



# **CRISIS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**Policy Owner:** Principal  
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**Approved by:** SLT  
**Ratified by:** Board of Governors  
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The College's overarching Crisis Management Policy (CMP) seeks to provide guidance in the eventuality of any event that is a threat to the well-being of a student, staff-member or visitor (such as a natural disaster, a serious injury or death, an assault, or personal harassment); a threat to the operation or reputation of the College (such as sabotage, financial breakdown or impropriety, or an accusation of misconduct or criminal activity by key personnel); and/or a threat to whole groups of people and the operation of the College (such as fire, multiple accident, outbreak of a communicable disease, sustained loss of services, Health and Safety emergencies). A crisis is often a combination of more than one of the above. In addition to the detailed CMP outlined below, further reference should also be made to the remit of the College's Workplace Health and Safety Committee, and to its Health and Safety policies as itemised on the College's website. The latter include the recording of accidents; fire wardens and training; first aid and first aid kits; and trip and event planning.

## **CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The aims of the CMP are to protect human life; manage any crisis; protect the College's reputation; maintain business continuity by securing the College's infrastructure and facilities; and return the College to normal business operations as soon as possible.

The Plan makes provision for the mobilisation of the College's Crisis Management Group (CMG) (see below for membership).

The Plan will be reviewed annually and suitable amendments will be made. It will be tested regularly by a simulation exercise involving members of the CMG. It will be published on the College's website and its existence will be periodically brought to the attention of the College community.

Where communication is essential, comments will be restricted to confirmation of the obvious; the welfare of students, staff and visitors; a statement that cause and effect are under investigation and that implementation of the College's CMP is in progress; and a promise that a detailed statement will be provided as soon as possible by the Principal.

### **Levels of Incident**

#### *Level One*

A relatively minor or local incident causing no serious threat to life or property. This may result in a limited disruption of services, but will normally involve no legal ramifications and pose no threat to the reputation of the College. No emergency services will be involved. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and appropriate co-optees may convene.

### *Level Two*

Situations or incidents which pose a potential threat to life or property and/or can cause disruption to the operation of the College. These may threaten the reputation of the College or have legal ramifications. They may involve isolation and/or evacuation of a part of a building and assistance from the emergency services (police, fire, ambulance). The College's CMG will be convened to assess and respond. Action will be needed outside normal procedures. Special communication will be needed with identified groups. Media attention will be likely.

### *Level Three*

Major incidents which (if not already) have the potential to escalate quickly into disasters. These will significantly (if not already) threaten human injury or life and affect the reputation of the College. They may cause disruption to the College's overall operation. Major efforts will be required from the College's own support services as well as from the emergency services. The College's CMG will be convened to assess and respond. It will meet regularly during the incident and its aftermath. Substantial intervention will be needed outside normal procedures. Special communication will be needed with identified groups over a period of time. Media attention will be at a high level, including national interest, and will need particularly sensitive handling.

## **Preparation Ahead of a Potential Crisis**

In order for this Plan to run smoothly, certain arrangements must already be in place:

- Emergency information on students should be readily available in a secure but central place. Such information will include any known medical conditions; details of next of kin; and relevant phone numbers. Members of the Student Services team and the SLT should have easy access to this information.
- A crisis pack should be made available annually to all staff, and to new staff at the time of their induction. It should be regularly updated. This should include the College's CMP, a list of emergency numbers, and a copy of *Weathering the Storm: Crisis Management in Higher Education* prepared by the Association of University Administrators, 1999.
- All staff, but especially those from outside the UK, should be familiar with procedures for contacting the emergency services.
- Arrangements should be made so that at least one member of the Student Services team and one member of the SLT are available on an emergency contact number 24 hours a day.
- Pre-prepared information on the lay-out of the campus and on SLT contact details should be available.
- All areas of the campus should be accessible to all members of the SLT

at all times. During any crisis, extra access to buildings may be vital, eg for persons responsible for communicating with the media.

