

# **Critical Incidents**

## **Policy and Procedure**

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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Critical Incidents Policy and Procedure is to:

- Plan for, respond to and manage critical incidents that impact AFTT students and members of the AFTT workforce,
- Set out AFTT's process for managing critical incidents.

## 2. SCOPE

The Critical Incidents Policy and Procedure applies to all members of the AFTT workforce, international and domestic students, and visitors, for critical incidents – either on-campus or off-campus including members of the workforce on business related travel interstate or overseas. Where AFTT workforce members or students witness an event that may be considered a critical incident or escalate to a critical incident, this policy and procedure should be followed.

For the purpose of this policy and procedure, members of the AFTT workforce are referred to as 'staff'.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

All definitions are located in the *AFTT Glossary*.

## 4. POLICY

- 4.1. All students and staff at AFTT have the right to feel safe and to be safe. AFTT is committed to:
  - 4.1.1. Providing a prompt and appropriate response to critical incidents, and
  - 4.1.2. Taking all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment on campus and advise students and staff on actions they can take to enhance their safety and wellbeing.
- 4.2. AFTT recognises that:
  - 4.2.1. Planning for the management of a critical incident is essential to enable AFTT and its staff to meet the duty of care owed to its students,
  - 4.2.2. Maintaining confidentiality and respect the privacy of those involved in a critical incident are of the utmost importance.
- 4.3. AFTT recognises that appropriate infrastructure must be in place to ensure that all necessary support services are provided in the event of and as a consequence of a critical incident. This support will extend beyond the time of the specific event to address any post events support needs.
- 4.4. AFTT will provide information to students and staff about how to seek assistance for and report an incident that significantly impacts on students' wellbeing, including critical incidents.
- 4.5. AFTT staff will be made aware of the Critical Incident Policy and Procedure and be given appropriate induction, to understand the procedures to use in managing a critical incident.
- 4.6. As a follow-up action, AFTT will develop a Critical Incident Action Evaluation Plan to review the management and response of the critical incident to address the underlying causes and various aspects arising from the incident including:
  - 4.6.1. Evaluating and reviewing the plan,

- 4.6.2. Creating and disseminating a revised plan and its procedures for future incidents,
  - 4.6.3. Updating and publishing relevant policy and procedures, and
  - 4.6.4. Organising appropriate staff development and training.
- 4.7. AFTT's Senior Management Committee is responsible for determining actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident and any follow up required.
- 4.8. Campus Manager or delegate will:
- 4.8.1. Be the first point of contact when a critical incident occurs,
  - 4.8.2. Contact the Director of International Services, or delegate, immediately, where an international student is involved,
  - 4.8.3. Rate the incident according to the risk assessment plan (in collaboration with the Director of International Services where an international student is involved). Depending on the risk assessment, a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) may be convened.
- 4.9. Staff members have a responsibility to report and respond to critical incidents involving the students with whom they have contact.
- 4.10. Student (or student's family):
- 4.10.1. Will cover any costs incurred from arrangements made following a critical incident, including an accident or the illness or death of a student,
  - 4.10.2. Must give their consent, in writing if circumstances permit, prior to any arrangements being made that involve payment for a service.
- 4.11. Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) Membership
- 4.11.1. Membership to the CIRT involves nomination by Campus Manager followed by approval by the Senior Management Committee.
  - 4.11.2. The CIRT is chaired by the Campus Manager.
  - 4.11.3. Membership of the CIRT is reviewed/revised every two years or as required.
  - 4.11.4. Membership can include:
    - Heads of Department,
    - Student Services Team Leader,
    - Director of International Services,
    - Director of Marketing and Brand, and
    - Nominated trained staff member/or agency/or counsellor.
- 4.12. 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 AFTT community. 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.

## **5. PROCEDURE**

- 5.1. Critical Incident – First Point of Contact  
When AFTT is advised of a critical incident, the matter is referred immediately to the Campus Manager or delegate as the first point of contact.
- 5.2. Forming Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)
- 5.2.1. Each incident will be rated according to the risk assessment plan.
  - 5.2.2. The Campus Manager or delegate decides on 'critical incident' i.e., does the event meet the critical incident definition with a risk rating of 1 or 2?

- 5.2.2.1. If yes, the Campus Manager convenes the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) and advises the Chief Executive Officer,
  - 5.2.2.2. If no, the Campus Manager, advises on the appropriate course of action.
- 5.2.3. Where an international student is involved, the Campus Manager will notify the Director of International Services and the CIRT is convened. The Director of International Services or delegate must be a member of the CIRT.
- 5.3. Operations of Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)  
CIRT is involved in activities prior to, during and after periods impacted upon by the critical incident, which include:
- 5.3.1. Preparing/informing students and staff on actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident,
  - 5.3.2. Initial action,
  - 5.3.3. Stabilising the AFTT community,
  - 5.3.4. Debriefing:
    - Personal support,
    - Media management,
    - Corporate review,
    - Reports and Records management.
- 5.4. Preparing members of CIRT, students, and staff for a possible critical incident  
In preparing for a possible critical incident, the CIRT will:
- 5.4.1. Inform AFTT students and staff of the role and activities of the CIRT,
  - 5.4.2. Assist and advise on the development of positive working relationships and morale across AFTT,
  - 5.4.3. Establish contacts with and/or develop suitably trained internal or external debriefers,
  - 5.4.4. In consultation with students and staff, develop and implement, agreed procedures for responding to critical incidents, which can include:
    - Medical emergencies involving a student,
    - Critical illness of a student,
    - Student death,
    - Traumatic events that affect students,
  - 5.4.5. Ensure that students and staff are familiar with these procedures, e.g., student induction, staff induction, and that information is also available on the AFTT website and Learning Management System,
  - 5.4.6. Meet twice a year to:
    - 5.4.6.1. Review the composition of CRIT,
    - 5.4.6.2. Review and practice procedures for responding to critical incidents,
    - 5.4.6.3. Assess AFTT environment for the potential for critical incidents,
    - 5.4.6.4. Confirm that students and staff have access to the procedures and information regarding critical incidents.
- 5.5. Initial response to critical incident
- 5.5.1. Critical incidents may trigger a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms, including increased heart rate, high blood pressure and anxiety. The initial action of Campus Manager or delegate, following a critical incident, is to:
    - 5.5.1.1. Determine whether emergency services are required,
    - 5.5.1.2. Deal with any immediate threats, and
    - 5.5.1.3. Calm students and staff to ensure that their immediate needs are met.
  - 5.5.2. Response strategies include:

