

Policy Name : Ulster University Student Substance Use Policy	
Policy Owner and Department	Policy Author and Department
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Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee	
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Student Substance Use Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out procedures for dealing with student related alcohol and drug incidents. It outlines and explains the actions that need to be followed to ensure that Ulster University fulfils its legal and welfare responsibilities in a coherent and consistent manner. These procedures recognise the complexities surrounding alcohol and drug use and aim to enable the University to balance its legal, welfare, health and safety, educational and professional conduct and customer care responsibilities.
- 1.2 Due to the complex nature of alcohol and drug incidents several key services actively liaise with each other and the Schools to develop appropriate responses. The key referral point for incidents relating to students is the Head of Student Experience and Wellbeing or the Student Wellbeing Manager.
- 1.3 The University is concerned for the welfare of its students and has a legal obligation to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, their health and safety. The misuse of alcohol, drugs and other substances poses serious risks to the health and welfare of users themselves and those with whom they come into contact. In addition, behaviour ensuing from the misuse of alcohol, drugs and other substances can bring discredit upon the University.
- 1.4 The University endorses a concept of communal responsibility and encourages staff and students to be alert to difficulties arising from alcohol, drugs and substance misuse.
- 1.5 The University wishes, by this Policy Statement, to foster awareness of the implications of alcohol, drugs and substance misuse for health and career prospects. It also seeks to draw attention to the legal implications of drugs, alcohol and substance related behaviour.
- 1.6 The University has a duty to educate members of its community on alcohol, drug and substance misuse and related issues so that it may assist them in fulfilling their personal, academic and social responsibilities. While sanctions may be necessary, these will be accompanied by attempts to educate and support students in finding solutions to the problems they encounter.
- 1.7 This policy and other relevant information will be made freely available in the Students' Union, Student Wellbeing Services, Halls of Residences and University managed accommodation.

- 1.8 Initiatives by the Students' Union to extend peer education on the consequences of alcohol, drug and substance misuse will be encouraged and supported.
- 1.9 Those identified or identifying themselves as in need of help are to be encouraged to seek it. Sources of help inside the University include the Student Wellbeing Services provision, the Chaplaincy, and Inspire Counselling Services. External agencies such as the NHS Community Addiction Teams, voluntary and community organisations will either offer help or advise on other sources of available assistance.
- 1.10 The document sets out procedures for dealing with student related alcohol and drug incidents. It outlines and explains the actions that need to be followed to ensure that Ulster University fulfils its legal and welfare responsibilities in a coherent and consistent manner. These procedures recognise the complexities surrounding alcohol and drug use and aim to enable the University to balance its legal and welfare responsibilities in a coherent and consistent manner. These procedures recognise the complexities surrounding alcohol and drug use to enable the University to balance its legal, welfare and safety, educational and professional conduct/customer care responsibilities.

2. Aims and Objectives of the Policy

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy is to promote a safe, healthy and supportive community for University staff, students and visitors;
- 2.2 To define substance misuse to enable staff and students to make informed decisions about alcohol and drug misuse;
- 2.3 Provide guidance and advice to staff and students on the support options available;
- 2.4 Offer guidelines to all students and staff regarding their responsibilities and the University Rules for Student Conduct;
- 2.5 Promote the safe use of alcohol and provide information on alcohol, drugs and substance misuse;
- 2.6 Meet the University's legal obligations to ensure the health and safety of its staff, students and others at work and identify the circumstances in which disciplinary action is initiated for the misuse of substances.

3. Definitions and Legal Context

- 3.1 The definition of 'drugs' for the purposes of this policy is any substance which, when taken, has the effect of altering the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks.
- 3.2 Such substances can include:
- Alcohol;

- 'Over the counter' medicines;
- Prescribed drugs;
- Volatile substances such as glues and aerosols;
- All drugs listed as illegal under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, including new psychoactive substances (NPS) previously referred to as 'legal highs' and any substance under a temporary class drug order;
- Other substances which are illegal for human consumption within medicines legislation; this may include so-called dietary supplements, such as Dinitrophenol (known as DNP).

