

Student Incident Response Plan (SIRP) March 2019

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1. Introduction

The University has a duty of care to staff and students, and an obligation to protect its reputation by being prepared to deal quickly, effectively and sensitively with student incidents. The Student Incident Response Plan (SIRP) is a companion document to the [UC Emergency Management Plan](#) and provides detailed protocols to be followed when responding to incidents that are reported.

This plan is designed to meet that duty of care by seeking to protect the welfare of staff and students both during and after a student incident. It provides guidance on measures to be taken and establishes the primary lines of responsibility and communication. The plan should be implemented in all of UC's campuses, field stations, halls of residences or in other settings where staff and students study and work.

This plan can be used in two ways. It can be followed as part of a wider response, as detailed in the UC Emergency Management Plan, in the event that a student incident has impacted significantly on the University, staff, students and the wider community. If the impact is on an individual or small group, the SIRP plan is used as a stand-alone reference.

The plan contains separate protocol checklists for each type of incident listed below. The SIRP protocols are contained in the appendices.

The determination of the scope of the incident response will require an exercise of judgment. Note that situations may require multiple levels of responses depending on the nature on the incident.

Student Diversity

This plan acknowledges that students differ widely in terms of their age, abilities, responsibilities, backgrounds, life experiences, living arrangements and other parameters. Accordingly, it advocates that responses should be sensitive to students' specific circumstances. In responding to a student incident, it is necessary to select those actions that are appropriate and omit those that are not.

2. Student Incident Defined

For the purposes of this plan, a student incident is defined as:

- a) an unplanned or unforeseen traumatic event affecting a student or students that has an impact on the University, its staff, its students and/or the wider community, or
- b) actions of a UC student which, in virtue of their nature, give rise to significant alarm for the safety of other students, staff and/or the wider community.

Protocols for Student Incidents

The SIRP contains protocols for responding to student incidents involving:

- death of a UC student
- serious illness or injury of a UC student
- serious psychiatric illness of a UC student
- assault of a UC student
- arrest of a UC student
- civil or family disaster in a UC student's home region

Note that other situations may require initiation of the plan from time to time. As set out in the documentation below, it is the SIRP leadership team that has responsibility for determining if an event qualifies as a student incident, and hence whether initiation of the SIRP is required or not.

3. Student Incident Impact

Student incidents may have a negative impact on a number of people, either through the immediate effects of being involved, by witnessing an event, or because the emotional impact of past experiences has resurfaced. Where there are negative effects, there is a need to be aware not only of the "ripple effect" on people not directly affected, but also the unpredictability or spread of this effect. Affected parties may include:

- secondary victims, such as students, staff and family members not directly involved but experiencing multiple bereavement or other trauma;
- the University as an institution, through negative media or public response; and

- the wider community.

For these reasons, communications are an essential component of an effective response.

4. Scope of Response

In some circumstances, the results of the SIRP may necessitate wider university response through initiation of the UC Emergency Management Plan.

In the case of an event where the wider UC Emergency Management Plan is initiated, the Incident Controller will ensure that the Health and Safety Manager has been informed as soon as possible to enable the correct reporting requirements to authorities. The UC Emergency Management Plan should be implemented in all of the University's campuses, field stations, halls of residence or in other settings where staff and students study and work. An off-campus incident, such as a serious accident associated with field study, requires a managed response to avoid confusion when people affected approach the University for information, support, or to offer their help.

When an incident involves individual students or small groups of students, in most cases, the SIRP is sufficient and the University-wide Emergency Management Plan does not need to be initiated.

It is noted that individual or small student group incident situations may cause strong emotional reactions in the respective wider communities at the University, among staff, family members and friends of the affected students. It is important that those dealing with the situation act and communicate efficiently.

Priorities will include:

- saving the life of anyone at risk;
- informing those with the need and the right to know;
- protecting others from the effects of the event;
- managing publicity;
- minimising any long term impact on the University;
- restoring normality as soon as possible; and
- preventing reoccurrences or resulting events, where possible.

5. Privacy, Confidentiality and Communication

The University is mindful of its obligations under the [Privacy Act 1993 \(New Zealand Legislation website\)](#) and its own [Privacy Policy \(PDF, 568KB\)](#). Given the special nature of a student incident as defined in this plan, further legal advice has been sought and the following guidance is provided:

Personal information should not be disclosed to a third person unless the person holding it believes on reasonable grounds that disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to individual or public health or safety. Disclosure should be to someone who can do something about it.

Personal information is any official information held about an identifiable person that is of a personal nature, such as name and date of birth that could be used to identify that person.

Personal information may be disclosed where:

- it is not practicable or desirable to obtain individual authorisation; and
- there is a serious threat to public health, public safety or the life or health of an individual;
- the threat is imminent;
- disclosure would prevent or lessen that threat; and/or
- disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen the threat.

Disclosure is not necessary if the threat can be prevented or minimised in some way that does not involve releasing confidential information. If disclosure is deemed necessary, it must:

- be made to someone who has the power to act urgently to achieve a tangible result in the particular case;
- only be to the extent necessary to prevent or lessen that threat; and
- should be to a responsible authority in the first instance if possible (e.g. Police).

Guidelines for communicating with whānau (family members) where English is a second language

- Establish if family or next of kin speak English before making contact. If there is any doubt, employ a translator. Translators must indicate on whose behalf they are calling the family or next of kin.
- If a translator is not available, University staff members may translate.
- As a last resort, students can be used to translate. It is essential that privacy and confidentiality expectations are clearly communicated to the student translator and strictly adhered to. See the [Privacy Policy \(PDF, 568KB\)](#) for further guidance.

6. Incident Response: Roles and Responsibilities

In student incidents, key University personnel and teams, or their delegates, will communicate with each other as soon as the student incident is identified in order to determine the University's responses, priorities and actions. The SIRP protocols provide detailed information to guide communication.

The student incident may be identified through multiple sources, including through front-line staff from UC Security, Student Care, Māori Development Team (MDT), Pacific Development Team (PDT), Equity and Disability Service (EDS), Accommodation, College Advisors, Course Coordinators, Lecturers, UCSA, UC Health Centre, Health and Safety team, the Strategic Emergency Management Group (SEM) or the Incident Management Team (IMT) as part of the UC Emergency Management Plan. In practice, the notification is often received by Security due to their 24-hour coverage.

UC staff, students and members of the community are directed to contact UC Security or a member of the SIRP Leadership Team to notify them of a possible student incident at the earliest opportunity.

SIRP Leadership Team

The SIRP Leadership Team is comprised of the following members:

- Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic)
- Executive Director Student Services and Communications
- Registrar
- Director Student Success
- Campus Services Manager

Co-opted Members, depending on scope and circumstances

- Relevant PVC
- Director Wellness Services
- Accommodation and Campus Life Manager (if student is in the halls)
- Assistant Vice Chancellor (Māori)
- Director Pasifika Development

The purpose of the SIRP leadership team is to:

- make an initial evaluation of the scope and impact of the incident;
- decide whether SIRP should be initiated;
- ensure appropriate resources are allocated and support is provided;
- act as a review board for decision making, risk assessment and further escalation;

SIRP Initiation

Any member of the SIRP Leadership Team, the VC or DVC can initiate SIRP. Once SIRP is initiated, a Student Incident Response Manager (SIRM) must be identified and SIRP protocols initiated and followed.

If SIRP is not initiated in response to a particular event, University staff will respond to the incident using 'business as usual' protocols, which means that expected SIRP notifications and communications will not occur and will be limited to appropriate communication with a line manager.

In the event of a wider UC Emergency, the University Incident Controller (see the UC Emergency Management Plan) will coordinate a response as detailed in the UC Emergency Management Plan.

Student Incident Response Manager

On notification and determination of a student incident, the SIRP Leadership Team will identify one of its own members or another appropriate senior staff member to act as the Student Incident Response Manager (SIRM). The SIRM is often the Student Care Team Manager, but could also be the MDT Team Leader, PDT Team Leader, the Registrar (in disciplinary situations) or UC Security.

The SIRM will direct the SIRP process, including ensuring that appropriate notifications to other senior leaders and stakeholders are undertaken in a timely fashion and appointing staff to assist with the response.

All staff involved in the SIRP response will be informed of who is on the response team and their roles. Where possible, the initial response plan will be developed in a brief meeting with key staff led by the SIRM. Where this is not possible, a coordinated response will be agreed by phone and email communication and monitored regularly.

The SIRM will initiate procedural protocols specific to the relevant SIRP response scenario. The SIRM will notify the relevant UC teams of the SIRP situation and will work collaboratively with a range of staff as needed in order to respond to the situation appropriately and complete the relevant actions required by the protocols.

Coordinating the Student Incident Response

The procedural guidelines for the SIRP response scenarios will be initiated by the SIRM. The procedural guidelines may require the combined cooperation of multiple teams and a range of staff under the coordination of the SIRM.

The SIRM's tasks include:

- updating and reporting to the SIRP Leadership Team throughout the response process
- coordinating the university-wide response to the critical incident
- confirming the facts of the incident
- confirming identity, ethnicity (essential to ensure culturally appropriate response)
- confirming which staff members have already supported the student (eg. Health Centre, PDT, MDT, EDS, College staff) and gathering relevant information as required
- identifying which UC staff need to be initiated to respond to the incident, and working collaboratively as a team to complete the actions required under the SIRP procedural protocols
- making notifications to appropriate teams as required
- updating a centralised SIRP database with the relevant incident details anonymised for statistical purposes
- organising a timely debrief of the incident with the relevant staff members at an appropriate time after the event and writing a report on the debrief review, including making recommendations to update the SIRP protocols if required

Student Insurance Issues

Any policy, operational insurance issues, liability, strategic insurance or travel critical incident issues should be notified to the Risk Manager in the Vice-Chancellor's Office. See the [Insurance intranet site](#) for further information.

Strategic Communications Group (SCG)

SCG is responsible for disseminating information, engaging with key stakeholders and assessing reputational risk. This group provides external and internal communications to students, staff, Government, the local community and other key stakeholders concerning incident notification, response, and outcome. This team works closely with University decision-makers in accurately representing the development and resolution of a student incident. SCG is comprised of members from the following areas: Communications, Marketing, Human Resources, Student Services, and Colleges.

For many student critical incidents, it will only be necessary to initiate the Communications and Engagement Manager.

The SCG Coordinator (under direction of the Communications and Engagement Manager) is responsible for developing, defining and maintaining their own procedural guidelines and/or protocols to support student incident situations. The team interacts and communicates with the SIRM and SIRP Leadership Team during any student incident response situation.

Notifications

A variety of notifications are required as part of any SIRP response to ensure that all stakeholders who need to know about the incident are kept informed. All notifications need to have regard for the privacy of the student, their family and whānau. Notification processes and requirements are included in all the SIRP protocols (see Appendix).

The SIRM in conjunction with the SCG Coordinator will ensure appropriate management of stakeholder communications. Operational response communications will be led by the SIRM with advice from the SCG Coordinator.

In the case of a student illness or injury, the Health and Safety Manager, as part of the University Health and Safety Plan, will be notified by the SIRM.

Students of Concern Group (SOC) and Student Critical Incident Group (SCIG)

The Students of Concern Group meets fortnightly to discuss how to support students around whom concerns have been raised. The Student Critical Incident Group meets monthly to review student critical incidents and progress strategic and operational matters to enhance staff and student safety and security.

The SIRM is responsible for updating and briefing both the Students of Concern Group and Student Critical incident Group about SIRP cases.

Support for Staff involved in a SIRP Incident

Responding to a SIRP incident may involve staff in sometimes distressing and emotionally demanding situations. The debrief process is designed to identify follow up actions and learnings. During the debrief the need for additional support for individuals or the group of staff involved may be identified. In addition, staff and managers may at any time identify appropriate support, which may include the Employee Assistance Programme, or in the case of staff involved in front line responses, external supervision.

7. Related Documents and Information

Legislation:

- [Privacy Act 1993 \(New Zealand Legislation website\)](#)

UC Policy Library:

- [Privacy Policy \(PDF, 568KB\)](#)

University Website and Intranet:

- [Communications and Engagement \(University Communications website\)](#)
- [Emergency Management Committee Contacts \(University Emergency Management website\)](#)
- [Emergency Management Related plans and policies \(University Emergency Management website\)](#)
- [Emergency Management Resources & Publications \(University Emergency Management website\)](#)
- [Student Care Team](#)
- [Māori Development Team \(MDT\)](#)
- [Pasifika Development Team \(PDT\)](#)