

Critical Incident Policy & Procedure

Purpose & Legislative Background

Based on Standard 6 of the National Code of Practice (NCP) for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018, PARAGON POLYTECHNIC is committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for staff and students. This policy underpins our approach to respond to critical incidents that may occur and impact on the people both studying and working at PARAGON POLYTECHNIC. We are particularly mindful of our responsibility to support our students from overseas who do not have access to a normal support network. This policy also includes 'compassionate and compelling' circumstances that are beyond the control of the student and have an impact on their wellbeing and course progress, reference to which can be made in Standard 8 and 9 of NCP. The purpose of this policy is to clarify the process to be followed in circumstances of critical incident that may occur within the campus of PARAGON POLYTECHNIC or outside which may involve any staff of PARAGON POLYTECHNIC.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all students and staff of PARAGON POLYTECHNIC. It may also impact other third-party contractors and visitors that come in touch with PARAGON POLYTECHNIC.

Policy

The National Code define a critical incident [under Standard 6] as 'a traumatic event, or the threat of, which causes extreme stress, fear or injury'.

Critical incidents could include but are not limited to:

- Fire, bomb-threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard
- Student or staff witnessing a serious accident or incidence of violence
- Serious injury, illness, or death of a student or staff
- Students or staff lost or injured during fieldwork experiences
- Missing student
- Severe verbal or psychological aggression
- Physical assault
- Natural disaster in home country or country of study e.g. earthquake, flood etc
- Social issues e.g. sexual assault
- drug use, alcohol abuse.

As soon as a staff member is aware a student or a member of their family has been seriously injured or in an accident or any other event/circumstance as defined above, the Critical Incident Policy and Procedure will be activated.

The relevant authority (eg police) will be called in the first instance if there is a breach of Australian Law.

All emergencies must be rung through to 000 - Police, Fire or Ambulance in the first instance or 112 in the case of a mobile phone.

Process for handling critical incident

In the first instance the Designated Officer is any member of the staff who is witness to /or receives the information which triggers the critical incident. If possible, the CEO is to be immediately called to the situation to assume control. The following steps outline the process to manage a critical incident. It applies to all staff including sessional staff members who may be present when the incident occurs or who may be the first point of contact for the student.

1. The Student Support Officer is to assess the situation and consider any apparent risks to their own safety and those present.
2. Where the Student Support Officer considers a critical incident involving threat to life or/ and triggering an emergency, the Student Support Officer is to contact Emergency Services by dialing 000 immediately and being put through to the appropriate service.
3. Provided there is no threat to personal safety in doing so, the Student Officer is to take steps to minimise further damage or injury. This may involve organising willing bystanders to provide support.
4. The CEO or most senior staff member available is to assume responsibility for assessing the incident and forming a Critical Incident Team if deemed necessary.
5. As soon as practical the CEO or the most senior staff member available, should organize a Critical Incident Team meeting

and prepare a Critical Incident Initial Report outlining details re: the type of incident, the exact location and details of any person or persons who might be injured, or in distress and in need of counselling or at risk. Where persons affected include current students, a copy of the Student Written Agreement should accompany the report.

6. The CEO and Critical Incident Team/ other staff members, will review the situation, set priorities, allocate tasks/responsibilities and coordinate an immediate response including communications (to staff, students, families of those involved, helpers, and the media).
7. Where a staff member has assumed management of the critical incident, this person will consult with and/or take instruction from the PEO as necessary.
8. The Critical Incident Team will organise ongoing response/follow up (including staff briefing, counselling, review and reporting) as part of the process.
9. The Critical Incident Team will organise a de-briefing session within 24-48 hours of incident to evaluate response procedures and make recommendations for ongoing actions if required.
10. The Critical Incident Team will produce a final report and make recommendations about handling any future critical incidents. Revision of this procedure may be part of that report.

