



Netherlands organization for international
cooperation in higher education

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for the worst

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A guide to crisis
management for
the international
affairs officers of
higher education
institutions

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Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	5
1 Drawing up an institutional plan for dealing with crises	6
1.2 Information and communication	7
1.3 Accessibility	7
1.4 Crisis management and the crisis team	8
1.5 Information	11
1.6 The logbook	11
1.7 Winding things up	11
1.8 Evaluation	12
2 Practical tips and instructions regarding students going abroad	13
2.1 The role of the institution	13
2.2 Instructions for the entire staff of the educational institution	15
2.3 An emergency call comes in. Now what?	16
2.4 When do you take the initiative to seek contact?	17
2.5 Follow-up	18
3 Tips and suggestions regarding incoming students and staff	19
3.1 Prevention	19
Appendix: sample forms	22

Foreword

- Students from your university are on an archeological dig in the Middle East. Their bus crashes. Several students are killed and others are being treated in local hospitals. One of the students calls you. 'We need help and the authorities here need information about the group.'
- 'One of the foreign students was found unconscious and has been taken to hospital,' reports an excited caller. 'We're not sure who he is. What do we do?'
- The press is on the phone. 'We've heard that someone from your institution has been kidnapped and is being held for ransom in Sierra Leone. What was he doing there, and will your institution pay?'

Such situations may sound too unusual to worry about, but if one occurs you will never forget it. You must act fast and make the right decisions. If you can immediately turn to a set of instructions for dealing with a crisis, you have a chance of managing it well. Then a small amount of worry now will prove to have been well worth it.

The following guidelines began with a workshop in 1994 that had been organized by Nuffic (Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education) and the international relations network of the Netherlands' universities of professional education (hogescholen). A Nuffic publication resulted in 1995 which included emergency plans that had been drafted at two institutions. The entire issue has recently been re-examined by a Cospa committee, which has also revised the guidelines. This publication is the result. Coordinating Office for Student Placements Abroad is the full name of Cospa, which is a network of the internationalization officers at Dutch higher education institutions who coordinate international internships or work placements. The focus here is therefore mainly on students who go abroad to do internships connected with their studies, but the basic principles apply to any crisis affecting an academic visitor, whether that visitor is at student or staff level, and whether he or she is one of your own people in another country, or someone from another country temporarily affiliated with your institution.



Introduction

Students and staff members who go abroad have to be aware that things can go wrong. If the international experience will be in direct connection with the person's studies or work - as part of an exchange programme, for example - the higher education institution also bears responsibility and has to judge the risks involved. The institution has to be able to say 'no' to a student or staff member if it considers the risks too great. How cautious an institution will be depends on various factors, which is why each institution needs to set its own norms. These can be decided at the central level or at the level of the faculty or department, as long as they are decided somewhere. Probably it makes most sense if an entire institution shares a single set of standards and guidelines. This avoids the problem of some departments being more restrictive than others.

Drawing up an institutional plan for dealing with crises

1

The following model is based on one designed by Paul Minee and Claudia Roskam in 1993. At the time they were working at the Hogeschool Gelderland. Their model is based on two premises: that the institution is large, and that it wants to be prepared should one or more staff members or students find themselves in a crisis situation abroad.

A. In internationalization, what is a disaster and what is a crisis?

For a university or other higher education institution, it is a 'disaster' if a large group of students or staff members die or are exposed to mortal danger. An accident suffered by an individual is more likely to be called a 'crisis'. To avoid confusion, this document will use the term 'crisis' to cover all cases – all sorts of mishaps affecting both groups and individuals.

A crisis has the following main features:

- Quick decisions must be made.
- Doing nothing could have serious consequences.
- Any decision has far-reaching consequences. If the wrong decision is made, the result can be serious.
- There are few if any options.
- There is a question of damage – both material and immaterial.
- Hesitation to act only makes the damage worse.
- The media might find the situation newsworthy.
- Information about a crisis is seldom complete. Rumours and speculations acquire the status of truth.

Knowledge of how a crisis can occur provides insight into what sort of procedures and rules are required for dealing with one. Any of the following could have befallen a student or staff member, for example. They could have:

- died;
- had a serious accident;
- been arrested;
- been a victim of crime.

