



# Critical Incident and Issues Escalation Policy

C/1.3

The Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod (UCAQ) requires all its entities to plan for the management of incidents. This includes reporting critical incidents to the Synod office to ensure UCAQ has timely information to support its entities and to communicate publicly in an accurate and timely manner when critical incidents or issues arise.

## Scope

This policy applies to the governing body of each entity of the UCAQ over which the Synod Standing Committee has legal and immediate direct management or oversight. This includes, but is not limited to, those activities managed by the Synod office, Trust schools, residential colleges, presbyteries and congregations but excludes Uniting Care and Wesley Mission Queensland – both of whom have their own policy and procedures for dealing with critical incidents and issues.

In the event of an inconsistency between this policy and:

- any other incident or escalation policy - this policy prevails;
- the Church's regulations - the regulations prevail;
- any legislative requirements - the legislative requirements prevail.

UnitingCare and Wesley Mission Queensland as well as other entities with whom UCAQ are associated, and from which reputation risk could attach to UCAQ, should take note of this policy and apprise the Synod office of relevant critical incidents and issues.

## Policy

### 1. Incident/Issue Management Plans

- 1.1 Each entity is required to develop and adopt a local Incident/Issue Management Plan (howsoever called but referred to in this policy as an 'Incident/Issue Management Plan') consistent with the requirements of this policy. This plan may also consist of one or more documents such as a Crisis Management Plan, Emergency Response Plan, Disaster Recovery Plan or the like.
- 1.2 Each entity's plan should define major or severe incidents or issues consistent with this Policy's description in Table A and should include general and specific procedures dependent on the critical incident/issue identified or for a particular client group e.g. disability services or children.
- 1.3 Each plan should demonstrate and reflect the following principles:
  - 1.3.1 The entity recognises it owes a duty of care to students, clients, staff and others and aims to prevent critical incidents or issues, reduce the likelihood of occurrence or mitigate the consequences as much as possible consistent with the risk management framework of UCAQ
  - 1.3.2 The entity is committed to preparing for incidents or issues through appropriate planning, training and education
  - 1.3.3 The entity responds to major or severe incidents with rapid, organised and effective action and mobilisation of appropriate internal and external resources
  - 1.3.4 The entity facilitates recovery and maintains normal activities as much as practicable
  - 1.3.5 The entity considers the impact of social media and plans the mitigation of the potential for issues to rapidly escalate causing public concerns and potential and reputational damage

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- 1.3.6 The plan assigns clearly defined roles and responsibilities to individuals and teams, including provision for:
- A Lead Incident Coordinator with overall responsibility for co-ordinating the response to an incident;
  - An Incident Response Team to co-ordinate the response to incidents as they arise in accordance with the plan.
  - A communication spokesperson to manage internal and external communication, including with media in accordance with the entity's media policy.
- 1.3.7 Reviews the effectiveness of the Incident/Issue Management Plan following any critical incident or issue.
- 1.4 In addition to any mandatory reporting requirements, each Incident/Issue Management Plan should provide for reporting to UCAQ as detailed in Table A.
- 1.5 In addition to the requirements of this policy, each entity must notify Synod Group Insurance of any matter with the potential for a liability or loss claim. Synod Group Insurance will notify the insurer. The entities are to note that failure to notify the insurer may entitle the insurer to reduce or deny their liability.
- 1.6 Each Incident Management Policy/Procedure should provide for record keeping as to the operation of the plan to enable retention of accurate information in the management of incidents and an assessment of the effectiveness of the plan.
- 1.7 The effectiveness of each Incident/Issue Management Plan is to be reviewed by the Lead Incident Coordinator and the oversight body at least annually unless a review of an actual activation of the plan has taken place during that 12-month period.

