CRITICAL INCIDENTS POLICY

Approved by Council: 14 September 2012
Revised by Council: 10 August 2016

Related documents


1. Purpose

1.1 This policy provides an overview of the action to be taken by Colleges of the University if a critical incident occurs that involves either the University's students or College staff. The University recognises that individuals and its community as a whole can be affected both physically and psychologically when a critical incident occurs. The University must provide appropriate support to its domestic and international students in the event of a critical incident.

1.2 The University recognises its unique structure in the Higher Education sector and therefore requires that critical incidents are managed by its constituent Colleges in conjunction with, and with the support of, their respective stakeholders. While College Principals manage critical incidents in accordance with their individual College’s Critical Incidents Policy and Procedures, a Principal may access support from other Principals and the Office of the Vice-Chancellor if considered necessary by the Principal whose College is experiencing a critical incident.

2. Scope

This policy covers all staff at the University's Colleges and in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, domestic students and international students studying in Australia at the University, whether they live on or off campus. This policy does not cover offshore students studying by either distance education or on the campus of one of the University’s offshore teaching partners, if applicable.

3. Definitions

3.1 Critical Incident: a tragic or traumatic event or situation affecting an individual student, a group of students and/or an institution’s staff. The National Code defines critical incident 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’ (National Code, Part D, Standard 6.4).

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Office of the Vice-Chancellor is responsible for ensuring all College Principals have a current list of contact details for all Principals at all times.
4.2 The College Principal is responsible for managing a critical incident in the first instance, but may seek the involvement of the wider University.

4.3 The Vice-Chancellor is responsible for organising the resources necessary to support the Principal in managing a critical incident in which a Principal requests the support of the wider University.

4.4 The Principal is responsible for notifying the religious order a student belongs to, if such a student is involved in a critical incident.

4.5 The Principal is responsible for managing a crisis situation involving international students, if the incident can be managed locally.

4.6 In cases where a student contacts the Office of the Vice-Chancellor via the Student Assistance Line, anonymity and privacy will be maintained unless the student chooses to give their name or asks for an appropriate person to be notified about part or all of the content of their call.

4.7 The University Secretary notifies the Commonwealth Government department with responsibility for international students if appropriate to do so in a crisis situation involving international students.

4.8 Any costs incurred from arrangements made following a critical incident, including an accident or the illness or death of a student will be met by the student and/or the student’s family.

4.9 The student and/or the student’s family must give their consent, in writing if circumstances permit, prior to any arrangements being made that involve payment for a service.

4.10 The Vice-Chancellor is the public spokesperson for the University in relation to critical incidents.

4.11 Any documents generated as a result of a critical incident are managed in accordance with the University's Records Policy.

5. Levels, Examples and Reporting of Emergencies or Critical Incidents

All emergencies and potential critical incidents must be reported to the management levels indicated below. When in doubt, it is preferable to call for support from the Vice-Chancellor and College Principals and subsequently to excuse them rather than risk an incident escalating into an emergency and losing the opportunity to contain it. This decision is at the discretion of the Principal.

5.1 Level 1 Minor Incident

A Minor Incident may include a fire, an equipment malfunction, an operational failure, unusual noise/odour, emissions or spills, or minor injury (but not lost time injury). It may also be an internal event which may require a report to outside agencies, but which presents no external threat and is unlikely to require significant assistance or protective actions by external personnel.

The situation is under control. However, response by on-site personnel is required.
**Critical Incidents**

**Policy**

5.2 Level 2 Moderate Incident

A *Moderate Incident* has the potential to escalate to a crisis and/or affect operations. Such incidents may include a major fire, explosion, a major equipment malfunction, or major security event.

*The situation is not under control and may pose a threat to off-site areas. Significant response by external personnel and external reporting may be required.*

**Reporting:** College Principal to consult with the Vice-Chancellor or another Principal. Possible call-out of support if the Principal considers the situation likely to escalate to a Critical Incident.

5.3 Level 3 Critical Incident

A *Critical Incident* is an event such as a natural emergency which seriously affects operations, a large fire, explosion, sabotage, material release or major equipment malfunction, prolonged loss of utilities, environmental emissions or spills or a major security incident which seriously affect the College’s and/or Institution’s operations. The incident is likely to involve internal and external emergency services, require external report, may result in one or more fatalities and/or serious injuries and is likely to affect the College’s and/or Institution’s reputation.

*The situation is not under control, and protective actions by external entities are necessary and ongoing. Media interest is likely to be high.*

**Reporting:** College Principal to consult with the Vice-Chancellor and arrange immediate support.