These are just a few of the possibilities. Many more situations would qualify as a crisis requiring a response from the institution. Keep in mind that because no list can ever be complete, the institution may have to respond to a crisis that is not specifically described in the crisis plan.

If a crisis involves only one individual, a single staff member can usually do whatever is required. But this will not always be the case, which is why it is always wise to be prepared for major catastrophes – for example if a whole group of students is killed in a plane crash, a fire or an earthquake.

1.2 Information and communication

A lack of information and poor communication are the main problems encountered by someone who is trying to help in a crisis. You do not know precisely what happened; you have to guess at the scale of the crisis; and it is not clear what kind of help is needed, or where. Often you will have nothing more than your instincts to go on in the beginning. Even if a crisis is on a large scale affecting more than one person, you will have to cope at first with a lack of information. You know something is wrong, but you do not have the details you need and it is not immediately apparent where you can get them. This is the main reason for the panic and inaction for which you and your institution could later be criticized.

The best basis for taking effective action in a crisis is therefore a system of communication and information. The institution must possess, as a matter of routine, some basic information about students and staff members who are abroad. Then, if a crisis occurs, at least this much will be known. The institution must also know which communication channels it will use to contact the person in question and the relevant authorities. With this system, the information is ready and waiting if you need it.

1.3 Accessibility

Crises are always unexpected. The institution must therefore ask itself whether it should be constantly accessible. If the answer is yes, there is only one approach that works. One or more 'crisis coordinators' must be appointed – persons who can take effective action should the need arise and whose job description specifically includes this task. Such persons have to be on stand-by at all times. They can be reached not only during office hours but also at home at all hours of the day. Time differences make this necessary. Ideally there should be more than one crisis coordinator, and they should arrange their vacations so that someone is always on hand.

Crisis coordinators can be appointed at the central level or the departmental level, depending on the size of the institution and the way it is organized. In any case, the crisis coordinator must be authorized to take the necessary steps and also to make use of the institution's administrative apparatus. It is important that they not find their hands tied during a crisis. Their own signature must be enough for getting money, for example, and they must be able to order another employee to do something immediately and without comment.

Be sure to define 'crisis situation' broadly. If action is required, the crisis coordinator will not have time to engage in discussions regarding borderline cases. He or she can give an accounting later, but must not be required to justify action before it is taken.

The institution might decide, however, that it does not have to be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Students and staff are supposed to be insured, after all, and all insurance companies have an alarm number that can be called at any time of day or night.

1.4 Crisis management and the crisis team

The telephone call initially reporting a crisis will seldom be made directly to the institution's international affairs office. This is why it is important for everyone at the institution to be so well instructed that they automatically forward any such call to the international affairs office. Or they take the number and have the office call the person back. There are cases, however, when staff of the international affairs office are the first persons at the institution to be aware of a crisis because they are the first ones to realize that the aeroplane that crashed could have been carrying someone from the institution, or that students and staff members could be among the victims of the earthquake or terrorist attack reported in the media.

In such cases, two questions of an organizational nature need to be answered:

1. At which level in the organization should the crisis be dealt with?
2. Under whose responsibility will action be taken? The answer to this question is simple. The more serious the damage suffered, the higher in the organization lies the ultimate responsibility for the crisis management that will follow. If a busload of students plummets over a cliff, for example, it is a matter for the Board of Governors. Whether the crisis team operates at central or departmental level depends on the nature and seriousness of the calamity.

The person or body who bears ultimate responsibility appoints a crisis team. Candidates for such teams should be designated in advance. They know they can be called upon to join a crisis team, and they are prepared for the job, perhaps through a course of training. A crisis team could be made up of any of the following. The exact composition will depend on the nature and seriousness of the situation.

- someone at the very top level: a member of the Board of Governors, for example;
- the person in charge of internationalization;
- the head of the public relations department;
- the head of the department or section to which the person or persons in question belong;
- a facility manager;
- a personnel officer or counsellor.



The assistance of other staff members might also be required, for example:

- information officers;
- legal advisers;
- members of the administrative staff;
- receptionists;
- financial officers;
- the catering department.

