

Critical Incidents Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to assist AFTT Academic/Admin Team and students in the management of critical incidents.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all AFTT Academic/Admin Team, students and visitors who have been exposed to a critical incident – either on-campus or off-campus (students & staff) including staff on business related travel interstate or overseas. Where AFTT Academic/Admin Team witness an event that may be considered a critical incident, the policy and procedures should be followed.

Where AFTT Academic/Admin Team are aware of an event which may either indicate or escalate to a critical incident, the policy and procedures should be followed.

DEFINITIONS

ESOS National Code

The ESOS National Code refers to the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 established under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000.

PRISMS

Provider Registration and International Students Management System (PRISMS). It provides Australian education providers with the Confirmation-of-Enrolment (CoE) facilities required for compliance with the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Legislation.

Compassionate or Compelling circumstances

Compassionate or compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the student's course progress or wellbeing. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the student was unable to attend classes;
- Bereavement of close family members such as parents or grandparents;
- Major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel and this has impacted on the student's studies;
- A traumatic experience that has impacted on the student which could include involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident; and witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, supported by police or psychologist's reports; or
- Where the Institute was unable to offer a pre-requisite subject.

Critical Incident

A critical incident is defined as 'a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury'. It includes but not limited to incidents that may cause physical or psychological harm.

Critical incidents are not limited to, but could include:

- Medical emergencies involving a student or staff;
- Critical illness of a student;
- Unexpected student/staff death;
- Missing students;
- Severe oral, written or psychological aggression;
- Natural disaster;
- Campus disturbance/riot;
- Fire/explosion with injuries or significant damage;
- Traumatic events that affect students; such as
 - Sexual Assault
 - Domestic violence
 - Mental Health Crisis
 - Drug / Alcohol Overdose

Non-life threatening events can be classed as critical incidents.

Emergency Incident

A sudden, serious and urgent incident needing immediate Emergency Services support.

CIRT - Critical Incident Response Team.

POLICY

The AFTT Academic/Admin Team recognises that planning for the management of a critical incident is essential to enable the Academy and its staff to meet the duty of care owed to its students.

The AFTT Academic/Admin Team is committed to providing a prompt and appropriate response to critical incidents. AFTT's senior management is responsible for determining actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident and any follow up required.

All students at AFTT have the right to feel safe and to be safe. Staff members have a responsibility to report and respond to critical incidents involving the students with whom they have contact. AFTT is committed to take all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment on campus and advise overseas students and staff on actions they can take to enhance their safety and wellbeing.

AFTT Academic/Admin Team 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. The support should extend beyond the time of the specific event to address any post events support needs.

AFTT Academic/Admin Team will provide information to overseas students about how to seek assistance for and report an incident that significantly impacts on students' wellbeing, including critical incidents.

AFTT Academic/Admin Team will be made aware of the Critical Incident policy and procedures and be given appropriate induction, to understand the procedures to use in managing a critical incident.

As a follow-up action, AFTT Academic/Admin Team 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:

- Evaluating and reviewing the plan;
- Creating and disseminating a revised plan and its procedures for future incidents;
- Updating and publishing relevant policy and procedures; and
- Organising appropriate staff development and training.

1.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Campus Manager or a nominee shall be the first point of contact when a critical incident occurs.
- Where an international student is involved, the Campus Manager or nominee should contact the Director of International Services, or nominee, immediately.
- The Campus Manager (and the Director of International Services where an international student is involved) will rate the incident according to the risk assessment plan. Depending on the risk assessment, a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) may be convened.
- Any costs incurred from arrangements made following a critical incident, including an accident or the illness or death of a student will be met by the student and/or the student's family.
- The student and/or the student's family must give their consent, in writing if circumstances permit, prior to any arrangements being made that involve payment for a service.

1.2 CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM (CIRT)

The CIRT is chaired by the Campus Manager and membership can include:

- Course Directors
- Administration
- Director of International Services,
- Nominated trained team member/or agency/or counsellor.

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, team members 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.

The CIRT shall follow the procedures set out in the Critical Incidents Procedure.

PROCEDURE

1.1 CRITICAL INCIDENT – FIRST POINT OF CONTACT

If AFTT is advised of a critical incident the Campus Manager, or their delegate, is usually the first point of contact.

1.2 FORMING CIRT

Each incident should be rated according to the risk assessment plan. The Campus Manager, or their delegate, makes a decision on 'critical incident' i.e. does the event meet the critical incident definition with a risk rating of 1 or 2?

- If yes, the Campus Manager convenes the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT);

- If no, the Campus Manager or nominee, advises on appropriate course of action.

