

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Critical Incident Guidelines

November 2019

Purpose

These guidelines enable the Western Sydney University community to manage and respond to incidents (that are not defined as a 'crisis' in the University's Crisis Management Plan.)

The guidelines exist to assist the University in responding to serious events or issues in a timely manner with care, support, respect and flexibility. They also ensure that professionally trained staff who possess up to date training in critical incident response and/or psychological first aid, are involved at the appropriate time in managing or responding to an incident, and are able to provide information, resources and support to students, staff, family members and others involved when required.

These guidelines should be followed with regards to, and in compliance with, all relevant Western Sydney University policies and legislation. They are intended to provide a broad and consistent management approach to incidents, and be publicly available. These guidelines do not represent detailed operational plans or crisis management plans that are more appropriately kept under confidential cover.

Critical Incident Definition

For the purpose of these guidelines, a critical incident is not a 'crisis' as defined by the University's Crisis Management Plan, but is any event that may adversely affect the University, its students, staff, visitors and/or assets and requires an immediate and coordinated response.

A critical incident that causes, or is likely to cause significant personal illness or injury, substantial impact to operations or commercial prospects, a degradation of reputation, or lead to an impact on the wider community may be escalated as a crisis, after which the Crisis Management Plan applies. Any incident addressed under these guidelines that escalates to a crisis will cause the Crisis Management Plan to be invoked and the Crisis Management Team will be informed and assembled if necessary.

A critical incident may occur anywhere; this definition applies to any incident involving the University community irrespective if the incident occurs on campus, off campus or internationally.

Examples

A critical incident can be regarded as any incident that puts the University community or any part of it under major stress. This may also include a relatively minor incident which has the potential to cause a major impact. A critical incident may take place on or off campus. Appropriate management of critical incidents is extremely important in preventing secondary trauma. Some examples of critical incidents are: -

- Serious traffic accidents;
- Death of students/staff or others on campus, due to health related complications;
- Serious crime, such as physical or sexual assault;
- Mental health emergency associated with a significant behavioural disturbance;
- Threats of self-harm or harm to others that cause an impact to bystanders;
- Injury or death of a colleague;
- Fire, explosion or bomb threat;
- Major theft or vandalism;
- Threat of infection/pandemic;
- Storms/natural disasters.

There are a range of incidents that may require a response from Campus Safety and Security (CS&S). **CS&S will classify and define a critical incident as one of three categories or levels as described below.** An incident may escalate or deescalate as it evolves and is addressed.

INCIDENT LEVEL AND TYPE: LEVEL 1 (CRISIS)

Responsibility for coordinating Incident	Examples	Who to inform and timeframes	Typical Response Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Western Sydney University Crisis Management Team (CMT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any event requiring urgent attention that has or may result in an outcome defined under the University's risk register as catastrophic. Causes may include, for example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accidental Death of staff or students• Significant impact to the financial viability or reputation of the University• Significant and coordinated external emergency response• Widespread media coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct briefing to Vice-Chancellor (as chair of CMT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The make-up of the team and the necessity for one or more of these staff members to be engaged or involved, will be determined on a case by case basis in response to each incident by the Crisis Management Team; Director, Campus Safety and Security or other senior managers as appropriate.• Counselling staff, Welfare staff and Chaplaincy staff may be involved as part of the Response Team in order to provide Psychological First Aid and organisational debriefing.• The University's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may also be called on to assist. Senior Manager, Counselling will liaise with EAP for a coordinated response.• Office of Corporate Communications