- Any individual essential to the CMP should ensure there is a substitute for him/her in case of unavailability and that this substitute is known to the SLT.
- First aid kits should be updated regularly, and lists of staff qualified in first aid should be clearly posted in prominent places in all buildings.
- Individuals who may have to deal with the media should receive training in this area.
- The SLT should set up a procedural plan with relevant personnel in the event of a Level One crisis, noting that the full CMG will meet in the event of a Level Two or Level Three crisis.

### **Management of a Crisis**

Any staff member initially faced with a crisis should take the following steps:

- Call the emergency services if relevant, asking for Fire, Police and/or Ambulance as appropriate.
- Identify any immediate needs and contain the situation until the arrival of key personnel. This could mean evacuating a building, isolating students or student groups, administering (or contacting an individual who can administer) emergency first aid, and following the Fire Action Plan posted in every room and office.
- Make contact with the Principal or other member of the SLT.

The member of the SLT called in the event of a crisis should take the following steps:

- Make an initial assessment of the level of the crisis with the staff member who has made contact.
- Agree with staff members on site the immediate actions to follow to ensure maximum containment of the immediate situation.

### **Crisis Management Group**

The CMG consists of:

- Principal (or SLT member in charge) - chair
- Office Manager (Office of the Principal) - recording secretary
- Publications Co-ordinator (public relations, communications)
- Chief Financial Officer, Academic Registrar and/or Residential Life Manager as relevant to the crisis
- Other staff as relevant to the crisis. These could include church pastor(s),

campus and estate services staff, residential life managers, tutors, heads of curriculum areas, food services staff, NSA President, campus ministries staff etc.

Members of the CMG need to be contactable 24 hours a day (or have agreed substitutes available). All should carry a list of key contact numbers.

The team should meet regularly and at each meeting agree the time for the next one, if appropriate. These meetings should continue past the end of the immediate crisis and should include a detailed debriefing at which the CMP may be updated if necessary.

### **Communication Plan**

With all groups, communications should be factual, and as caring and as transparent as possible.

#### *Internal College communication*

As far as possible, first communication should be with individuals who might be most affected by the crisis.

- A statement should be made to the full College community as soon as possible after the incident. This should happen in as many ways as possible: in an assembly, on the website, on plasma screens, on Facebook, through email etc. This initial statement should be followed by regular release of information as soon as is practical.
- Statements should remain factual, avoid conjecture or personal information, and identify any course of action that is being taken or will be taken that may immediately affect the whole community.
- Communication should include information of arrangements made for personal support of students and staff (chaplaincy and counselling arrangements).
- Optimum confidentiality must be maintained when preparing statements.

#### *Communication with external stakeholders, including Seventh-day Adventist Church media*

External constituencies may include parents, alumni, the Board of Governors, the local community, the wider Church, and local and national media.

- First communication should be with next of kin who might be directly

affected by the incident, the Chair of the Board of Governors, and other key individuals who may be required to comment on the situation, eg Union or Conference president(s). This is the responsibility of the Principal. If appropriate, the Chair of Governors may be asked to address the staff and students, as well as external media.

- If there are implications for the wider Church, an early decision should be made as to whether media relations are to be handled by the College, or by the British Union Conference or Trans-European Division Communications Directors. An early agreed press release should be prepared and posted on the website and on social media, as well as being released to appropriate media.
- An early agreed release should be prepared and released by the Principal in liaison with the Publications Co-ordinator (public relations, communications) to BUC and TED leaders, all College Board members and other relevant institutional heads and Church leaders.

#### *Local and national media*

- Pre-prepared information on the College should be available to the press from the onset of any crisis, along with a brief agreed press release.
- The Principal, in liaison with the Publications Co-ordinator (public relations, communications), is responsible for dealing with requested press interviews.
- Further releases to the press should remain factual, and avoid conjecture or personal details.
- No information should be given to the media that has not first been given to the College staff.
- It is vital that all staff and students should be kept up to date on developments but should not speak to the media. Staff should refer all media enquiries to the Principal in the first instance and any named individual(s) chosen to be the spokesperson(s) thereafter. Any news conferences should be chaired by the Principal.

