

CRITICAL INCIDENT PROCEDURES

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1. Purpose

1.1 These Procedures cover the actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident and any follow-up required.

2. Principles

2.1 MHE has a duty of care under common law to provide a safe and secure environment for all. MHE takes any potential crisis or emergency very seriously.

3. Context

3.1 This policy is aligned with section 2.3 of the *Higher Education Standards Framework 2021*.

4. Scope

4.1 This policy applies to all staff, students, stakeholders and any other person who may be physically affected by a critical incident or emergency or who may require first aid on the MHE campus.

5. Definitions

Critical Incident – an event, or the threat of an event, which causes extreme stress, fear or injury. Critical incidents may apply to just one person, one group of people or an entire community. Critical incidents include but are not limited to:

- missing students
- severe verbal, physical or psychological risk
- death, serious injury or any threat of these
- natural disaster
- domestic violence and sexual assault
- drug or alcohol abuse.

Emergency – an actual or imminent event which endangers or threatens to endanger any person's health or safety, or damages or destroys or threatens to damage or destroy property or endangers or threatens to endanger the environment.

First Aid – Emergency treatment given to an injured or sick person before a medical professional can attend.

Hazard – any object, situation or setting which has potential to cause harm, loss, danger or injury.

Provider Registration and International Students Management System (PRISMS) – A site established by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment which provides Australian education providers with the Confirmation-of-Enrolment facilities required for compliance with the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Legislation.

Psychological Hazard - anything that could threaten someone's mental health, or induce anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorders.

Risk – the probability of exposure to harm, loss, danger or injury from a particular hazard.

6. Procedure Details

6.1 Preparing for Critical Incidents

6.1.1 MHE will inform international students about personal safety and security in Australia during Orientation, in the Pre-Enrolment Book and on the MHE website.

6.1.2 MHE's Orientation will show how to react to critical incidents on campus, including the location of emergency exits, how to contact fire wardens, first aid officers, the Student Support Officer and the appropriate staff for reporting critical incidents.

6.1.3 MHE seeks to minimise both physical and psychological hazards. MHE's course planning will ensure that all international students will have full time study load and domestic student can reduce their study load. Overseas students are given all reasonable support to adjust to life in Sydney and build a social network here.

6.1.4 The Board of Directors will ensure that sufficient funds are assigned to providing and maintaining equipment necessary for handling critical incidents and schedule periodic testing of preparedness.

6.2 Responding to a Critical Incident

6.2.1 MHE will appoint a Designated Safety Officer and display this Officer's name and contact details. As soon as any member of staff or student becomes aware of a critical incident, they must inform the Designated Safety Officer immediately.

6.2.2 The Designated Safety Officer will assess the nature, seriousness and scope of the incident by observation and by talking to people involved and then plan an immediate response, in accordance

with the protocols established by the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee, which may include any or all of the following:

- Contact relevant emergency services agencies, including calling 000, and maintain communication with them.
- If people involved struggle with English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.
- Allocate individual roles and responsibilities to any available staff for managing a response
- Relocate or evacuate students and staff to a safe area
- Appoint and brief one member of staff to deal with telephone and reception enquiries
- Manage any interest from the media.

6.2.3 In the case of a death or serious injury to a staff member or a student, MHE will do any or all of the following:

- Refer the student or staff member to a clinical psychologist.
- Contact the staff member's or student's next of kin
- In the case of an international student:
 - Hire interpreters
 - Contact the Department of Home Affairs
 - Contact the student's agent
 - Organise hospital, funeral, memorial service or repatriation
 - Obtain a death certificate
 - Report the incident via the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS)
 - Assist the student and/or their next of kin with visa issues
 - Assist student's family with travel to Australia
 - Assist the student with his or her personal items
 - Assist the student with health insurance.

6.3 Critical Incident Reporting and Analysis

6.3.1 Staff and students must be sure that responses from management are based on facts. Senior management will take whatever action is necessary to dispel false rumours.

6.3.2 As soon as practicable after the critical incident, a staff member who was involved in or witnessed it must send a detailed written report to the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee containing:

- The date and time of the critical incident
- Its precise nature
- Its precise location
- All people directly involved
- All action taken in response
- Any organisation and/or people contacted
- Any suggestions for improvement of response.

