Critical Incident Policy & Procedure

Policy

In the event of a critical incident, The College recognises that appropriate infrastructure must be in place to ensure the provision of all necessary support services.

This document outlines The College policy, support mechanisms and procedures for managing a critical incident.

This policy will ensure that The College has:

- An effective approach in responding to critical incidents as they occur;
- Appropriate support and counselling services available to those affected;
- Appropriate training and information resources provided to staff.

Under Standard 6 of the National Code 2017, Student Support Services, Registered Providers must support students to adjust to study and life in Australia, to achieve their learning goals and to achieve satisfactory academic progress towards meeting the learning outcomes of the course.

The intention of Standard 6 is to ensure that appropriate support services are available to international students to ease the transition into life and study in Australia and allow access to appropriate assistance for the student as needed.

Under Standard 6.4 the registered provider must have a documented critical incident policy together with procedures that covers the action to be taken in the event of a critical incident, required follow up to the incident, and records of the incident and action taken.

1. Principles

The College recognises the duty of care owed to its students and that planning for the management of a critical incident is essential.

2. Definition

A critical incident is defined by the National Code as 'a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury'.

Critical incidents are not limited to, but could include:

- missing students;
- severe verbal or psychological aggression;
- death, serious injury or any threat of these;
- natural disaster; and
- issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse.

Non-life-threatening events could still qualify as critical incidents.

AWS Institute Pty Ltd
T/A Australian Workplace Skills Institute
RTO No: 45701   **CRICOS No.:** 03924J
ACT Campus: Level 1, 66 Townshend Street, Phillip, ACT 2606
NSW Campus: Level 6, 140 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: 02 9182 0984 **Email:** info@aws.edu.au
ABN No: 12 637 817 353   **Website:** www.aws.edu.au

3.   Critical Incident Team / Coordinating Group

When a critical incident occurs, the PEO, or their delegate will call a meeting with the appropriate staff to form a Critical Incident Team.

The Critical Incident Team is responsible for:

- assessing risks and response actions
- liaison with emergency and other services
- contact with students' relatives and other appropriate contacts
- liaison with other external bodies, such as home stays, carers or foreign embassies, and
- counselling and managing students and staff not directly involved in the incident.

4. Action Plan

The Critical Incident Team will set in motion a critical incident action plan to manage various aspects arising from the incident, including communication strategies.

This will include:

- creating and disseminating a plan and its procedures
- a review of the plan, and
- staff development and training.

5. Media Management

A media management process will be included in the management plan to ensure the most positive and supportive response from the media.

6. Reporting and recording of incident and action taken

The Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) requires The College to notify DET and DIBP as soon as practical after the incident and in the case of a student's death or other absence affecting the student's attendance, the incident will need to be reported via the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

All aspects of the incident and its management will be recorded on the student files.

7. Follow-up and evaluation

The College staff will be made aware of the critical incident policy and procedures and be given appropriate training to ensure the duty of care for international students is uppermost in their minds. A review and evaluation of the response to the critical incident will be conducted and the procedures reviewed by the Critical Incident Team and/or other stakeholders.

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8. Resources

Changes to the policy and procedures, including updating resources, will be made as soon as practicable following the review and evaluation.

Critical Incident Procedures

The College Critical Incident procedures detailed below include:

- Reporting and recording
- Flow chart and detailed action plan sample
- Evaluation and review checklist
- Staff training
- Resources and local links

Appendices A - F provide additional information and samples for the following:

- Staff training -things to remember
- Media hints
- Sample letters to parents
- Police involvement
- Death and funerals in Australia
- Other resources including a sample management plan

Any action taken in regard to a critical incident will be recorded to include outcomes or evidence if the incident is referred to another person or agency.

When an international student dies or other critical events involving students occur, The College of necessity, will take on many of the tasks which would normally be dealt with by the family of the victim were the incident to have occurred in the student's home country.

The College has in place efficient, sensitive and supportive strategies for dealing with a critical incident and provides support to members of staff, students and others in the community who are involved.

Reporting and Recording

The Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) requires The College to notify DET and DIBP as soon as practical after the incident and in the case of a student's death or other absence affecting the student's attendance, the incident will need to be reported via the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

When an international student dies or sustains serious injury, The College may be required to assist the student's family.

This may include:

- hiring interpreters
- making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation
- obtaining a death certificate
- assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues
- assisting with visa issues

In addition, the following need to be notified:

- Home stay or accommodation provider
- Library
- IT Services
- Utilities

On-campus Incidents

If the incident is on campus, the first action will be to contact the emergency services - fire, ambulance or police - as would be the case with other WH&S matters.

