

Critical Incident Policy and Procedure

OPOL012



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Owner	General Manager & Academic Manager
Review Cycle	Annual
Applicable To	All staff, students, agents, and contractors

1. Purpose

This policy establishes Shafston International College's framework for identifying, responding to, and managing critical incidents affecting students, staff, and the broader college community.

This policy ensures Shafston:

- Has an effective, coordinated approach when responding to critical incidents as they occur;
- Provides appropriate support and counselling services to those affected;
- Maintains appropriate training and information resources for all staff;
- Meets its duty of care obligations under applicable legislation and the National Code 2018;
- Protects the welfare of all students, including those Under 18, in accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (NPCSO).

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled at Shafston International College across all campuses:

- Brisbane: 188 Shafston Avenue, Kangaroo Point QLD 4169
- Gold Coast: 72 Nerang St, Southport QLD 4215
- Sydney: L2/72 Mary Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010

It also applies to all staff, contractors, homestay providers, and welfare guardians, and covers incidents occurring on-campus, at off-campus Shafston activities, or any incident affecting enrolled students.

3. Definition of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is defined under the National Code 2018 as a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear, or injury.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Death, serious injury, or missing student;
- Severe verbal, physical, or psychological aggression or violence;
- Sexual assault or serious harassment;
- Natural disaster, terrorism, or large-scale emergency;
- Domestic violence, drug or alcohol crisis;
- Any incident causing significant and ongoing distress to students or staff.

Non-life-threatening events may qualify as critical incidents where they cause significant distress to the community.

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4. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy complies with:

- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act);
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 — Standard 6 (Student Support Services);
- Standards for RTOs 2025;
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (NPCSO) — Principle 5;
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) and applicable State/Territory WHS legislation;
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Australian Privacy Principles;
- Applicable anti-discrimination legislation.

5. Principles

- Student welfare is the primary consideration in all critical incident responses;
- All students, including those Under 18, will be treated with dignity, respect, and cultural sensitivity;
- Child safety is paramount — Shafston adheres to the NPCSO in all responses involving students Under 18;
- Responses will be coordinated, calm, and evidence-based;
- Confidentiality of individuals will be maintained to the maximum extent lawfully possible;
- All relevant authorities will be notified as required by legislation;
- Shafston will continuously review and improve its critical incident procedures.

6. Critical Incident Team

When a critical incident occurs, the Principal Executive Officer (PEO) or Campus Manager will immediately convene a Critical Incident Team (CIT). The CIT is responsible for:

- Assessing risks and coordinating the immediate response;
- Liaising with emergency services, DESE, DHA, and other regulatory bodies;
- Contacting the student's family, emergency contacts, and agent;
- Coordinating with external parties including homestay providers and foreign embassies;
- Providing counselling and ongoing welfare support.

The CIT typically includes:

- Principal Executive Officer (PEO) or nominee — overall incident coordinator;
- Campus Manager (relevant campus);
- Director of Studies / Academic Manager;
- Student Support Officer / U18 Welfare Coordinator (where relevant);
- External counsellors or crisis support services as required.

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7. Immediate Response Action Plan

1. Contact emergency services (000) immediately if there is any risk to life or physical safety.
2. Ensure the safety and welfare of all students and staff. Administer first aid if trained and appropriate.
3. Notify the Principal Executive Officer (PEO) immediately with all known facts.
4. Convene the Critical Incident Team to assess the situation and allocate responsibilities.
5. Notify next of kin, parent/legal guardian, or emergency contacts — with particular urgency for students Under 18.
6. Brief relevant staff and delegate inquiry and communication responsibilities.
7. Arrange counselling or crisis support services; set up a designated recovery space if needed.
8. Report to DESE via PRISMS as soon as practicable where the incident affects student attendance or studies.
9. Document all actions, communications, and decisions in the Incident Register and student file.
10. Restore normal college operations as soon as it is safe to do so.

Confirm access to emergency funds if necessary.

Designate one CIT member as scribe for all meetings to keep records of content and decisions.

Organise a tasks timetable for the next hour(s), day(s) as required.

Plan ongoing feedback and regular CIT meetings so the coordinating team remains continuously in touch.

In initial group debriefing, allow opportunity to discuss the event in cultural and ethnic terms, share the impact, and normalise reactions.

7.1 Under 18 Students — Additional Obligations

Where the incident involves a student Under 18:

- Parents or legal guardians must be notified immediately regardless of time zone;
- The U18 Welfare Coordinator must be engaged without delay;
- Homestay providers must be contacted where the student is in homestay;
- If the student is an unaccompanied minor, Shafston must ensure continuous supervision until parent/guardian arrangements are confirmed;
- All actions must comply with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Principle 5);
- EQI (Education Queensland International) must be notified for HSP/PEP students within the required timeframe.

8. Media Management

The Principal Executive Officer (PEO) or designated spokesperson is the sole authorised person to communicate with media regarding any incident. All staff must:

- Direct all media inquiries immediately to the PEO or designated spokesperson;
- Refrain from making any public statements or social media posts about the incident;
- Not make any comment that implies blame or fault.

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The PEO will state the known facts, describe the support being provided, and refrain from disclosing identifying information without consent. Police Media or emergency services communications officers will be engaged as required.

9. Reporting and Record Keeping

The ESOS Act 2000 requires Shafston to notify DESE as soon as practicable following a critical incident. Where the incident affects a student's attendance or studies, it must be reported via PRISMS.

