



COMM20110 Crisis Communication

Term 2 - 2024

Profile information current as at 13/07/2025 04:58 pm

All details in this unit profile for COMM20110 have been officially approved by CQUniversity and represent a learning partnership between the University and you (our student). The information will not be changed unless absolutely necessary and any change will be clearly indicated by an approved correction included in the profile.

General Information

Overview

Not everything happens to plan. Sometimes crises occur with little or no warning, while other times issues build over time. How you manage the crisis as a leader can make or break an organisation. This unit will examine crisis management from a communications perspective. Communicating during and after a crisis is a complex strategy of message development and targeted delivery. You will examine the crisis lifecycle and the role of leadership during a crisis. You will develop messages for stakeholders as well as tools for managing intense media scrutiny. This unit is ideal for decision makers in organisations, or those who may be at the front line when a crisis occurs.

Details

Career Level: *Postgraduate*

Unit Level: *Level 8*

Credit Points: 6

Student Contribution Band: 10

Fraction of Full-Time Student Load: 0.125

Pre-requisites or Co-requisites

Admission to CC27, CL44, CL45, CM39 or CM52 or completion of 48 credit points.

Important note: Students enrolled in a subsequent unit who failed their pre-requisite unit, should drop the subsequent unit before the census date or within 10 working days of Fail grade notification. Students who do not drop the unit in this timeframe cannot later drop the unit without academic and financial liability. See details in the [Assessment Policy and Procedure \(Higher Education Coursework\)](#).

Offerings For Term 2 - 2024

- Online

Attendance Requirements

All on-campus students are expected to attend scheduled classes – in some units, these classes are identified as a mandatory (pass/fail) component and attendance is compulsory. International students, on a student visa, must maintain a full time study load and meet both attendance and academic progress requirements in each study period (satisfactory attendance for International students is defined as maintaining at least an 80% attendance record).

Website

[This unit has a website, within the Moodle system, which is available two weeks before the start of term. It is important that you visit your Moodle site throughout the term. Please visit Moodle for more information.](#)

Class and Assessment Overview

Recommended Student Time Commitment

Each 6-credit Postgraduate unit at CQUniversity requires an overall time commitment of an average of 12.5 hours of study per week, making a total of 150 hours for the unit.

Class Timetable

[Regional Campuses](#)

Bundaberg, Cairns, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton, Townsville

[Metropolitan Campuses](#)

Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney

Assessment Overview

1. **Case Study**

Weighting: 10%

2. **Report**

Weighting: 30%

3. **Online Test**

Weighting: 30%

4. **Self assessment**

Weighting: 30%

Assessment Grading

This is a graded unit: your overall grade will be calculated from the marks or grades for each assessment task, based on the relative weightings shown in the table above. You must obtain an overall mark for the unit of at least 50%, or an overall grade of 'pass' in order to pass the unit. If any 'pass/fail' tasks are shown in the table above they must also be completed successfully ('pass' grade). You must also meet any minimum mark requirements specified for a particular assessment task, as detailed in the 'assessment task' section (note that in some instances, the minimum mark for a task may be greater than 50%). Consult the [University's Grades and Results Policy](#) for more details of interim results and final grades.

CQUniversity Policies

All University policies are available on the [CQUniversity Policy site](#).

You may wish to view these policies:

- Grades and Results Policy
- Assessment Policy and Procedure (Higher Education Coursework)
- Review of Grade Procedure
- Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure
- Monitoring Academic Progress (MAP) Policy and Procedure – Domestic Students
- Monitoring Academic Progress (MAP) Policy and Procedure – International Students
- Student Refund and Credit Balance Policy and Procedure
- Student Feedback – Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Information and Communications Technology Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure

This list is not an exhaustive list of all University policies. The full list of University policies are available on the [CQUniversity Policy site](#).

Previous Student Feedback

Feedback, Recommendations and Responses

Every unit is reviewed for enhancement each year. At the most recent review, the following staff and student feedback items were identified and recommendations were made.

