



## CRITICAL INCIDENT GUIDELINES

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Date first approved:</b><br>5 April 2006           | <b>Date of effect:</b><br>5 April 2006  | <b>Date last amended:</b><br>(refer to Version Control<br>Table)<br>3 March 2023 | <b>Date of Next Review:</b><br>(Currently under major<br>review) |
| <b>First Approved by:</b>                             | Director, Student and Accommodation Services Division   |  |  |
| <b>Custodian title &amp; e-mail address:</b>          | Director, Division of Student Life  |  |  |
| <b>Author:</b>  | Senior Managers, Student and Accommodation Services Division  |  |  |
| <b>Responsible Division &amp; Unit:</b>               | Division of Student Life  |  |  |
| <b>Supporting documents, procedures &amp; forms:</b>  | <a href="#">Privacy Policy</a><br><a href="#">Privacy Information Sheet</a><br><a href="#">Emergency Response Guidelines</a><br><a href="#">Emergency Checklist Manual</a><br><a href="#">WHS Emergency Management Procedures</a><br>University Critical Incidents Process Map (refer Attachments)<br><a href="#">Critical Incident procedures for University of Wollongong students participating in the International Exchange Program</a><br><a href="#">Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy</a> |  |  |
| <b>Relevant Legislation &amp; External Documents:</b> | <a href="#">Higher Education Support Act, 2003 (Commonwealth)</a><br><a href="#">Education Services for Overseas Students Act, 2000 (Commonwealth)</a><br><a href="#">The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students</a>   |  |  |
| <b>Audience:</b>                                      | Public  |  |  |

Submit your feedback on this policy document using the [Policy Feedback Facility](#).



## Contents

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 1  | Introduction / Background .....               | 3 |
| 2  | Scope / Purpose .....                         | 3 |
| 3  | Definitions.....                              | 3 |
| 4  | Preliminary Action .....                      | 4 |
| 5  | Recommended Process Involving a Student ..... | 6 |
| 6  | Recommended Process for Missing Persons ..... | 6 |
| 7  | Recommended Process for Student Death .....   | 7 |
| 8  | Media Unit .....                              | 8 |
| 9  | Ongoing Liaison.....                          | 8 |
| 10 | Roles & Responsibilities .....                | 8 |
| 11 | Version Control and Change History .....      | 8 |



## 1 Introduction / Background

1. This guideline is intended to provide a clear process for managing critical incidents involving students. This will minimise the risk of independent action and assist in ensuring that each case is managed effectively and compassionately.
2. Our response needs to be timely and professional, and also as personal and sincere as possible. Incidents may vary in terms of the scale of the emergency, the level of response required and the level of media interest. Our response should be adapted, within these guidelines, to meet the needs of each incident.

## 2 Scope / Purpose

1. This Critical Incident Guideline applies to all UOW students, whether on or off campus unless otherwise stated.
2. Included within the scope of this document are incidents involving students in University Residences.
3. Included in the scope of this document are incidents involving UOW students enrolled at offshore sites (with the exception of UOW Dubai)
4. Excluded from the scope of this guideline are outbound students (ie: students enrolled at onshore sites who are participating in an exchange program). Please refer to the separate Study Abroad Procedure ‘Critical Incident Procedures for University of Wollongong students participating in the International Exchange Program’.
5. Some international students may require additional support because they will not have close family available and the University should try to assist in these cases.

## 3 Definitions

| Word/Term          | Definition (with examples if required)   |
|--------------------|--|
| Critical incidents | <p>An incident can be defined as either a “major” or “minor” critical incident.</p> <p>Major includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Death</li><li>Serious injury/illness</li><li>Hospitalisation (e.g.: accident, ill health, incapacitated)</li><li>Public health alert</li><li>Serious Mental health issue</li><li>Emergency medical evacuation</li><li>Missing person</li><li>Student arrest</li><li>Suicide attempt (concerns of welfare of student).</li><li>Perpetrating or being the victim of crime related incidents (eg: assaults, sexual</li></ul> |



|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
|                                   | <p>assaults, robbery)</p> <p>Anything that involves a threat to a person (eg: stalking, domestic violence, bullying – including cyber bullying)</p> <p>Significant Reputational effect on the University of Wollongong</p> <p>External disaster</p> <p>Minor is anything that does not fall into these categories and can be managed locally.</p> <p>Minor injuries</p> <p>Petty Theft</p> <p>Minor vehicle incidents on campus</p> <p>Incidents out of session that are unrelated to University activities and have no impact on other students or staff</p> <p>False alarms</p> |
| University Residence              | University student accommodation  |
| Regional / Sydney Campus          | Institutions part of the University of Wollongong's network of campuses. They include UOW Shoalhaven campus, UOW Batemans Bay, UOW Bega, UOW Southern Sydney, UOW South Western Sydney, UOW Southern Highlands, UOW Sydney CBD.   |
| International or overseas student | A student who is not a permanent resident of Australia but studying in Australia with UOW or is studying at an offshore site  |
| Staff                             | All people employed by the University including conjoint appointments, whether on continuing, permanent, fixed term, casual or cadet or traineeship basis.  |
| Affiliates                        | Includes people holding University of Wollongong Honorary Awards as conferred by the University Council, including the awards of Emeritus Professor, Honorary Doctor and University Fellow; people appointed in accordance with the University's Appointment of Visiting and Honorary Academics Policy; and people engaged by the University as agency staff, contractors, volunteers and work experience students  |
| Student                           | A person registered for a course at the University of Wollongong  |
| Residence Student                 | A student living in University student accommodation  |

## 4 Preliminary Action

1. The following actions should be taken by the responsible staff of the Student and Accommodation Services Division:
  - a. Access the relevant student record to verify details, including contact information.
  - b. Gather background details of the incident from the informing source if possible and appropriate.



