



## **Student Welfare, Support & Critical Incident Policy**

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### Policy Content

Aspect	Details
Regulator	Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
Standards Referenced	
Legislation / Requirements	

### Policy Statement

The organisation is committed to providing a supportive and safe learning environment for all students. We aim to promote the welfare and wellbeing of students by providing access to a range of support services that assist with their academic, emotional, and social development. This policy ensures compliance with the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, the **National Code 2018**, and relevant regulatory standards related to student welfare, support, and critical incidents.

### Objective

The objectives of this policy are:

1. To ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed academically and personally.
2. To provide students with clear guidance and services to support their welfare, including academic, personal, and social wellbeing.
3. To ensure that all students are provided with appropriate assistance during critical incidents to safeguard their health, safety, and wellbeing.
4. To comply with **ESOS 2025 amendments** and the **National Code 2018** regarding student welfare and support.

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- All enrolled international students at the organisation.
- All staff members involved in the provision of student welfare and support services.

- Third-party service providers engaged by the organisation to provide student support services.

## **Procedure**

### **5.1 Student Welfare and Support Services**

#### **Student Support Services Available:**

The organisation is committed to providing a comprehensive range of support services aimed at ensuring that students receive the necessary assistance to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. These services are designed to align with **ESOS 2025 amendments** and the **National Code 2018**, guaranteeing that international students receive the required support to maintain their wellbeing and academic success.

#### **Academic Support:**

- **Tutoring and Mentoring:**
  - Students will have access to additional support, including tutoring, study groups, and mentoring services, to help overcome academic challenges. These services are designed to improve students' understanding of the course content, enhance learning outcomes, and ultimately boost academic performance.
  - Academic support ensures that international students are able to meet the academic progress requirements under **ESOS 2025 amendments**. This is critical for students to maintain their enrolment status and comply with visa conditions that require satisfactory academic progress.
- **Regular Academic Advising and Progress Monitoring:**
  - Academic advisors will regularly meet with students to track their academic progress. If a student is struggling, additional support will be provided to ensure that the student stays on track to meet academic milestones.
  - This monitoring ensures that students are provided with the support they need to meet the academic progress standards set by ESOS 2025. Regular progress checks also help ensure that students continue to meet visa requirements tied to academic performance.

#### **Counselling and Mental Health Support:**

- **Counselling Services:**

RTO Number: 31518	CRICOS Number: 03569A	Author: Nomi College
Version Number: 2.0		Page 3 of 12

- The organisation will provide students with access to professional counselling services to help them cope with personal, emotional, and mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression. This service will support students' overall wellbeing during their studies.
- **Workshops on Coping Strategies:** Regular workshops and seminars will be offered on topics such as stress management, building resilience, and emotional wellbeing. These workshops aim to empower students to handle challenges they may face during their studies.
- Mental health services will be in accordance with the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, which emphasize the organisation's responsibility to provide appropriate support to international students in crisis situations, helping them adjust to living and studying in Australia.

### **Visa Compliance and Immigration Support:**

- **Visa Support Services:**
  - The organisation will provide visa-related support to ensure students comply with their visa conditions, including attendance, academic progress, and full-time study requirements. Students will receive guidance on how to meet the requirements necessary to maintain valid student visas.
  - **Visa and Compliance Assistance:** Assistance will also be available for students to understand their visa conditions and responsibilities. This includes clear communication on the implications of their academic progress and attendance on their visa status.
  - Visa support aligns with the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, ensuring that international students maintain their visa status and comply with the Department of Home Affairs' visa conditions, including requirements for full-time enrolment and academic progress.

### **Accommodation Assistance:**

- **Support for Accommodation Needs:**
  - The organisation will provide students with information and assistance in securing suitable accommodation. This includes offering options such as university-managed housing, private rentals, and shared accommodation.
  - **Tenant Rights Education:** Students will receive support in understanding their rights and responsibilities as tenants under Australian law. This

ensures that students are well-informed about their living arrangements and legal rights in Australia.

- The accommodation support provided by the organisation ensures that students live in safe, secure, and suitable environments. This aligns with the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, which emphasize the importance of ensuring that international students' welfare is safeguarded.

### **Social and Cultural Support:**

- **Cultural Integration Activities:**

- The organisation will organise social events, excursions, and cultural activities designed to help international students integrate into the Australian community, build social networks, and experience Australian culture.
- **Understanding Australian Culture:** The organisation will provide information to international students on Australian cultural norms, legal rights, and community expectations. This ensures that students are equipped to navigate their new environment successfully.
- Social and cultural integration support is crucial for international students' adjustment. These initiatives meet the welfare provisions outlined in **ESOS 2025**, which emphasize the importance of students' social and cultural wellbeing during their studies in Australia.

