



Dublin International Study Centre

Crisis Management Policy

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Crisis Management Policy

Section One: Introduction

1. Dublin International Study Centre (DISC) recognises that crises and critical incidents, whether arising from health and safety risks, safeguarding breaches, technological failures, or reputational threats, can significantly disrupt the safe and effective delivery of educational programmes. In response, DISC is committed to implementing a comprehensive, proactive, and transparent approach to crisis management.
2. Disc's Crisis Management Policy outlines the structures, procedures, and responsibilities in place to ensure that DISC is fully prepared to prevent, respond to, and recover from any crisis situations that may impact learners, staff, visitors, or the wider institution. It ensures that all stakeholders are protected through timely and coordinated action while maintaining compliance with Irish regulatory requirements and quality assurance standards.
3. Specifically, this policy supports DISC's Quality Assurance Framework and aligns with the following:
 - QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016).
 - English Language Education (ELE) QA Guidelines and Code of Practice.
4. In addition, this policy aligns with relevant Irish legislation, including:
 - The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.
 - Children First Act 2015.
 - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Definitions

5. **Crisis:** An unforeseen, significant event that poses a threat to safety, well-being, programme delivery, and or the institutional reputation.

For example, a crisis may occur when a natural disaster, such as severe flooding, which disrupts campus operations and renders facilities inaccessible or unsafe. Another example would be the sudden closure of a key partner institution, which could significantly impact student progression, programme delivery, or contractual obligations.

6. **Critical Incident:** A specific event requiring immediate response and coordination due to its severity (e.g. serious injury, fire, data breach).

For example, a critical incident may involve a serious injury or medical emergency affecting a learner or staff member, which requires urgent medical attention and the notification of relevant authorities. It may also include a fire or significant damage to the DISC premises which endangers or disrupts operations. A data protection breach involving personal information would also constitute a critical incident.

7. **Crisis Management Team:** A designated leadership team responsible for activating,

managing, and coordinating the institutional response to a crisis or critical incident. The team ensures safety, the continuity of operations, and the timely communication with relevant stakeholders.

Section Two: Scope

8. This Crisis Management Policy applies to all aspects of DISC's operations related to the delivery of its programmes and any other educational activities conducted under its remit.
9. This policy applies to all individuals and entities who have any involvement with DISC, including but not limited to:
 - All Learners.
 - All Staff: Academic, administrative, managerial, support, and contracted personnel, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary.
 - Contractors and Visitors: Including maintenance providers, external lecturers, guest speakers, and inspectors participating in any activities on DISC premises or under DISC supervision.
10. This policy applies to all academic, administrative, operational, and extracurricular activities, whether conducted:
 - On-campus: Including classrooms, offices, common areas, and student services facilities.
 - Off-campus: During educational trips, site visits, fieldwork, or public engagement events organised by DISC.

Types of Crisis Events Covered

11. DISC recognises that a wide range of incidents may constitute a crisis or critical incident. This policy provides guidance for the prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery in the following (non-exhaustive) areas:
 - **Medical emergencies:** Serious injury, illness, or mental health crises affecting learners, staff, or visitors. This includes pandemic outbreaks requiring coordinated institutional action in line with HSA and QQI guidance.
 - **Death of a student:** The loss of a student which may have a significant impact on the student community.
 - **Natural disasters and environmental hazards:** Fire, flooding, severe weather events, or any natural occurrence that endangers individuals or disrupts operations. This policy outlines evacuation protocols and contingency planning for such scenarios.
 - **Violent or threatening incidents:** Any situation involving physical aggression,

assault, verbal threats, or intruder incidents. DISC maintains strict protocols for responding to such incidents to safeguard all members of the community.

