

## **Crisis Management Communication**

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The purpose of effective crisis management is to mitigate the identified emergency, crisis, or controversial incident and protect the safety of the faculty, staff, students, and community by providing accurate information to all stakeholders.

This Policy establishes the framework for the American University of Armenia (AUA) to:

- a. manage emergencies and crises affecting the University;
- b. protect the health, safety and security of the community of the University in emergencies or crises; and
- c. support the continuation of, and management of disruption to the University's business and reputation, caused by an emergency or crisis.

### **Definition**

- a. A **Crisis** means any situation or circumstance, internally or externally caused, where there is immediate or imminent risk to the University's business, reputation, or there is a significant risk of serious injury or death to people arising from a situation that involves the University and is beyond the capacity of normal AUA management structures and processes for effective resolution.
- b. An **Emergency** means a crisis that is within the capacity of normal AUA management structures and processes for effective resolution.
- c. An **Incident** means a situation that is not an Emergency or a Crisis.

### **Activation of Crisis Management Communication Committee**

During an emergency or crisis the Executive Team will assemble to assess the crisis and determine whether the Crisis Management Communication Committee (CMC) should be activated. The AUA President is responsible for a final decision to activate the CMC. In the absence of the President, the members of the Executive Team may make the final decision upon consensus among the members.

The CMC will assemble to discuss and organize all the communication both internally and externally, as needed, based on the nature of the crisis.

### **Crisis Management Communication Committee Members**

- President, Committee Chair
- Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Vice President of Operations and COO
- Vice President of Finance and CFO
- Chief Communications Officer (CCO), Committee Secretary
- Director of Information & Communication Technologies Services
- Director of Facilities and Services
- Manager of AUA Services
- Additional members of the AUA faculty and/or staff will be drafted into the committee if particular expertise is needed to respond to a crisis.

### **Media Inquiries**

A fact sheet of the emergency, crisis, should be developed by the CCO. The fact sheet contains a summary statement of the situation including all known details to be released to the media, and other stakeholders. This information is made available to (and approved by) the President, Provost, or appropriate Vice President. This fact sheet is analyzed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security – in consultation with the university legal team when appropriate.

All media inquiries should be forwarded to the CCO ([cco@aua.am](mailto:cco@aua.am); +374 60 612 513). It is extremely important during emergencies, crises, and controversial issues that only factual information be distributed, speculation and rumors prevented, and security and privacy issues considered. These issues are made more complex at AUA since inquires and communications are often conducted in both Armenian and English.

The designated spokesperson in case of crisis is the CCO who may appoint a person with direct knowledge of the situation to assist her/him in this task.

The President of the University or the highest-ranking university official must take the lead in conveying the administration's response to the crisis.

All external and community wide communication must be reviewed and approved by the CCO and the President, Provost, or appropriate Vice President before it is disseminated.

### **AUA CARES ([auacares@aua.am](mailto:auacares@aua.am))**

AUA CARES (Communicating Action Response for Students) is a response team activated by the CMC, as needed, during the period of the crisis or emergency only. It is comprised of members from Student Council, Counseling Services, Student Affairs, Registrar's Office, and faculty representatives from each college/school. The Director of the Office of Student Affairs is the chair of the AUA CARES response team. The function of AUA CARES is to help AUA keep track of students that face adversity, and to reach out to those students with a helping hand. These activities include hospital visitations, home visitations, or any humane connection may offer comfort to students in need.

As with all crisis communication, AUA CARES messaging to internal and external stakeholders must be approved by the CCO and the President, Provost, or appropriate Vice President before it is sent to the AUA community or any other constituency.

## TASKS - RESPONSE

### Contact appropriate constituencies

Depending on the nature of the situation, appropriate constituencies will be contacted. Constituencies may include:

- Board of Trustees
- Full and part-time teaching faculty, on and off campus
- Full and part-time staff, on and off Campus
- Students, on and off campus
- Faculty Senate
- Student Government
- Staff Assembly
- Parents
- Alumni
- Business community/opinion leaders
- Vendors, college partners, granting entities
- Mass Media
- General Public

### Determine appropriate communication vehicles

The President with the CCO will determine the appropriate vehicle(s) to communicate information and their priority order, which may include:

- Campus list serve (e.g., [faculty@aua.am](mailto:faculty@aua.am))
- Key campus individuals
- Web Site
- Media releases and/or interviews for Broadcast and Print Media
- Press Conference
- Faculty assembly/staff assembly

## TASKS – POST INCIDENT

Factual information should be available through several communication vehicles for a period of time after the incident, as determined by the CCO.

Follow-up and appreciation letters to external agencies or organizations who assisted will be sent.

The CMC will meet within 10 days of each incident to ascertain its effectiveness and to seek improvement strategies.

### Other Responsibilities

- Recommend appropriate communication systems for utilization during a crisis or emergency to the CMC.
- Ensure systems and equipment are in appropriate working order.
- Coordinate media training for a cadre of probable spokespersons, and on-going crisis communication training for team members.
- Designate communication center with required technology and resources.
- Establish and maintain relationships with media and others
- Designate appropriate spaces for press conferences.
- Participate in simulations, drills, and tabletop exercises for readiness.
- Maintain list of volunteer communication specialists who may be called upon if needed.
- Create and regularly update a Crisis Management Communications Handbook that includes contact lists, members' duties, checklists, fact sheet forms, sample press releases, history of crises, including closed crises,

### Closing of a crisis

When the President determines that the crisis or emergency is over, an announcement shall be sent to the AUA community or the respective constituency, announcing of the closing of the crisis or emergency. Upon sending the announcement, all the sub-committees shall be deactivated by receiving a notification from the CCO on behalf of the Crisis Management Communication Team.

### Related Documents

**Decree AUA Crisis Management Communication ARMENG**