There is usually a funeral burial service for the dead. The service takes place in a church, but can also be held in a private home, funeral home or crematory, if desired.

### **Mourning rituals**

A last viewing before the beginning of the funeral service takes place, after which the funereal coffin is closed. Mourners may also be invited to pray at the burial site, and those nearer to the grave may throw handfuls of earth onto the coffin as it descends into the earth.

## **Mormonism**

### **Belief about death**

Mormons believe that at death, the spirit and the body separate. People go to judgment by God. Death is something to mourn but is also a time of hope because it is seen as a step into the next life and eternal life with God

### **Funeral practices**

Funeral services are usually held in an LDS chapel or mortuary. Burial is preferred to cremation because interment in the earth symbolizes the return of dust to dust.

### **Mourning rituals**

The gravesite of the deceased is viewed as a sacred spot for the family to visit and tend.

## **Pagan**

### **Beliefs about death**

Pagans believe that physical death is not the end of life. The dead become unborn and enter into a state where they may find temporary rest, after which healing and renewing energy for rebirth into a new life occur.

### **Funeral practices**

Believers in the pagan goddess traditions wash the dead body with a mixture consisting of spring water, a few drops of ocean water (or water from another special place), scented oil, and the herb rosemary for purity and protection. While washing, a special blessing is usually said. Then, the body is smudged (or censed) with an appropriate incense for the cleansing. Finally, the body is wrapped or dress in simple cloth or clothing.

### **Mourning rituals**

Pagans hold funerals and memorial services, during which, special prayers are said to help guide the dead to healing in their afterlife journey to rebirth. Rituals include offerings to nature and the ancestors, invoking spirits, music, chanting, sharing stories and more.

## **Presbyterianism**

### **Belief about death**

Presbyterian Christians believe that whether the reward of heaven or the punishment of hell, the consequences of life have a bearing on where you end up after death, and they begin immediately after death.

### **Funeral practices**



Most funerals take place two to four days after the death. Most services are held in the church sanctuary. Funeral practices vary from person to person. No one form of interment is either encouraged or discouraged among worshippers.

### **Mourning rituals**

Worshippers are encouraged to provide the "ministry of presence" to those who have experienced a loss. Whether one calls, writes or visits the bereaved, the act of being present for them is enough.

**Caribbean Communities, Chinese Communities, Irish Traveller and Romany Gypsy Communities**, See Child Bereavement link below

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/faqs/category/faiths-beliefs-cultures-and-communities>

### **Funeral Rites across Different Cultures.**

<https://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/Facilities/09%20Funeral%20Rites%20across%20Different%20Cultures.pdf>