

Crisis Communication – Resource Pack

The three steps to follow immediately if a crisis situation arises:

Step 0	Step 1	Step 2
If anyone is in danger, notify College Security on 4444 immediately	Ensure that a member of the Strategic Management Group is made aware of the crisis situation. This includes the Managing Director, and the Heads of each directorate. Their contact details can be found below. The crisis checklist (below) will be activated and owned by an SMG member.	In the event of a crisis, the Head of Student Voice & Communications (HSVC) will typically lead Imperial College Union's communication response. In the absence of any other arrangements, they will take responsibility for activating a crisis response team, executing the crisis checklist and ensuring contact is made with all key audiences.

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Crisis Communication – Guidance and Resources

This guidance is for any managers or student leaders who find themselves in a crisis situation. The below information will help you understand how to manage the **communications** aspects of any crisis. The resources will help staff responding to a crisis assure themselves they are managing our reputation and our relationships with our stakeholders effectively.

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1. Why is crisis communication planning important?

- 1.1. An organisation’s brand and reputation, no matter how carefully built and maintained, is at risk of serious damage if a crisis situation arises and communications are not appropriately managed.
- 1.2. Imperial College Union relies on productive relationships and a positive reputation with a range of stakeholders, including our membership, our volunteers, College leadership, and our own staff team. A pro-active approach to handling our relationships with each group in the case of a crisis is necessary to reduce the risk of reputational damage.
- 1.3. The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance and resources to use in the case of a crisis. Together, these provide a framework for managing communications and stakeholder engagement relating to any crisis affecting Imperial College Union. The guidance is intended to support managers and volunteers in ensuring that the impact of a crisis on the reputation, standing and viability of Imperial College Union is minimised, while maintaining regulatory compliance and observing good practice from the sector.
- 1.4. This plan does not provide a framework for dealing with all challenges and tasks arising from any given crisis, but specifically its communication and stakeholder aspects.

2. What is meant by ‘crisis’?

- 2.1. A crisis is any event or situation that may have an adverse effect on how Imperial College Union is perceived by stakeholders, or that may attract negative attention from the media.

Examples of possible crises include:

- 2.1.1. Injury or death during student-led activities
- 2.1.2. Injury or death in licensed premises
- 2.1.3. Injury or death of staff member
- 2.1.4. Misconduct, whether real or perceived, by a student leader, representative or member
- 2.1.5. Misconduct, whether real or perceived, by a member of staff
- 2.1.6. Financial shortfall that affects the viability of the organisation
- 2.1.7. Natural disasters affecting Imperial College Union activities
- 2.1.8. The proposal or adoption of a policy or stance by elected representatives that threatens our reputation and standing with partners
- 2.1.9. Failure, whether real, predicted or perceived, of a high-profile event or service

3. Crisis response team

- 3.1. Serious crises may require a crisis response team to form, to manage ongoing communication and to monitor developing situations.
- 3.2. The crisis response team should typically consist of the Managing Director (MD), Head of Student Voice & Communications (HSVC), President, and any other senior managers or student leaders immediately relevant to the situation.
- 3.3. The crisis management team should be as small as possible, and will typically be chaired by the MD.

4. Understanding success

- 4.1. A successful communications response to a crisis will ideally have all of the following features:
 - 4.1.1. Swift assessment of the crisis and its potential implications
 - 4.1.2. Clear leadership and defined responsibilities via a crisis response team
 - 4.1.3. Honest and timely communication, tailored to key stakeholders
 - 4.1.4. Active management of potential impact on our brand and reputation
 - 4.1.5. Structured information flow to enable the crisis response team to monitor the situation
 - 4.1.6. Continued operation of as many services and functions as possible
 - 4.1.7. Minimal negative impact on our brand understanding, reputation and relationships
 - 4.1.8. An evaluation of the crisis and the effectiveness of the communications response

5. What enables successful crisis communications?

- 5.1. Successful crisis communications is reliant on a number of enabling factors. These include effective internal communication practices, the maintenance of strong relationships with external stakeholders, and an understanding of our current reputation with stakeholders. An ethos of crisis preparedness and proactive assessment of risk is also important.

- 5.2. A guide for planning communication with each stakeholder group is included in the resources at the end of this document.

6. Evaluation

- 6.1. Any crisis is also an opportunity to learn lessons and prevent future problems. In certain circumstances, a crisis may present an opportunity to reset or even improve relationships with certain stakeholder groups. For example, swift and effective handling of a difficult situation in the public eye could reassure College leadership or our members about our competence and professionalism.
- 6.2. A member of staff should be allocated responsibility for writing a report on the causes, circumstances, outcomes and learning points of any crisis, for submission to SMG or an appropriate Board subcommittee.