Where an international student is involved, the Director of International Services must be notified and CIRT is formed. The Director of International Services or nominee must be a member of the CIRT.

1.3 CIRT MEMBERSHIP

The CIRT is chaired by the Campus Manager and membership can include:

- Course Director;
- Head of Student Services and Admin;
- Director, International Services; and
- Nominated trained team members member/or agency/or counsellor.

1.4 THE ROLE OF CIRT

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, team members and the broader AFTT community. Intervention procedures may reduce the intense reactions of students and team members to an incident and assist them in returning to their normal studies and/or duties.

1.5 THE OPERATIONS OF CIRT

The operations of the CIRT involve activities prior to, during and after periods impacted upon by the critical incident, and include:

- Preparing/informing students and team members on actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident,
- Initial action,
- Stabilising the AFTT community,
- Debriefing:
 - Personal support,
 - Media management,
 - Corporate review,
 - Reports and Records management.

1.6 THE OPERATIONS OF CIRT

The CIRT role in preparing students/team members for a possible critical incident includes:

- Informing AFTT students and team members of the role and activities of the CIRT;
- Assisting/advising on the development of positive working relationships and morale across the Academy;
- Establishing contacts with and/or developing suitably trained internal or external de-briefers;
- Assessing AFTT environment for the potential for critical incidents;
- In consultation with students and team members, 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/team members are familiar with these procedures.

1.7 CIRT INITIAL ACTION

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 AFTT is to calm students and team members following a critical incident and to ensure that their immediate needs are met. A member of the CIRT, who was not involved in the incident, or affected by it, is responsible for this initial action.

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

- Contact emergency services if necessary,
- 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/team members,
- Make short-term arrangements for study/work responsibilities,
- Offer information on defusing and debriefing.

1.8 CIRT ROLE IN STABILISING THE ACADEMY COMMUNITY

The role of stabilising AFTT community is assigned to a trained person (e.g. Campus Counsellor) and is designed to bring the experience of the incident to a conclusion and provide immediate personal support. The aim is to stabilize the responses of students/team members involved in the incident and allow an opportunity for them to express any immediate concerns. This step should take place within twelve (12) hours of the incident.

Strategies include:

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

1.9 CIRT ROLE IN DEBRIEFING

Debriefing is usually carried out within three (3) to seven (7) days of the critical incident, when students and team members 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/team members clarity about the critical incident they have experienced and assists them to establish a process for recovery.

De-briefers help the students/team members 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; and
- Methods to manage emotional responses resulting from a critical incident.

1.10 CIRT ROLE IN PERSONAL SUPPORT

- 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.
- The Campus Manager, or their delegate, manages all agreed communications and support mechanisms with affected students and their families.
- The CIRT through the Campus Manager arranges for particular students most closely related to the student(s) involved in the incident to receive personal support.

1.11 CIRT ROLE IN MEDIA MANAGEMENT

All media enquiries, press releases and institute website postings related to the critical incident are managed by the CIRT.

The Campus Manager or delegate will be the only people approved by the CIRT to deal with communications with the media.

The CIRT has a responsibility to impress upon students and team members that there may be pressure on students/team members to provide photos to the media. Out of respect for the students/team members 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.

1.12 CIRT ROLE IN THE CORPORATE REVIEW

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 and reports as evidence. 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.

1.13 CIRT ROLE IN REPORTS AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Campus Manager responsible for administration and who is a member of the CIRT has the responsibility for ensuring that:

- Minutes and agendas of ongoing CIRT meetings are maintained;
- 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 the institute became aware of the incident
 - Student support measures;
 - Communications with external bodies (Police/emergency services/DET/DoHA /VRQA/ITECA, embassies), media outlets and particularly members of student families;
 - Reports from defusing and debriefing sessions;
 - Action plans;
 - Corporate review report; and
 - Subsequent amendments to institute policies and procedures.

COMPLAINTS and APPEALS

Students may access the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy – and its associated procedures – at any time, against any decisions prescribed in this policy.

POSITIONS RESPONSIBLE

- Campus Manager
- Course Directors
- Administration
- Director of International Services,
- Nominated trained team member/or agency/or counsellor.

RELATED LEGISLATION

5 Standards Alignment

This policy complies with the requirements of the following RTO standards:

5.1 Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015

Standard 8.5: The RTO complies with Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation and regulatory requirements relevant to its operations.

5.2 ESOS National Code Part D

Standard 6.4: The registered provider must have a documented critical incident policy together with procedures that covers the action to be taken in the event of a critical incident, required follow-up to the incident, and records of the incident and action taken.