Feedback from Student Satisfaction Survey

Feedback

Students would benefit from a broader range of learning materials, including videos, interactive modules and synchronous sessions

Recommendation

Embed a broader range of learning materials into the unit, including videos, interactive tools such as H5Ps and offer more synchronous sessions

Feedback from Student Satisfaction Survey

Feedback

Students enjoyed the 'real-world' applicability of the assessment pieces

Recommendation

Continue to offer assessments in which students can see a direct link between their assessment and their current or future workplaces

Feedback from Student Satisfaction Survey

Feedback

Students felt written feedback may not have been sufficient for their needs

Recommendation

Consider ways to give students more detailed feedback on their assessment, in a range of formats, including oral feedback

Unit Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Recognise different types of crises and how they can impact on an organisation
2. Critically evaluate potential risks to leadership throughout the crisis lifecycle
3. Analyse the leadership role during and after a crisis
4. Apply crisis communication techniques to mainstream and digital media
5. Develop a crisis management communication plan.

Alignment of Learning Outcomes, Assessment and Graduate Attributes

 N/A Level	 Introductory Level	 Intermediate Level	 Graduate Level	 Professional Level	 Advanced Level
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Alignment of Assessment Tasks to Learning Outcomes

Assessment Tasks	Learning Outcomes				
	1	2	3	4	5
1 - Case Study - 10%	•				
2 - Report - 30%		•			•
3 - Online Test - 30%			•	•	
4 - Self assessment - 30%			•		

Alignment of Graduate Attributes to Learning Outcomes

Graduate Attributes	Learning Outcomes				
	1	2	3	4	5
1 - Knowledge					
2 - Communication					
3 - Cognitive, technical and creative skills					
4 - Research					
5 - Self-management					
6 - Ethical and Professional Responsibility					
7 - Leadership					
8 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures					

Textbooks and Resources

Textbooks

There are no required textbooks.

IT Resources

You will need access to the following IT resources:

- CQUniversity Student Email
- Internet
- Unit Website (Moodle)

Referencing Style

All submissions for this unit must use the referencing style: [American Psychological Association 7th Edition \(APA 7th edition\)](#)

For further information, see the Assessment Tasks.

Teaching Contacts

Amy Johnson Unit Coordinator
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Schedule

Module 1: What is a crisis - 08 Jul 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
What is a crisis? This module explains the difference between risk, issues and crises in an organisational communication context, and sets the scene for the rest of the unit. This Module provides the content you will need for Assessment One.	As per e-reading list	

Module 1: What is a crisis - 15 Jul 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
What is a crisis? This module explains the difference between risk, issues and crises in an organisational communication context, and sets the scene for the rest of the unit. This Module provides the content you will need for Assessment One.	As per e-reading list	

Module 2: When a Crisis Hits - 22 Jul 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
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When a crisis hits

Modern crises take place in a digital world which provides instant media coverage and requires a specialised response. When a crisis occurs, there is often little time to react before organisational reputation is affected. This module will consider the actions required of leaders in the immediate moments after a crisis, including: the importance of reacting immediately; how to craft and control a message; and issuing apologies.

As per e-reading list

Crisis Communication Case Study

Due: Week 3 Friday (26 July 2024)
11:59 pm AEST

Module 2: When a Crisis Hits - 29 Jul 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
When a crisis hits Modern crises take place in a digital world which provides instant media coverage and requires a specialised response. When a crisis occurs, there is often little time to react before organisational reputation is affected. This module will consider the actions required of leaders in the immediate moments after a crisis, including: the importance of reacting immediately; how to craft and control a message; and issuing apologies.	As per e-reading list	

Module 3: Developing a crisis communication plan - 05 Aug 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Developing a crisis communication plan A crisis communication plan is a document that can be used by leaders to help guide actions during and after a crisis. This module explains the format of a crisis communication plan and explores what organisational leaders can do to best be prepared if a crisis occurs. This Module provides content applicable for Assessment Two.	As per e-reading list	

Vacation Week - 12 Aug 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
	As per e-reading list	

Module 3: Developing a crisis communication plan - 19 Aug 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Developing a crisis communication plan A crisis communication plan is a document that can be used by leaders to help guide actions during and after a crisis. This module explains the format of a crisis communication plan and explores what organisational leaders can do to best be prepared if a crisis occurs. This Module provides content applicable for Assessment Two.	As per e-reading list	Crisis Communication Plan Due: Week 6 Friday (23 Aug 2024) 11:59 pm AEST

Module 4: Focusing the crisis communication plan - 26 Aug 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Focusing the crisis communication plan Whilst the timing of crisis is often unexpected and can occur with little warning, their nature can be hypothesised for the most part, and this preparation can be the difference between managing the crisis successfully, or not. This module will consider the monitoring of issues, recognising risk and using social media to help anticipate certain types of crises.	As per e-reading list	