Once the crisis team has been appointed, it should be given full authorization to do whatever is needed, also as regards money. The team is then responsible for doing, or instructing others to do, the following:

- analysing the crisis;
- planning the action to be taken;
- issuing information, both within the institution and externally;
- providing whatever help it can to the persons in question and their families. This can include financial as well as moral support.
- providing follow-up care;
- evaluating how the crisis was handled.

In practice, the crisis team will perform the following tasks:

- informing whoever needs to be informed;
- maintaining personal contact with the victims and/or their relatives;
- arranging (or helping to arrange) for transportation, the necessary paperwork, money, and shelter if necessary. All of this will depend on the nature of the crisis.
- acting as the point of contact for media inquiries;
- enlisting the commitment and help of other bodies that can provide help, and coordinating one's own efforts with these.

For a crisis team to function well, it is above all essential that the members of the team be freed of all other duties. They must be able to clear their desks both literally and figuratively, and if this is difficult they should be given a separate office from which to manage the crisis. Among themselves, the team members should have a clear division of labour. The responsibilities of each could be as follows, for example:

1. team leader

- to coordinate all activities;
- to plan and assign tasks;
- to manage any money involved;
- to maintain contact with the top levels of the institution.

2. chief internationalization officer

- to contact the bodies at home and in the other country that can provide help and/or information;
- to coordinate activities with those of one's own foreign ministry, embassy and/or consulate;

- together with the department head (who is also in the crisis team), to maintain contact as much as possible with the students or staff members in question;
 - if appropriate, to visit them together with the department head.
3. information officer
 - to act as spokesperson;
 - to issue press releases;
 - to direct the internal communication;
 - if appropriate, to organize and conduct press conferences.
 4. head of the department
 - to maintain contact with the victims and their relatives, colleagues and/or fellow students;
 - if appropriate, to go to the scene of the crisis either alone or in the company of the chief internationalization officer.
 5. facility manager
 - to arrange the necessary equipment, office space and other facilities;
 - to make transport and travel arrangements at home and abroad;
 - to direct any catering that is required.

The job of the facility manager should not be underestimated. If a crisis occurs, things must happen quickly. Valuable time may not be wasted looking for a room to meet in, or gathering equipment. A crisis team has to be able to get together immediately, which means there must be a plan in place for quickly converting a space into a crisis centre which can be immediately equipped with the following:

- computers with e-mail facilities and links to the Internet, a printer, a fax machine, and a telephone with a direct line outside;
- notepads and pens;
- a flip-over and markers;
- a logbook;
- a clock that can be set to the time at the scene of the crisis;
- a radio and a television connected to the antenna;
- equipment for making coffee and tea;
- supplies for sandwiches;
- sufficient wall sockets for plugging in electronic equipment;
- relevant documentation.

The crisis team must be able to work without any distractions. Full authorization alone is not enough. The crisis team must have full control over all activities connected with the crisis – everything from direct assistance to press releases. Other employees of the institution – from the highest to the lowest levels – must not interfere or take any initiatives themselves without first talking to the crisis team. They may of course pass on tips and information, but the crisis team holds a monopoly on action.



1.5 Information

The crisis team without a doubt will be besieged by people hungry for information, especially since uncertainty and unanswered questions are features of every crisis, certainly at the beginning. It is essential that this demand for information be taken seriously and dealt with well. The following should serve as a general guideline. Relatives of the victims need to be informed first of all and should receive absolute priority. Then come those at the institution who worked or studied with the person or persons in question. Only then should attention turn to the media. Certainly if there is sad news, the people closest to the victim should be informed first. It must be avoided at all costs that people hear for the first time on the radio that a loved one has been in a serious accident, for example. The rules for good news are different, however. It is not so bad to hear this first on the radio, although good news should also be shared directly with the family by telephone. The following guidelines should apply:

- Do not give people false hope. Try not to make the situation sound more favourable than it actually is. If you are short of information or are in fact powerless, never hide the fact. Say 'I don't know.' Anyone who ignores this rule is certain to get rumours started.
- Do not limit your contacts with family members and companions only to telephone reports of bad news. Send someone to go talk with them. And telephone them at regular intervals, even if it is only to say that there is no news.
- The best way to keep people informed within the institution is through bulletins and internal e-mails.
- Do not give the media any addresses of a victim's relatives or friends.