3.3 The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is the main law to control and classify drugs that are 'dangerous or otherwise harmful' when misused. The acts list all illegal (or controlled) drugs in the UK and divides them into one of 3 classes – A, B and C – based on the harm they cause to individuals and society. Class A drugs are considered the most harmful. This is commonly known as the 'drug classification system'.

3.4 Under this Act, the term 'misuse' covers the supply, possession and use of illegal drugs and misuse, whether deliberate or unintentional, of prescribed drugs and substances such as solvents.

3.5 The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Amendment) Order 2019 came into effect which relates to the control of certain drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Paragraph 1 (ca) of Part 2 to the Act controls a range of synthetic cannabinoids as class B drugs. Article 2 of this order amends that paragraph to reduce the range of synthetic cannabinoids controlled.

3.6 Supply or possession of an illegal drug is unlawful. It is an offence for an employer, an occupier of premises or persons concerned in the management of premises to allow the supply, use or production of drugs to take place on their premises. The penalties for offences involving controlled drugs depend on the classification of the drug.

3.7 The Government has now introduced new powers, meaning that they can temporarily ban any potential harmful substance, while they await a recommendation from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD), an independent group of experts, on whether it should be permanently controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

3.8 When it is used, the temporary ban will come into immediate effect, but it will have to be agreed by Parliament within 40 days. The drug will not be Class A, B or C, but called a temporary class drug. It is not illegal to import, distribute and sell the drug, and anyone caught could be fined, sent to prison or both.

- 3.9 The Psychoactive Substance Act 2016 came into force in May 2016 making it illegal to produce, distribute, sell and supply any new psychoactive substances (NPS) previously known as 'legal highs'. Police will take action where they find people committing these offences.
- 3.10 The Health and Safety at Work Order 1978 requires the University to do what is reasonable to protect the health and safety of staff, students and visitors. Alcohol, drug and substance misuse can have an impact on the health and safety of an individual and others, for example students in shared accommodation or staff having illegal substances and drug-related paraphernalia.
- 3.11 The Road Traffic Act 1988 states that a person is guilty of an offence if driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle in a public place while unfit through drink and drugs. Under licensing laws, it is illegal to sell alcohol to someone who is inebriated.
- 3.12 The University has a responsibility to uphold the law. Students, who contravene the legislation outlined above will be subject to disciplinary action under the Rules for Student Conduct by the University and this may include reporting incidents to the Police.

4. Scope

- 4.1 This policy is concerned with the effects of alcohol, drugs and substance misuse and applies to all students enrolled to study at Ulster University, including undergraduate, postgraduate, Ph.D., both taught and research and those on short courses.

5. Ulster University Commitment

- 5.1 Ulster University aims to create a healthy and sustainable working, learning and living environments for students, staff and the wider community.
- 5.2 Ulster University is committed to enhancing the health, safety and wellbeing of its students and staff and recognises the risks that may be caused by alcohol and drugs.
- 5.3 This University aims to provide support and guidance around alcohol and drug use.
- 5.4 Drugs are illegal and Ulster University does not tolerate the possession, use or supply of illegal drugs by students or staff. While we aim to reduce the risks associated with the misuse of drugs through awareness and information programmes, we will also make appropriate use of disciplinary procedures and referral to the police.
- 5.5 Safe and sensible drinking can be a positive feature of student life. For many, it is part of the student experience. However, we are committed to protect students from the harmful effects of excessive substance misuse and its impacts upon the physical, social and/or academic aspects of students' lives.

5.6 Ulster University looks to achieve these goals primarily through educational approaches, to provide guidance towards professional assistance and support.

6. Education and Awareness

6.1 The University will endeavour to increase awareness and understanding of drug and alcohol related issues. This includes:

- Raising student awareness with posters and leaflets as well as website and social media channels with links to established help sites;
- Ensuring students are aware of the dangers of the use of so-called 'psychoactive substances' (especially in combination with other intoxicants);
- Training of relevant staff, such as academic personal tutors, academic staff, student mentors, staff in student residences and security officers;
- Inviting representatives from our partner agencies including statutory, voluntary and community partner agencies to give talks at 'Fresher's and Welcome' events and other appropriate forums, including campaigns with new students providing information on the safe consumption of alcohol and the misuse of drugs;
- Work in partnership with the University's accommodation contract and Residential Services to ensure that the contract specifically prohibits the misuse of drugs on University premises.

