Appendix 4 - Literature search and grading of evidence

A literature review of Pubmed, Web of Science and SCOPUS was performed by an experienced librarian and the co-chairs. The search strategy is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: PubMed search strategy, modified as needed for other electronic databases.

1	Mesh [Major topic]:	Death
2	Title:	Death OR brain-death OR circulatory-death
3	1 OR 2	
4	Mesh term:	Diagnosis
5	Title	Certification OR certifying OR criteria OR declaration OR diagnosis OR diagnose OR diagnostic OR determination OR determining OR determine OR examination
6	4 OR 5	
7	Mesh terms:	Guidelines as Topic OR Policy
8	Title:	Policy OR policies OR guideline OR guidelines OR recommendations OR consensus OR statement OR standard OR standards OR review
9	7 OR 8	
10	3 AND 6 AND 9	

Citation indexes and reference lists of all articles found through the database search were reviewed for any articles that were not identified during the database search. A grey literature search was also conducted, specifically looking for national guidelines on the subject.

Recommendations were graded as either strong recommendations or conditional or weak recommendations. If consensus was not achieved to grade a statement it was specifically stated as such.

Strong recommendations - Based on expert consensus it is recommended that clinicians should follow the recommendation unless a clear and compelling rationale for an alternative approach was present, and where actions could be adopted as policy. Even though most evidence in this area is limited and of low-quality, strong recommendations were made as a

precautionary, conservative approach, to prevent premature or erroneous determinations of death (false positives).

Conditional or weak recommendations (It is suggested that) - Generated when there were potentially different options and the best action may differ depending on circumstances, patients, resources or societal values, or where there is a need for further evidence or discussion among clinicians and stakeholders.