

Critical Incidents Management Policy & Procedure

1. Purpose

National Training College of Australia (NTCA) is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and responsive environment for all staff and students. This policy outlines the framework for managing and responding to critical incidents that may occur either on campus or in external settings where staff or students are involved. The purpose is to ensure that NTCA has clear procedures in place to respond effectively, minimise harm, and provide appropriate support to those impacted. Particular attention is given to the wellbeing of international students who may face additional challenges due to being away from their usual support networks.

2. Scope

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

3. Policy Statement

NTCA is committed to protecting the safety, health, and wellbeing of all staff and students. We recognise that unexpected critical incidents can occur and may cause significant impact to individuals and the wider community.

A critical incident is defined as **“a traumatic event, or the threat of, which causes extreme stress, fear or injury.”**

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Fire, bomb threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard.
- Student or staff witnessing a serious accident or incident of violence.
- Serious injury, illness, or death of a student or staff member.
- Students or staff lost or injured during fieldwork.
- Missing student.
- Severe verbal or psychological aggression.
- Physical assault.
- Social issues such as sexual assault, drug use, or alcohol abuse.
- Natural disasters in Australia or the student’s home country (e.g., earthquake, flood).

This policy establishes a clear and consistent approach to:

- Responding promptly and effectively to any critical incident.

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of those affected.
- Providing timely and appropriate support services, with particular care for international students who may be vulnerable due to limited local support networks.
- Maintaining transparent communication and accurate records of incidents and responses.

The Academy fosters a culture of care and preparedness, ensuring that all staff and students are supported to manage and recover from critical incidents with dignity and respect.

Guiding Principles:

- **Safety first** - The immediate safety and wellbeing of staff and students is the highest priority.
- **Support and care** - All individuals impacted will be treated with empathy, dignity, and respect, with special consideration for international students.
- **Preparedness** - Clear procedures and staff awareness are maintained to ensure timely and effective responses.
- **Communication** - Information is shared appropriately and sensitively while respecting confidentiality.
- **Continuous improvement** - Each incident is reviewed to strengthen future prevention, preparedness, and response.

4. Procedures

4.1 Immediate Response

- Where a student or visitor becomes aware of a critical incident, they must notify the first available NTCA staff member immediately. Students and visitors are not required to complete reporting forms — this responsibility rests with NTCA staff.
- The NTCA staff member who witnesses the incident or receives the information (the Designated Team Member) is responsible for initiating the response.
 - If there is an immediate threat to life or safety, the staff member must dial 000 (or 112 from a mobile) and request the appropriate emergency service (Police, Fire, Ambulance).
 - The staff member must quickly assess any risks to their own safety and the safety of others present.
 - If it is safe to do so, the staff member may take reasonable steps to minimise further harm (e.g., evacuating an area, administering first aid, or directing bystanders to assist).
 - Once the situation is stable, the Designated Team Member must report the incident to the RTO Manager (or delegate) and complete a **Critical Incident Report Form** to ensure accurate documentation.

4.2 Escalation & Management

- Once a critical incident has been stabilised, the matter must be escalated to senior management for coordination.
- The RTO Manager (or delegate) must be informed immediately and will assume responsibility for managing the situation.
- The RTO Manager will determine whether additional staff or external agencies need to be involved.
- A **Critical Incident Report** must be initiated, capturing:
 - Type and location of the incident.
 - Names and details of those injured, distressed, or at risk.
 - Any immediate safety, medical, or counselling needs.
 - For incidents involving current students, a copy of the Student Written Agreement should be attached.
- The CEO and/or RTO Manager will:
 - Review the situation and set immediate priorities.
 - Allocate responsibilities to staff and coordinate the response.
 - Manage all external communications, including with families, emergency contacts, embassies, and the media, ensuring compliance with privacy requirements.
- If another senior staff member has assumed temporary management of the incident, they must consult with and/or take direction from the RTO Manager or CEO as soon as practicable.

