Funeral directors, also called morticians and undertakers, manage funeral homes and arrange the details of a funeral. Funeral directors typically do the following:

- Arrange transportation of the deceased
- Prepare the remains (body)
- Submit paperwork and legal documents
- Consult with the deceased’s family
- Help plan funerals
- Discuss and plan funerals with people who wish to arrange their own service in advance

Most funeral directors arrange the details and handle the logistics of funerals. Together with the family, funeral directors establish the locations, dates, and times of wakes, memorial services, and burials. They handle other details as well, such as determining whether the body should be buried, entombed, or cremated. This decision is critical because funeral practices vary among cultures and religions. Although family members or others may handle some details, funeral directors must be able to assist family members in preparing obituary notices and arranging for pallbearers and clergy. They may decorate and prepare the sites of services, arrange for flowers, and provide transportation for the deceased and mourners.

Most funeral directors handle paperwork involved with the person’s death, including submitting papers to state officials to get a formal death certificate. Some help resolve insurance claims or apply for veterans’ funeral benefits on behalf of the family. They also may notify the Social Security Administration of the death. In many settings, funeral directors embalm the deceased. Embalming is a sanitary and cosmetic process through which the body is prepared for burial, usually in a casket. A growing number of funeral directors work with clients who wish to plan their own funerals in advance to ensure that their needs are met. Many funeral directors also help prepare and ship bodies if the person dies in one place and is to be buried or cremated elsewhere. (*Occupational Outlook Handbook*)

The program to be followed by a pre-mortuary science student is largely determined by the requirements of the state in which you will practice and the mortuary school you will attend. *Gaining acceptance into a mortuary science program is a very competitive process. Completion of the pre-requisite courses does not automatically guarantee admission.* Since the acceptance process is competitive, students pursuing a program of study in pre-mortuary science are encouraged to choose a major as an alternate plan so that they can be working towards a baccalaureate degree concurrently with the pre-mortuary science program. This requires a major/minor combination or a comprehensive major as well as completion of the UNK general studies requirements and other degree requirements as set forth in the college catalog.

The following is based upon the state of Nebraska requirements (60 credit hours required) and requirements for regional mortuary science programs:

**Take one of the following options:**

**Take these 2 courses:**
- BIOL 103GS General Biology 4
- BIOL 215GS Human Physiology 4

**OR take these 2 courses:**
- BIOL 225 Anatomy and Physiology 4
- BIOL 226 Anatomy and Physiology 4

**Take one of the following options:**

**Take these 2 courses:**
- CHEM 160GS General Chemistry 4
- CHEM 161GS General Chemistry 4

**OR take these 2 courses:**
- CHEM 145GS Introductory Chemistry 4
- CHEM 150GS Consumer Organic Chemistry 4

**Take all the following courses:**
- BIOL 211GS Human Microbiology 4
- ACCT 250 Beginning Accounting I 3
- ACCT 251 Beginning Accounting II 3
- FAMS 160GS Personal Money Management 3
- ENG 101 Introduction to Academic Writing 3
- ENG 102GS Academic Writing and Research 3
- PSY 203GS General Psychology 3
- SOC 100GS Introduction to Sociology or elective 3

**Take one of the following:**
- PSY 230GS Human Development 3
- PSY 231GS Abnormal Behavior and Society 3

**Electives to complete a 60 hour program.**

**Suggested Electives:** When choosing electives to complete the 60 hour program, the student should check with the Mortuary Science Program to which he/she intends to apply in order of the state in which he/she plans to practice (if it is not Nebraska).

- ACCT 311 Business Law 3
- MGT 301 Principles of Management 3
- PSY 192 Death & Dying 3
- SPCH 100GS Fundamentals of Speech Communication 3
- Humanities Elective 3

**Academic Guidelines**

A minimum GPA of 2.5 is required; however, a higher GPA is preferred and will result in the student being a more competitive applicant. Each required course must be passed with a grade of “C” or better. A grade of “C-” will not be accepted. Students searching for electives should consider courses from the following areas: biology, chemistry, mathematics, sociology, psychology, business administration, healthcare management, and healthcare economics. See your advisor for suggestions. Students should be aware of prerequisites on all courses and plan their coursework accordingly.

**Non-Academic Guidelines**

There is no magic formula for acceptance in to professional school. Admission is based on GPA, shadowing and medical experiences, community involvement and volunteerism, leadership qualities, the interview, the essay, and letters of recommendation. Shadowing and medical experiences are of utmost importance. Students should plan to shadow a minimum of 40 hours in their selected profession. Health Sciences offers opportunities to meet these non-academic guidelines through the Shadowing Program, the Health Science Club, and volunteer experiences. Research experience is not required, but will be looked upon favorably. Students should plan to be involved in these types of activities and experiences throughout their undergraduate career. Other important non-academic factors include good moral character, excellent interpersonal skills, a deep commitment to healthcare, evidence of leadership potential and service to others.

**The Application Process**

Students who wish to make application to a mortuary science program should do so through the website of the respective program.

**Criminal Background Checks**
Prerequisite for enrollment into any health science professional program is consent for an external background check. This check includes, but is not limited to, past criminal offenses and registry information. If there is evidence of arrest for a crime(s), conviction for a crime(s), presence on an abuse registry, or other information which reasonably suggests that patient safety might be compromised, the student will be asked to provide additional information.

**Citizenship/International Students**

Professional schools in the health sciences vary as to whether they accept non-U.S. citizens. Some schools that do accept non-citizens require a substantial financial commitment up front. Since not all schools accept non-citizens and since the financial commitment of those that do may be substantial, students should thoroughly research and carefully consider such a decision and discuss it with their pre-health advisors early in their undergraduate years.

**Websites**

- State of Nebraska – HHS, Licensing Division: [http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/crl_mhcs_fun_funeraldirecting.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/crl_mhcs_fun_funeraldirecting.aspx)
- UNK Health Sciences: [www.unk.edu/healthsciences](http://www.unk.edu/healthsciences)

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### Suggested Sequence of Key Courses

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<tr>
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<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 1</strong></td>
<td>CHEM 145GS or CHEM 160GS</td>
<td>CHEM 150GS or CHEM 161GS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIOL 211GS</td>
<td>MATH 102</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 2</strong></td>
<td>ACCT 250</td>
<td>ACCT 251</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIOL 225 (recommended)</td>
<td>BIOL 226 (recommended)</td>
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- Completion of one semester of chemistry is a prerequisite for BIOL 225.
- Completion of MATH 102 and sophomore standing are prerequisites for ACCT 250.
- A minimum MATH ACT score of 22 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) or higher is a prerequisite for CHEM 160.
- Completion of one semester of chemistry is a prerequisite for BIOL 225.