- **Safeguarding breaches:** Incidents involving abuse, neglect, bullying, or exploitation of minors or vulnerable adults. This policy supports DISC's Safeguarding Policy which ensures timely and appropriate response and reporting, in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and Child Protection Procedures for Schools (2017).
- **Technological and cybersecurity incidents:** Major ICT disruptions, data breaches, cyberattacks, or failure of systems essential for teaching, administration, or communications. Crisis protocols include the protection of sensitive data and restoring digital access with minimal disruption.
- **Reputational and legal crises:** Events that may damage DISC's public image, credibility, or compliance status, such as media scandals, allegations of misconduct, or legal challenges. This policy ensures that reputational crises are addressed in a structured and lawful manner with input from relevant stakeholders.

Section Three: Policy Principles

12. This Crisis Management Policy is built upon a set of core principles that reflect best practice in educational governance, legal obligations under national health and safety legislation, and the standards of the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016). These principles guide DISC's approach to crisis preparedness, response, and recovery, ensuring that the rights and wellbeing of learners and staff are upheld at all times.

Preparedness

13. DISC promotes a proactive culture of crisis preparedness through institutional planning, training, risk assessment, and simulation exercises (as highlighted below). This principle ensures that all stakeholders are equipped with the knowledge, resources, and structures required to respond effectively to emergencies.
14. Crisis scenarios are identified in advance through risk assessments in line with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.
15. Preventative and preparatory measures are documented and integrated into DISC's operational policies and procedures.
16. Training and induction for staff and learners include emergency protocols, safeguarding responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms.

Rapid Response

17. Timely action is critical in reducing the harm associated with a crisis. DISC ensures

that crisis response procedures are clear, actionable, and swiftly deployed in any situation involving risk to people, property, or programme delivery. To facilitate this, DISC ensures that:

- The Crisis Management Team is authorized to act immediately, guided by a pre-approved response plan.
- Emergency contact protocols (internal and external) are accessible and tested regularly.
- The First Aid Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and Emergency Response Plan are activated without delay where applicable.
- In accordance with General Application Regulations 2007, DISC ensures adequate first aid response and emergency action systems are in place at all times.

Learner Protection

18. DISC recognises that learners are especially vulnerable during crises and prioritises their welfare, educational continuity, and mental health support.
19. Learner protection measures include:
 - Academic continuation plans.
 - Counselling referral pathways.
 - Academic accommodations.
 - Safeguarding interventions.
20. These arrangements align with QQI 's Programme Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL) requirements and the Children First Act 2015, particularly where learners under the age of 18 are involved.

Continuous Improvement

21. Each crisis or critical incident presents an opportunity to strengthen institutional resilience. DISC embraces a culture of reflection and improvement.
22. To support this, the following actions are undertaken after each incident:
 - Post-incident reviews are mandatory, leading to updates to the Risk Register, policies, and training content.
 - Feedback from affected stakeholders is used to refine future responses and prevent recurrence.
 - Policy revisions are documented and reviewed annually or as needed, in line with QQI's expectations for quality enhancement and monitoring.



Section Four: Roles and Responsibilities

23. Clear roles and responsibilities are fundamental to an effective crisis response. DISC ensures accountability at every level by assigning crisis management duties to designated individuals and committees.
24. Crisis management is a whole-centre responsibility. While roles vary by function and seniority, every individual within the DISC community is expected to contribute to a culture of safety, awareness, and care. This shared responsibility is reflected in cross-departmental planning, quality assurance reviews, and ongoing risk assessments, ensuring DISC can respond confidently and compliantly in any critical situation.
25. This section sets out the responsibilities for key stakeholders involved in crisis preparedness, management, and recovery.

The Crisis Management Team

26. The Crisis Management Team holds overall responsibility for coordinating DISC's response to any critical incident. The team is composed of senior staff with cross-functional roles and the authority to make operational decisions during a crisis.

Memberships and Roles

27. Roles within the Crisis Management Team are assigned based on professional responsibilities, relevant experience, and alignment with DISC's risk and safeguarding frameworks. The list of designated CMT members and their specific roles is maintained and regularly updated by the Programme Manager and stored in the internal **Crisis Management Register**, accessible via the Staff SharePoint site.
28. The Crisis Management Team comprises of:
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (Chair).
 - Programme Manager.
 - Health & Safety Officer.
 - Deputy Safeguarding Person (DSP).
 - Communications Lead (appointed depending on the crisis).
 - IT Systems Manager (as required).
29. The Crisis Management Team has the following key responsibilities:
 - **Lead and coordinate the institutional response:** Activate the Crisis Response Plan, assign roles, manage resources, and maintain oversight of all response activities.
 - **Decision-making:** Evaluate risks in real time and make informed decisions regarding evacuation, school closure, programme suspension, communication, and learner protection.