INCIDENT LEVEL AND TYPE: LEVEL 2

Responsibility for coordinating Incident	Examples	Who to inform and timeframes	Typical Response Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director, Campus Safety and Security • PVC(I) for matters involving international students/ operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accidental Death of staff or students • Any significant incident requiring immediate attention, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) risk to the University, domestic or international • Any serious injury or non-suspicious death • Any incident where an evacuation is required with an external emergency response • Any on campus, unplanned event that attracts significant media interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal briefing as soon as reasonably practicable to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snr DVC, VP People and Advancement • Campus Provost (for on campus incidents) • PVC (I) (if international relevance) by Director, CS&S within 4 hours of incident start or advice received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus Safety and Security (International office if required). • Counselling staff or mental health crisis management teams (if after hours) may be contacted by the Senior Manager, Counselling and requested to attend the scene of the incident, provide immediate support and assistance as needed to all those involved. This could include staff and students, as well as family members, and others affected by the incident. • Counselling staff may be requested to attend off-site if appropriate e.g. at clinical placement. • Welfare staff may also be called on to assist with the initial response and support of all involved in the incident. • Office of Corporate Communications

INCIDENT LEVEL AND TYPE: LEVEL 3

Local CS&S Standing Operating Procedures apply. International local guidelines, (if applicable and necessary).

Responsibility for coordinating Incident	Examples	Who to inform and timeframe	Typical Response Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director, Campus Safety and Security • Director, International Strategy, Mobility and Operations for matters involving international students/ operations and Deans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any incident involving a person that requires a coordinated multi team response by one or more business units or schools. • Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) incident • Moderate Medical attention required, for Students or Staff overseas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal Briefing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP (People and Advancement) and Campus Provost (for on campus incidents) as soon as reasonably practicable • Verbal briefing to PVC (I) (If International relevance) within 8 hours of advice initially being reported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a student or staff member presents directly to CS&S, they will be offered a private area, support and reassurance until an emergency appointment can be arranged with a Counsellor. • Following this initial assessment, the Counsellor may assist students with ongoing support through trauma counselling, special consideration applications as relevant, or referral to other agencies as appropriate. • Welfare and/or Chaplaincy staff may also be called on for immediate support if Counselling staff are not available in an appropriate timeframe.

NB: Staff may access the Counselling Service in an emergency situation but will normally be referred to the EAP or external services for ongoing counselling and support.

Scope

This procedure applies to all incidents at Western Sydney University, including International Mobility Programs. Such programs include:

Exchange Mobility	Overseas study undertaken for one or two teaching sessions, completed under an exchange agreement between the University and another educational institution
Short-term Exchange Mobility	Exchange mobility undertaken in breaks between teaching sessions or over a period of less than one session
Non-exchange Mobility	Overseas study or other academic activity which is not subject to an exchange agreement between the University and another educational institution including: - <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study tours;• Research fieldwork,• Internship;• Placements;• School led offshore programs and competitions;• University competitions.

Notification to Provost

If an incident covered by these guidelines occurs on a campus in visible view of potential bystanders (or has or is likely to attract media attention), the relevant Provost is to be advised and briefed at routine intervals by the Director, Campus Safety and Security or delegate, when practicable to do so.

Provosts should take an active lead in ensuring that accommodation and other logistics as required by the incident response team are made available at their nominated campus as requested, and this includes but is not limited to, vacating office spaces and other suitable locations for use by the team.

Reporting

Any serious, indictable offence that has occurred on University premises and at University events must be reported to the Police and Campus Safety and Security as soon as possible, thereafter reported to the reporting staff member's supervisor. This includes incidents of sexual assault or any behaviour or events where there is a risk to the health and safety of others.

Students who are under the age of 18

At any time, if a member of the incident response team is informed or becomes aware that a student is involved in, or affected by, an incident covered by these guidelines and is under the age of 18 years; the Director, Campus Safety and Security (or PVC International for matters involving international students) are to be contacted immediately.

Upon notification, the Director, Safety and Security (or when relevant, the PVC International) will cause as soon as practicable the appropriate arrangements to advise the parents or nominated guardians of the nature of the incident, and to provide a suitable point of contact for follow up by the parent or guardian as required.

International Student involvement in Critical Incidents

If a critical incident occurs (at levels 1 and 2) and involves an international student, Student Welfare should be notified.

Where an incident occurs overseas such as a natural disaster affecting students as third parties, the Manager, Welfare Services will be the first point of contact to engage with and assist in a coordinated response.

