



## **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This policy relates to critical incidents directly involving staff and/or students on any Sydney College of Divinity (SCD) campus that have an impact on the individual and also on other members of the College community. A critical incident is any event that causes a number of people to experience reactions that are beyond their normal emotional range, including physical or psychological harm from other people or animals or due to accidents or forces of nature, such as could affect an overseas student's ability to undertake or complete a course within the duration of the student visa.

### **PREEMPTIVE SAFETY MEASURES**

1. All campuses will operate at all times in accordance with the current Work Health and Safety Standards and will make WHS resources and training available for staff. See:
  - a. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>
  - b. <https://www.safetystartswithyou.nsw.gov.au/>.
2. All campuses will take all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment on campus and advise all students, including overseas students, and staff on actions they can take to enhance their personal security and safety.
3. All campuses will ensure that overseas students are provided with information about seeking assistance for and reporting an incident that significantly affects their wellbeing, including critical incidents, and also general information on safety and awareness relevant to life in Australia.
4. The Critical Incident Policy and Procedures will be made available to all students, including overseas students. Any separate critical incident policy or protocol drawn up by a Member Institution for use at its campus(es) will accord with the thrust of SCD's Critical Incident Policy and Procedures, while providing relevant local details to all students at that campus, including overseas students. It is understood that circumstances may demand some variation in the sequence of actions at Stages 2 and 3 below that achieves similar results in handling the incident itself, assisting anyone affected, informing relevant people, documenting the incident in full, and keeping the requisite records.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **Stage 1: Identifying a critical incident**

This policy relates to critical incidents that fall within any of the following criteria directly involving staff and/or students of the SCD, its Schools and its Member Institutions (MIs):

- An incident that results in a physical injury requiring professional medical treatment occurring within the SCD or its Member Institution's campus boundaries plus, for overseas students, off-campus.
- An incident that results in significant damage to the SCD or its Member Institution's facilities or property.
- An incident that threatens the safety of staff and/or students within the SCD or its Member Institution's campus boundaries plus, for overseas students, off-campus.
- An incident that impacts significantly on the normal emotional experience of the College community.
- An incident that may be identified as falling outside of boundaries of what would be considered normally appropriate (e.g. sexual misconduct, physical violence, intimidation, etc.) that impacts significantly on student/student or staff/student relationships and interaction.

## **Stage 2: Action to be taken in relation to on-campus incidents**

5. This sequence is the norm for a critical incident, including any affecting overseas students – circumstances may demand some variation that achieves similar results in handling the incident itself, assisting anyone affected, informing relevant people, documenting the incident in full, and keeping the requisite records:
  - Any critical incident is reported to the person in charge of the campus at the time - Principal/Dean/Campus Co-ordinator/delegated officer – by any student or staff member who becomes aware of it.
  - Issues of safety are addressed immediately, using evacuation procedures and/or calling emergency services where necessary and following up the outcome.
  - The person in charge needs to ascertain the facts and be able to verify what was 'reported to have occurred' - this will involve both those who reported the incident and those involved. The reported facts will be documented at this stage by the person in charge.
  - The person in charge meets with and informs the critical incident team, which is normally the 'Executive Committee' for the campus and receives any relevant advice. Appropriate steps to be taken are planned and documented as soon as the nature of the incident allows.
  - The Student Support Officer (e.g. the Registrar or Academic Dean) and any additional counsellors required are contacted by the person in charge.
  - Remaining staff are informed by the person in charge, as appropriate.
  - Where appropriate, the clergy are informed.
  - The person in charge communicates with the students and college/campus community affected by the critical incident, being mindful of legal and privacy constraints.
  - Siblings and close friends of the victims are informed individually and the emergency contacts for overseas students affected are contacted and informed.
  - The person in charge informs the rest of the campus community, if appropriate.
  - The person in charge contacts organisations and individuals for additional assistance if required.
  - The person in charge informs the Office of the Dean of the critical incident.

- The person in charge informs the relevant consulate for overseas students affected, as appropriate.
- All students and staff members are informed of counselling and assistance available.
- The person on charge will establish a supportive, calm atmosphere by maintaining normal procedures as far as possible.
- The person in charge plans the response to the media, as required.
- The Chaplain prepares memorials or prayer services, if required.
- The details of the event and all steps that were followed must be documented and held on file by the person in charge for prompt communication to the Office of the Dean as soon as possible (see Stage 4 below).
- If overseas students are absent from their studies as a result of the critical incident, the person in charge will make every effort to maintain contact with the overseas students and/or those taking care of them until the situation is resolved, for these reasons: (i) appropriate pastoral care should be made available, if appropriate, as a tenet of the SCD and its Member Institutions; (ii) SCD must be in a position to report variations to student enrolments on PRISMS as required.

### **Stage 3: Additional actions to be taken in relation to off-campus incidents involving an overseas student**

In addition to the steps outlined above, the person in charge will undertake these further actions in relation to incidents that occur off-campus and affect overseas students:

- Ensure overseas students are aware (i) that the College will assist them in the event of a critical incident that occurs off-campus, (ii) that the practical assistance will be available immediately, as possible, and (iii) that the College will assist them with any flow-on effect on their physical and psychological wellbeing, their studies, and/or their visa. Immediate practical assistance might, for instance, involve calling emergency services on behalf of overseas students affected and following up the outcome, informing those with whom the students affected live in Australia, if appropriate, or otherwise acting on an immediate request from the students affected, as appropriate (e.g. to have things fetched to them in hospital).
- Inform family or emergency contacts overseas of the incident, if appropriate.
- Provide guidance to family or emergency contacts overseas in relation to travel to Australia to support overseas students, if appropriate.
- Advise overseas students involved in a critical incident to consult the Department of Home Affairs as soon as possible, if their COE and visa may be affected.
- If overseas students are absent from their studies as a result of the critical incident, the person in charge will make every effort to maintain contact with the overseas students and/or those taking care of them until the situation is resolved, for these reasons: (i) appropriate pastoral care should be made available, if appropriate, as a tenet of the SCD and its Member Institutions; (ii) SCD must be in a position to report variations to student enrolments on PRISMS as required.

#### Stage 4: Documenting and record-keeping by the Office of the Dean

- The Office of the Dean will confirm that the initial documenting of the incident by the person in charge has taken place.
- The Office of the Dean will ensure that the steps taken by the person in charge of the campus and his or her 'Executive Committee' are documented and sent as soon as possible to the Office of the Dean.
- The Office of the Dean will keep a written record of the critical incident and the remedial action taken for at least two years after all students involved have graduated or ceased to be an accepted student, including overseas students.

#### Stage 5: Follow-up

- The person in charge of the campus concerned will make every effort to get back to the 'normal routine', within a time frame that is appropriate to the nature of the critical incident.
- To avoid future incidents of a similar kind:
  - The persons in charge of all campuses will ensure that student support staff and any 'outside professionals' are able to meet the needs of the campus community, including overseas students.
  - Provide appropriate further support training and/or materials to staff and students and additional/improved equipment and resources, where appropriate.

<b>Author(s), Latest (Role) and Previous</b>	L. Gainer (Academic Registrar), Student Support and Administration Committee, D. Speed (Dean)
<b>Last Approval (Date)</b>	Academic Board (7 November 2016)
<b>Date for Review</b>	Nov 2021
<b>Previous Approval(s)</b>	Academic Board Standing Committee (June 2015)
<b>Minor Amendments from 1 January 2017</b>	Academic Board Standing Committee (15 October 2018, 6 June 2019)