CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Critical Incident Policy	
Relevant Standards SRTO 2015: 8.5 The National Code 2018: 6.8, 6.9	**Linked Documents** Health and Safety Policy and Procedure Student Manual and Handbook Staff Handbook and Handbook

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to provide a clear and systematic process that protects the interests and welfare of all individuals who are involved in critical incidents.

2. Scope

This policy relates to critical incidents directly involving members of SLIT, visitors or contractors which impact not only on the individual but also on other members of SLITcommunity, and possibly the wider community.

3. Definitions

Critical Incident: An event related to the operation of SLIT or member(s) of SLIT community which is of such a serious nature that it has impacted or is a risk of impacting on the health, welfare, safety or interests of any involved individuals or SLIT itself. Critical Incidents are the highest level of incident which may affect the operations of SLIT and referred to crisis, emergency or other similar expressions.

Acute Stress Disorder: The essential feature of acute stress disorder is the development of characteristic anxiety, dissociative, and other symptoms that occur within 1 month after exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor, such as related to a critical incident. The symptoms must cause significant distress, significantly interfere with normal functioning, or impair the individual's ability to pursue necessary tasks.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: The essential feature of post-traumatic stress disorder is the development of characteristic systems, lasting more than 1 month, following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor, involving one of the following:

- Direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity.
- Witnessing an event that involves death, injury or a threat to the physical integrity of another person.
- Learning about unexpected or violent death, serious hazard, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.

The onset of symptoms may be delayed more than 6 months.

Critical Incident Management Team: This is a designated team of college personnel which consists of at least one member who is formally trained to deal with critical incidents. Other members should also be trained, at least internally by the qualified member. Members will likely comprise:

1. Chief Executive Officer
2. Campus Manager
3. Student Support Officer
4. Student Support Officer

Secondary Consultation: The situation where a staff member consults a counsellor about a student (secondary client) in order to improve the situation of concern, or to prevent harm

Defusing an Explosive Situation: An intervention with an objective of preventing a violent critical incident during an explosive situation where there is a high degree of agitation. The stages of this type of defusing are:

1. Observation
2. Preparation
3. Approach
4. Action, and
5. Follow up

Defusing after a Critical Incident: A process by which the immediate psychological needs of individuals involved in the critical incident are dealt with to ensure well-being over the next 24 hours (Source: Robyn Robinson's model of Critical Incident Management).

Psychological Debriefing: Psychological debriefings differ from operational debriefings by management and must be held separately. Psychological debriefings are normally held 24 – 72 hours after the event, should always be held by qualified staff, and deal with the reactions of people involved in an event and ways of handling it.

4. Legislative Context

SLIT has a responsibility to abide by relevant Acts of Parliament such as;

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 1988, Mental Health Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1983
- Accident Compensation Act 1985

5. Policy

5.1 SLIT undertakes to exercise a duty of care to all individuals who access its services and visit its premises. From time to time, events of a critical nature may occur that require immediate, systematic and comprehensive organisational processes. Being witness to or being involved in a critical incident can have a deep and lasting impact on individuals and groups. Early and appropriate action during and following a critical incident can do much to assist in minimising the effects of these incidents on the interests and welfare of involved parties. With these things in mind, SLIT:

a) Supports pro-active strategies which will help minimise the occurrence of some critical incidents
b) Encourages the early identification of potentially critical incidents within SLIT
c) Ensures critical incidents in the workplace are managed in line with established quality management and occupational health and safety objectives and emergency or disaster procedures
d) Provides clearly accessible and understood directions for all personnel caught up in a critical incident
e) Assists people to cope with critical incidents by providing appropriate practical and psychological support
f) Provides appropriate assistance to people who may require longer term assistance
g) Ensures ongoing training, support and review of the critical incident management team.