- c. If relevant, confirm with UOW Security that the Police or the relevant emergency services agency has been in contact with next of kin/family/other relevant parties, where appropriate.
- d. Where the circumstances are considered to have some implications in relation to or arising from the University's public profile, the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer (COO) are to be briefed by the Director, Division of Student Life (or nominated delegate).
- e. Check with the UOW Principal Privacy Officer about privacy obligations prior to any discussion with external agencies (including Consulate/Embassy where the student is an international student).
- f. The Director, Division of Student Life (or nominee) or, in the case of Residence students, the relevant Student Residence Manager, will provide timely advice to the following (where appropriate and/or necessary).
  - i. Counselling Services
  - ii. Chaplain
  - iii. Members of the Senior Executive as appropriate. For example:
  - iv. Research students - Vice-Chancellor, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation),
  - v. International or Study Abroad students – Vice-Chancellor and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Senior Vice-President (Innovation, Enterprise & External Relations)
  - vi. Undergraduate students – Vice Chancellor, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic & Student Life
  - vii. Relevant Faculty (Executive Dean, Head of Students and relevant Heads of School)
  - viii. University Residence (if applicable)
  - ix. Student Advocacy Officer
  - x. Student Recruitment Division (where the student is an international student, to facilitate advice to the agent and/or funding authority)
  - xi. Manager, Study Abroad (if applicable)
  - xii. Graduate Research School (if applicable)
  - xiii. Security Services, if notification is not through that channel
  - xiv. Library (for action regarding any loans)
  - xv. Student Support Advisors (for student support)
  - xvi. Student Administration Services Division (for student fee issues)
  - xvii. Media Manager
- g. Where the student is an international student and family members have already been consulted, advise the Consulate/Embassy (where support such as travel for the family of the student may be available).



## 5 Recommended Process Involving a Student

1. Where a critical incident is first identified by, or reported directly to, an emergency service the emergency service will inform UOW Security as the University's initial point of contact.
2. Where the critical incident is first identified by (or referred to) UOW Security, UOW Security will contact the relevant emergency service agency, if required/appropriate.
3. UOW Security has access to student records for the purposes of verifying details to assist emergency services. Particulars of the student's home address are to be provided only in cases where the individual is incapacitated and unable to provide these particulars themselves.
4. UOW Security should immediately alert the Director, Division of Student Life .
5. After receiving notification, the Director, Division of Student Life (or nominated delegate) will organise support where required. This may involve liaison with:
  - a. Student Services (Counselling Services, Disabilities Services, Student Support Advisors and/or other relevant parties based on the nature of the event);
  - b. Student Residence Manager;
  - c. The Manager, Study Abroad.
6. It is the responsibility of these officers to conduct an assessment of the circumstances of the matter and determine further immediate action.
7. During office hours, the contact for the Director, Division of Student Life Division is 02 4221 3943.
8. Where the matter arises after office hours, UOW Security has after hours contact details for key staff.
9. Depending on the scale and nature of the event, responsibility for managing the situation might be transferred to another officer within the University. This could include a Senior Faculty Staff Member, Manager of a Regional /Sydney Campus or a Student Residence Manager.
10. All internal communication is channelled through the Director, Division of Student Life (or nominated delegate). All comment to the media is to be made through the Media Manager.
11. Any direct contact with the family/next of kin in an official capacity is to be through the Director, Division of Student Life or nominee.

## 6 Recommended Process for Missing Persons

1. From time to time, parents or other family members of a student, a recent graduate or recent student may contact the University to report that student or graduate as missing. These enquiries should be referred to the Director, Division of Student Life .
2. The Director, Division of Student Life, (or nominee) should refer the relative to the Police. However, there are circumstances where the family may be reluctant to pursue that option and if so, the following charitable organisations may be a suitable alternative.
  - a. The Salvation Army (Telephone +61 2 9211 0277) offer a family tracing service. However, due to its international protocol, it will not initiate enquiries in Australia. The student's relatives should be advised to contact the Salvation Army in their home country. The Salvation Army operates in 100 countries. This applies even if the family



have arrived in Australia to look for their relative. If the Salvation Army locates the "missing" person, it will request the person to let their family know they are safe.