Module 4: Focusing the crisis communication plan - 02 Sep 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Focusing the crisis communication plan Whilst the timing of crisis is often unexpected and can occur with little warning, their nature can be hypothesised for the most part, and this preparation can be the difference between managing the crisis successfully, or not. This module will consider the monitoring of issues, recognising risk and using social media to help anticipate certain types of crises.	As per e-reading list	

Module 5: The crisis lifecycle - 09 Sep 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
The crisis lifecycle This module considers the lifecycle of the modern crisis, and the potential impact on organisations.	As per e-reading list	

Module 5: The crisis lifecycle - 16 Sep 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
The crisis lifecycle This module considers the lifecycle of the modern crisis, and the potential impact on organisations.	As per e-reading list	Crisis Scenario Response Due: Week 10 Friday (20 Sept 2024) 11:59 pm AEST

Module 6: Post-crisis communication - 23 Sep 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Post-crisis communication The aftermath of the crisis is often long term, and the role of the communication professional continues. This module considers the last phase of the crisis lifecycle.	As per e-reading list	

Module 6: Post-crisis communication - 30 Sep 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Post-crisis communication The aftermath of the crisis is often long term, and the role of the communication professional continues. This module considers the last phase of the crisis lifecycle.	As per e-reading list	

Review/Exam Week - 07 Oct 2024

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
	As per e-reading list	Critical Reflection Due: Review/Exam Week Friday (11 Oct 2024) 11:59 pm AEST
Exam Week - 14 Oct 2024		
Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
	As per e-reading list	

Assessment Tasks

1 Crisis Communication Case Study

Assessment Type

Case Study

Task Description

Overview

Not everything happens to plan. Sometimes crises hit without warning, or issues build over time. How the leadership team, including communications professionals, respond to a crisis can make or break an organisation. In this assessment you will demonstrate your emergent understanding of crisis communication by applying early unit concepts and theories to a real-world case study. We want you to show your understanding of the definition of a crisis as well as analysing key aspects of an organisational response.

Task Description

You will choose one recent crisis communication event from a list provided to you on Moodle. Once you have chosen your event, you will write a 'case study' about this event.

In 500 – 800 words, you will:

- Provide a brief overall summary of the crisis communication event
- Explain why this event meets the definition of a crisis communication event
- Summarise the media publicity generated as a result of the crisis. Explain how social media and traditional news media reacted to the crisis
- Identify what lessons (positive and negative) might the organisation have learnt from this crisis event?

Other Information

You are welcome to supplement your writing with screen shots and links to communication pieces. For example, you might include links to media articles written about the crisis, or screenshots of their social media pages and responses uploaded.

The crisis examples provided for this assessment activity are genuine, contemporary events. The example list may contain real-life events which you have personal experience with, or which cause you discomfort. If this is the case, you are invited to speak to the unit coordinator and will be provided with an alternative event to complete the assessment. You will not be asked to explain or justify your request other than to provide general information which may help the unit coordinator source an appropriate example.

Information about writing and formatting your case study will be given on Moodle.

'Choose your own adventure' option: If you would prefer to analyse a crisis communication event not already on the approved list, please contact the unit coordinator for prior approval.

Research tells us that early assessment help students engage with the unit at the start of the term and gives an opportunity for students to build confidence, receive feedback and prepare for future assessments (Thomas et.al 2018; Gonzalez & Linden 2020).

Extensions will be considered for students who enrol in the unit after the first day of term to ensure all students have a reasonable amount of time to review the materials and submit the task.

Use of GenAI tools in this assessment

Within this assessment, the use of Gen AI agents (including but not limited to ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot) is as follows:

- Gen AI tools can be used for content editing

Submission Instructions

This assessment will be submitted via Moodle. Information about submitting assessments will be provided on Moodle.

Assessment Due Date

Week 3 Friday (26 July 2024) 11:59 pm AEST

Return Date to Students

Vacation Week Friday (16 Aug 2024)

Weighting

10%

Assessment Criteria

Marking Criteria

A detailed grading rubric will be provided, outlining the specific components and criteria used for evaluation.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 7th Edition \(APA 7th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Submission Instructions

Single document to be submitted via Moodle

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Recognise different types of crises and how they can impact on an organisation

2 Crisis Communication Plan

Assessment Type

Report

Task Description

Overview

Crisis communication plans are essential organisational documents which outlay the policies and procedures it be followed in the event of an emergency or unexpected issue. They guide the organisation in assessing the event and delivering a swift response. Although they can look simple, they can be complex to prepare as they must address various potential scenarios and stakeholder concerns. This assessment will challenge you to develop a comprehensive crisis communication plan, which requires careful planning, strategic thinking, and anticipation of multiple potential crises.

