



Bereavement in Higher Education Institutes

**Faculty of Wellbeing Education
and Language Studies (WELS)**

Call for PhD projects starting in October 2024

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Project description

School

Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

Members

Prof Erica Borgstrom	http://www.open.ac.uk/people/esb79	erica.borgstrom@open.ac.uk
Prof Neil Thompson	https://www.open.ac.uk/people/nt4739	neil.thompson@open.ac.uk
Dr Kerry Jones	https://www.open.ac.uk/people/kj4483	kerry.jones@open.ac.uk
Claire Harris	https://www.open.ac.uk/people/ch27488	claire.a.harris@open.ac.uk

The wider project team also includes members outside of the Open University. Initial queries about the doctoral project should be directed to Prof Borgstrom.

Aim

The project aim is to document and change Higher Education staff's understanding and experiences of bereavement policy.

Methodology

To date, the project has adopted a mixed methods approach (e.g. survey with quantitative and qualitative responses, policy analysis). Existing data analysis is descriptive and content driven. There is scope to use other methods and we are keen that the project grows to provide more evidence of people's experience, analysis of policy, and can inform changes in practice.

Contribution

Very little is known about the bereavement experiences of staff in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), despite bereavement being a common experience and one that can impact both one's wellbeing and work performance. This is the first research of its kind to document understanding and experience of bereavement policy with the potential to change institutional policies and academic culture. This is part of a larger body of work that Prof Borgstrom is leading to improve bereavement experience in higher education institutes focusing on policy, training, and compassionate, supportive environments.

Website

<https://wels.open.ac.uk/research/projects/open-thanatology/projects>

PhD project

The doctoral researcher would be expected to have a self-driven project that relates to the overall project aims. This could be, for example:

- interview based study about people's experiences
- project about on postgraduate student experiences (often caught between student and staff policies)
- action research focused on changing policy in an institution or designing policy template for HEIs.