- **Engage with external authorities:** Liaise with emergency services, the HSE, Gardai, QQI, the Department of Education, or Tusla (if safeguarding is involved), ensuring any response meets legal and regulatory obligations.
- **Internal communications:** Disseminate accurate and timely information to staff and learners. Ensure consistency in messaging and control over misinformation.
- **External communications:** Issue updates to guardians, stakeholders, the media, and regulators in a coordinated and GDPR-compliant manner.
- **Post-crisis review:** Organise debriefing meetings, lead post-incident analysis, update the Risk Register, and revise policies or training based on lessons learned.

DISC Staff

30. All members of staff have a vital role to play in maintaining safety, supporting learners, and ensuring the effective implementation of the Crisis Management Policy. Staff serve as frontline responders during incidents and are expected to act in accordance with their training and institutional protocols.
31. DISC therefore expects all staff to:
 - **Know the plan:** Be familiar with the Crisis Response Plan, safeguarding procedures, and emergency evacuation routes relevant to their location.
 - **Take immediate action:** Respond promptly and appropriately to any incidents they witness or are informed of, for example providing first aid (within training limits), isolating risks, and raising alarm.
 - **Report accurately:** Document and report incidents using the designated DISC Incident Report Form, ensuring that the Health & Safety Officer or relevant manager is notified without delay. The Incident Report Form is available in the Crisis Management Folder on the Staff Share Drive.
 - **Protect learners:** Prioritise learner wellbeing, providing calm leadership, reassurance, and assistance during evacuations, lockdowns, or medical emergencies.
 - **Participate in training and drills:** Attend scheduled health & safety, safeguarding training sessions, and actively participate in practice simulations.
 - **Support recovery:** Assist with the return to normal operations, including temporary academic adjustments, emotional support, and learner reintegration.

DISC Learners

32. Learners at DISC have a right to a safe learning environment and a responsibility to participate actively in maintaining it. Their engagement is critical during crises, and they must be empowered to act responsibly and seek help when needed.
33. To support this shared responsibility, DISC expects all learners to:

- **Follow staff instructions:** Listen to and cooperate with staff directions during emergency evacuations, drills, or incidents. Avoid engaging in risky or disruptive behaviour.
 - **Report concerns promptly:** Notify a staff member of any hazards, suspicious behaviour, or health and safety concerns. This includes bullying, safeguarding risks, or unsafe infrastructure.
 - **Participate in safety drills:** Attend induction sessions, fire drills, and emergency briefings. Understand their role in various emergency scenarios and remain alert to signage and procedures.
 - **Protect peers:** Support peers during incidents where possible and alert staff to others in distress. All learners are encouraged to uphold DISC's ethos of mutual respect and collective responsibility.
34. Younger learners (under 18) are given additional protections under the Children First Act 2015, with tailored communications and safety measures explained clearly during induction.

Section Five: Crisis Response Procedure

35. DISC follows a structured, seven-phase process for managing any crisis or critical incident. This systematic approach ensures prompt and effective action, safeguards learner and staff welfare, and supports operational continuity.

Step 1: Detection and Initial Report

36. The crisis response process begins with the identification or detection of a potential or actual incident by any member of the DISC community. Any staff member, learner, or visitor who witnesses or suspects a crisis must report it immediately to a senior staff member or the designated Crisis Management Team contact; this may be in-person or through emergency channels such as internal phones.
37. Where appropriate (e.g. in the case of a fire or serious injury), emergency services should be contacted immediately. The primary emergency contact should be UCD emergency services (01) 716 7999. If further assistance is needed, call 112 or 999.
38. DISC's Incident Report Form must be completed for all incidents and near misses. The form should be completed by the person who witnessed the event or was first made aware of it, to ensure timely and accurate reporting.
39. For safeguarding-related issues, concerns must also be reported in line with DISC's Safeguarding Policy and Children First Guidelines.