#### *General points*

- The level of follow-up communication will depend on the nature of the incident and will be agreed by the Principal in liaison with the Publications Co-ordinator (public relations, communications), with advice from the Crisis Management Team.

- The role of the College website and social media is crucial. Information should be posted there as early as possible.
- Where practicable a phone Helpline may be set up and ongoing details posted on the website and social media. Any recorded phone messages should be updated regularly, and the phone number given in all news releases.
- Where appropriate, regular contact should be maintained with the Police Liaison Officer and Police Press Liaison Officer.

### **Specific Guidance on the Death of a Student or Staff Member**

#### *Location*

The location in which a student or staff member death occurs will have a significant influence on the degree to which members of the College community are involved in the early stages of dealing with the discovery of the body and notifying the authorities. The location will probably be one of the following:

- In one of the halls of residence
- In a College building or other non-residential part of the campus
- Off campus whilst engaged in College activity
- Off campus, whilst living in local accommodation away from a permanent or family residence
- Off campus in a permanent home or in a public place
- Whilst abroad, either on College placement or vacation.

#### *Circumstances of Death*

The degree to which members of the College community become involved, in ways other than being supportive of those distressed, may be affected by the manner of death, which may fall into one of the following categories:

- Accidental
- Possible suicide
- Natural causes (with or without infectious disease implications)
- Crime or suspected crime
- Substance related

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of a Coroner to determine the cause of death. Therefore, when any information is given out about a death, care has to be taken not to assign a cause prematurely.

#### *Discovering a Body*

**DO NOT** touch or move anything (other than to confirm that the person is deceased). **If the location is on campus:** inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team and ask them to call the police. **If the location is off-campus:** inform the police and, separately, inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Where appropriate, those present should secure the scene pending the arrival of the police. There may be other people at the scene and they need to be dealt with in a sensitive manner. Generally they should be asked to remain in the vicinity until the police arrive, preferably together in a suitable nearby room. Wherever possible immediate care and comfort should be provided by those on the scene and the names and contact details of those present should be recorded.

#### *Communicating the News*

When someone has died it is the responsibility of the police (or sometimes the hospital if the death has occurred there) to inform the immediate family. This is the priority: it is important that nothing be done to interfere with this process and that no information is released prematurely. This is increasingly important as online social networking accelerates the rate of communication. The only people who have a right to information following a death are the next of kin, so information must be requested sensitively.

#### *Liaison with the Police or Coroner's Officers*

In the event of a sudden death, the police have two quite distinct roles. They may be part of the initial emergency response and they gather evidence which will be reported to a Coroner and may also be used if any criminal proceedings ensue. An unexpected death is reported to the Coroner in whose area the body is found. The role of the Coroner is to determine who has died, as well as when, where and how they died. They have jurisdiction over the body until they are satisfied that they have gathered all the information available or that they require, which usually follows the receipt of the report of a post mortem examination by a pathologist. Liaison on behalf of the College with the police and the Coroner will be by a Senior Leadership Team appointee.

#### *Liaison with the Family*

It is important that the College establish a single **family contact**. Occasionally the family will not want any contact with the College. Ideally the **family contact** will be a member of staff at the College who knew the



student well. The key responsibilities of the College's family contact are:

- To establish if there is anything the family wants from the College, eg to arrange a visit to the College or to request help in retrieving the deceased's possessions. With regard to the latter the College will store such possessions carefully until instructions have been received in writing from the family, next of kin or person with power of attorney.
- To clarify funeral arrangements and whether the family would welcome students and staff attending the funeral
- To be a conduit for any practical information, eg about returning fees or providing a transcript and/or certificate for a posthumous award
- If possible to find out a little about the family, in particular parents, so that a letter of condolence from the Principal can be appropriately addressed
- To talk to the family about holding a memorial event at the College.