Notifications and Limits (International)

All students selected to participate in International Mobility Programs are covered by the University's corporate travel insurance policy for the official university component of their trip.

In accordance with the Student International Mobility Policy and Procedures, students participating in an International Mobility Program must, prior to travel, have their travel plans entered into the University Travel and Expense Management System (TEMS), linked to the University's travel tracker system, managed by the University's contracted provider of medical assistance, international health care and security services, World Travel Protection.

For student travel booked through the University contracted travel agent, travel plans are automatically registered in the TEMS system, when booked on a student's behalf, by the relevant academic unit. For student travel booked independently of the University contracted travel agent, students must submit their travel plans to Western Sydney International, by way of the Confirmation of Overseas Travel (COT) form, on the Western Sydney International Go Global website to register their travel on TEMS.

All students participating in mobility programs must ensure:

- a. their travel is registered with the University TEMS system and/or any required Travel Tracker system;
- b. they have been provided with an official mobility confirmation letter or research mobility approval letter from the University;
- c. they register their travel with the Australian Government Smartraveller;

The University subscribes to the services of World Travel Protection, a provider of 24 hours a day, 7 days a week medical assistance, international health care and security services whilst overseas. World Travel Protection provides specific information about destinations prior to travel, including medical and security risks and advice on how to stay safe and well while travelling and staying overseas.

Whilst participating in International Student Mobility Programs, students must carry with them at all times, World Travel Protection membership details, which can be downloaded from the University's Office of Finance and Western Sydney International's Go Global websites.

Western Sydney University will follow advice from DFAT and World Travel Protection in relation to the safety of students in the event of any critical incidents involving terrorism, political unrest or outbreaks of infectious disease.

In the instance of these organisations issuing a travel warning, the University will contact students involved in an International Mobility Program in affected area/s to ascertain their wellbeing and if required, suspend participation in programs if student wellbeing is deemed to be compromised.

Where the DFAT rating is upgraded to Level Four ('Do not travel'), all programs for that country, region or city will be immediately terminated and processes implemented to expedite the return of participants to Australia, or where this is not possible, to the most convenient safe location.

Response and Reporting

Given the variation in time zones for students participating in International Mobility Programs, incidents will often occur outside normal Australian office hours and will often be reported by an international partner university, host organisation, consulate official or University, School, Institute or Department International Mobility Program Project Leader.

Each emergency situation will require unique action and will be determined by the organisational arrangements associated with the program and the type of incident. The terms: severe, significant, moderated and minor impact or consequences are defined by the Western Sydney University Risk Rating Scale.

When any incident occurs after hours, the University Campus Safety and Security Office will be the first point of contact and will notify key staff depending on the level of the incident. In the first instance the Campus Safety and Security Office will alert key staff within the Western Sydney University Student Services Unit who will then contact other relevant stakeholders as required.

Other Matters

Group Travel Programs

Group Travel Programs are those where the flights of participants have been booked by a school/department through the University contracted travel agent and the travel details are automatically uploaded into the University's contacted Travel Tracker system managed by Customer Care. Western Sydney University travel will notify the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) or nominated representative, of any incidents in a timely manner. The University insurance provider and World Travel Protection will contact the nominated Western Sydney University travel representative to obtain approval for the appropriate emergency response.

If an incident occurs whilst a student is participating in an International Mobility Program, led by a School or other business unit, the WSU Program Leader (program facilitator who may be either in-country with the student/s, or may have returned already to Australia) will take the following actions:

