

CRITICAL INCIDENT PROCEDURE

Approving Authority	Executive Management Team
Purpose	This procedure outlines the Institute's process for reporting and managing critical incidents.
Responsible Officer	President and CEO
Next scheduled review	February 2031
Document Location	https://www.ozford.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/higher-education/
Associated documents	Critical Incident Policy Business Continuity Management Policy Deferral, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment Policy and Procedure ICT Continuity Management Policy and Procedure Occupational Health and Safety Policy Records Management Policy and Procedure Risk Management Framework Policy Student Support and Services Policy and Procedure

1. PRINCIPLES

The Ozford Institute of Higher Education (hereafter referred to as the "Institute") must have and implement a documented procedure and process for managing critical incidents that could affect the student's ability to undertake or complete a course, such as but not limited to incidents that may cause physical or psychological harm.

This procedure ensures that the Institute has:

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

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all staff and all current and prospective students.

3. DEFINITIONS

Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances

Compassionate or compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the student's course progress or wellbeing. These could include, but are not limited to:

- serious illness or injury where a medical certificate states that the student is unable to attend class;
- bereavement for the death of close family members such as parents or grandparents (documented evidence must be provided);
- serious illness, accident or family incident which requires immediate travel which has impacted the student to studies;
- the inability to begin study on the course commencement date stated on the CoE due to delay in receiving a student visa if relevant;
- major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring their immediate travel and this has impacted on the student's studies;
- a traumatic experience supported by police or psychologist's reports which could include but is not limited to:
 - involvement in or witnessing of an accident; or
 - a crime committed against the student; or
 - the student being a witness to a crime and this has impacted on the student.
- where the Institute was unable to offer a pre-requisite unit.

Notes:

- *misreading the examination timetable, examination anxiety or returning home will not be accepted as Compassionate and Compelling circumstances;*
- *religious or faith-based issues are not in themselves grounds for special consideration. However, they may be used in support of an application that meets the Compassionate and Compelling circumstances set out above.*

Critical Incident

A critical incident is defined as 'a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury'. It includes but is not limited to incidents that may cause physical or psychological harm. Non-life threatening events can be classed as critical incidents.

Critical incidents are not limited to, but could include:

- Critical illness/serious injuries/medical emergencies involving a student or staff;
- Unexpected Student/staff death;
- Missing students;
- Severe oral, written or psychological aggression;
- Traumatic events/threat/allegation that affect students;
 - Sexual assault
 - Physical and/or sexual abuse
 - Domestic violence

- Mental Health Crisis
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- natural disaster
- Riot; fire/explosion with injuries or significant damage on campus;
- Campus disturbance / riot

Emergency Incident

A sudden, serious and urgent incident needing immediate Emergency Services support.

Off-Campus Students

Students who are studying online or externally.

Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS)

Means the Provider Registration and International Students Management System (the electronic system that holds CRICOS and the electronic confirmation of enrolment).

4. PROCEDURE

- 4.1 All staff and students will be made aware of the ***Critical Incident Policy and Procedure*** as part of the Institute's staff induction and student orientation process.
- 4.2 The Institute will provide students with or refer them to (including electronically) general information on safety and awareness relevant to life in Australia.
 - All students will be provided with information on what to do and who to contact in an emergency in the Institute's Student Handbook.
 - The Emergency Contact details for the Student Experience staff, who can support students, are made available in the Institute's Student Handbook.
 - Students will be provided with the ***Critical Incident Policy and Procedure*** on the Institute website.
- 4.3 Students are informed of the Institute's crisis and critical incident arrangement, including instructions on how to report incidents, as part of the Orientation process.
- 4.4 Staff and students are informed that any critical incident must be reported to the Head of Marketing and Student Experience in the first instance, or to the next most senior staff member available. The Critical incident report must include the following details: time, location and a description and nature of incident; and the names of students/staff involved, together with any relevant information that may be of assistance.
- 4.5 If the incident is determined as an emergency incident, the first action will be to assess and ensure the safety of the situation, remove the students and staff from any source of danger (if safe to do so), and contact the emergency services - fire, ambulance or police – as would be the case with other occupational health and safety matters.
- 4.6 After receiving a critical incident report, the Head of Marketing and Student Experience will call a meeting of the Executive Management Team (EMT).

