

# UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

## STUDENT DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

MAY 2018

### Policy Context

1. The University's mission is underpinned by our institutional commitments to excellence in research and excellence in education, the delivery of a transformative education and putting students at the heart of everything we do. The Student Drug and Alcohol Policy ("the policy") forms part of a range of measures the University has in place to safeguard and promote student wellbeing and to enable our students to realise their full potential to succeed on their programmes of study in a safe, healthy and inclusive environment<sup>1</sup>.

2. The majority of our students are adults and the policy acknowledges that the use and misuse of alcohol, drugs and other substances can sometimes play a part in their lives. While the University is fully committed to supporting individual students to succeed, the policy seeks to manage the balance between our duty of care to all staff and students, our institutional legal obligations and recognition of the negative impact of unacceptable behaviour caused by alcohol and drug use on members of the University community and on individual or groups of students in achieving their best educational outcomes.

### Policy Aims and Principles

3. The policy has five overarching aims:

- To make clear the University's position on the use and misuse of alcohol and drugs.
- To describe the frameworks in place for managing the impact of the misuse of alcohol and drugs when it does occur.
- To reiterate the University's commitment to supporting the safe and sensible use of alcohol and to the provision of clear information on alcohol, drugs and substance misuse.
- To outline the support available to those experiencing difficulties related to alcohol, drugs and substance misuse.
- To reiterate the commitment to taking appropriate disciplinary action when necessary in accordance with the University's Code of Student Conduct.

4. The University's approach to managing drug and alcohol misuse is underpinned by the following principles:

- The University's commitment to student achievement and wellbeing and the provision of a safe, healthy and supportive environment for all students, staff and visitors regardless of their involvement in instances of misuse.

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<sup>1</sup> The policy relates to student use of drugs and alcohol. Separate arrangements are in place for other members of the University community, for example University staff, through the appropriate procedures.

- Zero tolerance<sup>2</sup> in response to the possession or use of illegal drugs or the supply of any drugs, or anti-social behaviour relating from the misuse of drugs or alcohol on University premises.
- The need for openness and transparency in order to promote knowledge, awareness and understanding to enable all members of the University community to make informed choices and to enable appropriate action to be taken.
- Partnership working underpinned by a One University approach to ensure a shared understanding and the delivery of the policy's aims in a way that crosses team and organisational boundaries appropriately.
- The commitment to preventative action to minimise and reduce the risks associated with drug and alcohol misuse.
- The importance of individual personal responsibility for managing alcohol or drug use and for ensuring that misuse does not impact negatively on the University community and our students' academic achievement.

## **Policy Definitions**

5. Alcohol misuse is defined in the policy as the drinking of intoxicating liquor where a student's ability to study and work may be impaired, academic engagement may be affected, the safety of others is endangered, personal harm is caused or there are physical, mental, emotional or behavioural changes.

6. Drugs are defined in the policy to include all drugs and substances, legal or illegal, which adversely affect behaviour or performance

7. Drug misuse is defined as the taking of drugs, psychoactive<sup>3</sup> or other substances, including prescribed drugs, where a student's ability to study and work may be impaired, academic engagement may be affected, the safety of others may be endangered, personal harm may be caused or there are physical, mental, emotional or behavioural changes.

## **Drug and Alcohol Education and Awareness**

8. The University is committed to increase awareness and understanding concerning the use of drugs and alcohol and to promote safe use and harm minimisation strategies. This commitment is supported by the following activities:

- Use of proactive communications, which establish, develop and promote a contemporary student identity based on responsible alcohol consumption and reinforcing social norms around responsible alcohol consumption.
- Use and development of materials to enable effective education for students on the impact of drug use to assist them in making informed decisions.
- Provision of guidance and information to staff to enable effective action in response to concerns about drug and alcohol misuse, including training for relevant staff groups.

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<sup>2</sup> Zero tolerance means that (i) we will take action and (ii) the action will be proportionate to the circumstances of the case.

<sup>3</sup> As defined by the World Health Organisation and the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

- The provision of awareness courses for students who are subject to disciplinary proceedings.

9. Education and awareness activities are delivered in partnership through collaboration between the University and relevant organisations, including liaison with external agencies, such as specialist drug and alcohol agencies, and working with the Students Union to co-ordinate education, information and campaigns, to ensure that there are clear expectations for student members and clubs and societies regarding their behaviour relating to drug and alcohol consumption on and off campus and to offer non-alcoholic events and availability and appropriate pricing of non-alcoholic beverages.

### **Support and Advice**

10. The University recognises that most students are not affected by drug and/or alcohol misuse.

11. Where a student discloses that he or she is concerned about another student or experiencing difficulties caused by their own use of drugs or alcohol, the University is committed to responding in a sympathetic and supportive way, underpinned by appropriate confidentiality within the law. Support is primarily offered through the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service, with referrals to external specialist agencies where appropriate.

12. Confidential advice and support is available from other support services, including the NHS and the University Health Centre on the Colchester Campus, the Students' Union, the Multi-faith Chaplaincy and Nightline, as well as external agencies such as Ask Frank and Open Road.

13. The commitment to support for students affected by drug and alcohol misuse is implemented alongside the recognition that students who may be misusing drugs or alcohol may cause harm or upset to other members of the University community. Under these circumstances and where attempts to address the concerns with the student are not successful, other policies and procedures may be considered, including the Code of Student Conduct regulations, the Fitness to Study Policy or the Fitness to Practise Procedures.

