



Student Critical Incident Plan

Chief Operating Officer's Portfolio
Division of Security, Safety and Wellbeing

Version 3.1, 21 June 2022

Purpose

- (1) This plan acknowledges the importance of having a clear and coordinated process for decision making, managing and reporting critical incidents involving students of Charles Sturt University. This plan outlines how to respond promptly and appropriately to, and manage critical student incidents in an effective, consistent, compassionate and culturally sensitive manner.
- (2) This plan is part of the University's resilience processes and also reflects the obligations the University has in relation to its management of critical incidents involving students under both the [Higher Education Standards Framework](#) 2015 and 2021, [Education Services for Overseas Students Act](#) and regulatory frameworks by outlining the record keeping, reporting, and post incident review requirements of the effectiveness of the incident response.

Scope

- (3) This plan applies to incidents of a critical nature noting that the [Resilience Policy](#) outlines strategies and processes to deal with unexpected non-routine situations that are beyond the capacity of normal management structures and processes to address.
- (4) In terms of a critical student incident, this includes any traumatic event or situation or the imminent risk of such (within or outside Australia) which causes extreme stress, fear or injury/significant risk of harm to the physical or mental health, safety or wellbeing of an individual or individuals. It may include:
- a. death
 - b. attempted suicide
 - c. serious injury, life-threatening illness, and/or drug, alcohol or psychoactive substance overdose
 - d. unlawful behaviour including physical and/or sexual violence, or crime-related incidents
 - e. missing student
 - f. significant mental-ill health issues threatening the safety of self or others
 - g. witnessing a serious incident
 - h. other traumatic events or serious threats, such as natural disasters
- (5) This plan applies to all Charles Sturt University students regardless of course or enrolment location (including but not limited to on-shore and off-shore students, students on exchange or students enrolled through a partnership).

Providing information to students

- (6) This plan recognises that the University has obligations to provide information to students about how to seek assistance for and report an incident that significantly impacts on their wellbeing, including critical incidents.
- a. The Division of Safety, Security and Wellbeing is responsible for providing information on relevant student channels and in orientation information.



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Responding to a critical student incident

(7) For Australian on shore incidents involving the death of a student or an immediate threat to a student's life follow local emergency response procedures including:

- a. Call 000 to engage the assistance of the emergency services, and
- b. For students on campus, report the incident to Charles Sturt security by
 - activating the Security Request function on the CSU Security mobile app; or,
 - calling extension 400 from an internal phone; or
 - calling security on 1800 931 633 for all campuses except Wangaratta; or
 - for Wangaratta Security, calling (03) 5725 2767; or
 - for CSU Study Centres or other onshore partners, follow the reporting protocol provided by the partner
- c. Provide First Aid and/or secure area if safe and if required
- d. Record incident in the University's incident management system.

(8) In all other incidents, onshore or offshore, involving a student in any traumatic event or situation, including the imminent risk of such:

- a. Respond to incident as required
- b. Record incident in the University's incident management system.

(9) Where the Executive Director, Security, Safety and Wellbeing believes the incident is a critical incident, they will advise the Chief Operating Officer and call a meeting of the Critical Student Incident Response Team.

Critical Student Incident Response Team

(10) Not every incident will be serious enough to warrant the processes of this procedure, and may be resolved by the actions of the Executive Director, Security, Safety and Wellbeing, the Office for Student Safety and Wellbeing and/or the Office of Global Engagement and Partnerships (OGEP). When a critical incident is activated, the Student Critical Incident Response Team (the Team) will meet to coordinate the University's response. The membership of the Team comprises:

- a. Executive Director, Safety, Security and Wellbeing (Chair) (Critical Student Incident Response Coordinator)
- b. Director, Office for Student Safety and Wellbeing (OSSW) (Deputy Critical Student Incident Response Coordinator)
- c. Executive Director, People and Culture, Division of People and Culture (DPC)
- d. Director, Risk and Compliance (or nominee)
- e. Director, Communications, COO Portfolio
- f. Manager, Student Counselling, OSSW

(11) Depending on the incident type or location, the Team may include the following additional advisory members, as determined by the Executive Director, Security, Safety and Wellbeing:



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- a. The relevant Executive Dean(s) or Head(s) of School,
- b. Director, Commercial Services, COO Portfolio, or Head of St Martins or St Francis College (where the incident involves a residential student),
- c. Director, Legal Services, Office of Governance and Corporate Affairs (OGCA),
- d. Director, OGEP, where the incident involves an international or partnership student or a student on study abroad or exchange,
- e. Head, International Compliance, where the incident involves an international or partnership student or a student on study abroad or exchange,
- f. Chief Security Officer,
- g. Director, Division of Facilities Management,
- h. Director, Division of Student Administration (DSA),
- i. Prevention and Support Specialist (DSSW),
- j. A cultural expert, where the person is a First Nations student or is from a culturally and linguistically diverse background,
- k. A campus based representative if required due to the nature of the incident,
- l. A senior representative from the University's Education Partner Provider, where the incident involves a partnership student, or
- m. Any other person deemed necessary due to the nature of the incident.

(12) The Team will determine the appropriate processes to respond to the specific circumstances of the incident and will be chaired by the Executive Director, Security, Safety and Wellbeing, or in their absence, the Director, Office for Student Safety and Wellbeing.