### **Access to Support Services:**

- **Availability of Support Services:**

- All support services will be clearly communicated to students during their orientation and throughout their enrolment. Students will be reminded regularly of the services available to them and how to access them when needed.
- **Confidentiality:** All student support services will be provided in a confidential and respectful manner to ensure that students feel comfortable seeking help when needed. This confidentiality extends to counselling and any personal matters discussed with student support staff.
- **Encouragement to Seek Assistance:** Students will be encouraged to seek help whenever they experience challenges that may affect their academic performance or personal wellbeing. The organisation will make it clear that seeking assistance is a proactive way to ensure success and wellbeing during their studies.

- All student welfare and support services provided by the organisation are in line with the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, ensuring that the institution remains compliant with the regulatory requirements for the care and wellbeing of international students.
- The organisation will regularly review its welfare services to ensure they meet the evolving needs of international students and comply with any updates to the ESOS framework.

## 5.2 Critical Incident Management

### Definition of Critical Incident:

A **critical incident** refers to any event that has the potential to cause significant distress, harm, or danger to students or staff members and requires immediate attention. Critical incidents can range from accidents and injuries to mental health crises, natural disasters, or threats to personal safety.

### Examples of Critical Incidents:

- **Serious accidents or injuries** affecting students or staff.
- **Natural disasters** such as bushfires, floods, or storms impacting the organisation or students.
- **Threats to student or staff safety**, including criminal activity, assault, or harassment.
- **Sudden death** or severe illness of a student or staff member.
- **Mental health crises**, such as self-harm, suicidal ideation, or severe emotional distress.

### Critical Incident Response Procedure

#### 1. Identification and Immediate Action

- **Staff Training:** The organisation ensures that all staff are trained to identify and respond to critical incidents promptly. This includes identifying signs of distress, mental health issues, or other immediate threats to student welfare.
- **Activation of Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT):** In the event of a critical incident, the **Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)** will be activated immediately. This team will consist of trained staff members, including welfare officers, compliance officers, and emergency response coordinators.

#### Immediate Action:

RTO Number: 31518	CRICOS Number: 03569A	Author: Nomi College
Version Number: 2.0		Page 6 of 12

- The CIRT will assess the situation and ensure that all affected individuals are immediately provided with appropriate care and assistance.
- Immediate actions may include:
  - **Providing first aid** or emergency medical treatment.
  - **Contacting emergency services** (e.g., paramedics, police).
  - **Escorting affected individuals** to a safe location.
- The priority is to ensure the immediate safety and wellbeing of all affected students and staff.

## 2. Notification and Communication

- **Internal Communication:** The **Compliance Officer** will be responsible for notifying relevant internal parties (e.g., senior management, student services, health and safety staff) about the incident.
- **External Notification:** The **Compliance Officer** will also notify external authorities where required, including:
  - The **Department of Home Affairs** if the incident has potential visa implications.
  - Local **emergency services** if additional support is needed.
  - Relevant regulatory bodies (e.g., **ASQA, ESOS agencies**) when necessary under the **ESOS 2025** regulations.
  - **Family or emergency contacts** of affected students will also be contacted by the organisation, with the student’s consent.

## 3. Post-Incident Support

- **Ongoing Support for Affected Students:**
  - The organisation will provide continued **counselling and welfare support** to students affected by the critical incident. This may involve:
    - **Ongoing mental health support** for students experiencing trauma or emotional distress.
    - **Academic support**, such as adjustments to deadlines or course requirements for students who have been impacted.
    - Offering a **leave of absence** for students unable to continue their studies due to personal circumstances related to the incident.

- **Compliance with ESOS 2025:** Ensuring that students’ welfare needs are met post-incident is a key component of compliance with the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, which mandate that student wellbeing be prioritised.

#### 4. Investigation and Review

- **Thorough Investigation:** Following the incident, a **thorough investigation** will be conducted to determine the cause(s) of the incident and evaluate the response. This investigation will be led by the Compliance Officer in collaboration with relevant staff members.
- **Documentation of Findings:** The findings of the investigation will be **documented** in a report, which will include:
  - The nature of the incident.
  - The response actions taken.
  - Any gaps or areas for improvement identified.
- **Corrective Actions:** Based on the findings, the organisation will implement corrective actions, which may include:
  - **Revising safety protocols.**
  - Enhancing **staff training** to ensure better preparedness for future incidents.
  - Improving **welfare services** if necessary.

The investigation and any subsequent corrective actions will be done in accordance with **ESOS 2025** regulations, ensuring continuous improvement and compliance with student welfare obligations.

### 5.3 Monitoring and Reporting of Critical Incidents

#### 1. Documentation of Critical Incidents

##### Incident Reporting:

- **Confidentiality and Record-Keeping:** All critical incidents, regardless of their nature, must be documented in a **confidential incident report**. This report will be handled with strict confidentiality to protect the privacy of all students and staff involved. Only authorised personnel, such as the Compliance Officer or senior management, will have access to these records. This ensures adherence to privacy laws, as outlined in the **ESOS 2025 amendments** and the **Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)**.