Step 2: Assessment and Activation

40. Once an incident is reported, the Crisis Management Team (or a designated lead

member) will assess the situation to determine the level of response required. Key points that will be considered are:

- **Severity:** Is there a risk to life, health, infrastructure, or reputation?
- **Scope:** How many individuals or departments does this incident affect?
- **Urgency:** Does the situation require immediate evacuation, lockdown, or isolation?

41. If the situation meets the criteria for a crisis or critical incident, the Crisis Management Team will be formally activated. Roles will be assigned based on the crisis type (e.g. safeguarding, health emergency, IT breach), and a primary Incident Log will be opened to track actions, decisions, and communications.

Step 3: Immediate Actions

42. The priority in the initial response phase will be to protect people and property, prevent escalation, and stabilise the situation. Examples of immediate actions that may need to be taken by the Crisis Management Team include:
- Initiate evacuation or lockdown procedures, using the nearest exit points or safe zones.
 - Administer first aid or medical assistance where necessary by trained personnel.
 - Secure hazardous areas and restrict access to prevent further harm.
 - Isolate the individuals involved (e.g. in cases of violence or infection).
 - Inform emergency services or external agencies (e.g. Gardaí, fire brigade, Tusla) if not already done.

Step 4: Communication

43. Effective, accurate, and transparent communication is vital to maintaining trust and order during emergencies to prevent panic, correct misinformation, and coordinate the institutional response. DISC is committed to clear internal and external communications during all phases of a crisis and will ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed promptly of evolving situations and next steps through established communication channels.
44. The Crisis Management Team will ensure that key stakeholders are informed of the situation, as set out below.
- 1) Internal Communications:
- Notify staff, learners, and on-site individuals of the incident using pre-agreed channels (emails/SMS).
 - Assign a communications lead to deliver updates at regular intervals, even if only to confirm that the situation is ongoing but under control.

2) External Communications:

- Inform guardians (if learners are under 18), QQI, and any necessary regulatory bodies, using standard notification templates. These templates can be found in the Crisis Management section of the Staff Shared Drive.
- Manage communications with the HSA or emergency services to ensure consistency and legal compliance.
- Prepare factual and GDPR-compliant statements for potential media inquiries.
- Maintain confidentiality around personal details and sensitive issues, in line with DISC's Data Protection Policy.

Step 5: Ongoing Management

45. During any sustained phase of a crisis, the focus will shift to maintaining control, supporting those affected, and managing institutional operations. As such, the Crisis Management Team will:
- Maintain an updated risk status report and track all decisions in the Incident Log.
 - Coordinate logistics (e.g. temporary teaching arrangements, staff deployment, learner support).
 - Ensure welfare supports are available, including access to counselling, medical support, or academic flexibility.
 - Monitor developments and adjust the response strategy as needed.

Step 6: Resolution and Recovery

46. Once the crisis is stabilised, a formal process will be initiated to de-escalate the situation, restore operations, and begin the return to normalcy. To support this, the Crisis Management Team will:
- Communicate clearly to all stakeholders that the crisis has ended.
 - Reinstate access to affected facilities or systems (once cleared).
 - Provide updated timetables or work arrangements to learners and staff.
 - Offer additional support for affected individuals (e.g. missed assessments, emotional recovery).
 - Notify QQI or other external bodies of crisis closure, if required.

Step 7: Debrief and Review

47. Following any crisis or significant incident, DISC will conduct a structured debrief to

ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. To support this, the Crisis Management Team will:

- Convene a post-incident meeting within 5 working days with all relevant parties (e.g. CMT, staff, external agencies if applicable).
- Evaluate what occurred, how the institution responded, and what could be improved.
- Update the Risk Register and revise relevant policies and procedures, as needed.
- Complete a Crisis Incident Review Report including outcomes, follow-up actions, and recommendations.
- Incorporate lessons learned into future staff training, learner orientation, and simulated drills.
- Adjust the Crisis Management Plan, communication templates, or safeguarding interventions as necessary.

