

<b>Policy Name</b>	Critical Incidents
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<b>References:</b>	ESOS Act (2000), National Code 2018: Standard 6.8, 6.9

## 1. Purpose

This procedure ensures that any critical incident that occurs is documented, reported and action taken by PARAGON POLYTECHNIC where required.

This policy is designed to ensure that PARAGON POLYTECHNIC:

- a) Meets its Duty of Care as an ESOS based Education Provider
- b) Is able to respond to a Critical Incident effectively and promptly
- c) Provides appropriate support services to those affected
- d) Applicable information is provided to staff and students

## 2. Scope

This policy relates to critical incidents directly involving members of the college, visitors or contractors which impact not only on the individual but also on other members of the college community, and possibly the wider community.

### References

ESOS National Code 6.8 - “ *The registered provider must have and implement a documented policy and process for managing critical incidents that could affect the overseas student’s ability to undertake or complete a course, such as but not limited to incidents that may cause physical or psychological harm. The registered provider must maintain a written record of any critical incident and remedial action taken by the registered provider for at least two years after the overseas student ceases to be an accepted student*”.

### 3. Definitions

A critical incident is:

Any extraordinary and unpredicted traumatic event, or threat of such (within or outside Australia) which has the potential to harm life or well-being, and causes extreme stress, fear or injury to the person experiencing or witnessing the event, affecting students or staff that requires the implementation of special arrangements involving one or more areas of the institute.

Critical incidents may include but are not limited to

- Medical emergencies involving a student
- Critical illness of a student
- Sudden serious injury, illness, or death of a student or staff
- Serious illness, such as any illness which causes the deterioration of the student /staff member's health over time
- Serious Injury which prevents or severely affects the student's ability to complete the course
- Public transport or road traffic accidents
- Traumatic events that affect students; such as
  - Sexual Assault
  - Mental Health Crisis
  - Drug / Alcohol Overdose
- Campus Disturbance / Riot
- Fire / Explosion with Injuries or Significant Damage
- Natural Disasters (in Australia and overseas)
- Airplane Crashes
- International Hostage Situations/ Kidnappings
- National Emergencies
- Hate/Bias Incidents
- A missing student
- Physical or Sexual assault
- Occupation Health & Safety Risk
- Student or Staff witnessing a serious accident or violent act
- Fire, bomb-threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard
- Drug or Alcohol abuse
- Damaging Media attention

## 4. Requirements / Process

The Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) requires the college to notify Australian Department of Home Affairs (DHA) as soon as practicable after the incident and in the case of a student's death or other absence affecting the student's attendance, the incident will need to be reported via the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

When a student dies or sustains serious injury, the Institute may be required to assist the student's family. For international students this may include:

- hiring interpreters
- making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation
- obtaining a death certificate
- assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues
- assisting with visa issues

Where danger to life or safety occurs all members of staff are authorised to take the most appropriate action and as soon as practicable contact a senior member of staff and brief them of the incident and status.

Any college staff member receiving news or information regarding a critical incident (and after any immediate action that must be taken – e.g. contact emergency services) must contact the CEO or in his absence another senior management member as soon as practicable. If this is not possible then the most senior person available must be contacted and informed. Once notified and clearly briefed the CEO or most senior member of staff available should assume responsibility for the incident:

### Reporting a Student Critical Incident

On receipt of news or information regarding a critical incident the CEO or senior person must:

- Create for themselves a clear understanding of the known facts
- If an emergency exists (and not already done so) contact the relevant emergency services by phoning 000
- If translators are required contact Translating and Interpreting Service by phoning 131 450
- If counselling services are required contact Lifeline on 131 114
- If the critical incident is at an offshore location contact the department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for advice on the best way to assist the student
- Plan an immediate response.
- Plan ongoing strategies.
- Allocate individual roles/responsibilities for ongoing tasks.

## Critical Incident Management

The CEO or senior management member will, as soon as practical, convene a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) meeting to coordinate the response and allocate responsibility and actions.

- i. The role of the CIRT is to effectively manage critical incidents with clear actions and procedures that are humane, sensitive, and responsive to the needs of students, staff and the broader institute community.
- ii. Intervention procedures may reduce the intense reactions of students and staff to an incident and assist them in returning to their normal studies and/or duties.
- iii. The operations of the CIRT involve activities prior to, during and after periods impacted upon by the critical incident, and include
  - a. Preparing/informing students and staff on actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident
  - b. Demobilisation
  - c. Defusing
  - d. Debriefing
  - e. Personal support
  - f. Media management
  - g. Corporate Review
  - h. Reports and Records Management
- iv. The CIRT meeting should only be called once the immediate crisis or incident has been managed and no delay should be tolerated by calling such a meeting first. In this case the actions should be taken and reported to the CIRT meeting once it is convened.
- v. Based on an evaluation of the critical incident the CIRT Meeting or CEO or most senior person must implement the following (dependent upon the incident):
  - Contact with next of kin/significant others
  - Informing Institute staff and students.
  - Prepare a guideline to staff about what information to give students.
  - Prepare a written bulletin to staff and students if the matter is complex.
  - Briefing staff and delegating a staff member to deal with telephone/counter inquiries.
  - Managing media/publicity
  - Identify students and staff members most closely involved with the incident and ensure they are offered support and counselling
  - Arrange a time and place for an initial group/individual debriefing session with Counsellor/s
  - Arrange access to emergency funds if necessary.

