

# Student Critical Incident

## Policy

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Related policies and documents:	Student Critical Incident Procedure, Student Duty of Care, Emergency Evacuation Manual, Business Continuity Plan, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

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### Purpose

To ensure that student critical incidents are managed to minimise harm to all involved and that the infrastructure is in place to ensure provision of necessary support services.

### Coverage

This policy applies to all staff, students, stakeholders of William Angliss Institute (WAI) and its local community who may be involved in, or impacted by, a student critical incident, whether that incident occurs internal or external to WAI.

Students include the community of International students under 18 years of age where it is recognised that in some cases, international students do not have close family networks available to care and provide support to them in Australia. With any student critical incident involving an international student, WAI must swiftly and regularly communicate with families abroad and ensure that ongoing support is provided to the student in need.

### Policy

WAI has a responsibility to staff and students in terms of their physical safety and emotional well-being. This policy is built on the values of safety for all staff and students, respecting diversity and cultural differences and the principle of equal opportunity.

Appropriate timely, compassionate and effective intervention during and following an incident can assist in minimising the psychological, physical, educational and social effects on the WAI community.

Effective student critical incident management:

- Enables WAI's community to deal with all stages of critical incidents promptly and professionally in order to prevent the development of posttraumatic or acute stress disorder or harm to the learning environment.
- Supports pro-active strategies which will help minimise the occurrence of some critical incidents such as pre-incident education.
- Encourages the early identification of potentially critical incidents within WAI.
- Effectively manages critical incidents within WAI.
- Ensures critical incidents in the workplace are managed in line with established Occupational Health and Safety objectives and Emergency and Disaster procedures.
- Provides clearly accessible and understood directions for all personnel caught up in a critical incident.

- Assists people to cope with student critical incidents by providing appropriate practical and psychological support depending on the severity and impact of the critical incident. This may include crisis management briefing and psychological first aid support to individuals and groups.
- Provides appropriate assistance to people who may require longer term support.
- Ensures ongoing training, support and review of the Critical Incident Management Team and the Crisis Aid and Support Team (CAST).
- Follows appropriate and timely communication and reporting processes including to students, management, Department of Home Affairs and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) - as appropriate.

WAI's student critical incident management capability is designed and implemented around the following core elements:

- Planning and preparing. This includes developing, documenting, training and testing arrangements in the advent of a critical incident
- Detecting and mitigating. This includes identifying, assessing, controlling, treating and monitoring risks
- Responding. This means making staff and students feel safe, minimising damage to assets, and managing strategic issues and consequences
- Recovering. This means implementing business continuity arrangements and repairing negative impacts, as well as following up and monitoring of any critical incident
- Learning and adapting. Continual review and improvement of the arrangements and procedures around managing critical incidents

### Responding to Student Critical Incidents

The severity and impact of a student critical incident may vary greatly depending on the nature of the incident. Response and communication requirements therefore also vary greatly. An escalation process applies depending on the severity of the incident and its impact. See Student Critical Incident Procedures for a description of levels of severity of critical incidents and corresponding requirements. Critical Incident management strategies at WAI includes the Critical Incident Management Team for immediate incident response and the Crisis Aid and Support Team (CAST) for post-incident support to assist personnel in recovering as quickly as possible from the stress associated with a critical event. Where the incident will impact on the usual operations of WAI for a prolonged period of time, the incident may be escalated to Business Continuity event, requiring activation of the Business Continuity Plan.

### International Students under 18 years of Age

For International students under the age of 18 enrolled by WAI, the relevant Commonwealth and State legislation relating to child welfare and protection needs to be adhered to aside from the requirements of the ESOS Act 2000.

The Institute will support and care for students during their period of study and life in Australia, to achieve their learning goals and to achieve satisfactory progress towards meeting the learning outcomes of their course of study, and underpin this with this documented critical incident policy and procedures.

WAI ensures that international students under the age of 18 are given appropriate contact information in the event of an emergency situation such as a critical incident. This is through marketing, orientation, teaching departments, the student portal and other mediums.

WAI also ensure that any staff involved in caring or providing accommodation to international students under 18 have a current working with children check (WWC). All staff, including non-teaching staff and volunteers, who are in possible contact with under 18 year old students, must also hold a current WWC.

WAI must make all reasonable efforts to protect the student including but not limited to

- Notifying the police
- Notifying other relevant Commonwealth Government Agencies
- Notifying parents or legal guardians.

Where a student under 18 years of age is missing from their approved accommodation and cannot be contacted, WAI will inform the student's parents/legal guardians and place a missing person report with police if requested by the parents.

Where students under the age of 18 are not being cared for in Australia by a parent or Legal guardian, WAI will ensure the arrangements made to protect the personal safety and social well-being of those students are appropriate.

### Privacy

In relation to privacy, Principle 2.1 of the Information Privacy Principles states that the use and disclosure for purpose other than the primary purpose of collection is permissible if the organisation reasonably believes that the use or disclosure is necessary to lessen or prevent:

- (i) a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare; or
- (ii) a serious threat to public health, public safety, or public welfare.

This exemption clearly covers cases where a critical incident has arisen and allows relevant individuals to make the disclosure required to progress the co-ordinated effort for the care of the individual.

### **Definitions**

**Critical Incident:** – A critical incident may be defined as any event which causes disruption to an organisation and creates significant danger or risk where staff, students, stakeholders and the WAI community feel unsafe, vulnerable and under stress. A crisis situation can derive from sudden, unexpected events (or series of events), or chronic or accumulative (perhaps one or more longer term stressful event/s). Critical incidents may impact on a few students and/or staff, or they can significantly affect the whole WAI community.

**Student Critical Incident:** - A Student Critical Incident means a traumatic event, or the threat of such, which causes extreme stress, fear, physical or psychological injury to Students. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- death, or life-threatening injury or illness;
  - suicide, or attempted suicide;
  - unexplained or unusual absence (for example, on fieldwork);
  - violent behaviour, including severe verbal or psychological aggression;
  - accident;
  - natural disaster, or socio-political event;
  - sexual assault;
  - witnessing serious incidents, or distressing behaviour;
  - mental health crisis;
  - issues relating to drug, alcohol or substance abuse.
- Critical Incident Management Team – those appointed to the Critical Incident Management Team from time to time, who have received appropriate training.
  - ESOS Act: the Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth)
  - Post-traumatic and acute stress: – physical, emotional, behavioural and/or organisational symptoms that are associated with severe stress reactions following a critical incident or trauma. These may include disturbed sleep behaviours, flashbacks, withdrawal and absenteeism, nightmares, tremors, chest pains, confusion, disoriented thinking, disturbance in concentration, fear and anxiety, shock, excessive worry, etc.

- Psychological First Aid (PFA) - the provision of basic psychological care in the short-term aftermath of a critical incident. The key elements of PFA are based around basic common principles of support - promote safety, security, calm, connectedness, self-efficacy, help and hope.

### **Legislative and/or Institute Management Context**

This policy enables WAI to comply with regulatory and management instruments including but not limited to:

- Students Duty of Care Policy
- Education Standards for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 (Clth)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Mental Health Act 1986 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Vic)
- Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
- Accident Compensation Act 1985 (Vic)

### **Non-compliance with Policy**

Established breaches of WAI's Critical Incident Policy and any associated procedures will be met with disciplinary action and may result in dismissal.