5.2 Critical Incidents

Examples of Critical Incidents include, but are not limited to:

- Serious injury to or serious illness or death of a college student, staff member, visitor, tenant or contractor, or any threat of these;
- A missing student, where the student is:
    - An international student; or
    - While undertaking fieldwork off-campus
- Severe distressing or disturbing behaviour;
- Physical assault, threats, or attack;
- Where a student, staff member, visitor, tenant or contractor has witnessed a serious incident;
- Natural disaster (e.g. cyclone, earthquake, tsunami, or flood);
- Fire, riot, bomb-threat, explosion, gas, chemical hazard, or another environmental hazard;
- Major overseas events, such as earthquakes or political unrest;
- Pandemics

5.3. **Support for Students and Staff Involved in a Critical Incident**

5.3.1 Domestic Students

The Campus Manager and their delegates, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, will coordinate support for domestic students, their family, friends and next of kin, which may include, as appropriate:

- Referral to SLIT's available counselling service;
- Contacting the Faculty Head(s) and/or Academic Manager to request rescheduling of assignments or withdrawal without academic penalty;
- Facilitating an application for deferred examination or special consideration in an examination;
- Assistance in application for withdrawal without financial penalty;
- Assistance with arrangements for hospital or medical treatment
- Assistance in the arrangements for family, friends and next of kin to visit SLIT e.g. in relation to accommodation and crisis support,
- Providing a single point of contact at SLIT for family, friends and next of kin

5.3.2 International Students

The Campus Manager and their delegates, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, will coordinate support for international students, their family, friends and next of kin, which may include, as appropriate:

- The support outlined in 7.1 above, plus,
- Assistance with arrangements for hospital or medical treatment;
- Assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues;
- Contacting the consulate, high commission or embassy for the student's country;
- Assistance in obtaining visas for family, friends and next of kin to visit SLIT;
- Hiring interpreters; and
- Assistance in arrangements for repatriation, funeral or memorial service, if required

5.3.3 Support for Staff Involved in a Critical Incident

The Campus Manager and their delegates, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, will coordinate support for members of staff, their family, friends and next of kin, which may include, as appropriate:

- Referral to SLIT's counselling service;
- Assistance with arrangements for hospital or medical treatment;
- Assistance in the arrangements for family, friends and next of kin to visit SLIT; and

▪ Providing a single point of contact at SLIT for family, friends and next of kin

5.3.4 Support for Visitors and Contractors Involved in a Critical Incident

The Campus Manager and their delegates, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, will coordinate support for visitors and contractors, their family, friends and next of kin, which may include, as appropriate:

▪ Referral to SLIT's counselling service;
▪ Assistance with arrangements for hospital or medical treatment;
▪ Assistance in the arrangements for family, friends and next of kin to visit SLIT; and
▪ Providing a single point of a single point of contact at SLIT for family, friends and next of kin.

5.2 Critical Incident Management Principles

5.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities: The head of the Critical Incident Team is the Campus Manger and he/she assumes operational command of a critical incident as soon as the policy is activated. Roles and Responsibilities should be delegated to appropriately trained personnel by the Campus Manager. Consideration needs to be given to appointing external personnel for debriefing critical incidents. Roles and responsibilities of personnel delegated to carry out this policy should be clearly defined in order to ensure co-operative functioning. The role of the counsellors employed by SLIT in critical incident management needs to be clearly defined.

5.2.2 Resources: Sufficient funds, resources and organisational support are provided to ensure the effective implementation of this policy.

5.2.3 Ongoing Improvement of Critical Incident Policy and Procedures: Should occur as part of quality improvement.

5.2.4 Reporting of Critical Incidents: A Critical Incident Report Form should be filled out for each incident and sent to the Critical Incident Management Team. For any critical incident involving a student, all records will be kept for a minimum of two years from the date student has ceased to be an enrolled student (Ref: Documents and Records Management Policy).

