

CRITICAL INCIDENTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1.10. Critical Incidents Policy and Procedure

Policy Content

Aspect	Details
Regulator	Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
Standards Referenced	
Legislation / Requirements	

Purpose

To ensure the RTO effectively manages critical incidents involving students or staff through structured response, support coordination, compliance with reporting obligations, and minimisation of disruption to RTO operations.

Policy Statement

The RTO is committed to promptly identifying, responding to, and resolving critical incidents to safeguard student wellbeing and meet all legislative, regulatory, and duty-of-care obligations. The RTO ensures staff are prepared to manage incidents and support affected individuals, particularly international students.

Objectives

- To define what constitutes a critical incident and how such incidents are to be reported and managed.
- To assign responsibilities for managing critical incidents.
- To provide timely, coordinated, and appropriate responses to minimise harm.
- To ensure accurate documentation and review of incidents for continuous improvement.
- To comply with regulatory reporting obligations, particularly under the ESOS National Code.

Scope

This policy applies to all current, prospective, and past students, as well as all RTO personnel involved in the delivery of services on and off campus. It includes incidents involving international students, including those occurring outside normal operating hours.

Procedures

1.10.1. Immediate Identification and Notification

- Any RTO staff member, student, or visitor who witnesses or becomes aware of a critical incident must report it immediately.
- Notification must be made to the RTO Manager or Principal Executive Officer (PEO) without delay.
- If the incident involves serious harm, injury, fire, or risk to life, the notifier must also call 000 Emergency Services.
- The person reporting the incident must:
 - Remain calm and provide clear, factual details (what happened, who is involved, location).
 - Stay at the scene (if safe) until assistance arrives or they are advised otherwise.
 - Avoid speculating or discussing the incident publicly.
- Internal notification can be made by phone, in person, or through the RTO's emergency communication system.
- All incidents must be treated seriously and reported even if there is uncertainty about the level of risk.

1.10.2. Activation of Critical Incident Response

- Upon receiving the incident report, the RTO Manager conducts an initial risk assessment to determine if the event qualifies as a critical incident.
- If deemed critical, the Critical Incident Team (CIT) is immediately activated.
- The RTO Manager assumes the role of team leader, coordinating all response actions.
- Team members may include:

- Student Support Officer
- Workplace Health and Safety Representative
- Other relevant personnel depending on the incident type
- The CIT immediately convenes to:
 - Verify facts and confirm the details of the incident
 - Assess risk to individuals and operations
 - Assign specific responsibilities to team members for managing the situation
- If needed, the RTO contacts external emergency services and facilitates their access to the premises or affected student(s).
- Communication is initiated with relevant stakeholders internally to ensure prompt coordination.

1.10.3. Communication and Coordination

- The RTO Manager oversees all communication related to the critical incident.
- The privacy, dignity, and cultural sensitivities of all involved individuals are respected.
- Internal communication is established to:
 - Inform relevant RTO staff of their roles or precautions to take.
 - Ensure that students and staff are kept updated where appropriate.
- The RTO Manager determines whether to inform:
 - Emergency contacts of affected students or staff.
 - Parents or guardians of international students.
- If international students are involved, the RTO ensures:
 - Culturally appropriate support is offered.
 - Language barriers are addressed using interpreters or translated information if required.

- Only the Principal Executive Officer (PEO) or RTO Manager may speak to the media.
 - Media statements are managed carefully to ensure accuracy and protect the RTO's reputation.
- Communication with external authorities or agencies is documented and kept on record.

1.10.4. Documentation and Reporting

- The staff member who witnesses or manages the incident completes a Critical Incident Report Form as soon as possible.
- The form includes:
 - Date, time, and location of the incident
 - Names of persons involved
 - Description of the incident
 - Actions taken and support provided
 - Follow-up or referrals required
- The RTO Manager:
 - Reviews and verifies the completed report
 - Ensures all information is factual, complete, and clearly recorded
 - Signs off on the report and files it securely
- All documentation is:
 - Stored in the student's file (if applicable)
 - Logged in the Critical Incident Register
- Records must comply with confidentiality requirements and be accessible only to authorised personnel.
- Any further correspondence or updates regarding the incident are appended to the original record.

1.10.5. Student Support and Follow-Up

- The RTO Manager and Student Support Officer coordinate appropriate support services for affected students and staff.

- **Support may include:**
 - **Counselling or trauma support from qualified professionals**
 - **Medical assistance or referrals if physical health is affected**
 - **Academic support, such as flexible deadlines, deferments, or study plan adjustments**
- **The Student Support Officer:**
 - **Conducts regular check-ins with the affected student(s) to monitor wellbeing**
 - **Liaises with trainers and assessors to ensure academic needs are considered**
- **Any actions taken are:**
 - **Documented in the student's file**
 - **Noted in the Critical Incident Register for management oversight**
- **Support is provided in a culturally sensitive and student-centred manner, especially for international students**
- **Students are informed of available resources and encouraged to access them as needed**

1.10.6. Post-Incident Review and Corrective Actions

- **After the incident has been managed, the RTO Manager convenes a management review meeting.**
- **The review includes relevant members of the Critical Incident Team and may include:**
 - **Student Support Officer**
 - **WHS Officer**
 - **Course Coordinators or other involved staff**
- **Discussion focuses on:**
 - **What occurred, how it was managed, and any difficulties encountered**
 - **Root causes or contributing factors to the incident**