1.6 The logbook

It is important that members of the crisis team do not duplicate each other's efforts or work at cross purposes, and that everyone can see at a glance what has been done and what has not. A logbook is the answer. Every team member writes in the logbook what they have done, and who they have talked to about what, being extra precise if something was said in the nature of a concession or promise. These entries must be made in between other activities, but they can be in telegramme style. This creates a report that everyone can refer to.

1.7 Winding things up

The worst of a crisis usually passes within one or two days. A crisis team therefore loses its relevance rather quickly and the members of the team go back to their normal work. But the team must not be disbanded at this point because a crisis always requires some follow-up. A number of matters need to be brought to a proper conclusion. And then comes the moment of evaluation. This is essential.

In general, follow-up usually consists of the following:

- A visit is paid to the person concerned and/or to their close relations. Other forms of contact are also possible. If there is a funeral or memorial service, arrangements should


be made for someone of the proper standing to represent the institution.

- In cases of illness and disability, regular contact should be maintained with the person in question – not just to communicate the institution’s concern for their well-being, but also to see if the person needs any help that the institution could provide.
- Before visits are paid to a person who has experienced a crisis, someone should inquire whether that person indeed wants visitors. Their wishes should be respected and communicated to the person’s colleagues or fellow students so as to avoid a possibly unwelcome flood of visitors.
- Persons and organizations that have helped in the crisis should be thanked in writing.
- The members of the crisis team should be allowed time to recover from the experience and ease back into their normal work without too much pressure being put on them.
- Financial matters must be settled and spending accounted for in a report.
- A first analysis should be made of the cause of the crisis. Could it have been prevented? This inquiry could well lead to improved preventive measures.
- The entire management of the crisis should be evaluated.

1.8 Evaluation

Experts in dealing with and preventing emergencies all agree that the people involved in a crisis generally learn too little from the experience. A crisis is quickly forgotten. This does nothing to help prevent the next one or to improve the quality of the help that will be given. This is why it is so important to make a deliberate and detailed evaluation. For this, the logbook in which the members of the team noted everything will be very useful. The purpose of the evaluation is not to point a finger of blame, nor is it to analyse how well the team members stood up under stress. The subject of the exercise is the entire process. This analysis will probably result not only in better preventive measures, but also in a refinement of the crisis plan and the structure that goes with it.





Practical tips and instructions regarding students going abroad

2.1 The role of the institution

A higher education institution is not the same as an embassy or consulate, nor is it family of the student or staff member in question. What the institution can do in a crisis is usually limited. Moreover, it would be wrong for the institution to barge in on territory that rightly belongs to the diplomatic corps or to the family of the person in trouble. Often the institution can do little more than keep abreast of developments, pass on information, and establish lines of communication. Sending money is probably the most specific thing an institution can do. But however modest, all of these contributions can be vital. The institution needs to consider how much responsibility it has for its students and staff, and how far it wants to go in helping them.

Major institutional intervention in what is in fact personal suffering can be counterproductive. It can also add to rather than relieve the burden of those who are providing help, and it can be an unacceptable invasion of privacy that makes decision-making harder rather than easier for relatives who are already in a vulnerable state.

1 Prevention

Crisis prevention begins with several forms of preparation before the student or staff member leaves home. At the most basic level, critical consideration should be given to the country which the student or staff member has chosen as destination. It might be useful to find out what your own foreign ministry advises regarding travel to the country in question. The ministry might discourage or even forbid its own citizens from going to particular hotspots because of the risks involved. In principle, higher education institutions should be willing to protect students and staff from themselves. If a person chooses to ignore the ministry's warning and go to a dangerous country, the institution can demand that the student or staff member in question sign a statement relieving the institution of all liability – a document in which the person states that they are aware of the dangers, accept full responsibility for their actions, and will not claim any damages from the institution. This does not mean that the student or staff member loses the right to return to the institution after the period abroad is over.

