

2.7 CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Responsible Officer	Master
Review Date	15 July 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the College is prepared, as far as it can be, for the unexpected and traumatic. The College community can be affected by critical incidents within the college, outside the college, in session time, in vacation time, at social events or at sporting events. Detailed plans cannot be made in advance for every incident that may occur. However, some principles and procedures can be articulated to create the framework in which the many detailed decisions can confidently be made leading to a specific plan that would be needed in the event of such an incident.

2. Overview

In the life of a residential college events can occur that have the potential to cause residents or staff to experience unusually strong reactions that can interfere with their ability to function.

3. Scope

The policy is designed to cover events that occur within the college communities or in activities associated with the day-to-day lives of residents and staff.

4. Definitions

Board	The Board of New College (incorporating the Board of New College Postgraduate Village) comprising members appointed by Standing Committee, UNSW and the Board itself
College or New College Communities	General terms for New College and New College Postgraduate Village as separate but related companies limited by guarantee under the control of the Board and Master
College Community	College Board, staff, residents, families of residents and alumni of New College and New College Postgraduate Village

Critical Incident	Any incident with potentially significant legal, financial or reputational consequences for the College or causes stress or incapacity to members of the College community, at the time the situation arises or later
Master	The chief executive officer of New College and New College Postgraduate Village appointed by the Board
Resident	Any student, (undergraduate or postgraduate), visiting academics to UNSW, or other educational institutions, or members of staff or families, living on site at New College and New College Postgraduate Village
Residential Community	Residential members, staff of New College and New College Postgraduate Village
Staff	Any person on the College payroll including senior residents and academic tutors

5. Policy Statement

The Board of New College is to ensure that the Master and staff have procedures in place for dealing with critical incidents and to ensure that adequate risk assessment is carried out to minimize the likelihood and impact of such events.

The policy seeks to ensure that the Master and staff monitor the activities of the College and conduct risk assessments as necessary. The purpose is to reduce the possibility that critical incidents occur and ensure the preparedness of all staff to respond should they occur.

a. Criteria for determining level of response

Not all 'critical' incidents will require a full-scale response. Key criteria for determining the level of response include: the level of destabilization of College routines, the extent of the emotional impact on residents, and the breadth of the impact on the College community. It is also recognised that a series of small-scale incidents may have the cumulative effect of a large-scale incident. Small sub-groups within the College may be deeply traumatized and this may require intervention to reduce the impact on individuals and the wider community.

b. Types of critical incidents

Many incidents can cause trauma, stress and a variety of significant emotional, psychological, physical and cognitive responses. These might include:

- The death or serious injury of a resident, member of staff, or prominent community member
- The destruction of the whole or part of the building (e.g. by fire)
- A break-in accompanied by major vandalism
- A group of residents lost or injured on an outing
- College members witnessing serious injury or death
- A health issue that impacts a number of residents
- Unusual and unfavourable media attention
- Allegations of a serious nature (e.g. sexual assault) involving a member of the college community
- A natural or other major disaster in the community
- The diagnosis of a possible terminal illness of a member of the College community

The Master will establish and monitor procedures for a College response to any incident identified as a 'critical incident'. Such procedures as a minimum should ensure:

- Rapid response from staff and the College community
- Effective communication as appropriate with the families of residents, Chair of the Board, senior University staff and relevant responsible authorities (e.g. police and ambulance)
- Effective management of publicity concerning any critical incidents
- Identification and use of outside resource groups as appropriate (e.g. counselling and crisis management teams)
- Provision of pastoral support and follow-up programs
- Ongoing monitoring of the impact of the critical incident on staff and residents

6. Legal and Policy Framework

The College has obligations as part of its duty of care towards residents of the college. These are set within a broad framework of university policies, government legislation and common law that covers individual rights to enjoy safety, non-discrimination acts, fair treatment and protection from harm and harassment. Such university policies are UNSW Staff Code of Conduct, UNSW Student Critical Incident Policy and UNSW Workplace Health and Safety. Government legislation and common law practices include the Fair Work Act 2009.

7. Implementation and Responsibilities

The Master is responsible to ensure that:

- Procedures are developed that assist staff to respond effectively when critical incidents occur, and
- Training is provided for staff and student leaders

8. Review & History

Superseded Documents		Critical Incident Policy (2016)		
Associated Documents		2.8 Harassment Prevention Policy		
Version	Authorised By	Sections Modified	Approval Date	Effective Date
1			2003	
2	The Board	All	20 July 2016	17 February 2016
3	The Board	All	15 July 2020	15 July 2024

9. References

- a. Fair Work Act 2009
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2009A00028>
- b. UNSW Staff Code of Conduct
<https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/codeofconduct.pdf>

- c. UNSW Student Critical Incident Procedure
<https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentcriticalincidentprocedure.pdf>
- d. UNSW Workplace Health & Safety Policy
<https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/ohspolicy.pdf>