This assessment will prepare you for the subsequent online test, where you will be presented with real-life crisis scenarios and expected to respond effectively using the principles and strategies outlined in your crisis communication plan.

Task Description

For this assessment, you will choose an organisation (from the provided list or your own selection, subject to unit

coordinator approval) and prepare a crisis communication plan on its behalf. You will be supported with exemplars and templates.

Your crisis communication plan should include the following components:

- Identify potential vulnerabilities or crisis scenarios that could impact the chosen organization
- Identify a crisis management team and establish a crisis command centre. Clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and communication channels for team members during a crisis
- Select a suitable spokesperson for the organisation and write draft 3-5 key messages for one of the identified crisis scenarios

Plan Structure

Present your crisis communication plan as an easy-to-read document in the style and manner of a real-world plan. Write the document as if it were being developed for the person in charge of the organisation, with a practical focus on implementation.

Additional Elements (optional): You may choose to include supplementary components such as:

Checklists of key actions typically taken during a crisis
Draft templates for media statements, press releases, or social media posts
Crisis response protocols and decision-making frameworks
Media handling guidelines and social media monitoring strategies

The crisis communication plan should be concise yet comprehensive, with a recommended length of 8-12 pages (excluding appendices or supplementary materials).

Use of GenAI tools in this assessment

Within this assessment, the use of Gen AI agents (including but not limited to ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot) is as follows:

- GenAI content can be used to generate ideas and general structures
- Gen AI tools can be used for content editing
- Gen AI content generation (for you to critique and review) can be used to assist you develop public relations materials (such as media releases etc) in alignment with unit expectations laid out in Moodle.

Assessment Due Date

Week 6 Friday (23 Aug 2024) 11:59 pm AEST

Return Date to Students

Week 9 Friday (13 Sept 2024)

Weighting

30%

Assessment Criteria

Marking Criteria

A detailed grading rubric will be provided, outlining the specific components and criteria used for evaluation.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 7th Edition \(APA 7th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Submission Instructions

Single document to be submitted via Moodle

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Critically evaluate potential risks to leadership throughout the crisis lifecycle
- Develop a crisis management communication plan.

3 Crisis Scenario Response

Assessment Type

Online Test

Task Description

Overview

In this assessment, you will put your crisis communication planning skills to the test in a simulated real-world environment. Although we can anticipate potential crises, we rarely get extensive notification of an incoming emergency; this assessment will replicate the time pressure and stress of a real scenario and ask you to respond effectively, leveraging the principles and strategies you developed previously in your crisis communication plan.

Task Description

You are required to complete a timed, online test. During the test you will be given a crisis scenario and asked to answer a range of questions in response to the crisis scenario, using your crisis communication plan as a reference to guide your responses. This assessment challenges your ability to think critically, respond effectively and apply your crisis communication knowledge in a realistic, time-sensitive environment.

Scenario and Requirements

You will be randomly assigned one crisis scenario from a pool of potential scenarios covering various crisis types, such as natural disasters, data breaches, reputational crises, etc. The scenarios will be based on realistic situations, drawing inspiration from past events or hypothetical but plausible circumstances.

You will use your previously prepared crisis communication plan as a reference to guide your responses throughout the test. The test will include a mix of short-answer questions and the production of various deliverables, such as key messages, media releases or social media posts.

Online Test Format

The assessment will be delivered through an online test environment (Moodle), accessible for a one-week period. Once you have started the test, it must be finished within two hours (or permitted time based on reasonable accommodations- see more information below). *Extensions will not be granted* except in cases of extremely extenuating circumstances, as the time constraint is designed to simulate the urgent nature of real-world crisis response.

Reasonable Accommodations

Students with an Accessibility Plan will be accommodated as per the reasonable education adjustments outlined in their plan. This may include additional time to complete the test. Please contact the unit coordinator for more information if required.

Use of GenAI tools in this assessment

Within this assessment, the use of Gen AI agents (including but not limited to ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot) is as follows:

- The use of GenAI tools is not supported in this assessment item with the exception of any content which has been previously generated and included in your previous assessment.

