

Critical Incident Policy and Procedures – HGS

1. Scope

This policy and procedures is applicable to all staff, students and visitors of Holmes Grammar School (HGS).

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy and procedures provides guidance and effective processes for HGS' response to, and management of, critical incidents when they occur to ensure that HGS meets its duty of care obligations by providing the appropriate health and safety support to those affected and taking appropriate actions to prevent re-occurrence of the incident.
- 2.2 This policy does not give instructions as to how to deal with an emergency situation, but is concerned with institutional management of critical incidents.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Critical Incident:** In general terms, a critical incident is defined as a traumatic event which causes or is likely to cause extreme physical and/or emotional distress to staff, students or visitors to HGS which may be regarded as outside the normal range of experience of the people affected. These guidelines apply to critical incidents involving or otherwise impacting students, staff or visitors. Every critical incident is unique and will need to be dealt with differently, according to the needs of the people affected.

Some examples of critical incidents:

- a) Any fatality, serious injury or “near miss” likely to affect seriously staff, students or visitors;
- b) Serious traffic accidents;
- c) Acts of violence by or towards students, staff and/or their family members or visitors;
- d) Threats of violence by or towards students, staff and/or their family members or visitors;
- e) Physical or sexual assault;
- f) Serious injury;
- g) A student's, particularly a student under 18 years of age, disappearance for a prolonged period and/or student accommodation and welfare arrangements are disrupted;
- h) Fire, explosion, bomb threat;
- i) Chemical, radiation or bio-hazard spillage;
- j) Hold-up or attempted robbery;

- k) Major theft or vandalism;
 - l) Infection or threatened infection of serious communicable diseases, including HIV infection or pandemic symptoms;
 - m) Incidents involving pain or abuse of children;
 - n) Incidents in which sights, sounds, or smells are distressing;
 - o) Storms/natural disasters;
 - p) Acute illness (physical or mental).
- 3.2 **Emergency Critical Incident** means an incident which involves the possibility of immediate or imminent threat, physical and/or emotional distress to staff, students or visitors to the Institute, cyber bullying, harassment or threat to staff and/or students; and which may require an immediate response.
- 3.3 **Non-emergency Critical Incident** means a critical incident which does not involve the need for an initial emergency response (for example the development of a pandemic from a lower phase to a higher phase in which cases the government instructions will need to be followed).

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 HGS recognises that critical incidents can arise that have the potential to impact seriously on the safety of staff, students, visitors and/or the school's business continuity. HGS further recognises that effective planning, management and rehearsal are important elements in the success of critical incident management.
- 4.2 This policy and the related procedures are designed to ensure HGS:
- a) Meets its duty of care obligations in providing the highest possible standard of health and safety for staff, students and visitors and other persons working at or visiting the Institute;
 - b) Is able to respond swiftly and effectively in the event of a critical incident;
 - c) Implements an integrated approach to management of risks associated with critical incidents; and
 - d) Is compliant with relevant legislation and standards so that:
 - i. Exposure of persons to health and safety risks arising from critical incidents is avoided or minimized; and
 - ii. Physical and psychological trauma are reduced.
- 4.3 This policy provides a framework for HGS' response to a critical incident in the period during and immediately following the incident, and for its management of the longer term consequences of such an incident.
- 4.4 This policy and the procedures also define the roles and responsibilities of key staff in:
- a) The management, coordination and communication of information about a critical incident; and
 - b) The recovery and post incident review of the critical incident and its handling.
- 4.5 HGS ensures that students under the age of 18 are given appropriate information as to who to contact in the event of an emergency situation such as a critical

incident.

4.6 For the management of emergency situations for U18 students, please refer to the Emergency Management Plan. Described within are our procedural arrangements pertaining to a series of critical incidents including:

- Emergencies requiring evacuation
- Lockdown
- Off Campus Activities
- Pandemic protocols

4.7 In the event of a disruption to welfare arrangements for under 18 students, please refer to the Management of U18 International Students Policy and Procedures.

5. Procedures

Reporting a Critical Incident

5.1 Where a critical incident has occurred or is imminent:

- a) An incident or potential incident must be reported. If possible this should be co-ordinated by the Principal. The Principal should be notified immediately and given the full details of the situation including the exact location of the incident, the type of incident and details of any person or persons who may be injured, in distress or at risk;
- b) The Principal can be contacted 24 hour 7 days on the emergency number:
03 7002 3399
- c) Students will also be provided options of reporting critical incident via email to Studentservices@holmes.edu.au, visiting the on-campus Student Services desk or the Principal.