### *Support for Students*

When a student or staff member dies there will typically be a close circle of friends and possibly a partner who are deeply affected, then a wider circle. The circumstances of the death may intensify the emotional responses, eg if it is believed that the death may have been preventable. It is sometimes helpful to explain what will happen to students. For example, it may be necessary to explain the role of the Coroner in determining cause of death if students are jumping to conclusions or asking lots of questions. Often sudden deaths raise questions for which there are no satisfactory answers.

Students should be provided with counselling if appropriate, and advised to contact their curriculum area head to discuss any work for which they need to submit mitigation.

### ***Posthumous Academic Awards***

When a student dies part-way through their studies it should be established whether they are eligible for an academic award for work already completed, or whether they have successfully completed sufficient work for a posthumous *aegrotat* degree to be awarded.

When a posthumous award is made, the student's next of kin should be consulted about how (if at all) they wish to receive the certificate. A family representative may receive the certificate at an awards ceremony, they may collect it from the College, or it can be sent by post. The timing of the presentation of the certificate should be guided by the preferences of the next of kin.

#### *Memorial Service*

When a funeral is some distance away and for practical reasons not many students or staff are able to attend, a memorial service may be appropriate. Whilst the College can help to arrange such an event it is important to be sure that there are sufficient people wishing to take part for one to be successful. The norm is for a memorial service to be arranged and to take place after the funeral, typically in the following few weeks.

#### *International dimensions*

When an international student dies, a number of additional practical dimensions need to be addressed:

- Communication with the family may require a translation service
- The appropriate consulate or embassy may need to be involved
- The repatriation of bodies is subject to strict regulation, so if this is to happen a funeral director will need to be involved at an early stage.

When a student dies overseas, the responsibility for investigating and determining the cause of death generally rests with the country in which the death occurs. The family is likely to have to be in touch with the relevant consulate or embassy in the country in which the student died for assistance with the administrative requirements. If the student is on College business, the College's insurance policy may cover some aspects of the costs of repatriation of their body. Where relevant, the insurance company will appoint a caseworker to facilitate this process. It is important that no assurances are given that the College can cover these costs, which can be considerable.

#### *Impact on Staff*

Dealing with the death of a student or colleague is usually hard for all involved. If any staff find dealing with any aspect of a student death personally very difficult, it is important that colleagues help them to do what is required and that they are encouraged to seek help through the College's counselling service.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Checklist for CMG**

*(steps which may need to be taken, though not necessarily in this order)*

- Decide personnel to be involved and roles of each, including authority to act
- Document preliminary findings and actions
- Contact other external agencies/emergency services
- Contact parents/next of kin of persons at risk
- Contact other personnel (eg Publications Co-ordinator (public relations, communications), Health and Safety Officer)
- Ensure written details of what has happened are taken from individuals involved at the scene
- Agree an initial plan for dealing with police, media etc.
- Arrange for any physical needs: rooms for media, closing down of buildings etc. Obtain necessary documentation (e.g. student lists/contact numbers etc.)
- Call an emergency meeting of the Health and Safety Committee
- Ensure a communication plan for dealing with internal and external constituencies and media
- Ensure refreshments are available
- Ensure provision of rooms, phones, flipcharts etc.
- Issue a holding statement as quickly as possible
- Explain the limitations to information that can be provided
- Detail any physical arrangements
- Ensure that an accurate record is kept of events leading up to the crisis and of the crisis itself
- Identify any resources needed beyond the College (counselling, legal advice etc.)
- Make arrangements for ensuring student and staff support, such as chaplaincy and counselling/mental health services.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Useful Materials**

- Copy of the Crisis Management Plan
- Contact information
- First aid boxes
- List of first aiders
- Fluorescent jackets
- Pads, pencils, pens, tape, paper clips etc.
- No Access signs and ribbons
- Protective hats
- Wind-up torches
- Tags/badges for identification purposes
- Maps of campus
- Floor plans
- Mobile phones and chargers
- Kettles, mugs, tea, coffee, milk, biscuits, bottle water