



COMM20110 Crisis Communication

Term 1 - 2020

Profile information current as at 30/04/2024 12:29 am

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

There are no requisites for this unit.

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 1 - 2020

- Mixed Mode

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. **Presentation**

Weighting: 30%

2. **Report**

Weighting: 70%

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 appreciated the real world and authentic nature of the assessments.

Recommendation

It is recommended to continue offering a real-world assessment so that students can engage with the authenticity of the content.

Feedback from Student Satisfaction Survey

Feedback

Students appreciated the opportunity to complete the unit in an intensive format.

Recommendation

It is recommended to continue offering the unit in an intensive format so that students can engage with the material in a flexible manner that suits their work commitments.

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.

Textbooks and Resources

Textbooks

COMM20110

Prescribed

Ongoing Crisis Communication

Edition: 4th (2015)

Authors: W. Timothy Coombs

Sage

Thousand Oaks , USA

ISBN: 978-1-4522-6136-2

Binding: Paperback

Additional Textbook Information

Copies can be purchased from the CQUni Bookshop here: <http://bookshop.cqu.edu.au> (search on the Unit code)

[View textbooks at the CQUniversity Bookshop](#)

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 6th Edition \(APA 6th edition\)](#)

For further information, see the Assessment Tasks.

Teaching Contacts

Celeste Lawson Unit Coordinator

c.lawson@cqu.edu.au

Schedule

Module 1: What is a crisis? - 09 Mar 2020

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.	Coombs, Chapters 1 and 2	

Module 2: The online crisis - 16 Mar 2020

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

The online crisis

Modern crises take place in a digital world which provides instant media coverage and requires a specialised response. This module considers the lifecycle of the modern crisis, and the impact on organisations and their leaders.

Coombs, Chapters 3 and 4

Module 3: Preparing for crisis 1 - recognition of the warning signs - 23 Mar 2020

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

Preparing for crisis 1 - recognition of the warning signs

Crises can occur with little warning, but 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.

Coombs, Chapters 5 and 6

Module 4: Preparing for crisis 2 - the crisis communication plan - 30 Mar 2020

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

Preparing for crisis 2 - the 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.

Coombs, Chapter 6 continued and Chapter 7

Module 5: Crisis response - 06 Apr 2020

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

Crisis 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.

Coombs, Chapter 8

Four slide powerpoint Due: Week 5 Friday (10 Apr 2020) 5:00 pm AEST

Vacation Week - 13 Apr 2020

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

Module 6: Post crisis communication - 20 Apr 2020

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.

Coombs, Chapter 9

Review/Exam Week - 08 Jun 2020

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

Exam Week - 15 Jun 2020

Module/Topic

Chapter

Events and Submissions/Topic

Term Specific Information

WORD COUNT for written assignments:

The word count is considered to be from the first word of the introduction to the last word of the conclusion. It excludes the cover page, reference page and appendices. It includes in-text references and direct quotations.

In COMM20110, paraphrasing of information is preferred rather than the use of direct quotations.

Assessment Tasks

1 Four slide powerpoint

Assessment Type

Presentation

Task Description

Choose a recent crisis. You can select one of the case studies provided on Moodle, or you can choose another one.

Complete a four slide powerpoint (with voice over) about the crisis. Slides must be presented with minimal words, in an appropriate slide show design. Images are permitted, however attribution is required.

Slide 1: Summary of the crisis. This slide might be a photo or an infographic of the crisis. The voice over will describe the crisis, and explain how the event meets the definition of "crisis" as defined in Chapter One of the textbook. The voice over will include a brief summary of the timeline of the crisis lifecycle - from pre-crisis, to the crisis event and any post-crisis fallout.

Slide 2: Public impact. This slide will discuss the media publicity generated during the crisis. The slide might be a series of snapshots from social media, or a photo that represents public perception about the crisis. The voice over will explain how social media and traditional news media reacted to the crisis. Refer to Chapter Two of the textbook for information about the online world of crisis communication.

Slide 3: Leadership messages. This slide will look at the organisational response to the crisis. Who was the spokesperson and what messages did they portray? The slide might include an image of the key spokesperson. Was this done well? Chapter Three of the textbook considers the relationship between risk, reputation and proactive management functions.

Slide 4: Moving forward. This slide considers the next step for the organisation in relation to risk and reputation. What could the organisation be doing now? And how will this knowledge help **you** develop a crisis communication plan in Assessment Two? You might draw on Chapter Four of the textbook for inspiration.