4.3 Follow-Up & Review

- After the immediate response and escalation have been managed, NTCA team will coordinate a structured follow-up process to support recovery and ensure lessons are learned.
- The RTO Manager (or delegate) will oversee the ongoing response, which may include:
 - Staff and student briefing sessions.
 - Counselling or referral to professional support services.
 - Monitoring the wellbeing of affected individuals.
- A debriefing session must be held within 24–48 hours of the incident to review the actions taken, identify strengths, and highlight areas for improvement.
- The Critical Incident Report must be completed and finalised, consolidating the details of the incident, actions taken, support provided, and recommendations for future management.

- All documentation, including forms and reports, must be recorded in the **Critical Incident Register** and retained as compliance evidence.
- Any improvements identified must be referred to the **Continuous Improvement Register** for tracking and implementation.

4.4 Ongoing Support

NTCA recognises that the impact of a critical incident may continue beyond the immediate response. The organisation is committed to providing ongoing care and assistance for students and staff.

- The RTO Manager (or delegate) will maintain regular contact with affected individuals, including outside of normal hours if required.
- Families and close contacts of those affected will be prioritised for updates and support.
- Cultural and linguistic needs will be respected. Interpreters will be arranged where necessary, and overseas authorities (such as embassies) may be notified.
- Staff and students experiencing trauma will be referred to professional counselling services. Special leave may be approved where appropriate.
- A written statement may be issued to staff and students, consistent with Privacy Act 1988 obligations, to provide accurate information and reduce speculation or distress.
- Additional students or staff indirectly affected will be identified and offered reassurance and support.
- The CEO and/or RTO Manager will meet with staff at the end of the working day to debrief and assist in restoring normal operations.

Standard Operating Procedure: Critical Incidents Management

Step	Procedure	Responsibility	Timeframe	Supporting Documents
1	Call emergency services (000/112)	Designated Team Member (first aware)	Immediately	N/A
2	Ensure personal and group safety; take steps to minimise harm if safe	Designated Team Member	Immediately	N/A
3	Notify CEO/RTO Manager or most senior staff	Designated Team Member	Within 30 minutes	N/A
4	Prepare initial Critical Incident Report	RTO Manager (or delegate)	Within 2 hours	Critical Incident Report Form

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Step	Procedure	Responsibility	Timeframe	Supporting Documents
5	Coordinate response and manage all communications (families, agencies, media)	CEO and/or RTO Manager	Ongoing	Critical Incident Report Template
6	Record incident in the Critical Incident Register	Admin / Student Support Officer	Same day	Incident Register
7	Conduct debriefing session to review actions and identify improvements	RTO Manager	Within 24–48 hours	Meeting notes
8	Provide ongoing support and counselling referrals	RTO Manager / Student Support Officer	As required	Counselling referrals
9	Complete and finalise the Critical Incident Report with recommendations	RTO Manager (with CEO oversight)	Within 5 working days	Critical Incident Report Template
10	Record lessons learned in Continuous Improvement Register	Compliance Coordinator	Within 10 working days	CI Register

5. Supporting Documents

- Critical Incident Report Form
- Critical Incidents Register
- Critical Incident Report Template

6. Related Policies

- Student Information Policy and Procedures
- Student Support and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures
- Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures
- Facilities, Resources and Equipment Management Policy and Procedures
- Leadership and Accountability Policy and Procedures
- Third Party Arrangements Policy and Procedures
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance Policy and Procedures
- Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedures

7. Roles and Responsibilities

CEO: Provides overall leadership, approves major decisions, manages external communications (families, embassies, media), and oversees post-incident reviews.

RTO Manager: Coordinates the response, prepares the Initial and Final Critical Incident Reports, allocates tasks, chairs debrief sessions, and ensures support is provided to affected staff and students.

Compliance Coordinator: Monitors compliance with National Code and ESOS obligations, reviews incident documentation, and records lessons learned in the Continuous Improvement Register.

Admin / Student Support Officer: Maintains the Critical Incident Register, supports students with counselling referrals and follow-up communication, and ensures all documentation is filed.

All Staff: Act immediately if witnessing or receiving information about an incident, contact emergency services if required, take reasonable steps to ensure safety, and escalate the matter to the RTO Manager or CEO.

8. Legislative Background

This policy is informed by:

- Standards 6, 8 and 9 of the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code) under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act).
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

9. Monitoring and Improvement

This policy is reviewed annually or earlier in response to changes in regulatory requirements or audit outcomes. Review activities including, audit findings, and student, staff as well as industry feedback.