Safety is an issue as regards the country to be visited, but also as regards the place and situation where a student will be posted. Is the organization offering the internship reliable, for example, and is its position within the country clear? Determining this requires a network of personal contacts, and knowing whom to ask. Bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce can usually provide some information about the position of a

potential host organization. It is also important to ask people who have been posted there before about their experiences. Does your institution have a good relationship with the organization's own internship coordinator? In cases of discrimination or intimidation, the student must have someone in the organization to call on for help. This could be a member of the personnel department, but it could also be a staff member to whom this responsibility is specifically assigned.

Consideration must also be given to linguistic and cultural preparation. Does the student speak the language in question and is he or she sufficiently aware of the cultural differences that can be expected?

The person going abroad must be adequately insured, through either the institution or a private policy. If the institution is providing insurance coverage, it could be that it is cheaper to set up an emergency fund than to insure everyone who goes abroad with an elaborate package that covers all eventualities. Money given from the emergency fund should be considered a loan. After the crisis has passed, it can be decided whether or not the loan must be paid back.

These tips regarding crisis prevention should be included in any booklets written for the benefit of students going abroad.

2 Getting basic information on record

Students and staff members going abroad should fill in a form that provides the institution with the basic information it would need in case of an emergency. This information should be entered in a database to which the crisis coordinator has immediate access. The following information should be recorded together with the person's name:

- where, and if possible when, the person can be reached abroad: address(es), telephone number(s), e-mail address and fax number;
- who should be contacted back home: name(s) of spouse or companion, parent or other family member(s) or friend(s), together with their address, telephone number, e-mail address and fax number;
- name of the supervisor abroad, together with his/her address, telephone number, e-mail address and fax number;
- name, address and telephone number of the person's physician at home, in case medical information about the person is needed;
- the person's blood group;
- information about any health conditions that might be a problem at a time of crisis, such as diabetes or epilepsy.
- the expected starting and finishing dates of the person's period abroad.

The form used to elicit this information should begin with a brief explanation of why the information is needed and how it will be used. Confidentiality should of course be assured.



Alongside this database, the crisis coordinator should at all times have an up-to-date list of relevant embassies and consulates – both of one's own diplomatic corps abroad and of the foreign diplomatic corps in one's own country.

3 Factsheet with basic data and instructions

The students and staff members going abroad should themselves know what to do in a crisis. The form that is filled in and returned should be accompanied by a factsheet with some basic instructions and critical telephone numbers. Most important is the first telephone number that should be called in an emergency. It must be possible to call this number collect at any time, and people must know this. The entire number should be given, complete with the codes for requesting a collect call. Other options should be offered as well, such as a mobile telephone number, a fax number and an e-mail address. Of almost equal importance are the telephone numbers at work and at home of the crisis coordinator and the designated personnel officer. The factsheet should stress the importance of writing these numbers in several places so that they can always be found quickly should the need arise. When abroad, the person in question should carry the numbers on their person at all times. Copies of the factsheet should be given to certain colleagues, teachers and/or supervisors, together with an explanation of its purpose.

The factsheet should offer instructions and advice on several points. In a prominent place on the sheet, its user should be reminded to communicate any address changes to the home institution immediately. The following advice is also useful:

- Carry with you a card that gives your blood group.
- Make sure you know how to contact your supervisor or closest colleague in the host organization, and the nearest embassy or consulate of your own country.
- Be sure your insurance is in order. Consider war-risk coverage.
- Make one or more copies of all your official documents.
- Carry vital medical information with you at all times.
- See if your own foreign ministry has any other useful suggestions.

2.2 Instructions for the entire staff of the educational institution

Every employee at the home institution needs to be fully aware of the crisis procedure since the first emergency telephone call could come in at any point. Instructions for taking such a call, including the names and telephone numbers of crisis coordinators, should be given a prominent place in the internal telephone directory and on the organization's internal computer network or intranet. Staff members should be told always to accept an emergency collect call, but not to take any further action themselves other than to contact a crisis coordinator. Staff members most likely to be confronted with a crisis situation – telephone operators and internship coordinators, for example – could perhaps benefit from some specific training on the subject.

