

Critical Incident and Major IT Incident Communication Procedure

This document outlines our communications procedure in the event of a Critical or Major IT Incident. This document should be followed when a Critical Incident has been identified and the Major IT Incident plan has been invoked.

Principles

Communication with IT staff, users and customers is an essential part of resolving a Critical Incident or Major IT Incident.

Early communication with users is important even when we have little information on the incident. Initial vagueness is acceptable but misinformation is not.

The term '**Major** Incident' should be reserved for Major Incidents covered by the University's corporate Major Incident procedure and agreed as such by the relevant Gold Team member (e.g. typically involving risk of death, injury, reputation). In most cases IT should use the term **Critical** Incident when communicating with users and customers.

IT Service Desk is responsible for all communications with IT service users.

Business Partners and ITD are responsible for communications with Senior Customers. Coordination is essential. Communication with Senior Customers will continue post Critical Incident.

The IT Engagement Officer is able to assist with all communication but, as a single point of failure who works part time, it is not be appropriate for him to take responsibility for Critical Incident communications.

Groups

Affected – Those directly impacted by the Incident. This could be localised, due to a specifically affected physical location or specific IT service or small set of services, or University wide impacting all users.

Unaffected – Those not directly impacted by the Incident.

Senior Customer – The person or group that helps to define and agree our service level targets. Customers may not use the IT service directly but will have an interest in the overall health of the service.

Users – A person who uses the IT service on a day-to-day basis. These could be end users or people who rely on IT to deliver their own services (e.g. CQSD TEL team use our services to deliver Blackboard). Users are distinct from customers, as some customers do not use the IT service directly.

University Communication Team – The central team responsible for University communications (Communications, vbs09c@reading.ac.uk). Based on the information we give them, they will make the decision to send any information to a larger audience via their various communication channels.

Service Partner – Business Systems teams which we collaborate with to deliver an IT customer facing service e.g. RISIS team, HR systems team. Communication with Service Partner will be at a more detailed, technical level. Business Systems teams may be directly involved in resolving a Critical Incident.

	Affected	Unaffected
Senior Customer	Business Partner Targeted Comms	Business Partner Standard Comms
Users	Service Desk Targeted Comms	Service Desk Standard Comms
University Communication Team	Service Desk Targeted Comms	Service Desk Targeted Comms
Service Partner	CAST Targeted Comms	Service Desk Standard Comms

Identifying affected users can be challenging and often relies on users reporting an incident. In the case of a Critical incident:

- assume that there are more affected users than identified
- use a broad brush
- do not err on the side of caution communicate to the many not the few
- do not wait until all facts are known, communicate early

It is essentially that CAST keep Service Desk updated with a list of Business Systems Teams (Service Partners) contact details so that the Service Desk are able to send any Service Desk Standard Communications directly to them.

The University Communication team need to know about critical incidents as soon as possible. They will make the decision on whether to communicate to a larger audience based on the information we give them. If they require additional information, the Service Desk are to promptly escalate the request for information to the Major IT Incident Manager who will directly liaise with the University Communication team thereafter.

All Service Desk Standard communications via email are also to be sent to it-all@lists.reading.ac.uk.

Communication Channels

IT Blog – Standard communication – used to communicate to all groups – Service desk is responsible for keeping Critical Incident posts up to date. All Critical Incident posts must include the time and date in the heading.

When the Critical Incident is first discovered there will be little information. This should not prevent the initial blog being posted. Example wording for initial post:

12:00 01/01/2016 Critical issues effecting core IT services

We are currently experiencing a number of technical issues which have caused disruption to many of our core services.

We are conscious of the inconvenience this may be causing you and are treating this with the up most priority. A dedicated team is in place to resolve the incident as soon as possible.

As soon as we ascertain more details, will post further information on the extent of the incident, services which are affected, and estimated resolution time.

Please accept our apologies for the disruption this has caused.

It is recommended that the second post give as much detail as possible on affected services / systems and estimated resolution times.

Phone – In some instances availability of the email service may itself be affected by a critical incident. It is important that in these circumstances phone contact is made with relevant senior customers (via Business Partners), the University Communications Team (Via Service Desk) and Business Systems Teams (via CAST).

Subsequent posts should inform users what services are back up and running.

Email – Service desk to send email to potentially affected users as soon as a Critical Incident has been identified. The initial communication should include it-all@lists.reading.ac.uk, Business Systems Teams and the University's communication team (Communications, vbs09c@reading.ac.uk). The University's communication team can then decide if information relating to the Critical Incident needs to be communicated to a wider audience and what additional channels are appropriate.

CAST to keep affected Business Systems Teams (Service Partners) updated with relevant technical information.

Business Partners are to email their affected Senior Customer as soon as affected areas are identified and confirmed.

All emails should have a link to www.reading.ac.uk/it stating that further information can be found on the IT Blog.

Social Media – Service desk is responsible for Tweets via UoR_IT regarding Critical Incidents. Post as soon as possible as lack of information should not prevent informing users that we are experiencing problems. Contact Tim Watkins (Social Media Manager) if retweeting from UoR main twitter account is required or advice is required.

All tweets should have a link to www.reading.ac.uk/it stating that further information can be found on the IT Blog.

TOPdesk – (replacement standard communication) if the IT webpages or blog is down then TOPdesk should be used as the core communication channel and referred to in all emails and tweets. <https://uor.topdesk.net/tas/public/> (News Overview).

University Communications

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