Assessment Due Date

Week 10 Friday (20 Sept 2024) 11:59 pm AEST

The online test will open Monday for Week 10 and close 2359 Friday of Week 10. Once the test has commenced, students must complete and submit their responses within two hours.

Return Date to Students

Week 12 Friday (4 Oct 2024)

Weighting

30%

Assessment Criteria

Marking Criteria

A detailed grading rubric will be provided, outlining the specific components and criteria used for evaluation.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 7th Edition \(APA 7th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Analyse the leadership role during and after a crisis
- Apply crisis communication techniques to mainstream and digital media

4 Critical Reflection

Assessment Type

Self assessment

Task Description

Overview

Having developed your own crisis communication plan and had the experience of applying that plan to a simulated, real-world crisis scenario, you are now being asked to critically reflect on this experience, as well as your learning across the term. This assessment aims to promote deep reflection on the crisis communication planning and response process, and the application of key unit concepts.

Task Description

You will write an essay-style self-assessment, between 800-1000 words in length. Your critical self-assessment must incorporate references to relevant unit concepts, theories, and best practices discussed throughout the course. You will need to demonstrate critical thinking and self-reflection by analysing your decision-making processes, underlying assumptions, and the rationale behind your choices.

You will need to address the following areas:

- Reflection on crisis communication plan and online test performance. Evaluate the effectiveness of your crisis communication plan in addressing the scenario presented in the online test. Make sure you identify specific strengths and weaknesses in your plan.
- Application of unit concepts. Analyse how your crisis communication plan and online test responses aligned with, or deviated from, key crisis communication concepts and best practices. Include specific examples and provide evidence to support your analysis. Discuss how your understanding of crisis communication has evolved throughout the course and these assessments.
- Areas for improvement. Based on your experience with these assessments, outline areas where you can improve your crisis communication planning and response abilities. Propose specific strategies or approaches you could adopt to address the identified weaknesses or gaps in your knowledge and skills.

A minimum of 5 scholarly sources must be cited and referenced appropriately.

Use of GenAI tools in this assessment

Within this assessment, the use of Gen AI agents (including but not limited to ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot) is as follows:

- Gen AI tools can be used for content editing

Assessment Due Date

Review/Exam Week Friday (11 Oct 2024) 11:59 pm AEST

Single document to be submitted via Moodle

Return Date to Students

Grades and feedback will be returned to students within three weeks following submission

Weighting

30%

Assessment Criteria

Marking Criteria

A detailed grading rubric will be provided, outlining the specific components and criteria used for evaluation.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 7th Edition \(APA 7th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Submission Instructions

Single document to be submitted via Moodle

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Analyse the leadership role during and after a crisis

Academic Integrity Statement

As a CQUniversity student you are expected to act honestly in all aspects of your academic work.

Any assessable work undertaken or submitted for review or assessment must be your own work. Assessable work is any type of work you do to meet the assessment requirements in the unit, including draft work submitted for review and feedback and final work to be assessed.

When you use the ideas, words or data of others in your assessment, you must thoroughly and clearly acknowledge the source of this information by using the correct referencing style for your unit. Using others' work without proper acknowledgement may be considered a form of intellectual dishonesty.

Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in your university study ensures the CQUniversity qualification you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

As a student, you are responsible for reading and following CQUniversity's policies, including the [Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure](#). This policy sets out CQUniversity's expectations of you to act with integrity, examples of academic integrity breaches to avoid, the processes used to address alleged breaches of academic integrity, and potential penalties.

What is a breach of academic integrity?

A breach of academic integrity includes but is not limited to plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, cheating, contract cheating, and academic misconduct. The Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure defines what these terms mean and gives examples.

Why is academic integrity important?

A breach of academic integrity may result in one or more penalties, including suspension or even expulsion from the University. It can also have negative implications for student visas and future enrolment at CQUniversity or elsewhere. Students who engage in contract cheating also risk being blackmailed by contract cheating services.

Where can I get assistance?

For academic advice and guidance, the [Academic Learning Centre \(ALC\)](#) can support you in becoming confident in completing assessments with integrity and of high standard.

What can you do to act with integrity?

**Be Honest**

If your assessment task is done by someone else, it would be dishonest of you to claim it as your own

**Seek Help**

If you are not sure about how to cite or reference in essays, reports etc, then seek help from your lecturer, the library or the Academic Learning Centre (ALC)

**Produce Original Work**

Originality comes from your ability to read widely, think critically, and apply your gained knowledge to address a question or problem