- **Complete and Accurate Documentation:** The **Compliance Officer** will ensure that all details of the critical incident are recorded accurately, including:
  - Date and time of the incident.
  - Description of the incident, including the individuals involved and the immediate actions taken.
  - Actions taken to provide support and prevent further harm.
  - Any external agencies or authorities contacted (e.g., emergency services, Department of Home Affairs).
- **Record Retention:** Incident reports will be securely stored and retained for a **minimum of five years** as per the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, ensuring that the records are available for auditing purposes or future reference. This period also aligns with compliance requirements under Australian education law and regulatory bodies. The records will be kept in a secure, confidential manner and will be accessible only to authorised personnel when required for compliance reviews or incident investigations.

## 2. Reporting to Regulatory Authorities

### Notification to Authorities:

- **Prompt Reporting:** In line with **ESOS 2025 amendments**, the **Compliance Officer** will ensure that all critical incidents that may affect a student's visa status, or those that are subject to reporting requirements under the National Code 2018, are promptly reported to the relevant regulatory authorities. This includes:
  - **Department of Home Affairs:** If a critical incident has implications for a student's visa status (such as suspensions, expulsions, or critical welfare concerns), the organisation will notify the Department of Home Affairs as required.
  - **ASQA** (Australian Skills Quality Authority): If the incident impacts the organisation's ability to meet the required standards for training or assessment, the Compliance Officer will ensure that the incident is reported to ASQA for compliance with the **National Code 2018**.
  - **ESOS Agencies:** In cases where the critical incident affects the organisation's ability to meet ESOS 2025 requirements, such as student welfare concerns or failure to comply with regulations related to course delivery, the organisation will report to the appropriate **ESOS agencies**.

- **Regulatory Compliance:** Reporting to these authorities will be done in a timely manner, ensuring compliance with the **ESOS 2025 amendments** and any associated regulations. The organisation will fully cooperate with investigations initiated by regulatory bodies and provide them with all required documentation related to the critical incident.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
<b>Compliance Officer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oversee the implementation of all welfare and critical incident procedures.</li> <li>- Ensure documentation of all critical incidents and reporting to relevant authorities.</li> <li>- Provide ongoing monitoring of student welfare services and ensure compliance with ESOS 2025 amendments.</li> <li>- Maintain secure records of all welfare-related incidents and follow-up actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Student Support Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide direct support to students in need, including academic, emotional, and social support.</li> <li>- Assist with referrals to counselling, mental health services, and other external support services.</li> <li>- Communicate with students regarding welfare services available and encourage them to seek assistance when necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Academic Advisors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor student academic progress and attendance.</li> <li>- Identify students who may require support, including intervention and referral to appropriate services.</li> <li>- Work with students to develop personalised support plans.</li> </ul>

### Confidentiality

- **Definition and Commitment:** Confidentiality refers to the practice of protecting personal information and sensitive data about students, staff, and the institution itself. The organisation commits to ensuring all welfare-related information, especially sensitive matters regarding mental health or academic concerns, is handled with the utmost confidentiality.
- **Key Points:**

- All staff involved in student welfare and critical incidents must sign confidentiality agreements.
- Only authorised personnel (such as the Compliance Officer, academic advisors, and senior management) have access to confidential information.
- Information will only be shared with third parties (e.g., external support services, regulatory bodies) with student consent, or where required by law (e.g., Department of Home Affairs, ASQA).
- All welfare and critical incident documentation will be stored securely and in compliance with Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and **ESOS 2025** regulations.

### Continuous Improvement

- **Commitment to Improvement:** The organisation will continuously assess and improve its student welfare, support services, and critical incident response processes. This commitment is aligned with ESOS 2025 amendments to ensure the ongoing success and wellbeing of students.
- **Key Actions for Continuous Improvement:**
  - Regular feedback collection from students, staff, and external partners about the effectiveness of welfare services and critical incident management.
  - Analysis of incident reports to identify trends or recurring issues that require attention.
  - Ongoing professional development for staff involved in welfare services, ensuring they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to handle emerging challenges.
  - Regular reviews of welfare services in line with changes to the **ESOS 2025 amendments** and other relevant regulations.
  - Integration of any feedback or identified improvements into welfare and critical incident procedures to improve student experiences and outcomes.

### Retention of Records

- **Record Retention Policy:** In compliance with the **ESOS 2025 amendments**, the organisation will retain all welfare and critical incident documentation for a minimum of **five years**. This ensures transparency, accountability, and compliance with auditing and regulatory requirements.

RTO Number: 31518	CRICOS Number: 03569A	Author: Nomi College
Version Number: 2.0		Page <b>11</b> of <b>12</b>

- **Key Points:**

- Incident reports, intervention records, and all correspondence related to student welfare and critical incidents will be securely stored and accessible for auditing purposes.
- Digital records will be stored on secure servers with restricted access, while physical records will be kept in locked storage.
- Records will be organised and easily retrievable for reporting to regulatory authorities such as ASQA, the Department of Home Affairs, or any other relevant bodies.
- The Compliance Officer will ensure that all records are maintained in accordance with **ESOS 2025** and the **Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)**.