All references not added on the slide show must be verbally attributed. Refer to the Moodle site for an exemplar.

Team work is **optional** for this assessment, with the permission of the Unit Coordinator. The maximum team size is three. If you would like to work in a team, please let the Unit Coordinator know the names of your team members **prior to** commencing the assessment item. If you want to work in a team, but do not know anyone, post your availability to the Discussion Forum. Teams will be formed if three names are nominated. Once a team is selected, changes will not be permitted. There is no grade advantage to completing this assessment as a team, although the discussions that being in a team can bring may assist deep learning for this topic, and workload may be reduced. However, the disadvantage is that you will be required to submit as a team, and each team member will receive the same grade, regardless of contribution or quality. Choose this option carefully!

Assessment Due Date

Week 5 Friday (10 Apr 2020) 5:00 pm AEST

Return Date to Students

Week 6 Friday (24 Apr 2020)

The assessment will be returned within 10 days of submission

Weighting

30%

Assessment Criteria

A detailed marking rubric is available on Moodle.

Assessment criteria includes:

1. Quality of summary of crisis
2. Interpretation of public impact
3. Consideration of key messages
4. Relevance of lessons moving forward
5. Evidence of research, quality of sources, and referencing style
6. Quality of presentation, including voice over
7. Adherence to requirements of the task.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 6th Edition \(APA 6th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Submission Instructions

Submitted via Moodle

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Recognise different types of crises and how they can impact on an organisation
- Critically evaluate potential risks to leadership throughout the crisis lifecycle
- Analyse the leadership role during and after a crisis

Graduate Attributes

- Knowledge
- Communication
- Cognitive, technical and creative skills
- Research

2 Crisis Communication Plan

Assessment Type

Report

Task Description

Choose an organisation with which you are familiar and prepare a crisis communication plan on its behalf. Discuss your choice with the Unit Coordinator. A crisis communication plan is one part of a crisis management plan.

You will need to diagnose and identify potential vulnerabilities; identify a crisis management team and crisis command centre; and select a spokesperson. The Plan is **not** meant to be a lengthy, prescriptive document. It is designed to provide advice and helpful background information at times of crisis.

This assessment will be presented as an easy-to-read document in the style and manner of a real world Crisis Communication Plan as discussed in the unit material. Refer to Chapter Six in the textbook for details of the structure of an appropriate plan. Write the document as if it was being developed for the person in charge of the organisation. You may choose to develop a series of checklists of key actions typically taken during a crisis. You may also choose to include draft templates for media or social media posts. Refer to Table 6.1 on p.92 of the textbook for potential headings in the plan - remembering this assessment is the communication component of an overall management plan.

The maximum word count is 5,000 words. This may be challenging because there is a lot of information that could be included. It may be necessary to focus the plan on one particular element, or one type of crisis. The inclusion of risk assessments is **not** required.

Please note: You are not required to implement the plan. The assessment is hypothetical and although it must be real-world and authentic, whether you choose to provide the plan to your chosen organisation is up to you.

This is an individual assessment. Team work is not permitted for this assessment.

The word count is considered to be from the first word of the introduction to the last word of the conclusion. It excludes the cover page, abstract, contents page, reference page and appendices. It includes in-text references and direct quotations. Paraphrasing of information is preferred rather than the use of direct quotations.

Assessment Due Date

Review/Exam Week Monday (8 June 2020) 5:00 pm AEST

Return Date to Students

Exam Week Monday (15 June 2020)

The assessment will be returned within 10 days of submission.

Weighting

70%

Minimum mark or grade

Students must pass this assessment to pass the unit overall.

Assessment Criteria

A detailed marking rubric is available on Moodle.

Assessment criteria includes:

1. Required elements included - nomination of spokesperson, crisis management team and crisis command centre
2. Communication plan considers all stages of the crisis lifecycle, including post-crisis
3. Specific communication challenges acknowledged and addressed
4. Relevance of plan to the identified organisation - vulnerabilities are appropriate to both potential crisis and organisation
5. Evidence of research, quality of sources, and referencing style
6. Quality of presentation, including appropriateness of format and adherence to word count
7. Adherence to requirements of the task.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 6th Edition \(APA 6th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Submission Instructions

Submitted via Moodle

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Apply crisis communication techniques to mainstream and digital media
- Develop a crisis management communication plan.

Graduate Attributes

- Knowledge
- Communication
- Cognitive, technical and creative skills
- Research
- Self-management
- Ethical and Professional Responsibility
- Leadership

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