5.3 Critical Incident Management Framework

The Comprehensive Management of Critical Incidents will comprise 4 stages. Each stage has a number of issues and strategies that are relevant to successful outcomes.
The 4 stages are:

▪ Prevention
▪ Critical Incident Response Management
▪ Post-Incident Management, and
▪ Review

STAGE 1: PREVENTION

Prevention may occur either;

▪ Before any outward disturbances are apparent (primary prevention);
▪ When disturbances occur but have not yet resulted in a critical incident (secondary prevention);Or
▪ After a critical incident occurs, to prevent repetition (tertiary prevention).

Primary Prevention

The main activities are **preparation and education**

- General Education
- Information and discussion
- Training
- Planning: co-ordination; evaluation and improvement of policies and procedures, especially Orientation Policy, Access and Equity Policy, OHS Policy,
- Environment modification/security measures/architectural planning
- Legal parameters defined
- Balance between duty of care and confidentiality defined
- Clear rights and protection regarding rules of conduct and personal safety for students and staff
- Customer service geared to satisfying customer needs and dealing with challenging behaviour
- Assessment of risk, through audits and records of critical incidents etc

Secondary Prevention

Also known as Early Intervention;

- Identifying, assessing and working with "at risk" population individually or in groups
- Secondary consultation with counsellors by staff about a student/problem
- Counselling, referral and information provided by counsellors
- Student discipline and other policies applied if relevant, including the use of behaviour contracts for students with challenging behaviour
- Interventions of calming challenging situations and defusing explosive situations
- Legal constraints adhered to
- Outside professional supervision provided to counsellors if required by them on a regular basis
- Monitoring and adjusting security measures to prevent specific incidents

Tertiary Prevention

To prevent further occurrence of same type of incident;

- Individualised Emergency Management Plan for students with challenging behaviour
- Adjusting security measures to prevent further incidents
- **Most interventions from B. (Secondary Prevention) are recommended.**

STAGE 2: CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

A response to the critical incident needs to be planned and a rapid and effective intervention needs to beimplemented.

Assessment

An accurate assessment of the person/situation needs to be made. This is critical otherwise inadequate action may be taken. A number of factors need to be considered.

- Type of incident
- Levels of risk and Probable Severity
- Levels of Urgency
- Implications of the incident

Assessment is usually ongoing until the situation is dealt with/resolved.

- Accountability hierarchy in relation to assessment of level of risk and urgency should be clarified.
  Intervention:
- The Critical Incident Management Team should be convened as soon as possible to plan intervention.
- Relevant college policies and procedures need to be integrated for effective outcomes.
- Carrying out of intervention plan.
- Contacting outside service (police, Crisis Assessment Teams through hospitals, etc.);
- Emergency protocols need to be developed with minimum time delay, containing, waiting for services to arrive.
- If incident is ongoing (e.g. stalker or threats), continual assessment, planning and intervention needs to take place.

STAGE 3: POST CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

A plan of recommended interventions will need to be made by the Critical Incident Management Team as soon as practicable, and may include any of the following:

- An assessment of the degree of trauma and the affected persons.
- Informing campus community of state of affairs and available assistance in order to allay anxiety and to invite usage of assistance.
- Defusing of involved persons within 8 hours of incident.
- Psychological debriefing of students and staff 1 – 3 days after the incident (except if legal processes contra-indicate).
- Involvement of outside consultants in critical incident management and debriefing.
- Counselling/treatment/group sessions for affected persons.
- Training groups in stress management and coping strategies.
- Provision of information about community mental health services.
- Contribution to media releases.

STAGE 4: REVIEW OF EACH CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENTPROCESS

A system of reviewing action taken at specific critical incidents should be developed and carried out by the Critical Incident Management Team. This may include debriefing of the Critical Incident Management Team and assisting staff.

6. Responsibility

The Campus Manager is responsible for effective implementation and management of this policy as well as provisionof information on ways to resolve complaints of breaches of this policy.

The CEO has overall responsibility for the implementation and review of this policy.

Any complaints or breaches in relation to this policy should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer in person or by email to: ceo@slit.edu.au