

Critical Incident Policy

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University (CDU) is committed to providing a safe environment for students and staff. This policy informs students and staff of the University's approach to critical incident management and how the University supports students, staff and all other people present in the event of a Critical Incident.

(2) Critical incidents, disasters, crises or threats (collectively referred to as "critical incidents") can occur anywhere and at any time. Incidents may vary in terms of scale, the level of response required and the risk to the University's reputation. Every critical incident is unique and will need to be dealt with differently, according to the needs of the people affected. In all cases the response will be timely and professional.

Section 2 - Purpose

(3) This policy provides the framework and rationale to plan for, respond to, and manage critical incidents and emergencies as they may occur at CDU. It is intended to ensure that critical incidents are managed effectively and compassionately and to enable a 'whole-of-University' approach.

(4) This policy enables the University to have clear decision-making processes for managing and reporting on critical incidents to ensure that each case is managed effectively, consistently, and expeditiously.

(5) This policy also fulfils the specific responsibilities the University has to international students during a critical incident or emergency, as required by the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) (ESOS).

Section 3 - Scope

(6) This policy applies to staff, students, contractors, volunteers, visitors and clients of the University during and after critical incidents occurring at or affecting the University.

(7) The scope of this policy excludes ordinary staff or student welfare concerns and relatively minor incidents for which the University provides routine support through the normal service operations, such as the Student Support services and Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) services.

(8) This policy provides a starting point for business continuity and recovery from a disruptive critical incident. However, business and operational continuity and recovery are separately covered by the University's Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) and associated documents.

Section 4 - Policy

(9) This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- a. [Emergency Management Procedure](#), which provides detailed information on how to respond to the variety of possible critical incidents;

- b. Critical Incident – Business Continuity Management Procedure;
- c. Critical Incident – International Student Procedure; and
- d. other associated documents, including incident response plans, emergency response plans, BCPs, and disaster recovery plans.

Principles

(10) 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. Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- a. natural disaster e.g. cyclone, earthquake, flood, hailstorm, or extreme temperature, both within Australia or the home country of international students or staff;
- b. serious injury, illness or death of a student or staff member;
- c. fire, bomb-threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard, water leak;
- d. students or staff lost or injured during fieldwork experiences;
- e. a missing student;
- f. severe verbal or psychological aggression;
- g. physical assault;
- h. student or staff witnessing a serious accident or incidence of violence; and
- i. social issues, such as sexual assault, drug use and alcohol abuse.

(11) The University will identify risks, implement risk management and preventative measures, and manage critical incidents within its sphere of responsibility and influence. This will include:

- a. developing and implementing an effective approach to respond to critical incidents as they occur;
- b. providing appropriate support and counselling services to those affected;
- c. providing appropriate training and information resources to staff; and
- d. developing appropriate plans, systems and processes to ensure swift and effective responses to critical incidents and emergencies.

(12) CDU is committed to ensuring its response to a critical incident is managed in a timely and effective manner, and that appropriate resources are made available to respond to all aspects of the critical incident. Critical incidents will be managed with the foremost goals of preserving life, protecting the University's property and restoring normal operations as quickly as possible.

(13) CDU will provide reasonable support for students and staff, and, where appropriate, the families of students and staff who may be affected by a critical incident. Appropriate services will be made available to students and staff affected by a critical incident, including international students who may be away from family or community support mechanisms.

(14) The University has staff members assigned to assist in preventing and managing critical incidents both on campus or off campus where the University has a duty of care, including international students for whom CDU has undertaken care responsibilities, and all other students and staff involved in CDU-related activities.

(15) This Policy and supporting documents will be available to all members of the University community. Students and staff will be advised of this Policy's existence and will be informed about how to report an Incident and where to seek assistance.

(16) Students and staff are encouraged to report all incidents to the University that they consider to be 'critical', either within or outside of Australia. The University will review all reported incidents and determine their level of seriousness.

Incidents found not to be “critical” will be managed by University student support or the HSE team.

Roles and Responsibilities

(17) During a critical incident, University staff have specific roles and responsibilities for managing the safety and welfare of people involved in or affected by the critical incident. In many cases, particularly among senior University staff, this role may be separate from or in addition to their substantive role.

(18) Staff responsible for managing the University’s response to an Incident are as follows:

- a. Vice-Chancellor – In the event of a critical incident, the Vice-Chancellor or acting Vice-Chancellor is the sole authorised person to declare a campus closed and to initiate the evacuation of all personnel, and to declare a campus reopened and able to recommence work.
- b. Critical Incident Controller (CIC) – a senior executive of the University appointed to have overall responsibility for overseeing the University’s preparedness and capacity to manage emergencies. During a critical incident, they are responsible for convening the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT).
- c. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) – manage the critical incident under the direction of the CIC in accordance with the Emergency Management Procedure.
- d. Local Incident Controller – a member of staff nominated to support the CIC, to manage and coordinate emergency response in site specific locations, including all CDU campuses in Australia, under the direction of the CIC, and to maintain documentation and records throughout the critical incident.
- e. CDU Global – as the primary point of contact for international students, CDU Global are responsible for communicating with and providing support to international students and their families.

(19) There are also a range of other staff with direct operational roles during a critical incident, including security staff, Building and Floor Wardens, and designated First Aid Officers. These operational roles are set out in the Emergency Management Procedure.

(20) Emergency services personnel of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services (NTPFES) may be called in response to an Incident. All staff, students and visitors are required to follow the directions and instructions of emergency services personnel.

Critical Incident and Emergency Management Framework

(21) The management of critical incidents and emergencies is based around planning and preparedness for two key responses following an incident:

- a. Emergency response – managing the immediate issues arising from a critical incident and focusing on the protection of life and property; and
- b. Business continuity – assisting the University to continue to operate its critical business functions and time sensitive resources.

(22) The Emergency Management Procedure outlines how the University will plan for and respond to critical incidents and emergencies, including providing support for staff, students (including specific provisions for international students), volunteers, visitors and all other members of the University community.

Business Continuity Plans

(23) Preparation for business continuity during a critical incident or emergency is governed by a range of Business Continuity Plans (BCPs). These will be established and maintained by individual business units to outline how those areas will ensure continuity of critical functions and business processes, including planning for specific and unforeseen incidents, identifying key areas of risk, and recovering as quickly as possible.

(24) BCPs are activated during a critical incident as part of the emergency management processes.

- a. Appendix 1: Critical incident and emergency management framework diagram
- b. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the relationship between critical incidents, emergency response, business continuity and incident management

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(25) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the [Code of Conduct – Staff](#) or the [Code of Conduct – Students](#), as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the [Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2022](#) and the [Code of Conduct – Students](#).

(26) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the [Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees](#) and [Complaints Policy - Students](#).

(27) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the [Fraud and Corruption Control Policy](#) and [Whistleblower Reporting \(Improper Conduct\) Procedure](#).

Status and Details

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