4.7 The EMT will meet to discuss the incident, plan and determine a prompt and appropriate response and action plan by:

- Developing a clear understanding of the known facts.
- Assessing risks and response actions
- Planning an immediate response to the incident
- Appointing a delegate to deal with public enquiries. If required, a media management procedure may be included in the management plan to ensure the most positive and supportive response to the media. Only the President and CEO may speak to the media on behalf of the Institute.
- Determining an action plan and allocating individual roles/responsibilities for ongoing tasks by devising a tasks schedule such as:
 - Liaison with police, emergency and other services
 - Establishing if there are any immediate impacts to welfare or support arrangements
 - Liaison with students' next of kin/family members and other contacts such as agents,
 - Liaison with other external bodies, such as accommodation providers or foreign embassies,
 - Identify students and staff most closely involved and most at risk and, assess their needs, determine the nature and degree of support needed
 - Confirm access to emergency funds if necessary.
 - Provide appropriate support to student and family, for eg: arrangement for visits to hospital, arrangement for visit from/to family, hiring interpreters for overseas family, assist family to make contact with relevant departments for insurance/legal arrangements
 - In the event that the incident involves a death of a student, additional support to the family will include:
 - assisting with overseas family to obtain a visa to come to Australia;
 - making arrangements for funeral/memorial service/repatriation;
 - obtaining a death certificate;
 - assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues.
 - Provide appropriate support to other students. At a minimum, opportunities are provided for those involved to express and share with others the reactions that they had to the incident. Those in charge and those providing support also need extra consideration during this time.
 - Formal stress management interventions required for students and/or staff (release from classes, leave, rescheduled assessment or exams)
 - Counselling and managing students and staff not directly involved in the incident. 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.

- Consider other support arrangements for staff and students affected, including how the Institute communicates information about the existence of support services and how to access such services.
 - Arrangements for further debriefing sessions for groups/individuals as required.
 - Determining and plan for ongoing feedback and regular meetings so that the EMT is continually in touch and working together.
- 4.8 The EMT will organise for reporting and recording of incident and actions taken. If the incident affects student's enrolment, the ***Deferral, Suspension and Cancellation of Enrolment Policy and Procedure*** will be applied.
- 4.9 The Institute will notify the Department of Education and Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS as soon as practical after the incident.
- 4.10 In the case of a student's death or other absence affecting the student's attendance, the incident will be reported via PRISMS.
- 4.11 The EMT will provide information and facilitate appropriate venues for its dissemination. A written bulletin will be provided if the matter is complex. Students and academic staff have a need to accept the reality of the event, and the inevitable discussions that follow are better based on fact rather than on rumour or supposition. It is important that rumours are discounted.
- 4.12 Once the event has been formally acknowledged - perhaps through meetings, a memorial service, or whatever is appropriate - the next step may well be to resume, as far as practicable, normal routines, so that any ongoing recovery strategies can take place against a background of predictability.
- 4.13 As a follow-up action, the EMT will set in motion a ***Critical Incident Action Evaluation Report*** to review the management and response of the critical incident to address the underlying causes and various aspects arising from the incident by:
- evaluating and reviewing the critical incident;
 - reviewing the ***Critical Incident Policy and Procedure*** for future incidents;
 - updating and publishing relevant policy and procedures; and
 - organising appropriate staff development and training.
- 4.14 Changes to the ***Critical Policy and Procedure***, including updated critical incident resources, will be made as soon as practicable following the review and evaluation.
- 4.15 At the conclusion of the incident management, all aspects of the incident and its management will be recorded on the student files and Critical Incident File in the form of a file note.
- 4.16 The EMT will report to the Audit and Risk Committee and the Governing Board on any significant critical incidents.

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

To ensure that this procedure is fit for purpose and meets the requirements of the TEQSA Compliance Frameworks, the procedure will be:

- 5.1 internally approved by the Executive Management Team on development or review
- 5.2 externally reviewed as part of any independent review of the TEQSA Compliance Frameworks approved by the Governing Board;
- 5.3 internally reviewed by the Responsible Officer every 5 years from the date of approval (if not earlier).
- 5.4 referenced to the applicable TEQSA Compliance Frameworks requirement(s) and/or other legislation/regulation.

6. FEEDBACK

Feedback or comments on this procedure is welcomed by the listed Responsible officers of the Institute.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This procedure was initially developed with reference to the following:

- Deakin University, Critical Incident Management Policy, 2023 ([Critical Incident Management policy / Document / Deakin Policy Library](#))
- University of the Sunshine Coast, Critical Incident Management – Governing Policy, 2020 ([Critical Incident Management - Governing Policy | UniSC | University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia \(usc.edu.au\)](#))
- UTS, Critical Incident Response Policy, 2023 ([Critical Incident Response Policy | University of Technology Sydney \(uts.edu.au\)](#))
- Ozford College, Critical Incident Policy and Procedure (see Ozford website)

8. VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date approved	Description	Approved by
2.0	June 2018	Initial issue	EMT
3.0	December 2020	Internal review	EMT
4.0	June 2023	Internal review	EMT
4.1	September 2023	Internal review – minor formatting changes and add external referencing	EMT
4.2	June 2024	Internal review	EMT
4.3	October 2024	Internal review	EMT

Version	Date approved	Description	Approved by
5.0	July 2025	Internal review – minor edits to include ICT Continuity Policy and Procedure	ARC/EMT
5.1	February 2026	Internal Review to remove under 18 student obligations after change in policy	EMT
Related legislation/ regulation/standard	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS) 2000 Education Services for Overseas Students Regulations 2019 The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 Standards 5 and 6		

Notes:

EMT = Executive Management Team

ARC = Audit and Risk Committee