

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. PREAMBLE

SydneyMet is committed to minimise the traumatic effects of critical situations both in the short and long term. This is best achieved by a coordinated, systematic response that restores stability and creates a sense of safety and security for members of the College. The College seeks to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of the College community. This document forms part of the College's Workplace Health and Safety policies.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to ensure that SydneyMet has appropriate infrastructure and plans in place to provide necessary support services in the event of a critical incident occurring.

Serious or traumatic incidents could affect a student's ability to undertake or complete a course.

This Policy and Procedure will ensure that SydneyMet has:

- an effective approach in responding to critical incidents as they occur;
- appropriate support services available to those affected;
- appropriate training and information resources provided to staff.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- 2.1 all staff and students of the College
- 2.2 everyone using any of the College's premises
- 2.3 all places where staff may be working or representing the College for example, when visiting a customer, client or supplier (collectively referred to as 'workplace')
- 2.4 all College-related functions, for example, work lunches, conferences, Christmas parties and student functions.

4. DEFINITIONS

National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 defines a critical incident as “a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury”. SydneyMet will ensure that it has in place a structured approach in responding to critical incidents as they occur and providing appropriate support and counselling services to students.

Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- serious injury, illness, disappearance or death of a member of the College community
- severe verbal or psychological aggression
- physical assault
- student or staff witnessing a serious accident or violent incident
- natural disaster e.g. earthquake, flood, windstorm, or hailstorm
- fire, bomb-threat, explosion, gas leak or chemical spill.

5. CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM

The PEO will form a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to assist the QSM in the prevention and management of critical incidents. The QSM will act as team leader of the team.

The responsibilities of the team include:

- briefing on this policy at students' initial orientation program and at the induction of all new staff in the College; ensuring that all students and staff are made aware at orientation of what to do in the case of a critical incident and a point of contact for any issues, which require support and assistance.
- regularly assessing risk and hazards situations which may require emergency action, including risk mitigation planning, and reporting these to the PEO;
- displaying contact numbers for emergency services on the notice board in the SydneyMet College reception area, e.g. police, fire and rescue, crime stoppers, ambulance, state emergency, national security hotline;
- ensuring they have 24 hour access to contact details for all students and their families (see Student Handbook);
- ensuring they have 24 hour access to contact details for all relevant staff members needed in the event of a critical incident (e.g. team members).
- ensuring that soon as practical after a critical incident occurs, the appropriate regulator(s) is/are notified about the details of the incident including the time, location and nature of the incident. In the case of an international student's death or other absence affecting the student's attendance or course progress, the incident is reported via PRISMS. That the incident and its management are recorded on the affected students' files.
- maintaining and reviewing the critical incident plan framework for incidents identified as highest risk, and assisting with implementation of critical incident plan framework; communicating planned procedures to staff and students as necessary, organisation of regular practice drills; coordination of appropriate staff development.

6. CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

SydneyMet's *Critical Incident Plan Framework* has three phases: 1. Rescue & Response, 2. Recover & Restore, and 3. Review, Reflect & Learn

The Quality Systems Manager (QSM) is responsible to manage critical incidents and act as the point of contact when and if any critical incident happens.

Phase 1: Rescue & Response

- **Notification:** As soon as a critical incident occurs, any staff member who becomes aware of it must notify the Quality System Manager (QSM) or the PEO. The Quality System Manager (with support from PEO) will if appropriate declare a Critical Incident. The QSM will contact relevant emergency services if required, such as fire, ambulance, or police;
- **Rapid Rescue:** QSM utilises required personnel and resources to undertake rapid rescue if required, and in the case that evacuation is an appropriate intervention, engages the *College Emergency Evacuation Policy and Procedure*.
- **Victim assistance:** QSM will identify any person directly affected by the incident and arrange to offer appropriate assistance immediately. This may involve assistance from the Student Counsellor, the PEO, the External Relations Officer, or any other relevant personnel.
- **Investigation:** QSM investigates the incident by seeking answers to questions of what, when, where, how, who, what to do and to whom etc. and decide appropriate intervention. This is undertaken within the first 24 hours if practicable.

Phase 2: Recover and Restore

- Within the first 3 days, the QSM will communicate to the College community facts about the incident together with the intervention activities, in order to re-establish routine and a sense of safety within the college.
- The PEO and the Student Counsellor will provide support services and assistance for students and staff who may be directly or indirectly affected.
- Within the first 15 days of the critical incident, the PEO with the Senior Executive Team will review staff and students affected by the incident, and if relevant, monitor progress of those hospitalised or injured.
- Within the first 20 days the PEO will ensure that the College:
 - Communicates to all key staff of their roles in recovery from the critical incident.
 - Notifies students and staff about the problem and remedial action planned/taken.
 - Organises alternate facilities in order to continue operations, if needed
 - Provides support and counselling to staff who may have required to work longer, more stressful hours, and students who may have gone through difficult times. If the incident involves death, staff and students should be given leave to attend funerals.
 - Provides necessary assistance to staff to operate within new facilities.

Phase 3 Review, Reflect and Learn

- 30 days after the incident, the QSM will:
 - review the roles and functions of the staff involved, the point of contact, critical incident team and relevant support staff.
 - review the process involved in the management of the critical incident.

- seek feedback from students and staff involved in various aspects of the responding to the incident.
- develop a report outlining what was learned from the handling of the critical incident, and provide input into the continuous improvement of policies and practices of SydneyMet.
- Present this review and report to the Critical incident Team and the PEO.

7. DUTIES OF STUDENTS

Students must:

- Report any potential hazard or critical incidents to your teacher or student counselor
- Attend all inductions sessions where the following topics will be covered
 - Support services that are available to overseas students
 - Emergency services
 - Referral services for counselling
 - Information on how to seek assistance
 - Safety and wellbeing while living in Australia

8. STAFF DUTIES

Nominated Staff will be assigned and trained in specific safety roles that they are to assume in a critical incident.

Teaching staff are responsible for the safety of their class whilst in the classroom.

Administrative staff are responsible for the safety of building occupants in their vicinity.

The *Student Counsellor* should consider whether students who have been affected by a Critical Incident are in need of referral to counselors external to the College, who have expert knowledge and skills in those matters. A list of these are in the Student Handbook.

Students may need to have their studies deferred if the Critical Incident has seriously affected them. *The Dean* will consider each individual case and circumstances with the best interests and welfare of the student at the forefront of the decision.

9. EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Critical incidents that need emergency evacuation from the College premises are guided by the SydneyMet's *Emergency Evacuation Policy and Procedure*.

10. RECORD KEEPING

The QSM is responsible to keep a record of critical incidents and responses in the Incident Register.

The Register will take special note of students affected by the incident, and steps taken to assist them.

This Register must be kept for at least two years after any affected student has completed their studies and left the College.