## 2 Reporting

- 2.1 The Incident/Issue Management Plan must provide for reporting of an incident or issue:
- As required by legislation
  - To the relevant governing council/board
  - To the Synod office, in accordance with the escalation matrix at Table A of incidents or issues classified as "Major" or "Severe".
- 2.2 Outside of normal business hours, reporting must be by telephone to the Synod Office Duty Officer (07 3377 9706). This single point of out of hours contact ensures relevant members of the Executive Leadership Team, including the General Secretary and Moderator, are aware of the circumstances and are able to respond to media queries and may also enable specialist advice to be available if required.
- 2.3 In addition to this escalation framework, any person may report a critical incident to UCAQ and the local Incident/Issue Management Plan should not prevent such reporting.
- 2.4 Any report to UCAQ should include summary details as outlined in the Situation Report of the Incident in Annexure A.
- 2.5 In addition to any provisions of the local Incident/Issue Management Plan, the General Secretary, on behalf of the Church, may coordinate the resources of the Church to assist the entity in responding to the critical incident or issues arising therefrom.



## Critical Incident and Issues Escalation Policy

Table A: Incident/Issues Escalation Matrix

	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
<b>Mission</b>	No perception of inconsistency with Mission and Values.	Service/procedure/practice requires strategies to conform to Mission and Values.	Intervention required by senior manager/executive.	Significant perception of inconsistency with Mission and Values. Loss of community/staff/client goodwill.	Serious perception of inconsistency with Mission and Values. Loss of goodwill in Church, community and staff. Ethical reputation seriously damaged.
<b>Customer</b>	No or minimal harm. Minimal support, incident response or monitoring required.	Minor harm. A local incident response is required to resolve.	Harm may require some ongoing treatment.	Harm may lead to permanent reduction in bodily function. Significant unexpected harm (unrelated to the natural course of illness/condition or setting). Allegation of intentional abuse or harm.	Unexpected client death, critical/life threatening injury or serious incident that results in harm to multiple clients/patients. Student enrolment drops by more than 10%. Allegation of substantial or systemic abuse or harm.
<b>Reputation</b>	Isolated complaint or event. No media inquiry.	A number of complaints and/or clients affected. Receiving local adverse publicity and/or limited social media activity	Multiple wide-spread complaints and/or clients affected. Sustained adverse media. Disruption at a service level due to localised industrial action.	Complaints across state. Significant or sustained adverse media. Detrimental effect on short-term credibility with clients and stakeholders. Disruption to service through major industrial action. Likely damage to brand.	Sustained national and state-wide media exposure Affects long term credibility with clients and stakeholders. Significant brand damage. Widespread major industrial action.
<b>People, Safety and Environment</b>	Workplace incident limited to first aid treatment.	Minor medical treatment required.	Inability to attract or retain key staff or fill critical roles. Serious compensable injury.	Hospitalisation/permanent impairment due to workplace related illness/injury. Bomb or weapon threats/alerts. Missing person from our care. Lockdown of facility.	Death, suicide or serious injury due to workplace. Work-related hospitalisation of multiple people. Intruder, bomb or weapon incident. missing persons. Resignation without notice of key position holder.
<b>Business Disruption</b>	Limited damage to property. Temporary loss of critical functions.	Minor damage to property. Loss of critical functions for up to 4 hours.	Damage or disruption to a service or site for 7 to 14 days. Loss of critical functions for 4-24 hours.	Major damage or closure of a service or site for 14 to 30 days. Loss of critical function for 2 to 7 days.	Significant damage or closure of service or site with inability to service clients for 8 days or longer. Loss of critical functions for 8 days or longer.
<b>Environment</b>	Negligible environmental impact – return to pre-existing condition within 24 hours.	Minor localised environmental impact – return to pre-existing condition within 1 week.	Material environmental impact – return to pre-existing condition within 1 month.	Serious environmental impact – return to pre-existing condition within 3 months.	Long term environmental harm – unable to return to pre-existing condition within a year.
<b>Financial</b>	Impact managed within operational budget.	Loss/cost coverage from budget adjustment or reserves.	Financial impact requires tapping into reserves.	Large financial impact resulting in closure or suspension of a group/type of service. Allegation of fraud or corruption.	Significant financial impact leads to closure or suspension of multiple types of services.
<b>Compliance</b>	Breach of local operating procedure – not breach of policy.	A minor breach of policy or regulations with no negative impact.	A breach of regulations or negligence resulting in notices or claim issued with potential for limited prosecution/civil action.	A major breach of regulations, or negligent act.	A serious breach of regulations or negligence. Likely suspension of licence/business. A mandatory report of death/injury/incidents damaging property. Any information request from State/Federal Government of death/injury/incidents damaging property.