Section Six: Training and Awareness

48. Effective crisis management relies not only on procedures but on the competence, confidence, and preparedness of the individuals responsible for implementing them. DISC is committed to building a culture of risk awareness and emergency readiness across the entire institution, ensuring that staff, learners, and visitors understand their roles and responsibilities in the event of a crisis.
49. DISC continuously implements a structured programme of training and communication that supports a proactive and responsive approach to crisis situations.

Staff Training and Induction

50. All new staff members (academic, administrative, and operational) receive comprehensive crisis management training as part of their induction process and are also required to participate in the annual review of training. Training includes:
 - Orientation to DISC's Crisis Management Policy, First Aid Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and Emergency Response Plan.
 - Identification of the roles and responsibilities of the Crisis Management Team and the procedures for escalating concerns or incidents.
 - Training on how to respond to medical emergencies, initiate evacuations, and support learners during a crisis.
 - Familiarisation with safety infrastructure, including fire exits, alarm points, assembly areas, Automated External Defibrillator (AED) locations, and emergency contact lists.

51. In addition, specialised sessions are provided where relevant, such as:
- First Aid Response (FAR) training (PHECC-accredited).
 - Safeguarding and child protection awareness.
 - IT and data breach response training for administrative and digital teams.

Learner Induction and Engagement

52. All learners at DISC receive structured training in crisis awareness and personal safety during their orientation programme. This includes:
- Clear explanations of emergency procedures (e.g. fire drills, lockdowns, and evacuation protocols).
 - Identification of staff roles during emergencies, including First Aid certified and the Safeguarding Lead.
 - Guidance on how and when to report emergencies, suspicious behaviour, or well-being concerns.
 - Encouragement to take personal responsibility for safety and to participate respectfully in all safety-related activities.
53. Where appropriate, training is adapted for vulnerable learners, including minors or those with additional support needs.
54. DISC ensures that all learners have access to key documents (e.g. the Crisis Management Summary Sheet) on the VLE and that reminders are regularly shared throughout the academic year.

Simulations and Drills

55. Regular simulation exercises are conducted to test the effectiveness of DISC's crisis response protocols and to reinforce preparedness across the institution. These drills include fire evacuation drills (minimum twice annually) and medical emergency simulations, including use of AEDs and staged first aid scenarios.
56. Participation in drills is mandatory for all on-site staff and learners. These drills are:
- Scheduled and announced to minimise unnecessary alarm, while maintaining realism.
 - Evaluated and reviewed, with feedback collected from staff and learners.
 - Refined based on any identified gaps, delays, or confusion during execution.

Communication and Visibility

57. Training efforts are supported by visible and accessible information to promote

everyday awareness:

- Emergency procedure posters are displayed in all teaching spaces, administrative offices, kitchens, and reception areas.
- Contact information for key crisis personnel (Crisis Management Team, First Aid certified, Safeguarding Lead) is posted clearly across campus.
- Safety and crisis information is also shared via email bulletins, and VLE as appropriate.

Continuous Improvement in Training

58. Training content is regularly updated based on:

- Lessons learned from drills or real incidents.
- Changes to national legislation (e.g. HSA guidance, QQI or Tusla requirements).
- Feedback from learners, staff, and regulators.
- Internal reviews of training effectiveness and policy performance.

Section Seven: Additional information

Confidentiality and Data Protection

59. All personal data collected during a crisis will be managed in accordance with the GDPR and DISC's Data Protection Policy.

Monitoring and Review

60. The Crisis Management Policy is reviewed annually or after any critical incident.

Related Documents

- DISC Risk Assessment Policy
- DISC First Aid Policy
- DISC Safeguarding Policy
- Emergency Response Plan
- Incident Report Form
- Staff and Learner Handbooks

Document Control

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