2.3 An emergency call comes in. Now what?

A call comes in from someone in a panic. There is a crisis and help is needed. It is important that the crisis coordinator impose some structure on the conversation to make sure that the vital information is communicated. A form for this purpose is helpful. The one suggested in the appendix would direct such a conversation approximately as follows:

1. Let the caller deliver his or her message (for example, 'I'm sick.' 'I've been robbed.' 'Your student's in a coma.'). Take notes.
2. Reassure the caller and make sure you get answers to the following questions:
 - 'What is your exact name?'
 - 'Where are you calling from?' (a telephone number if possible)
 - 'Can I always reach you at this number, or will you be at another number? What is it?'
 - (If relevant) 'Have you notified the embassy or consulate? No? Here is the number.' (You have this on hand, either in your database or on a list.)
 - (If the caller is a third party) 'Where is the person in question? In whose custody (hospital, police)?'
3. At this point repeat all of the information and ask the caller if it is correct and complete.
4. (If relevant) Ask to speak to the person in charge (doctor, police officer, local supervisor, etc.). Introduce yourself and make a note of their exact name and position. Let this person tell the story. Ask them if you can be of any help and give them your telephone number, saying that they can call collect at any time. Then ask to speak to the original caller again.
5. Arrange a date and time that you will call the person for a next report. Confirm the telephone number you will call.
6. Ask who else should be contacted, and agree with the caller on who will contact whom. Agree also on what the next steps will be, and on who will do what.
7. Ask if the person involved wants to come home. If so, do they have a return ticket or do they need a quick loan of some money?

After you hang up the phone, decide whether you or someone else in the institution is the best person to take action. This will depend on the nature and seriousness of the crisis. The following steps need to be taken, although the exact order will depend on the situation. This is when you will be grateful for the information about the person you have stored in your database.

- Contact the person or persons who are supposed to be contacted in case of an emergency. Tell them what you know and make sure they have the names and numbers they need to contact the person in question. Tell them what the initial caller said is required, and decide together whether you or they will do this. Respect the wishes of family members and companions.
- Contact your country's embassy or consulate in the country in question, certainly if the student or staff member is in trouble with the authorities, but also in cases of serious illness. Ask if they can offer the person any help, and if so, what. Ask that they please keep you fully informed of the situation, and ask whether they think you should get in touch with the local diplomatic representative of the country in question, or with a



representative of the European Union. Do exactly as they suggest. Say they can call you collect if they wish.

- Let persons who bear responsibility for the academic exchange know what is happening: for example, the internship coordinator, the person's supervisor, the coordinator at the partner institution, etc.
- Contact the sources of other useful information. For example, the hospital in the other country might have asked for the person's medical records. You could get the records from the person's doctor and fax them to the host institution.

Other than this, there is not much that you can (or should) do. The embassy or consulate will arrange for repatriation if this is required. The only real contribution an education institution can make is to send money quickly. But do this only if no one else is able or willing to do it. And make it clear that this is an advance or a loan. Afterward it can be decided whether or not the money has to be paid back.

2.4 When do you take the initiative to seek contact?

Events sometimes occur that make you wonder whether your people in a particular country are okay – an earthquake or flood, for example, or an outbreak of political violence. In such cases, lines of communication are often broken. Nevertheless, there are a few things you can do. But you must make sure to establish contact with the person's closest relatives before you take any steps.

- Call the family and tell them what you know. Make agreements with them regarding keeping in touch and taking action.
- Check whether or not communication lines are indeed shut down. It is worth trying to contact your people. Who knows, you might get straight through. If you fail to reach them, send a list of their names and local addresses to your country's nearest embassy or consulate. If this also fails, call your own foreign ministry and send them the list. Do exactly as the ministry tells you, and agree with them how you will stay in touch.
- Try again to contact your students and staff members and/or their supervisors in the other country to find out what is happening. Agree with them how you will keep in touch.
- Never try to make your own arrangements for evacuating people from a danger zone. Leave this to the local network of compatriots, and channel any help you offer through that network.

N.B. If a student or staff member of your institution is detained by the authorities, stay on the case. Telephone regularly to ask for more information. Do not take a position on guilt or innocence. Do not start preaching about human rights or good governance. The best thing you can do is to make it clear both to your own country's diplomatic representatives and to those who are detaining your student or staff member that your institution is following the case closely. Get advice from the foreign ministry and do as they say.