- b. Mission Australia (24 hours Support Line - Freecall 1800 227 772) has a Family and Friends of Missing Persons support line. It offers support and a referral service.
3. Depending on the advice provided by the family, the Director, Division of Student Life should ascertain whether it has had any contact with the student and/or has current contact with the student, through which a message may be passed.
4. There are Privacy constraints to providing student address and other information to family members. If a current student address/email address is on the Student System, the University may offer to send a letter on behalf of or from the family to that address or to telephone using the last known contact numbers on the student's record.
5. The University shall provide advice as requested by the Police in conjunction with the University Privacy Policy.

## 7 Recommended Process for Student Death

1. Where the student death is first identified by any University party (faculty or administration staff member, student etc) that party should immediately advise UOW Security. UOW Security should contact the relevant emergency service agency.
2. Where the student death is first identified by an external party and emergency services are notified directly, emergency services will inform UOW Security as the University's initial point of contact.
3. UOW Security should immediately alert the Division of Student Life and the Media Manager. If the student is a residence student then the relevant Student Residence Manager should also be contacted.
4. The following steps should be initiated by the Director, Division of Student Life (or nominee).
  - a. Talk to the relevant faculty Head of Students to talk through the appropriate actions. These might include:
    - i. Assess the likely scale of impact – friends affected/social networks etc
    - ii. Responsibility for internal communications
    - iii. Discuss the necessary actions to take to ensure a professional and compassionate response
  - b. Student System details should be adjusted accordingly
    - i. change personal details to deceased,
    - ii. withdraw student from subjects as appropriate and
    - iii. change course status to discontinued
  - c. Financial Services, Fees, the Library and Information Technology Service should be informed to enable adjustment of relevant records
  - d. In the event of a student death, an appropriate person, who has had some relationship or contact with the student, is to compose a letter conveying condolences. The relevant Executive Dean will be consulted to assist in identifying someone who was familiar with the student. Where the student was a resident, the Student Residence Manager will also be invited to provide input. The Director, Division of Student Life (or



nominee) will recommend whether the Vice-Chancellor or another senior person, such as an Executive Dean, should sign the letter of condolence. The final decision will depend on the circumstances.

- e. Ensure that any personal effects are returned to the next of kin. For international students bank accounts may need to be closed, and any other personal property disposed of, in consultation with the family.

## 8 Media Unit

1. The Media Manager is responsible for responding to media enquiries and will, where appropriate, make statements on behalf of the University.

## 9 Ongoing Liaison

1. The Director, Division of Student Life (or nominated delegate) will take responsibility for managing the case including, where necessary, liaison with:
  - a. Police;
  - b. Medical Services;
  - c. Media Manager - to be kept informed;
  - d. Family - ongoing contact (assist with travel and accommodation, as necessary); and
  - e. Vice-Chancellor - for information, and where an ex gratia payment is made to assist with travel and accommodation.

## 10 Roles & Responsibilities

1. University Security Services plays a pivotal role in providing a first or emergency response, and should be the first point of contact.
2. The Division of Student Life is responsible for disseminating information to appropriate people within the University and responding to any special needs that might emerge.
3. The Director, Division of Student Life is responsible for managing the first response to critical incidents involving students who live in a University residence that occur either in residence or off campus.
4. The Media Manager is responsible for responding to media enquiries and will, where appropriate, make statements on behalf of the University.
5. All other University staff and affiliates have a responsibility to report critical incidents to University Security who will ensure emergency service agencies are appropriately involved and will contact the Division of Student Life for follow up.

## 11 Version Control and Change History

| Version Control | Date Effective | Approved By        | Amendment     |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1               | 5 April 2006   | Academic Registrar | New Procedure |





|    |                      |  |   |
|----|----------------------|--|---|
| 2  | 6 May 2009           | Vice Principal<br>(Administration)     | Migrated to UOW Procedure Template as per Policy Directory Refresh  |
| 3  | 7 February 2011      | Academic Registrar                     | Review of entire document. Document name change to Critical Incident Guidelines. Process map and checklist created.   |
| 4  | 17 Jan 2013          | Vice-Principal<br>(Administration)     | Updated references from OHS to WHS and DVC(A) to DVC(E).  |
| 5  | 11 September<br>2013 | Chief Administrative<br>Officer        | Updated to reflect title change from VP(A) to CAO.  |
| 6  | 13 February 2014     | Deputy Vice-<br>Chancellor (Education) | Updated to reflect change from Dean of Students to Student Ombudsman  |
| 7  | 5 July 2016          | Vice-Chancellor                        | Consequential amendment following minor amendments to Coursework Student Academic Complaints Policy – removal of reference to Student Ombudsman at clause 4.1(f). Transfer to rebranded template.                           |
| 8  | 21 July 2017         | Vice-Chancellor                        | Minor updates to include new UOW campuses UOW South Western Sydney and UOW Sydney CBD. Updated definitions for “affiliate”, “staff”, “students”, and “residence student”. Critical incident response more clearly outlined. |
| 9  | 18 December 2020     | Chief Operating Officer                | Administrative amendments to reflect divisional and faculty realignments.   |
| 10 | 3 March 2023         | Vice-Chancellor                        | Administrative amendments to reflect divisional realignment. Removal of flowchart.  |



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA