

**TITLE: CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

Version	4	Date Approved	9 October 2024
	This policy was reviewed as part of its review cycle; there are only minor changes made related to the composition of the Senior Management Team.	Review Date	9 October 2029 <i>or as required</i>
Approved By	Management Board		
Owner	President’s Office and Director of Strategy and Operations		
Version Control			
Version No.	Date Approved	Documented Changes	
1	13 January 2011	Initial Issue	
2	20 April 2016	Policy significantly revised to provide: aims / objectives; definitions; clear roles and responsibilities for College personnel; clear communication channels and clear emergency protocols.	
3	8 April 2020	Policy revised to include alignment with CCSP <i>Policy on Policies</i> ; defined procedures / guidelines; and updated roles and responsibilities.	

**1. Purpose of Policy**

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) aims to protect the well-being of its learners and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. At Carlow College there is a genuine attempt on the part of all to create a College community of care. The College has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos

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in the College. The College has formulated a policy and procedure to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological well-being of both the staff and learners in the event of a Critical Incident.

## 2. Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy, a critical incident is defined as 'any incident or sequence of events which impacts on the normal coping mechanisms of the College and disrupts the running of the College'. Critical incidents may involve learners, staff, the College or the local community.

Critical incidents can be emergencies that require immediate action; however, they can also have a slower trajectory or emerge from less serious incidents therefore allowing for a more considered response. Examples of a critical incident have been identified in 4 broad categories, (this list is not exhaustive):<sup>1</sup>

### Physical

Chemical/Biological/Gas/Radioactive  
Extreme Weather – Storm, Snow etc.  
Failure of internal processes/ fraudulent activity  
Fire/Explosion  
Loss of service (electrical, water, or IT: loss of communication systems, cyber-attack)  
Natural Disaster  
Vehicular impact release

### Security

Bomb threat/Terrorism/Firearm  
Hostage situation  
Murder  
Occupation or Civil unrest  
Rape or Assault  
Suspicious object or parcel  
Cyber attack  
Vandalism/Aggravated Robbery/Violence

### Health

Contagion/Epidemic/Pandemic  
Contamination of Food, Water, or Air  
Missing Person  
Serious injury or Death  
Suicide or Threat of Suicide

### External Event

Any of the 3 categories happening outside university property  
To staff or students on University's business or Club/ Society activities.  
Where a specific link to the university is perceived  
Overseas event (political unrest or natural disasters).

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the Atlantic Technological University's *Critical Incident Policy*

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**If you have any doubt as to whether an event is a Critical Incident, please inform your line manager immediately.**

### **3. Scope of Policy**

The *Critical Incident Policy* is to be adhered to by all staff of Carlow College, irrespective of grade or function; by all learners of Carlow College; and by all persons invited to provide a service to Carlow College, of whatever nature.

### **4. Policy Statement**

The aim of the *Critical Incident Policy* is to help the College management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that the appropriate support is offered to learners and staff. This will be achieved by the following measures:

- establishing a Critical Incident Team;
- defining roles and responsibilities for each member of the Critical Incident Team;
- setting up lines of communication within the College as well as with outside agencies;
- planning of the debriefing process; and
- provision of post-incident support for the Critical Incident Team.

#### ***4.1 Initiation of Critical Incident***

All possible critical incidents should be reported to a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

On notification of a Critical Incident the SMT will meet to ascertain the facts and convene a Critical Incident Team comprising relevant staff members as deemed appropriate by the SMT.

The President will convene the Critical Incident Team to:

- Inform each member of the team of their assigned role (see Section 5.1);
- Inform the relevant Programme Director (if appropriate);
- Inform relevant staff (if appropriate);

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- Agree on a generic statement of facts for staff, learners and the media and inform these parties as appropriate; and
- Communicate with staff and learners who may be affected by the incident.
- In the case of Critical Incident directly involving a learner, the President will appoint an appropriate person to make contact with the student or staff member's emergency contact if required.

#### *4.2 Response Process to Critical Incident*

The response process itself can be broken down into distinct phases:

##### 1. Critical Incident Activation

Verification – the SMT verify the facts pertinent to the incident and determine whether a Critical Incident Team should be convened. If the incident warrants a Critical Incident declaration, they will name a Critical Incident Coordinator and assign responsibilities to the Critical Incident Team (see Section 5.1).

##### 2. Critical Incident Implementation

Critical Incident Coordinator convenes a meeting of the Critical Incident Team to agree actions.

The Critical Incident Team:

- a. establishes lines of communication within the College as well as with outside agencies (as appropriate);
- b. Identifies support requirements to learners and staff. This includes a three-pronged approach:
  - immediate response – day of incident;
  - medium – following days;
  - long-term support.
- c. Meets at the start of each day to outline plan of day and at the end of each day to evaluate day's actions;

##### 3. Critical Incident Follow-Up

Critical Incident Team reviews the Critical Incident Process and identifies long-term support requirements (i.e. debriefing for staff / learners) and identify learning points

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and complete Critical Incident Follow-Up Section of *Critical Incident Checklist* (Appendix 3).

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

### *5.1 Critical Incident Team*

The Critical Incident Team is assigned by the Senior Management Team. Members of the Critical Incident Team are selected in terms of the appropriateness of their practical, professional and personal skills as they relate to the critical incident. The roles within the Critical Incident Team are as follows:

#### **Critical Incident Coordinator Role**

- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaise with legal / insurance providers (if required)
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Allocates preparation and issuing of letters, emails and texts
- Ensures record management of the Critical Incident Team, and processes adopted

#### **Staff Liaison Role**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of learners who may be affected by the incident
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to staff members who may be affected by the incident and makes contact with them individually (if appropriate)
- Advises them of the availability of the EAP and gives them the contact number.

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- Provides additional resources if required (i.e. quiet room, support services, etc.)

### **Learner Liaison Role**

- Is alert to learners who may be affected by the incident and makes contact with them (if appropriate)
- Alerts other staff to learners who may be affected by the incident (if appropriate)
- Provide additional resources if required (i.e. quiet room, support services, etc.)

### **Community / Agency Liaison Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers including emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Family Liaison Role**

- Coordinates communication with family members (as appropriate)
- Maintains a record of communications with family members
- Provides appropriate materials for family members (if appropriate)

### **Media Liaison Role**

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- In the event of an incident, will liaise (where necessary) with internal and external stakeholders;
- Will coordinate press statements, media briefings and interviews (as agreed by College President)

Each member of the Team has a dedicated Critical Incident folder, which contains a copy of the Policy and relevant material. Each member of the Team has been assigned a key role in line with best practice. In the event of an incident each member of the Critical Incident Team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, and material used (see Appendix 2: *Critical Incident Communication Register*).

### *5.2 Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations*

Management and staff of Carlow College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of College staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that learners do so also.

## **6. Associated Documentation**

- Appendix 1: Critical Incident Management Process
- Appendix 2: Critical Incident Communication Register
- Appendix 3: Critical Incident Checklist
- Appendix 4: Critical Incident Review

## **7. Referenced Policies**

- *Data Protection Policy*
- *Dignity and Respect Policy*
- *Fitness to Continue in Study Policy*
- *Health and Safety Policy*

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- *Information Security Policy*
- *Learner Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy*
- *Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Quality Assurance Policy*
- *Risk Management Policy*
- *Staff Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy*
- *Learner Death Protocol Policy*

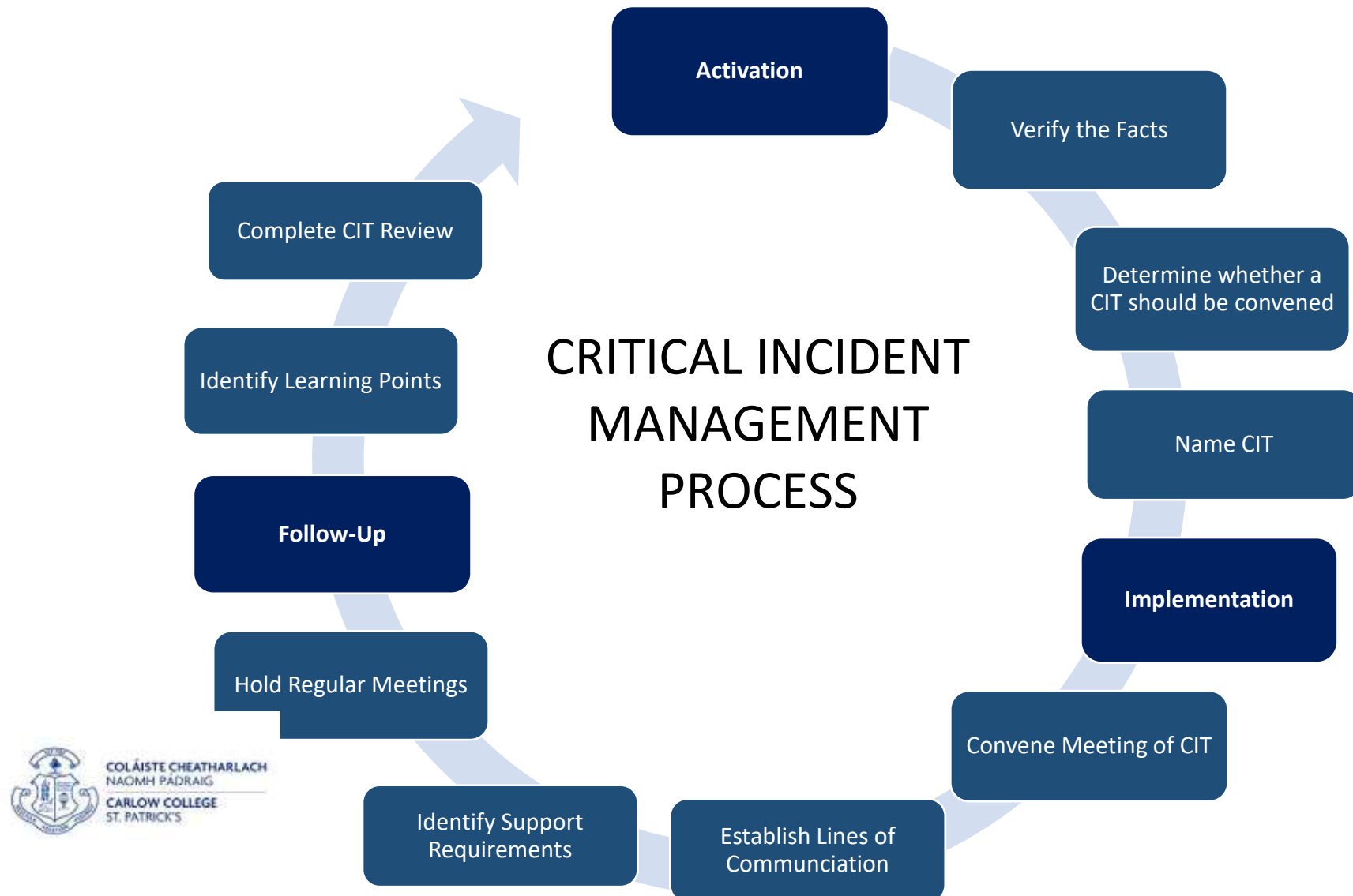
## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The Office of the President and the Director of Operations are the Policy Owners for the *Critical Incident Policy*. This Policy is to be reviewed every five years.

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Appendix 1: Critical Incident Management Process



Policy: Critical Incident Policy

Owner: President’s Office / Director of Strategy and Operations

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Appendix 2: Critical Incident Communication Register



Critical Incident Communication Register

Date	CIT Role	Method of Communication	Person / Agency Communicated With	Notes from Communication

### Appendix 3: Critical Incident Checklist



#### Critical Incident Checklist

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Brief description of incident:</b>	

Tasks	Done	N/A	Completed Date	Comments
Critical Incident Activation				
Verification				
Log incident				
Establish facts				
Activation				
Perform initial risk assessment				
Agree CIT Coordinator				
Agree CIT				
Critical Incident Implementation				
Convene CIT Meeting(s)				
Establish Communication Channels				
Identify Support Requirements				
Develop Action Plan				
Ongoing Management				
Liaise with staff				
Liaise with learners				

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Liaise with community / agencies				
Liaise with family (if relevant)				
Liaise with media				
<b>Critical Incident Follow-Up</b>				
Update Records				
Offer Incident Debriefing				
Arrange Review Meeting				
Finalise Documentation				

## **Appendix 4: Critical Incident Review**



### **Critical Incident Review**

The following are suggestions which the College may wish to consider in managing the long-term effects of a Critical Incident:

- Monitor learners for signs of continuing distress, staff may refer learners to College Counsellor / Chaplain or Nurse as appropriate. Symptoms to be watchful for may include uncharacteristic behaviour, deterioration in academic performance, physical symptoms (i.e. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, and restlessness), inappropriate emotional reactions, increased absenteeism. The *Fitness to Continue in Study Policy* may be consulted.
- The Critical Incident Team will continue to liaise with family members (where appropriate).
- The Office of the Registrar will liaise with College Administrative Offices (where appropriate).
- The Chaplain's Office may wish to plan a special day of reflection / memorial service.
- The Critical Incident Team should evaluate the response and amend the *Critical Incident Policy* appropriately:
  - What went well?
  - Where were the gaps?
  - What was most/least helpful?
  - Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
  - Is there any unfinished