7. Maintaining and embedding good practice

- 7.1. The HSVC will take ongoing responsibility for two documents: the crisis communications plan itself, and also the maintenance of an accurate record of important information such as social media logs, stakeholder contact details, and draft holding statements.
- 7.2. The HSVC will ensure the plan is reviewed annually by the Communications Committee, and is kept accurate in terms of contact details and relevant information. They will maintain a set of draft responses and holding statements
- 7.3. The HSVC will disseminate the crisis communication plan to managers and student leaders across the organisation, to ensure it is known to frontline staff who may be first to be notified of a crisis situation.

8. Resources

- 8.1. Below, you can find:
 - 8.1.1. Crisis Response Team Checklist
 - 8.1.2. Stakeholder engagement guide and checklist
 - 8.1.3. Contact details
 - 8.1.4. Holding messages

Crisis response team checklist

This checklist denotes steps that must be taken in the case of a crisis. It is not exhaustive; every step must be taken, but the absence of a measure from this list does not mean it is therefore unnecessary.

Please note that this checklist is for managing the *communications* aspect of a crisis. It does not necessarily address how to resolve the crisis itself.

Task	Outcome	Completed?
Convene urgent meeting	The crisis response team (CRT) and any relevant other parties have met or otherwise communicated	
Prepare and distribute brief	The HSVC or another team member has briefed the CRT on the situation	
Agree initial assessment	The CRT has discussed and agreed the nature of the crisis and the risks it poses	
Agree and verify position	The CRT has determined whether the organisation is at fault, if possible	
Agree initial messages	The CRT has agreed messages, whether holding or permanent, for every relevant stakeholder group	
Communicate	The CRT has activated the cascade system and other broadcasting methods to disseminate the agreed messages to stakeholder groups	
Agree management plan	The CRT has agreed the frequency and time of future meetings to manage the situation	
Maintain information flow	The CRT has decided who will take responsibility for updating them on the situation, and how often updates will be circulated	
Evaluate	The CRT has ensured that an evaluation process of the crisis and of the response to it has begun and that its recommendations will be treated appropriately	

Stakeholder engagement guide and checklist

Stakeholder group	Message qualities	Method	Owner	Message drafted?	Message communicated?
College leadership	Formal, professional, full disclosure	Personal phone calls, followup email	MD		
Student leadership	Formal, professional, full disclosure, reminder of discretion	Personal phone calls, followup email	MD/Pres		
Membership	Formal, professional, appropriate information, multimedia	Email, web content, social media	HSVC		
Alumni	Formal, professional, appropriate information, multimedia	Web content, social media	HSVC		
Peer group of affected student/staff (if relevant)	Formal, professional, appropriate information, direct	Email, group meeting	MD/Pres		
Partner organisations	Formal, professional, appropriate information, direct	Personal phone calls	Relationship owner		
Media	Formal, professional, appropriate information, direct	In writing when possible	HSVC		

Contact details

Role	Roleholder	Email	Landline	Mobile	Called?
Managing Director	Jarlath O'Hara	j.ohara@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 9997	07714 215 510	
Head of Student Experience & Services	Paul Buckley	p.buckley@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 8125	07590 250 452	
Head of Finance & Resources	Malcolm Martin	m.martin@imperial.ac.uk	020 7954 8070	07714 051 253	
Head of Student Voice & Communications	Andrew Keenan	a.keenan@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 5387	07734 077 350	
Union President	Alex Chippy Compton	union.president@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 8060	07875 853 006	
Deputy President (Education)	Nick Burstow	dpeducation@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 5646	07920 024 350	
Deputy President (Welfare)	Fintan O'Connor	dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk	020 7595 8064	07599 484 643	
Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)	Tom Bacarese-Hamilton	dpes@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 1763	07703 766 310	
Deputy President (Finance & Services)	Matthew Blackett	dpfs@imperial.ac.uk	020 7595 8062	07804 445 787	
ICSMSU President	Rhys Smith	icsm.president@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 8079	07964 458 341	
President, Imperial College London	Professor Alice Gast	president@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 5001		
Provost, Imperial College London	Professor James Stirling	provost@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 7224		
Vice Provost (Education)	Professor Simone Buitendijk	s.buitendijk@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 8809	07834 174 367	
College Secretary & Registrar	John Neilson	j.neilson@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 7272		
Vice President (Communications)	Luke Blair	luke.blair@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 6816		
Chief Financial Officer	Muir Sanderson	muir.sanderson@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 8803		
Director of Human Resources	Louise Lindsay	l.lindsay@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 5540		
Academic Registrar	David Ashton	david.ashton1@imperial.ac.uk	020 7594 8054		
Out of Hours Duty Media Officer	Rotating	n/a	n/a	07803 886 248	

Holding messages

“We have implemented our crisis response plan, which places the highest importance on the health and safety of our members. We will be supplying additional information when it is available via our website and social media”

“The situation is still evolving, and we will keep you updated as soon as we have more information”

“We are aware of <an ongoing incident> and are investigating swiftly. We will share updates here when possible”