5.2 HGS has effective arrangements in place for critical incidents in relation to students who are under 18.

- a) Students and other parties including staff and guardians who become aware of a possible or actual critical incident affecting an U18 student are required to report the incident as soon as practicable;
- b) Under 18 students will be issued a Student Safety Card containing the emergency contact details that under 18 students can ring 24/7 for assistance and emergency report;
- c) Student Services and Principal ensure the availability and immediate response for U18 students to report critical incident via email, phone and on campus;
- d) The designated staff in each campus will be accessible to U18 students for counselling and for assistance in reporting a critical incident;
- e) Contact details of designated staff are made available to students during orientation and in student handbook;
- f) The legislation fact sheet on Feeling Safe will be provided and explained to the students during orientation;
- g) U18 students will be advised on orientation that they should talk to an adult they trust in the event of feeling unsafe and seek their assistance in reporting a critical incident;
- h) All HGS teachers and staff will be made aware to provide help to the U18 students in reporting a critical incident.

Responding to a Critical Incident

- 5.3 Principal will immediately assess the critical incident.
- 5.4 If it is assessed as a critical incident, the Principal will also be responsible for the assessment and co-ordination of responses to the incident, although other staff members may be co-opted as necessary to deal with specific aspects.
- 5.5 It is the responsibility of the Principal to inform the School Council. Action to be undertaken by the Principal:
- a) Identification of the persons affected by the critical incident;
 - b) Recommendation of response in terms of personnel and resources to be provided to the School council on the basis of an assessment of needs and priorities;
 - c) Offer immediate assistance to persons involved in the incident;
 - d) Liaise with Emergency Services, where appropriate and ensure requisite access for Emergency Services;
 - e) Secure premises and cordon off or close areas deemed to be unsafe;
 - f) Document details of the incident;
 - g) Notify relevant emergency contacts for the individuals involved in the incident and provide appropriate support. If an International student dies or sustains serious injury, this support may extend to many of the tasks that may otherwise have been dealt with by the family;
 - h) Initiation of pastoral care services to be provided to individuals including victims and other persons affected by the incident;
 - i) Provision of a quiet area will be established for the use of victims and/or their families. This area shall be protected from intrusion by anyone not immediately affected in the incident; and
 - j) The Principal is responsible for completing the Critical Incident Report Form and forwarding it to the School Council within 24 hours of the incident.
- 5.6 The School Council, if necessary, will appoint a spokesperson to speak to media representatives or make public statements regarding a critical incident.
- 5.7 The School Council will provide guidance to staff about what information to give students and the public regarding the incident. Until that guidance is provided, staff are to make no comment and to discourage other staff and students from making comment about the incident.

Follow Up Action

- 5.8 The School Council and the Principal will assess the need for counselling, further information and debriefing sessions and may need to arrange resources to implement an ongoing plan for support.
- 5.9 In implementing an ongoing plan of support, the Principal will ensure follow up concerning the well-being of individuals involved in the incident. This support may be extended to provide accommodations or adjustments to student or staff workload to provide for recovery from injury and or shock.
- 5.10 The Principal will also ensure that HGS complies with any additional legislative reporting requirements that may arise from the incident.
- 5.11 In the case of a critical incident affecting student's attendance and/or course

progress, the incident will need to be reported via the PRISMS and the Student Management System.

- 5.12 When disruption to U18 student welfare arrangement occurs, Holmes will ensure
- a) Immediate welfare intervention and arrangement to be made;
 - b) Follow up actions to be taken;
 - c) Student parents/guardians to be informed; and
 - d) The relevant Commonwealth, state or territory agencies will be contacted where needed.
- 5.13 The Principal is responsible for preparing a detailed report of the management of the incident for the School Council including recommendations for the management of such incidents in the future as appropriate.
- 5.14 The Critical Incident Report will be verified by the Principal and the School Council will be briefed on the incident and action.
- 5.15 The Principal is also responsible for recording the incident in the Critical Incident Register, including what remedial action was undertaken.
- 5.16 The completed Critical Incident Report and the Critical Incident Register will be tabled at the following WHS Committee meeting. The WHS Committee will review and evaluate the response to the critical incident, what remedial action was taken, and make recommendations as to any changes to policy and procedure where applicable.
- 5.17 Changes to the policy and procedures, including resources, will be made as soon as practicable following the review and evaluation.
- 5.18 Review of the Critical Incident Register will be a standing item of all WHS Committee meetings.
- 5.19 The written record of any critical incident and remedial actions taken in response to the incident will be retained for at least two years after the student ceases to be an accepted student.

6. Useful Contacts

NATIONAL	
Emergencies	000
Police – non emergency	131 444
1800RESPECT (Domestic and Sexual Violence assistance)	1800 737 732
Mental Health Support	
Lifeline	13 11 14
Beyond Blue	1300 224 636
VICTORIA	
Sexual Assault Crisis Line	1800 806 292

Version Control and Accountable Officers

It is the joint responsibility of the Implementation Officer and Responsible Officer to ensure compliance with this policy.

Responsible Officer	Principal		
Implementation Officers	Head of School and teachers		
Review Date	January 2026		
Approved by			
Governing Council			
Associated Documents			
Critical Incident Report Form Management of U18 International Students Policy and Procedures Privacy Policy and Procedure Student Support Policy Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures Workplace Health and Safety Policy			
Version	Brief Description of the changes	Date approved	Effective Date
1	Separation of policy from generic Holmes Institute policies	November 2026	November 2026