Ongoing support

Maintain contact with those who may need ongoing support, often at times and in locations outside of the normal class routine. The following should be considered:

- Consideration should be given to personal contact with victims and those affected by the incident outside of normal hours. Family and friends are a priority. The Critical Incident Team will assess those affected by the incident and make referrals for counselling and/or advice to agencies outside of those normally used.
- Appropriate cultural responses may be put in place, interpreters may be provided, and overseas authorities, such as embassies and legations, notified.
- Where appropriate, staff and students may need to be directed to seek professional counselling. Counselling of staff and students will be a priority for incidents where trauma may be experienced. Special Leave will be considered where necessary.
- There may be a need to issue a written statement to staff and students, within the guidelines of the Privacy Act 1988 to inform them of the incident.
- There may be a need to identify others who may be affected by the incident to provide re-assurance and minimise distress.

It is important to return to normality as soon as possible. The CEO should meet with staff at the end of the working day to debrief staff and assist in the recovery process.

Dissemination of this Policy

A copy of this policy will be available on the PARAGON POLYTECHNIC website. An emergency evacuation drill will be conducted by staff and include all new students at the commencement of each term. This policy and procedure will be reviewed as part of the continuous improvement actions of PARAGON POLYTECHNIC.

Management action & Responsibility

The Academic Manager is responsible for implementing this policy in order to ensure that every student receives adequate support in difficult situations.

All the staff will be responsible to provide support to the students in circumstances of critical incident and compassionate or compelling situation. Such officer should consider the documentary evidence provided to support the claim and record a copy of the same on students file.

The CEO holds the authority to approve this policy.

Tasks and Responsibilities

The CEO or most senior staff member available will:

- Head the Critical Incident Team;
- Liaise with emergency services;
- Liaise with Diplomatic Post/Embassy/Consulate;
- Provide notification of critical incident to most Senior Staff Member;
- Liaise with immediate family members or guardians if appropriate;

- Convene Critical Incident Team;
- Formulate and execute critical incident plan; and
- Organise debriefing, counselling and follow-up.

Informing the Police

The police must investigate all sudden unexpected death. Police actions include:

- Reporting the death to the Coroner;
- Notifying Next of Kin;
- Obtaining official identification of the deceased (this must be done by a person who has known the individual for at least the past year); and
- Conducting investigations (interviewing witnesses or others involved).

Notifying Next of Kin

Once death/injury has been confirmed, the initial contact with next of kin / significant others needs to be considered carefully.

The following questions may be helpful:

- What is the appropriate manner of contact?
- What were the circumstances of the tragedy?

Definition

A Critical Incident: is any sudden or progressive development (event) that requires immediate attention and decisive action to prevent / minimise any negative impact on the health and welfare of one or more individuals or students. Critical incidents may include (but are not limited to) events such as:

- Death/suicide/missing students;
- Serious accident or injury;
- Death or serious illness of a student's family or friends overseas (in their homeland);
- A traumatic event within or outside Australia which may cause serious stress or fear
- Removing an individual's liberty under duress, threats of violence, assault, rape/sexual assault, aggravated burglary, biological or chemical weapons found/ present;
- Fire, bomb, explosion, gas/chemical hazards, discharge of firearms;
- Threat of widespread infection or contamination;
- Civil unrest;
- Serious damage to essential facilities and or extreme disruption to operations at PARAGON POLYTECHNIC; and
- Information which has the potential to negatively affect the reputation of PARAGON POLYTECHNIC in the media and/or wider community.

Critical Phase: The critical phase is that time immediately after the incident has occurred, or the point in time when the student or staff member first contacts PARAGON POLYTECHNIC.

Legislative Context

The legislative base for this policy is as follows:

- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)
- The ESOS Act 2000
- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Regulations 2001
- The National Code 2018
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 1988,
- Mental Health Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1983

- Accident Compensation Act 1985

Policy Control

Version	Date	Changes / Updates	Approved
1.0	Aug 2020	RTO Policy and Procedure of PARAGON POLYTECHNIC	CEO