- Record the incident and the following key details to report include
  - The time of the incident
  - The location and nature of the incident
  - The names and roles of persons directly involved in the critical incident
- The action taken by the Institute including any opportunities for improvement
- The organisations and people contacted by the Institute

There is an emergency number that is available 24 hours per day. This number is exclusive to this purpose. The phone will be either held by the CEO or it will be diverted to a responsible person within PARAGON POLYTECHNIC.

At the completion of that person's shift, the phone will either be diverted to a new person in charge or revert to the CEO. By delegating this number the CEO is also giving the person permission to act on behalf of PARAGON POLYTECHNIC, with the proviso that when events permit the CEO is immediately informed or the issue is escalated as appropriate.

The telephone number is **1300 927 601**

This information is to be posted in the International Student Handbook

Following a critical incident a CIRT meeting should be convened to analyse the Institute's response and processes and implement improvements where indicated. The recommendations should be placed in the continuous improvement register if appropriate for action to avoid a repeat of the incident or behaviour during the incident.

**A. CIRT role in preparing students/staff for a possible critical incident includes:**

- Informing students and staff of the role and activities of the CIRT
- Assisting/advising on the development of positive working relationships and morale across the institute
- Establishing contacts with and/or developing suitably trained internal or external debriefers.
- Assessing the institute environment for the potential for critical incidents.
- In consultation with students and staff, developing agreed procedures for responding to critical incidents.
- Medical emergencies involving a student
- Critical illness of a student
- Student death
- Traumatic events that affect students
- Ensuring that students/staff are familiar with these procedures

**B. CIRT role in Demobilisation**

- i. Critical incidents may trigger a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms, including increased heart rate, high blood pressure and anxiety. Demobilisation is a way of calming students and staff following a critical incident and ensuring that their immediate needs are met. A member of the CIRT, who was not involved in the incident, or affected by it, carries out the demobilisation.

- ii. A demobilisation takes place before the end of a shift or before those involved in the incident disperse. Strategies include:

- Convene a meeting for those involved as soon as possible.
- Summarise the incident and clarify uncertainties.
- Invite questions and discuss issues of concern.
- Show care and support.
- Draw up a plan of action, taking into account the needs of the students/staff.
- Make short-term arrangements for study/work responsibilities.
- Offer information on defusing and debriefing.

### **C. CIRT role in Defusing**

- i. Defusing is conducted by a trained person and is designed to bring the experience of the incident to a conclusion and provide immediate personal support. The aim is to stabilise the responses of students/staff involved in the incident and allow an opportunity for them to express any immediate concerns. This step should take place within 12 hours of the incident.

Strategies include:

- Review the event.
- Clarify student/staff questions and concerns.
- Encourage student/staff to talk about what happened.
- Identify current needs.
- Offer student/staff advice, information and handouts on referrals and support agencies.
- Arrange debriefing and follow-up sessions to provide additional information about the event when available.

### **D. CRT role in Debriefing**

- i. Debriefing is usually carried out within three to seven days of the critical incident, when students and staff have had enough time to take in the experience. Debriefing is not counselling. It is a structured voluntary discussion aimed at putting an abnormal event into perspective. It offers students/staff clarity about the critical incident they have experienced and assists them to establish a process for recovery.

Debriefers help the students/staff to explore and understand a range of issues, including:

- The sequence of events
- The causes and consequences
- Each person's experience
- Any memories triggered by the incident
- Normal psychological reactions to critical incidents
- Methods to manage emotional responses resulting from a critical incident

#### **E. CIRT role in personal support**

- i. An immediate and primary role of the CIRT is to determine how the institute can support the individual student(s) and their families involved in the incident.
- ii. The CEO manages all agreed communications and support mechanisms with affected students and their families.
- iii. The CIRT through the student services officer arranges for particular students most closely related to the student(s) involved in the incident to receive personal support.

#### **G. CIRT role in Media management**

- i. All media enquiries, press releases and institute website postings related to the critical incident are managed by the CIRT.
- ii. The CEO or Training Manager will be the only people approved by the CIRT to deal with communications with the media.
- iii. The CIRT has a responsibility to impress upon students and staff that there may be pressure on students/ staff to provide photos to the media. Out of respect for the students/staff and their families and to protect the integrity of the institute, no photos other than those approved by the CIRT should be released to the media

#### **H. CIRT role in the corporate review**

- i. A corporate review is held a few weeks after the incident. The CIRT reviews all aspects of the incident to uncover deficiencies in the handling of the incident, and provide corrective solutions. The review looks at how the incident was handled, how it could have been handled better and the effectiveness of the intervention strategies. Related institute policies, safety regulations, safe work procedures are also reviewed.

#### **I. CIRT role in Reports and Records management**

- i. The Training Manager is responsible for administration across the institute who is a member of the CIRT has the responsibility for ensuring that
  - a. Minutes and agendas of ongoing CIRT meetings are maintained
  - b. A file is raised each time the CIRT is convened to deal with a specific critical incident.
  - c. This file (electronic and/or hardcopy) includes but is not limited to records of;

The incident

- The nature of the incident
- The people involved in the incident
- How the institute became aware of the incident
- Student support measures;
- Communications with
- external bodies (Police/emergency services/DET/DHA/OSO/ ASQA),
- media outlets and
- particularly members of student families;
- Reports from demobilisation, defusing and debriefing sessions;
- Action plans;
- Corporate review report and
- Subsequent amendments to institute policies and procedures.

**5. Related Policies and Procedures**

- International Student Enrolment Policy
- Student Support Services Policy