- Response effectiveness and any delays or communication gaps
- Outcomes of the meeting are:
 - Documented in the Continuous Improvement Register
 - Used to identify policy or procedure updates, if necessary
 - Used to determine if staff training or drills should be modified or introduced
- Follow-up tasks are:
 - Clearly allocated to responsible staff
 - Tracked through to completion by the RTO Manager

1.10.7. Death of a Student (If Applicable)

- The PEO or RTO Manager takes immediate lead in managing the situation with dignity, legal compliance, and compassion.
- The family of the deceased student is:
 - Contacted personally by the PEO or RTO Manager
 - Offered condolences and support
 - Asked about preferences regarding cultural/religious practices and repatriation
- The RTO coordinates:
 - Repatriation of the body in line with the family's wishes and Australian legal requirements
 - Handling of personal effects, ensuring respectful packaging and delivery
- A formal condolence letter is issued on behalf of the RTO to the family
- Internal administrative actions are completed, including:
 - Updating the student management system to reflect the student's status
 - Cancelling the CoE and notifying relevant authorities (e.g., Department of Home Affairs)

- Processing tuition refunds, if applicable, as per the Fees and Refunds Policy
- All records of the incident and communications are:
 - Maintained confidentially
 - Filed in the student's file for secure retention and future reference
- The RTO ensures that affected students and staff receive:
 - Counselling support
 - Time off or academic accommodations, if needed

1.10.8. Public Relations and Media Communication

- In any case where the incident has public interest or reputational risk, the PEO or RTO Manager assumes full responsibility for external communication.
- No other staff member is authorised to make statements or provide comments to the media.
- The PEO or RTO Manager will:
 - Assess the nature and impact of the incident on public perception.
 - Prepare an official media statement, if necessary, with input from legal advisors or communication professionals if required.
 - Ensure that any statement:
 - Is factual, brief and professional
 - Protects the privacy and dignity of the student(s) involved
 - Complies with the Privacy Act 1988 and relevant regulatory guidelines
- If contacted by media personnel, other staff are instructed to:
 - Politely declined comment
 - Redirect all inquiries to the PEO or RTO Manager
- All public relations records (media inquiries, statements, communications) are:

- **Logged and filed in the incident report file**
- **Reviewed post-incident as part of the continuous improvement process**

Roles and Responsibilities

Role/Position	Responsibilities
Principal Executive Officer (PEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorised spokesperson for media communication - Oversees incident management and legal compliance - Supports family liaison in serious incidents (e.g. student death) - Approves formal reports and communication actions
RTO Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leads the Critical Incident Team (CIT) - Conducts initial risk assessment and classifies criticality - Coordinates incident response and internal communications - Manages documentation, reporting, and escalation procedures
Critical Incident Team (CIT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assists in immediate response actions - Coordinates implementation of the Critical Incident Plan - Liaises with emergency services as required - Conducts post-incident review and drills
Student Support Officer (SSO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides welfare and counselling support to affected students - Maintains regular follow-up and documentation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arranges cultural and linguistic support where necessary
WHS Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advises on health and safety risks - Supports onsite coordination during emergencies - Participates in incident prevention and response planning
All RTO Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible for identifying and reporting incidents immediately - Must complete critical incident forms accurately and promptly - Maintain confidentiality and comply with instructions during and after the incident
Administrative Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Files and securely stores all incident records - Updates student management systems as directed - Assists in coordinating communication with emergency contacts/family

Confidentiality and Privacy

- The RTO is committed to protecting the personal information of students and staff involved in any critical incident.
- All records and reports concerning a critical incident are stored securely and only accessible to authorised personnel (e.g. RTO Manager, PEO).
- Any discussion, documentation, or correspondence related to the incident is handled discreetly and with cultural, linguistic, and personal sensitivity.
- Information about the incident will not be shared with third parties unless:
 - Required by law.
 - Necessary to prevent imminent risk to health or safety.

- Consent has been provided by the affected individual.
- All personnel involved in managing or witnessing the incident are reminded of their confidentiality obligations during training and induction.

Continuous Improvement

- After each critical incident, a formal review is conducted by the RTO Manager and Critical Incident Team to evaluate the response and identify improvement opportunities.
- Any repeat issues or systemic concerns are recorded in the Continuous Improvement Register and discussed during the next Management Review Meeting.
- Findings may result in:
 - Updates to the Critical Incident Plan or procedures.
 - Additional staff training or drills.
 - Adjustments to student safety protocols or resource allocation.
- Feedback from students and staff involved in the incident is collected (where appropriate) and used to refine RTO procedures and welfare strategies.
- The continuous improvement process ensures that the RTO maintains readiness, meets compliance expectations, and supports a safe, responsive learning environment.

Retention of Records

- All documents related to the critical incident, including reports, communication logs, and response actions, are retained for a minimum of seven (7) years from the date of the incident.
- These records are securely stored in the Student Management System (SMS) and/or incident register, with access restricted to designated personnel.
- Records are managed in accordance with the RTO's Document Control and Record Management Policy, ensuring:
 - Data integrity.
 - Timely retrieval for audit or legal purposes.

- **Secure disposal after the retention period.**
- **For incidents involving international students, relevant documentation will also comply with ESOS and CRICOS requirements.**