Only after setting all of the above processes in motion should the crisis coordinator draw other employees at the institution into the picture.

- Tell the person's department head or supervisor what has happened, and agree with them how you will stay in touch. Ask them to inform the person's colleagues or fellow students about the situation.
- If the crisis involves death, mortal danger, or a group of people from your institution, inform the Board of Governors and the head of the faculty and provide them with regular reports.
- Get in touch with your institution's public relations department, certainly if the crisis might attract media attention, as would be the case with a natural disaster, political unrest or criminal activity. Reach agreement with the public relations officers regarding who will give information to the media, to the public, and to the institution as a whole. Respect the PR officers for their expertise and accept their suggestions. Let them act as spokespersons. As regards passing on information in general, try to be open while at the same time treating names, addresses and telephone numbers with confidentiality.
- If there is bad news, make sure that the family hears it first. Only then can it be shared with third parties. This rule applies even if it means suppressing news for a while.

N.B. Be sure also to pass on good news to family members and contact persons. If you have ascertained that your people have survived a natural disaster unharmed, for example, be sure to let those who might have been concerned know. In the case of good news, it does not matter who you tell first.

2.5 Follow-up

The institution's involvement in a crisis does not necessarily end the moment the persons in question have come back home. Consideration should be given to follow-up activities.

You might, for example, want to:

- Send a thank-you note to everyone who helped you with your crisis management.
- If a person is recovering from illness or injury, send a card and/or a basket of fruit.
- Send colleagues and fellow students a report on the current state of affairs.
- Work out what the collect calls and loans have cost, and consider whether it would be acceptable to ask for reimbursement.
- If there has been a death, send written condolences on behalf of the Board of Governors and make sure that the institution is properly represented at the funeral. Consider whether the institution should place an obituary in a newspaper (if this is a custom in your country). Have your public relations department check the text before you place an obituary.
- Evaluate how the entire process of crisis management went.



3 **Tips and suggestions regarding incoming students and staff**

Just as your institution has responsibilities towards its own students and staff when they are abroad in connection with their studies or work, it is also obliged to help out lecturers, scientists and students from other countries who are temporarily affiliated with your institution and find themselves in a crisis. Crises can thus be seen to fall into two categories: crises that occur in one's own country and crises that occur in another host country. Because the steps that can be taken are much the same, however, no distinction will be made on this basis. Guidelines for dealing with academic visitors can be easily extrapolated from the information presented above.

3.1 Prevention

All prospective international students and staff should receive a list of the information they should note down and leave with a designated person at home. At the very least, this information should include:

- the name, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address of the higher education institution with which they will be affiliated;
- the name, address, e-mail address, and telephone numbers (at work and at home) of the person or persons who will be supervising or working with them;
- their address, telephone number and e-mail address in the host country.

This information can of course be supplemented with anything else thought necessary.

Once the person arrives at your institution, he or she should give you the following information in case an emergency requires action on the part of the institution:

- name, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address of parents, spouse or other close family;
- name, address and telephone number of the local physician who will be responsible for treating the person if this is needed;
- health data: for example, blood group and information about any chronic ailments such as diabetes.

If a student's presence is part of an exchange with a partner institution, the following should also be included:

- the name, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address of the student's home institution;
- the name, address, e-mail address, and telephone numbers (at work and at home) of the student's supervisor.

It is important to explain on the form why you want this information and what you plan to do with it. People from certain countries will be suspicious and might even give deliberately false information because they fear it could be used against them. Point out that the information will be treated confidentially.

When you receive the information from the foreign visitor, add to it the contact numbers of the relevant embassies or consulates: both the person's diplomatic representative in your country, and your country's representative in the person's country.