14. Support is available to students who are affected by drug and/or alcohol misuse by other people in their lives through the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service.

### **Unacceptable Behaviour**

15. All students are expected to maintain a standard of conduct which supports the University's commitment to excellence in education and research and promotes good order and the good name and reputation of the University.

16. Any student found having used, or being suspected of having used, illegal substances will be provided with the necessary care and attention in relation to their physical condition as a priority. Concern about ensuing disciplinary proceedings does not and should never preclude any student or member of staff seeking help for a student who is unwell or at risk due to being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or who appears at risk to themselves or others due to an ongoing dependency.

17. If a student's use of drugs or alcohol causes them to breach the Code of Student Conduct, they may be subject to appropriate disciplinary proceedings.

18. Using, selling or possessing a controlled drug is illegal and could result in prosecution. The University reserves the right to report appropriate cases to the police as well as dealing with them in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct.

19. Penalties for drug and alcohol misuse can include mandatory attendance at a relevant awareness course, receiving a fine, notice to leave University accommodation and, in the most serious cases, expulsion from the University. These penalties are applied through the standard Code of Student Conduct procedures and in a way that supports the institutional commitments to the delivery of a transformational education for all our students and putting the interests of all our students at the heart of everything we do.

20. Where a student has been arrested and is subject to a police investigation, disciplinary action against the student may be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct.

21. Students with drug and alcohol dependency are strongly encouraged and supported to engage with sources of help, but are not exempt from disciplinary proceedings that result from any breach of the Code of Student Conduct. Any disruption of academic, University or Students Union-related activity due to alcohol or drug misuse is investigated by the relevant party or parties and appropriate action taken in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

22. The influence of alcohol or drugs is not normally accepted as a mitigating factor or an excuse for behaviour leading to breaches of the Code of Student Conduct.

### **Information sharing and partnership working**

23. The University's approach to partnership working and data sharing is underpinned by the principles of openness and transparency, balanced that with the University's legal obligations and agreed approach in relation to personal information and ensuring that sharing is limited to those who need to know.

24. The University's Drug and Alcohol Action Group brings together key stakeholders in support of the implementation of the policy and its aim and to oversee the operation of the University's approach to drug and alcohol misuse. The stakeholders include but are not exclusive to the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service, the Proctor, Patrol staff and the Students' Union<sup>4</sup>.

25. There is a central point of recording for anonymised information and incidents relating to drug and alcohol misuse. The purpose of these records are to assist with the identification and analysis of information relating to trends and statistics in relation to drug and alcohol use in order to ensure effective oversight within decision-making structures, to shape future policy development and to enable a proactive approach to psychoeducational activities and awareness raising. Consideration is managed through the Drug and Alcohol Action Group, which provides appropriate reports to the relevant Committees of Senate. Records relating to individual students are managed via standard student records and systems.

26. Information about individual students may be shared within the University between relevant to teams in order to support student wellbeing and the safety of the University community and to ensure the effective operation of University policy and procedure, including the implementation of decisions in relation to students subject to the Code of Student Conduct, the Fitness to Study Policy or Fitness to Practise Procedures. Any sharing of data is undertaken in accordance with the University's legal obligations and agreed approach in relation to personal information, ensuring consent where it is required.

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<sup>4</sup> The Students' Union operates its own Disciplinary and Barring Procedure for students that exhibit disruptive behaviour within their venues, which is independent of the University's Code of Student Conduct and is required to fulfil their obligations as a licensee.

## Reporting and Analysis

27. The University Senate, via the Student Experience Committee, receives an annual report on student drug and alcohol use in order to identify emerging issues and trends and to recommend action as appropriate to the Education Committee for consideration and approval by Senate.

## Policy Oversight and Review

28. On behalf of the University Senate, the Academic Registrar is responsible for ensuring that the policy operates effectively and is reviewed appropriately and remains fit for purpose in meeting its aims and supporting the University's mission.

29. On behalf of the Academic Registrar, the Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity coordinates all aspects of the administration and operational delivery of the policy across all University campuses, providing a focal point for operational management for activities associated with the policy and a first point of contact for matters relating to student use of drugs and alcohol.

30. The policy is reviewed biannually by the appropriate Committee of Senate and the Health and Safety Group to ensure it continues to meet the University's strategic and operational requirements and sooner if circumstances require it, with changes considered and approved by Senate as appropriate.

## Related Documents

31. The policy relates to and should be read in conjunction with the following University policies, procedures and guidance:

- Code of Student Conduct  
<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/code-conduct.aspx>
- Code of Student Conduct in Residential Accommodation  
<https://www.essex.ac.uk/governance/regulations>
- Fitness to Study  
<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/documents/fitness-to-study.pdf>
- Fitness to Practise  
[https://www1.essex.ac.uk/hhs/current\\_students/fitness-to-practise.aspx](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/hhs/current_students/fitness-to-practise.aspx)
- Health and Safety Policy  
<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/health-safety/policies/hs-policy.aspx>

**Richard Stock**  
Academic Registrar

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## Help and Support

### Student Services Hub

Colchester Campus  
 First Floor – Silberrad Student Centre  
 01206 874000  
[askthehub@essex.ac.uk](mailto:askthehub@essex.ac.uk)

Loughton Campus  
 Ground Floor, