

Student Critical Incident Policy

Approved by: Chief Student and Community Officer

Approval date: 30 May 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, TAFE NSW acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Section 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
- a Outline how TAFE NSW manages student critical incidents by offering staff clear guidance on the necessary management, response, and reporting procedures.
 - b Provide ongoing support to students affected by these incidents and ensure the support is regularly reviewed and improved through a coordinated process.
- 1.2 This policy also supports TAFE NSW's compliance with the:
- a [Emergency Management Framework](#)
 - b [National Vocational Education and Training Regulator \(Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations\) Instrument 2025](#)
 - c [National Code for Providers of Educational Services for Overseas Students \(ESOS\) 2018](#)
 - d [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)
 - e [NSW Child Safe Scheme](#)

Section 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all TAFE NSW students, staff (including employees, contractors and third parties engaged by TAFE NSW, on-hire workers, volunteers and visitors).

Section 3. Policy requirements

- 3.1 This policy is to be made publicly available on the TAFE NSW website.

Responding to Student Critical Incidents

- 3.2 The [Emergency Management Framework](#) outlines the administration, implementation, and validation of emergency management, ensuring effective integration with Incident and Crisis Management Teams, supporting a strong governance structure, and facilitating the development and execution of emergency management plans.
- 3.3 Similarly, the [WHS Incidents and Corrective Actions Procedure](#) ensures a consistent and timely response to the management of incidents and hazards and the [How Do I manage Critical Incidents](#) guides management of critical incidents for international students. These documents form the methodology for managing critical incidents.
- 3.4 In responding to a Student Critical Incident, staff will also act in accordance with the following TAFE NSW policies, procedures and guides considering the specific nature, severity and urgency of the situation:
- a [Emergency Management Procedure](#)
 - b [International Student Management Policy](#)
 - c [Provision of First Aid Procedure](#)
 - d [Sexual Assault, Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

e [Under 18 International Student Welfare Management and Orientation Procedure](#)

f [Work Health and Safety Policy](#)

- 3.5 For critical incidents that are psychosocial or mental health related TAFE NSW staff are authorised to arrange same-day counselling support for students through [TAFE NSW Urgent Same Day Counselling Support](#).
- 3.6 If the incident involves an international student, the international Customer Experience Lead should be contacted, in addition to any action taken under 3.5.
- 3.7 Students seeking to self-refer for counselling can contact the TAFE NSW Counselling and Career Development Services by calling 131601 and follow the options.
- 3.8 Following the immediate response to an incident, the staff member leading the response will ensure that the student is offered appropriate follow-up support, which may include referrals to services such as the [TAFE NSW Counselling and Career Development Service](#) who may also assist with referrals to services external to TAFE NSW where needed.
- 3.9 If the student is an international student, the International Unit are to be notified (if they aren't the recipient of the critical incident in the first instance) so welfare, support measures can be implemented and any impact on course progress and attendance monitored, as per the:
- a [Course Progress and Attendance Monitoring for International Students \(VET and ELICOS\) Policy](#)
 - b [Higher Education Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy](#)
 - c [International Student Management Policy](#)
 - d [International Under 18 Student Welfare Management and Orientation Procedure](#)
 - e [TAFE NSW How Do I Manage Critical Incidents](#)
- 3.10 In adherence with the [Emergency Management Framework](#) and the [WHS Incidents and Corrective Actions Procedure](#), relevant staff members will take appropriate actions as required. This includes determining the need for further support, reviewing the incident, conducting debriefs, evaluating the response, making recommendations and formally closing the incident.
- 3.11 Incidents relating to under 17-year-old students must also be reported to schools, workplace and/or families as required and/or consented to by students.

Reporting a Student Critical Incident

- 3.12 In accordance with the [Emergency Management Framework](#) and the [WHS Incidents and Corrective Actions Procedure](#), the employee managing the incident will make an Incident Report once the student's safety and well-being have been ensured.
- 3.13 For critical incidents relating to international students, the [How Do I manage Critical Incidents](#) guide is to be followed.

Record Keeping

- 3.14 In adherence with the [Emergency Management Framework](#) and the [WHS Incidents and Corrective Actions Procedure](#), TAFE NSW will maintain written records of all Student Critical Incidents and any remedial action taken.

- 3.15 Critical incident reporting, including details of remedial action, related to international students are retained for at least two years after the student ceases to be an *accepted student* under the [ESOS Act](#).
- 3.16 All records relating to Student Critical Incidents will also be managed in accordance with the:
- [Records Management Policy](#).
 - [Privacy Policy](#).
 - [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#).
 - [Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998](#).
 - [Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002](#).

Section 4. Responsibilities

Position or Team	Responsibilities
Chief Student and Community Officer (Accountable Officer)	Oversight of the development, review and amendment of this policy, with the authority to approve revisions to the policy to ensure alignment with regulatory and legislative requirements and current TAFE NSW operations.
Executive Director, Student and Campus Services (Responsible Officer)	Supports the Accountable Officer in the development, monitoring, review, amendment and implementation of this policy, to ensure alignment with regulatory and legislative requirements and current TAFE NSW operations.
Emergency Planning Committees	Lead by Campus Services who are responsible for implementing emergency management.
International Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive critical incident reports for International Students, record and report via relevant systems/departments. Facilitate welfare and support of students post critical incident.
Student and Campus Services	Offer support services to students involved in a critical incident
Senior Manager Campus Services	Manager TAFE Services will be representing – Emergency Management Cluster Group
TAFE NSW Staff, including contractors and third parties.	Access and adhere to the requirements of this policy and associated policies and procedures.