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## Critical Incident and Issues Escalation Policy

Escalation Point					
<b>Key Responsibility</b>	Supervisor/Coordinator	Supervisor/Coordinator	Appointed person with management responsibility	Accountable person/manager/head of entity where incident has occurred/ Incident Manager	Head of entity where incident has occurred/Incident Manager
<b>Level of Involvement</b>	Business area	Business area	Business area with support of next level	Governing body Synod Office Duty Officer	Governing body UCAQ Synod Office Duty Officer/Synod Office Crisis Management Team
<b>Action Required</b>	Part of normal operational management	Part of normal operational management – reported to next level in operational reporting line	Part of normal operational management – retrospectively reported to entity management	Mobilisation of Incident Management Team (IMT) Escalation of Situational Report to Synod Office Duty Officer <b>within 6 hours</b> of IMT being in place	Mobilisation of IMT <b>Immediate</b> escalation to Synod Office Duty Officer Crisis Management Team may be enacted from Synod Office



## Related documents

- Uniting Church in Australia Regulations
- Synod Office Duty Officer Instructions
- Anti-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Employment Equity POL-PEO-02
- Complaints and Allegations Policy POL-003 Regulation 5.2.5 Uniting Church in Australia Regulations  
Illegations of sexual misconduct

## Definitions

Term	Meaning
<b>Critical Incident</b>	<p>A Critical Incident is defined as any actual or threatened incident, the consequences of which are potentially major or severe in accordance with Table A (Incident/Issues Escalation Matrix) that requires on-going management, typically of an emergency nature. A critical incident may cause significant stress, injury or death to a staff member, student, visitor, guest or contractor.</p> <p>Some examples of incidents that may reach the threshold of criticality include, but are not limited to, instances of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency requiring on-going management</li> <li>• A threat or actual serious injury, serious illness or death of someone to whom UCAQ holds a duty of care</li> <li>• Severe distressing or disturbing behaviour</li> <li>• Physical assault, threats, attack or allegation of sexual misconduct</li> <li>• Natural or other disaster e.g. cyclone, earthquake, flood fire, subsidence.</li> <li>• Fire, riot, bomb-threat, explosion, gas, chemical hazard or environmental hazard</li> <li>• An outbreak of a serious health concern such as rapidly spreading viral or bacterial infection, pandemic or epidemic</li> </ul>
<b>Governing Body</b>	<p>Any Council, Committee or group responsible for the direction and control of the entity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church Council</li> <li>• Presbytery Council</li> <li>• School Board</li> <li>• Entity Board</li> <li>• Commission of the Synod.</li> </ul>
<b>Damaging Property</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical injury to or loss of or destruction of tangible property including loss of use at any time resulting there from</li> <li>• Loss of use of tangible property which has not been physically damaged or destroyed.</li> </ul>
<b>Injury/ illness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assault or battery</li> <li>• Bodily injury including illness, disability, shock, fright, mental anguish or mental injury,</li> <li>• false or wrongful arrest, detention or imprisonment and malicious prosecution</li> <li>• Libel, slander or defamation.</li> </ul>

## Revisions

Document number	C/1.3				
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
1.0	06.06.2019	Synod Standing Committee SSC 19.109	06.06.2019	ED Risk and Assurance	Manager Risk and Compliance
Next scheduled review	06.06.2022				



ANNEXURE A: Situation Report Template

Date & time incident/issue:

Date & time of report

Location (include address where applicable):

Name of person reporting

Phone #

E-mail

Position of reporter

What has happened? Describe incident/issue and background (relevant information leading up to the incident/issue, circumstances, whether the incident was witnessed and other relevant issues – include advice of any injury/harm/ongoing threat):

Who has been informed of the incident (Manager, Queensland Police, Ambulance/Fire Brigade/Other)?

Follow up action being taken by the reporter:

Name of Duty Officer \_\_\_\_\_