The visiting students and staff must also know what they should do in an emergency. When they are given the above form to fill in, they should also receive a factsheet with instructions and telephone numbers. Most important is the telephone number which they should call if they are in trouble, and which can always be called collect. This number should be in a prominent place on the factsheet. If your institution has decided to be available around the clock for emergencies, you should also list a mobile telephone number, a fax number and an e-mail address. Equally important are the numbers of the crisis coordinator(s) and designated personnel officer. Academic visitors should be advised to copy these numbers and put them in several places so that they can always be retrieved quickly should the need arise. In any case, they should carry these numbers with them at all times. They should be advised also to give a copy of the factsheet, together with an explanation of its purpose, to one or more fellow students and colleagues and to their immediate superior. The factsheet should remind academic visitors to let the institution know immediately if there are any changes of address.

The factsheet could contain additional advice, such as the following:

- Carry with you a card indicating your blood group.
- Make sure you know how to reach your local supervisor or colleague as well as your country's nearest embassy or consulate.
- Make sure you have adequate insurance! Consider whether you should have war-risk coverage.
- Be sure to make one or more copies of all official documents.
- Be sure to carry important health information with you at all times.

Staff members responsible for supervising international students should have an idea of what this might entail. They might be called upon to help students in a variety of situations involving such things as contact with the police, hospital admission, intimidation and discrimination. A bit of training would be very useful. They should also have easy access to information about the social customs of incoming students from different cultures. This will help them understand how a particular academic visitor is likely to respond and act in certain situations. If you do not have a good source, call on fellow students, compatriots or an interpreter for help and/or advice.



In general, the best rule is probably the following. In a crisis, act as if the person in question is your own child or best friend. This applies whether it is someone visiting your institution from another country, or someone from your own institution who is temporarily posted abroad.



Appendix: sample forms

The following sample forms apply in cases where the people in trouble are students or staff of your own institution who are studying or working abroad. Comparable forms for students and staff from other countries who are studying or working at your own institution can be devised on the basis of these.

Form to be filled in by students and staff of your own institution before they go abroad..

Information needed in case of an emergency

This information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. We will use it only in an emergency and only for your own benefit.

Personal details

Last name:

First name:

Date of birth:

Student/identity card number:

Passport number:

Faculty/department:

Name supervisor:

Medical Record

Name of your physician at home:

Physician's telephone number:

Blood group:

Rh factor/ positive/negative:

Are you taking medicine?

If so, what?

What dosage?

Should your health condition be known to anyone who will give you emergency medical treatment?

Personal details abroad

Home address:

Telephone number:

Mobile:

E-mail address:

Emergency contact details

Name:

Relationship to you: parent / friend / husband / partner / sister / brother / (circle one)

Address:

Telephone number:

Mobile:

E-mail address:

Emergency contact details: organizations

Name & address of the foreign organization:

Name of contact person:

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

Name & address of the nearest embassy abroad:

Telephone number:

Name & address of the foreign embassy at home:

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

Departure/return dates

Date of departure from your own country:

Start date of your affiliation:

End date of your affiliation:

Date of your arrival home:

Anything else?

Is there anything else we should know about?



To be filled in by the international affairs office

Name and address of your country's nearest embassy or consulate:

Telephone number:

Name and address of the relevant foreign embassy or consulate in your own country:

Telephone number:

Notes:

Sample form for taking telephone calls
Registering an emergency

Who telephoned?

student / staff member / someone else.....(circle one)

Name:

Identity number issued by your institution (if relevant):

Telephone number where the person can be reached:

What has happened?

What has been done already?

- The family and/or companion has been notified.
- The person's local supervisor or superior has been notified.
- The person's supervisor or superior back home has been notified.
- The case has been reported to the police.
- Your country's nearest embassy or consulate has been notified.
- Other:



Results and agreements:**What must still be done, and who will do what?**

(C = the caller; IA = the international affairs office; O = other)

- The family and/or companion has been notified.
- The person's local supervisor or superior has been notified.
- The person's supervisor or superior back home has been notified.
- The case has been reported to the police.
- Your country's nearest embassy or consulate has been notified.
- Other:

Now repeat the story and confirm the agreements that have been made regarding who will do what. Ask the caller to make any necessary corrections or additions to that information.

Ask if there is anyone else present (supervisor, police, member of the embassy staff, etc.) who can also tell what happened. Ask to speak to this person and note down his or her story.

Name and position:

Notes:

Ask to speak again to the caller, reassure him or her, and agree on when you will call again.

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