- a) Report the incident to key staff, depending on the incident type and level, including relevant Dean/Director.
- b) Report the incident to World Travel Protection, if immediate advice and assistance is required concerning travel, security or medical support.
- c) Record and confirm details in regard to the situation using relevant sources of information including: World Travel Protection, partner university, third party provider, hospital, fellow student participants in the program and local authorities.
- d) Contact Western Sydney University International who will advise Western Sydney University Student Services and Campus Safety and Security in order for the incident to be managed according to the Guidelines.
- e) Decide on the immediate steps which need to be taken on site. This may include confirming access to emergency funds if necessary. In most cases any costs incurred from arrangement made following a critical incident involving a student will be met by University travel insurance, the student and or their family, with reference to their travel insurance policy, unless approval has been granted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) or relevant Dean/Director, for specific costs to be paid by the University up front.
- f) Keep key, on campus staff, updated concerning the steps taken to manage the incident, including Executive Director, Student Services, the relevant Dean, Director and Director, International Strategy, Mobility and Operations. While

there may be good reasons to keep the matter confidential, staff must be kept in the loop in order to avoid misinformation which can prove detrimental to those involved in the case.

- g) If relevant, identify those students who are most impacted by the incident and therefore most at risk - identify arrangements and support that can be organised from Australian for these students.
- h) If students need to return home, or be evacuated to another location, plans will need to be confirmed with World Travel Protection and the University insurer. A decision concerning evacuation of students will be made by the University Crisis Management Team. Unless this is impossible (i.e. complete breakdown of telecommunications.)
- i) Record and report the incident using the [Incident / Hazard Report form](#)

Independently ticketed travel are those programs where the flights of participants have not been booked through the University's contracted travel agent. The initial response to a critical incident for independent mobility programs will be the notification of the University insurance provider by the affected student, university partner or third party provider. Students, staff or external providers will notify Western Sydney International, Director, International Strategy, Mobility and Operations, or nominated representative of the incident in a timely manner. Western Sydney International will advise the Executive Director, Student Services and the relevant Dean and Director. Western Sydney International will work with the institutional partner/provider to take the required actions to manage the incident.

Additional actions

Consulate

In the case of a serious accident or death, involving an International Student (Level 1 or 2 Incident) the University Crisis Management Team will contact the relevant consulate to inform them of the incident and provide them with details about the student. The contact person will discuss with the consulate respective roles and responsibilities in terms of contacting the student's family, arranging a service, arranging travel to Australia, temporary accommodation for relatives and repatriation of the body.

Hospital

Staff involved in managing an incident may need to contact the University insurer via the Finance Office to arrange any necessary guarantor agreements and check with the hospital, if needed, that any necessary paperwork regarding insurance claims is completed by the student or student's family.

In-country Western Sydney University Staff or Representatives

Contact in-country Western Sydney University Staff or representatives, if enlisting their help will assist in liaising with relevant bodies in the host country in that country's language.

Counselling

If required, staff involved in managing an incident will draw upon the University Counselling Services, Chaplaincy or Welfare Services as required, to students and staff affected by the incident.

Communications (internal and external)

If required, the Office of Corporate Communications will develop a strategy for dealing with media inquiries. All media enquiries should go through the Office of Corporate Communications. This Unit will consult with relevant stakeholders (including the Office of General Counsel) prepare information about the incident for the University community and determine the most appropriate way in which to distribute this information.

Department of Home Affairs

If required, staff involved in managing an incident will alert the Welfare Office to contact the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS, if the incident involves an international student.

Debriefing

Debriefing should follow any managed Level 1 or 2 incident and will be determined on a case by case basis relevant to the circumstances and period of time over which the incident occurs. Debriefs will be arranged by CS&S under its Standard Operating Procedures and the invitees to a debrief will be determined by the incident itself. This also includes whether or not there is a necessity to undertake an oral debrief immediately after the incident, or whether a more formal or structured debrief is necessary in order to review the response and undertake a process of learnings.

Key counselling or other support staff responding the incident will generally be invited to a debrief.

Support of those who may be impacted

In acknowledgement of the diverse cultures and religions represented in the student population, the University will ensure that students are given the opportunity to grieve in ways that are congruent with their religion and culture. The Director, Campus Safety and Security will make arrangements with the Executive Director, Student Services to properly accommodate and respond to those in need of support and are effected by any incident addressed or contemplated within these guidelines.