Section 5. Monitoring

- 5.1 This policy will be monitored and reviewed within the context of the [Emergency Management Framework](#) and associated policies and procedures. Aligned with the Framework TAFE NSW's

Emergency Planning Committees will ensure Emergency Plans are reviewed and if necessary updated and communicate any changes:

- a at least every 12 months, and,
- b whenever there is a significant change to the physical environment (e.g. new buildings) or to the organisational structure and,
- c following audits, incidents, drills or actual emergencies where the plan is evaluated and a need for improvements is identified.

5.2 The WHS Team will support and monitor the implementation of this procedure by:

- a conducting audits across communities and business units
- b investigating incidents and emergencies and reviewing the response actions taken.
- c providing regular data reports and recommendations to the Executive Leadership Team on areas for improvement.

Section 6. Where to get help

6.1 For advice on this policy:

- a Students can obtain advice by contacting their teachers or course coordinator in first instance.
- b TAFE NSW staff can seek further information from their manager and senior manager and their local emergency management team.

Section 7. Governance information

Governance	Details
Legislation, regulations, and standards	<p>This policy is governed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 - Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Standard 2.3) - National Code for Providers of Educational Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) 2018 (Standards 5 and 6). - NSW Child Safe Scheme (Child Safe Standards) - Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTO Standards) (Standards 2 and 4). - Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998 - Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002
Related procedures	<p>This policy relates to the following procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency Management Procedure - Emergency Management Framework - Provision of First Aid Procedure - How Do I manage Critical Incidents

Governance	Details
Related policies	This policy is to be read together with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Privacy Policy - Privacy Management Plan - Records Management Policy - Sexual Assault, Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy - Work Health and Safety Policy - Under 18 International Student Welfare Management - International Student Management Policy - Diversity and Inclusion Policy.pdf
Accountable Officer	Chief Student and Community Officer
Responsible Officer	Executive Director Student & Campus Services
Content Manager number	TAFE25/9518
Next review date	30/05/2026

Section 8. Definitions

Word	Definition
<p>Critical Incident <i>and</i> Student Critical Incident</p>	<p>For TAFE NSW, an incident is when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life, assets, and business continuity are threatened - Emerging event, not clearly defined and outside of Emergency Management Team (EMT) capabilities, requires a significant response - Major shutdown disruptions impacting more than one building or campus - Critical business functions affected <p>Student Critical Incident is a traumatic event or threat of such which causes extreme stress, fear, or injury. Examples include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Death (including accidental, suicide, or murder) - Serious illness or injury - Missing students - Severe verbal, physical or psychological aggression - Natural disasters - Domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse - Fire, explosion, bomb threat, or other emergencies <p>The ESOS Act/National Code defines a critical incident as ‘a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury’ or may affect their ability to continue or complete their studies. This does not include serious academic misconduct.</p>
<p>Emergency Management Framework</p>	<p>The TAFE NSW Emergency Management Framework governs how Emergency Management is administered, implemented, and validated. This will ensure Emergency Management risks are considered and managed to support TAFE NSW’s ongoing commitment to safety within TAFE NSW’s Risk Appetite</p>
<p>Emergency Management Team (EMT)</p>	<p>The on-site team who will manage the initial emergency response for TAFE NSW.</p>
<p>International Student</p>	<p>A student who is enrolled at TAFE NSW, in Australia on a student visa and falls under the requirements of the Educational Services for Overseas (ESOS) Act and National Code.</p>

Word	Definition
Mental Health Incident	<p>A mental health incident refers to an acute or significant event in which a person's mental health condition causes or contributes to behaviour or symptoms that require immediate attention, support, or intervention. This may include episodes of severe anxiety, depression, psychosis, suicidal behaviour, or self-harm. Mental health incidents often require professional mental health assessment, crisis intervention, or emergency response.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A panic attack at work or school - An episode of severe depression requiring hospitalization - Suicidal ideation or attempt - A psychotic episode in a public or private setting
Psychosocial incident	<p>Refers to any event, situation, or interaction that negatively affects an individual's psychological and social well-being. These incidents often involve interpersonal conflict, harassment, bullying, discrimination, exposure to violence, or other stressors in environments like the workplace, learning environment or home. They do not always involve a mental health diagnosis but can contribute to emotional distress or create conditions that may lead to mental health problems if not addressed.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bullying or harassment - Exposure to a traumatic event (e.g., witnessing violence) - Chronic work-related stress - Social exclusion or discrimination
Physical Incident	<p>Refers to an event that involves physical harm, damage or impact on a person/body. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accidents - Unsafe interactions - Unexpected situations/hazards that result in injury
Child and Young Person	<p>A child means a person who is under the age of 18 years.</p> <p>A young person means a person who is aged 16 years or above, but who is under the age of 18 years.</p> <p>Under the Children's Guardian Act and Child Protection (Working With Children) Act a 'Child' is defined as a person under 18 years of age, while under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act a Child is a person under 16 years of age. TAFE NSW adopts the conservative definition of the prevailing legislation and considers a Child to be a person under 18 years of age.</p>

Section 9. Document history

No.	Effective	Approved by	Amendment
1	1 June 2025	Chief Student and Community Officer	New policy document that articulates and refers to existing student critical incident management practices and documentation and is aligned to the new TAFE NSW Operating Model.

Note: (6 March 2026) Accountable and Responsible Officer roles have been updated since publication, as part of an automated update associated with recent operating model changes. These updates reflect position title or organisational alignment changes only and will be captured in the version history when the document is next reviewed and published.