7. Support and Advice

7.1 If a student is experiencing difficulties with their studies as a result of alcohol and drug misuse, they are encouraged to contact their Academic Tutor or alternatively seek support from Student Wellbeing Services, the Students' Union or their GP.

7.2 Ulster University has a range of services available to students with drug and alcohol concerns, which are freely available to all students who wish to access help and support.

7.3 The Student Wellbeing Service offers a comprehensive array of support services to help with mental, physical health and personal development needs and therefore will offer an initial assessment to any student presenting with drug and/or alcohol related issues. During the assessment, they will explore how the student's substance misuse impacts their daily functioning, including academic studies and consider mental or physical health issues, levels of social support required and coping strategies. A risk assessment will also be carried out and if necessary, the Student Wellbeing Service may also suggest or refer the student to relevant external agencies that can specifically address drug and alcohol issues.

7.4 There are Student Wellbeing Services on each campus: Belfast Room BA-02-034, Coleraine Room E047, Jordanstown Room 15G20A and Magee Room MG108G.
Contact: Tel: (+44) 028 9536 7000 or Email: studentwellbeing@ulster.ac.uk
There is also information on the website: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/wellbeing>

8. Confidentiality and Alcohol and Drug Related Incidents

- 8.1 Confidential records held by staff offering support are governed by their professional ethical guidelines. Information about these guidelines is available from the services themselves.
- 8.2 The inability of students to act responsibly and safely due to the effects of alcohol or drugs or other substances, whether on or off campus, will be subject to disciplinary procedures.
- 8.3 The University will never accept the consumption of alcohol to excess as a mitigating circumstance. The use of alcohol becomes a disciplinary problem when a student endangers life; or adversely affects the well-being of other individuals; or damages property; or interferes with the good working of the University; or by his/her action may be deemed to have brought the University into disrepute.
- 8.4 The University will regard as a serious disciplinary matter any action that breaches the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; the Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1989; or any other relevant legislation. The University would be breaking the law if it permitted the possession, supply or use of illegal drugs on a property. The possession of illegal drugs is a criminal offence and possession with intent to supply is a more serious offence.
- 8.5 Legislation distinguishes between the crimes of possession and supply, the penalties for the latter being more severe. The University will therefore inform the Police, through the University Secretary, of any student who is found to be or is suspected of dealing in drugs. For those students found to be using class B illegal drugs, (for their own use), on the first occasion, the University will deal with the matter under its own disciplinary procedures as outlined below in the hope that students will respond positively and not re-offend. Further offences may lead to the University informing the police in addition to taking its own disciplinary action.
- 8.6 If a student obtains a criminal record by possessing and/or supplying drugs, this may affect his/her ability to practice in certain professions (e.g. the health professions, social work, teaching, law). A drug offence, even a caution, can seriously limit career choices.
- 8.7 For minor occurrences, informal resolution will be sought.

8.8 In University-controlled accommodation, existing regulations permit Residential staff to take action (including summary removal) in urgent or extreme cases. This power is appropriate if there is a clear indication from PSNI that a student is involved in supplying controlled drugs.

8.9 The University will liaise with PSNI to ensure that both parties understand the action the other is likely to take in the event of the offence being committed.

8.10 Depending on the gravity of the situation, the officers authorised to take disciplinary action under Ordinance XLII Section 4.1* may impose penalties or, alternatively, refer the matter to the Disciplinary Committee. Penalties range from a reprimand to expulsion and include fines and/or suspension from studies.

*The Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Provosts, the Deans of the Faculties, the Heads of Schools, the Director of Campus Life, Director of Faculty Operations and Accommodation Managers of Residences.

9. Other University Related Policies and Procedures

- Campus Life Strategy
- Student Mental Health Strategy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Fitness to Practice Policy
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Student Wellbeing, Risk Management Procedures
- Safeguarding Policy

10. Conclusion

This policy will be implemented and reviewed every 2 years, unless early review is required.