- 5.5.2.1. Contact emergency services (Phone: 000 or 112 from a mobile for police, fire, and ambulance),
- 5.5.2.2. Contact the family of any student directly involved in the critical incident,
- 5.5.2.3. Contact other relevant organisations who may be able to assist if necessary, including but not limited to:
  - Counselling online (Phone: 1800 888 236 or Website: [www.counsellingonline.org.au](http://www.counsellingonline.org.au))
  - Department of Home Affairs (Phone: 131 881 or Website: [www.homeaffairs.gov.au](http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au))
  - External Support Services as listed in the Student Handbook.
- 5.5.2.4. Convene a meeting for those involved as soon as possible,
- 5.5.2.5. Summarise the incident and clarify uncertainties,
- 5.5.2.6. Invite questions and discuss issues of concern,
- 5.5.2.7. Show care and support,
- 5.5.2.8. Draw up a plan of action, considering the needs of the students and staff,
- 5.5.2.9. Make short-term arrangements for study and work responsibilities,
- 5.5.2.10. Offer information on defusing and debriefing.

#### 5.6. Stabilising the AFTT community

5.6.1. The role of stabilising the AFTT community is assigned to a trained person, i.e., the Campus Counsellor, who will provide immediate personal support and bring the experience of the incident to a conclusion. The aim is to stabilise the responses of students and 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.

5.6.2. Stabilising strategies include:

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

#### 5.7. CIRT role in debriefing

5.7.1. Debriefing is usually carried out within three (3) to seven (7) 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 and staff clarity about the critical incident they have experienced and assists them to establish a process for recovery.

5.7.2. Campus Manager will appoint appropriately qualified staff to act as debriefers. Debriefers help the students and 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 incident,
- Methods to manage emotional responses resulting from a critical incident.

#### 5.8. CIRT role in personal support

- 5.8.1. An immediate and primary role of the CIRT is to determine how AFTT can support the individual student(s) and their families involved in the incident.
- 5.8.2. Campus Manager or delegate will manage all agreed communications and support mechanisms with affected students and their families.
- 5.8.3. CIRT through the Campus Manager will arrange for particular students most closely related to the student(s) involved in the incident to receive personal support.

#### 5.9. CIRT role in media management

- 5.9.1. All media enquiries, press releases, and AFTT website postings related to the critical incident are managed by the CIRT.
- 5.9.2. Campus Manager or Director of Marketing and Brand will be the only people approved by the CIRT to deal with communications with the media.
- 5.9.3. CIRT has a responsibility to impress upon students and staff that there may be pressure on students and staff to provide photos to the media. Out of respect for the students, staff, and their families, and to protect the integrity of AFTT, no photos other than those approved by the CIRT should be released to the media.

#### 5.10. CIRT role in the corporate review

- 5.10.1. A corporate review will be held a few weeks after the incident by members of Senior Management Committee. CIRT will review all aspects of the incident to uncover deficiencies in the handling of the incident and provide corrective solutions and report to Senior Management Committee.
- 5.10.2. The review will look at:
  - How the incident was handled,
  - How it could have been handled better, and
  - The effectiveness of the intervention strategies, related policies, safety regulations, and safe work procedures.

#### 5.11. CIRT role in reports and records management

Campus Manager, responsible for administration and who is a member of the CIRT, will ensure that:

- 5.11.1. Minutes and agendas of ongoing CIRT meetings are maintained,
- 5.11.2. A file is raised each time the CIRT is convened to deal with a specific critical incident. 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 AFTT became aware of the incident,
  - Student support measures,
  - Communications with external bodies (police/emergency services/Department of Education/Department of Home Affairs/Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority/Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia, embassies), media outlets and particularly members of student families,
  - Reports from defusing and debriefing sessions,
  - Action plans,
  - Corporate review report, and
  - Subsequent amendments to AFTT policies and procedures.

## **6. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- 6.1. AFTT Glossary
- 6.2. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- 6.3. Critical Incident Action Evaluation Plan

## **7. RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 7.1. Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth)
- 7.2. Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- 7.3. Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 (Cth)
- 7.4. National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

## **8. POSITIONS RESPONSIBLE**

- 8.1. Governing Council
- 8.2. Academic Board
- 8.3. Senior Management Committee
- 8.4. Members of the AFTT workforce
- 8.5. AFTT students



## 9. APPROVAL INFORMATION

<b>Approval Authority</b>	Governing Council
<b>Health Check approval authority</b>	AFTT CEO
<b>Review date</b>	15/11/2024

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Modifications	Status
1.0	AFTT CEO	05/08/2021	15/11/2021	Amendments as per external reviewer's recommendations. <b>Critical Incidents Policy</b> and <b>Critical Incidents Procedure</b> have been merged into one document.	Current

*Version control tables from previous Policies and Procedures reside in the original documents.*

## Appendix 1 – Table 1 – Critical Incidents Reporting and Procedure Flow Chart