(13) The Team will meet in a timely manner (wherever possible the same day the incident occurs or is reported) to assess the severity of the situation and discuss the priorities and actions taken, or to be taken, over the first 24 hours, one week, two weeks or longer, following the incident.

(14) The person best placed should brief the Team on the current facts of the situation. Consideration should be given to who has been affected, what is appropriate first and second response, who should manage that, and who should be informed and consulted.

(15) Team members will be allocated roles and responsibilities, as necessary, as part of a plan to coordinate the ongoing management of the critical incident. These actions may include:

- a. Accessing the student record to verify student details, and gather information, including emergency and next of kin contact details, address, email, phone numbers, nationality, primary contact, sponsor or agent, and any other relevant information.
- b. Ensuring the facts are accurately established and informing the emergency contact or next of kin. Wherever possible, negotiate with the impacted student about alerting their emergency contact prior to doing so. If the incident involves the death of a student within Australia, the police are responsible for informing the next of kin. Where possible, a staff member with counselling training should be designated as a support for family members who may be dealing with shock, grief or trauma associated with the incident.
- c. Nominating a University representative to be the main point of contact for others (family, friends and other parties such as the consulate, police and medical services providers) and that person making it known that they will be available 24 hours a day during the incident response phase.
- d. Liaison with external parties, which may include medical services providers, emergency services, government departments, and/or relevant embassy.



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- e. Informing the Communications team in case the circumstances of the critical incident result in media attention and to assist with the development of internal communications to staff and students.
- f. If the student is under 18, making provisions according to their nationality status or enacting welfare arrangements and mandatory reporting where required.
- g. Making relevant referrals for staff and student wellbeing support services.
- h. Ensuring priority counselling is provided for impacted individuals in the first days and up to two weeks after the incident. It is noted that timing is important for individuals who have been traumatised by an incident.
- i. Notifying the Charles Sturt After-Hours Crisis Support Line that a critical incident has occurred as this may trigger a higher volume of calls from other impacted students.
- j. Providing voluntary group information sessions (facilitated by a qualified counsellor) to staff or students directly involved.
- k. Ensuring the incident has been logged in the University's incident reporting system

(16) The Team is to establish mechanisms for the timely and accurate reporting on the critical incident to the Vice Chancellor, as the chair of the University's Crisis Management Team.

(17) The Team is to ensure that the University meets all its relevant obligations throughout the incident management process, including but not limited to:

- a. considering census date reporting
- b. applying for a HECS HELP liability remission for students in crisis
- c. contacting the relevant sponsor
- d. having regard to the Australia Award critical incident procedures via Student Administration and the International Student Liaison Officers.

(18) The Team will ensure records are kept through the response period. Records include information evidencing each step in the response process, including emails, letters and/or records of significant interactions that occur.

(19) Where the student involved is an international student, the Team may take the following additional actions:

- a. If the student is a Study Abroad or Exchange student, contact their home university or agent as they may be in contact with the relevant emergency contact or next of kin.
- b. Consult with the student about alerting their emergency contact prior to doing so, wherever possible.
- c. Hire independent interpreters (if required). Consideration should be given to this regardless of English language proficiency due to the impact of shock or grief for people for whom English is a second language.
- d. Liaise with OGEP and Student Administration to:
 - place the student on leave
 - Inform the Department of Home Affairs about the situation and any student visa implications.
 - Discuss implications for the student's enrolment, finances (e.g. student fees) and visa conditions, where applicable.
- e. Help the student to obtain legal advice, if needed.



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- f. There can be costs associated with a critical incident. Where the student's personal or overseas insurance does not cover costs associated with the incident, the student and/or family will need to meet those costs. Director, Office of Global Engagement and Partnerships (OGEP) can be contacted if students or their families have questions.

Recovering from a critical student incident

(20) The Team will stand down, with the consent of the Vice-Chancellor, at such time as the ongoing management of the incident can be transitioned to the business as usual roles and responsibilities of the University.

(21) Prior to standing down, the Team is to compile a recovery plan identifying forward actions and assigning these to responsible officers for completion against due dates.

(22) The recovery plan may include any of the suggested or required actions identified in this plan not actioned during the crisis activation period. In addition, a note will be placed on the student's file advising that a file responding to a critical incident has been created and is held by the Division of Safety, Security and Wellbeing. Records relating to critical incident management must be retained for a minimum of seven years unless a longer duration is specified under the NSW general disposal authorities.

(23) The chair of the Team is responsible to ensure the completion of the recovery plan items.

(24) A post incident review report is to be compiled under the oversight of the Chair of the Team. The report is to:

- a. Review the effectiveness of the resilience strategies, processes, procedures, and plans to respond to the incident.
- b. include any improvement measures to address the underlying causes of the incident
- c. include an action plan to monitor the implementation of improvement measures.

(25) Recognising that the University's governing bodies have responsibilities to monitor reports on incidents and to address underlying causes, the post incident review report is, at a minimum, to be tabled at the Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Team and University Council.



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Approval date	Approval authority	Nature of Amendment
09/07/2021	Chief Operating Officer	First version to be published
21/06/2022	N/A	Administration updates to titles and records management requirement to comply with legislation – Risk and Compliance Unit.