

Critical Incident Policy and Procedures

1. Scope

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

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This policy and procedures provides guidance and effective processes for Holmes' response to, and management of, critical incidents when they occur to ensure that Holmes 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 Holmes campuses 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. Holmes recognises that critical incidents can arise that have the potential to impact seriously on the safety of staff, students, visitors and/or the Institute's business continuity. Holmes 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 Holmes:
- 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 Holmes' 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. Holmes 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 is 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 Campus Director. The Campus Director 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 Campus Director 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 Campus Director.
- 5.2. Holmes 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 Campus Director 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 Holmes 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. Campus Director will immediately assess the critical incident.
- 5.4. If it is assessed as a critical incident, the Campus Director 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 Campus Director to inform the Chief Operating Officer. Action to be undertaken by the Campus Director:
- 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 Chief Operating Officer 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 Campus Director is responsible for completing the Critical Incident Report Form and forwarding it to the Chief Operating Officer within 24 hours of the incident.
- 5.6. The Chief Operating Officer is the only authorised spokesperson to speak to media representatives or make public statements regarding a critical incident.
- 5.7. The Chief Operating Officer 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 Campus Director, Chief Operating Officer and the Senior Management Group (SMG) 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 SMG 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 SMG will also ensure that Holmes 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 Campus Director is responsible for preparing a detailed report of the management of the incident for the Chief Operating Officer and SMG including recommendations for the management of such incidents in the future as appropriate.
- 5.14. The Critical Incident Report will be verified by the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Executive Officer will be briefed on the incident and action.
- 5.15. The Campus Director 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.

Useful Contacts

NATIONAL	
Emergencies	000
Police	131 444
1800RESPECT (Domestic and Sexual Violence assistance)	1800 737 732

Mental Health Support	
Lifeline	13 11 14
Beyond Blue	1300 224 636
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY Canberra Rape Crisis Centre	02 6247 2525
NEW SOUTH WALES NSW Rape Crisis Centre	1800 424 017
QUEENSLAND Sexual Assault Help Line	1800 010 120
VICTORIA Sexual Assault Crisis Line	1800 806 292
WESTERN AUSTRALIA Sexual Assault Resource Centre	1800 199 888

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	Chief Operating Officer		
Implementation Officers	Chief Operating Officer and Campus Directors		
Review Date	October 2026		
Approved by			
Governing Council			
Associated Documents			
Critical Incident Report Form 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
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy reviewed to update the Responding to critical incidence, Follow up action and Reporting. Policy formatted to align the structure and format with other institute policies. Version control added in the absence of the version control record of the previous two versions. Under 18 student emergency contact added in the critical incident reporting and follow up action. 	22 May 2020	22 May 2020
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional emergency examples added. Included section on managing emergency situations and when welfare arrangements are disrupted for under 18 students. Added the requirement for the inclusion of remedial action taken in the Critical Incident Register. 	17 February 2023	17 February 2023
3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of minimum retention period for Critical incidents 	20 October 2023	20 October 2023