6.3.3 The Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee will discuss the report, identify root causes of the incident and propose modifications to MHE's policies, procedures and resources to prevent recurrence and/or improve MHE's response and recovery. This will be an open discussion. Any student or staff member involved in the incident and any medical, psychological or other support worker who responded, will be invited to contribute and their opinions and observations will be respected.

6.3.4 The Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee shall forward its conclusions to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will consider and act upon the advice from the Audit, Risk and

Compliance Committee at their next regular meeting. If any policies and procedures are amended, or new policies and procedures are drafted, the Board of Directors will arrange training for relevant staff.

6.3.5 The Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee will file the report made to them securely and arrange notes about the critical incident on any affected staff members' or students' files.

6.4 Following Up After a Critical Incident

6.4.1 To guarantee suitable monitoring and assistance, MHE will do any or all of the following:

- Offer support and counselling to students or staff members involved, as per the Student Support Framework and Student Counselling Policy and Procedures
- Debrief staff or students individually or in groups
- Ensure that staff and students are informed honestly about the incident
- Arrange a memorial service
- Observe people directly or indirectly involved for signs of delayed stress, withdrawal from social activities, mood swings, irritability, outbursts, physical symptoms, decline in academic performance, isolation, self-harm, substance abuse, or expressions of emotional distress.
- Share information (unless this breaches privacy legislation) with external bodies, e.g., consulates or embassies, carers, landlords or accommodation providers etc.
- Confirm access to emergency funds
- Releasing appropriate information to the media

6.4.2 Once the appropriate measures in point 6.4.1 above are in place, management will return MHE to its normal operations as soon as possible.

6.5 Support

6.5.1 MHE will promote a range of free counselling services on our website, in the Pre-Enrolment Booklet and in the Student Handbook. MHE will also display posters for Apex Psychology, a nearby psychological practice.

6.5.2 Students involved in critical incidents and displaying symptoms of physical and/or psychological trauma may be considered for temporary leave of absence from classes or reasonable adjustment such as delays of assessment due dates.

6.5.3 In response to critical incidents, the MHE Student Counsellor (see the Student Counselling Policy and Procedures for full details) may provide workshops and activities for staff including but not limited to:

Support for Staff

- Training staff to identify and respond appropriately to indicators of self-harm or suicide
- Training staff of notice and respond to signs of trauma
- Offering resilience training
- Offering self-help techniques for recovery from trauma
- Training on how being involved in critical incidents impact mental health
- Training on how to respond to and recover from critical incidents.

Support for Students

- Aiding students (whether directly involved or witnesses) in recovery through discussing the impact, their sense of vulnerability and normalisation of feelings and reactions
- Helping students create individual action plans and techniques for overcoming trauma
- Providing ongoing individual emotional support
- Referring students if necessary to external psychological practices
- Sharing mental health self-management tools on the Learning Management System.

7. Relevant Legislation

MHE acknowledges its legal and regulatory obligations under the following frameworks:

- Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) 2021
- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Framework 2013
- Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS)
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000

8. Policy Administration

Policy category	Health and Safety
Policy owner	Board of Directors
Responsible officer	Campus Compliance Officer
Approving authority	Board of Directors
Contact officer	Campus Compliance Officer
Approval date	8 th July 2022
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Review date	Three years
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Related documents	Critical Incident Policy Determination of Clinical Psychologist Support for Students Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure Risk Management Plan and Register Risk Assessment and Continuous Monitoring Template Student Support Framework Student Counselling Policy and Procedures

9. Version control

Version	Approval date	Approved by	Summary of changes
1.1	8 th July 2022	Board of Directors	

10. Benchmark / References

- Australian Institute of Management
[ABS-Procedure-Critical-Incident-Management.pdf \(aim.com.au\)](https://aim.com.au/ABS-Procedure-Critical-Incident-Management.pdf)
- International College of Management Sydney
[Critical Incident Management Procedures – Policy Library \(icms.edu.au\)](https://icms.edu.au/Critical-Incident-Management-Procedures-Policy-Library)
- Ozford Institute of Higher Education.
[Microsoft Word - Critical Incident Procedures EMT Dec20 \(ozford.edu.au\)](https://ozford.edu.au/Microsoft-Word-Critical-Incident-Procedures-EMT-Dec20)
- Southern Cross Higher Education.
[HEPP56-Critical-Incident-Policy-and-Procedure.pdf \(scei-he.edu.au\)](https://scei-he.edu.au/HEPP56-Critical-Incident-Policy-and-Procedure.pdf)