The PEO, or their delegate must also be contacted immediately when the incident involves death, serious injury or a threat to life or property.

Off-campus Incidents

If the critical incident involves a student or staff member and is off-campus, the person receiving the information must immediately contact the PEO, or their delegate who will communicate other staff as appropriate.

Key Details to be Reported

Key details to report include the time, location and nature of the incident (e.g. threat, accident, death or injury), names and roles of persons involved (e.g. staff, international or domestic student).

The staff member receiving the news contacts the PEO, or their delegate / Head of the Critical Incident Team. The PEO, or their delegate urgently deals with an emergency situation then calls a meeting with the staff involved to make decisions as to how to proceed.

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The staff most likely to be present will be:

- Each PEO, or their delegate
- PEO
- Administrator
- Trainer

The Critical Incident Team

At the initial meeting, the task of the group is to:

- create for themselves a clear understanding of the known facts.
- plan an immediate response.
- plan ongoing strategies.
- allocate individual roles/responsibilities for ongoing tasks.

Immediate response

Issues to be considered:

1. Contact with next of kin/significant others - what is the most appropriate manner of contact?

2. Arrangements for informing staff and students.

3. Guidelines to staff about what information to give students.

4. A written bulletin to staff if the matter is complex.

5. Briefing staff and delegating a staff member to deal with telephone/counter inquiries.

6. Managing media/publicity

7. Identification of those students and staff members most closely involved and therefore most at risk.
   - Those directly involved
   - Personal friends/family of those involved
   - Others who have experienced a similar past trauma
   - Other students, staff, supervisors etc

8. Arrange a time and place for an initial group/individual debriefing session with Counsellor/s.
   In this session, an opportunity is given to share the impact of the event, discuss various interpretations of the event in cultural/ethnic terms, the resulting sense of vulnerability, the experience of painful emotions and the normalisation of reactions.

9. Organise a tasks timetable for the next hour/s, day/s etc.

10. Plan ongoing feedback and regular meetings so that the coordinating team is continually in touch and working together.

11. Confirm access to emergency funds if necessary.

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Note   *One member of the team should record for all meetings to keep records of content and decisions.*

Ongoing and follow up response

These issues may need to be discussed at subsequent meetings.

- WHO is the DECISION MAKER?

- WHO will FOLLOW UP?

- Availability of mobile phones

- Notification of and liaison with Sponsor/Agent if applicable

- Arrangements for visits to/from Family

- Liaison with Police, Doctors, Hospital Staff

- Hiring Independent Interpreters

- Death Notices

- Funeral/Memorial Service Arrangements

- Refund of student's fees to pay repatriation or associated expenses

- Copy of Death Certificate

- Consideration of personal items and affairs (household and academic)

- Insurance Matters, OHSC Coverage, Ambulance Cover

- Formal Stress Management interventions required for students and/or staff (release from classes, leave, rescheduled assessment or exams)

- Liaison with Academic Staff

- Arrangements for further debriefing sessions for groups/individuals as required

- Liaison with Department of Immigration and Citizenship if studies will be interrupted

- Fees issue to be resolved if student cannot continue with their studies

- Legal Issues: helping students get access to legal assistance if required.

- Arrangements for further debriefing sessions for groups/individuals as required

- Follow up condolence or other letters to Family

- Financial Assistance for families of affected person(s) if residing in Australia

- Organising students/staff for hospital visits

Student File Essentials

In addition to The College Student Management System, The College employ and use a file note system, keeping hard copies of student details in the Enrolments files. This will enable all required staff to monitor any student issues.

Include in the file will be the following information:

- Coloured Photograph

- Copy of Passport, including number, photo page, and visa page

- Student's address and telephone number

- Student's religion

- Emergency contact telephone, with next of kin details, agent or sponsor (if applicable)

- Any other identification details - student ID, course details, medical conditions, allergy information etc.

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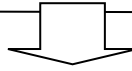**NSW Campus**: Level 6, 140 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000
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Critical Incident Flowchart

Staff member(s) (witness to incident or first contacted)

Gather factual information and Contact Emergency Services - Dial 000

Staff member(s) (witness to incident or first contacted).
Ensure Safety & Welfare of Staff and students
Contact first aid officer
Administer first-aid until ambulance arrives
Note: *Assess situation: focus on immediate safety of other students and staff*