Required documentation includes:

- Time, date, location, and nature of the incident;
- Names and roles of persons involved;
- Actions taken by Shafston, emergency services, and support providers;
- Communications sent to families, agents, and regulatory bodies;
- Counselling and welfare support provided;
- Follow-up actions and outcomes.

All records are stored securely in the student file and Critical Incident Register in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 and Shafston's Privacy Policy (OPL021).

10. Follow-Up and Continuous Improvement

Following each critical incident, Shafston will conduct a structured debrief to assess response effectiveness and identify improvements to this policy, procedures, and staff training. Findings are documented and retained.

11. Response Timeline Summary

Immediately (within 24 hours):

Gather facts; ensure safety of all students and staff; administer first aid if necessary; contact emergency services (000); notify PEO; convene CIT; manage media; set up recovery room; contact next of kin (immediately for U18 students); keep staff and students informed; confirm access to emergency funds; designate a scribe to record all decisions.

Within 48–72 hours:

Arrange counselling and support services; provide opportunities for staff and students to discuss the incident; debrief all relevant persons; provide support to all staff and helpers involved in the response; restore normal operations as soon as practicable; keep all relevant parties informed.

Within the first month:

Arrange a memorial service if appropriate; encourage parents to participate in welfare discussions; identify behavioural changes and possibility of post-traumatic stress disorder — refer to mental health services; monitor progress of hospitalised students or staff; monitor mental and physical health of all helpers and responders.

Longer term:

Monitor staff and students for signs of delayed stress and onset of PTSD — refer for specialised treatment if required; provide ongoing support as needed; plan for and be sensitive to anniversaries, inquests, and legal proceedings; conduct mock critical incident exercises to test preparedness.

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Timeframe	Required Actions
Immediate (0–1 hr)	Call 000 if life at risk; ensure safety; notify PEO; begin incident log
Within 24 hours	Convene CIT; notify family/guardian; arrange counselling; notify DESE/PRISMS
Within 48–72 hours	Ongoing counselling; staff/student debrief; restore normal operations
Within 1 month	Memorial service if appropriate; monitor for PTSD; evaluate response
Long-term	Monitor for delayed stress; update policy and training; file all records

12. Emergency and Support Contacts

Police / Ambulance / Fire: 000
State Emergency Service (SES): 132 500
Suicide Helpline (Lifeline): 13 11 14
Crisis Care: 1800 177 135
Domestic Violence Hotline: 1800 811 811
Sexual Assault Helpline (1800RESPECT): 1800 737 732
Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services: 1800 177 833
Family Drug Support: 1300 369 186
Poison Information Centre: 13 11 26
Gambling Helpline (Gamblers Anonymous): 1800 002 210
Quit Smoking (Quitline): 13 78 48
Crisis Pregnancy: 1800 650 840
Salvation Army Crisis Support: 1300 363 622
Office of State Coroner (QLD): 07 3239 6193
Australian Funeral Directors Association: 03 9859 9966
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT): 1300 555 135
Australian Search and Rescue: 1800 815 257
Queensland Government Telephone Interpreters: 13 14 50
Department of Home Affairs (DHA): 13 18 81
DESE (reporting via PRISMS): prisms.education.gov.au

Staff Training and Preparedness:

Shafston will conduct regular training for all staff regarding this Critical Incident Policy. Staff are encouraged to build and maintain a network of local community contacts including funeral directors, police, medical authorities, religious and ethnic group leaders, media representatives, insurance representatives, and local embassy or consular representatives. Shafston will coordinate mock critical incident exercises periodically to test readiness, observed and assessed by an independent party.

Post-Incident Evaluation Checklist:

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Following each critical incident, the CIT and relevant staff will evaluate the response using the following criteria (rated 1–5, where 1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent):

Were decisions clear and timely?

Was follow-up on decisions effective?

Were mobile phones and communication channels available?

Were arrangements for family visits adequate?

Was liaison with police, doctors, and hospital staff effective?

Were independent interpreters arranged where needed?

Were death notices, funeral, and memorial service arrangements appropriate?

Were refund and repatriation expense matters handled?

Were personal items and academic affairs of affected persons considered?

Were insurance matters (OSHC, ambulance cover) addressed?

Were formal stress management interventions provided for students and staff?

Was liaison with academic staff effective (release from classes, rescheduling exams)?

Were further debriefing sessions arranged for groups/individuals?

Was liaison with DHA conducted if studies were interrupted?

Were fee issues resolved for students unable to continue?

Was access to legal aid arranged if required?

Were follow-up condolence letters sent to families?

Was financial assistance arranged for families of affected persons in Australia?

Were hospital visits by staff/students organised?

Service	Organisation	Contact
Emergency	Police / Ambulance / Fire	000
Crisis Support	Lifeline	13 11 14
Mental Health	Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636
Sexual Assault	1800RESPECT	1800 737 732
Domestic Violence	DV Connect (QLD)	1800 811 811
Drug & Alcohol	ADIS Queensland	1800 177 833
Regulatory Authority	DESE (Dept. Education, Skills & Employment)	1300 566 046
Immigration	Dept. of Home Affairs (DHA)	131 881
Consular	Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT)	1300 555 135
Tuition Protection	TPS	tps.gov.au
Interpreter Services	TIS National	131 450

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13. Related Policies

- Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure (OPOL009);
- U18 Welfare Management Policy (POL029);
- Student Code of Conduct (CPL020);
- Anti-Discrimination, Vilification and Inclusion Policy;
- Privacy Policy (OPL021);
- Deferral, Suspension and Cancellation Policy and Procedure;
- Academic and General Misconduct Policy and Procedure.

Document Control

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END OF POLICY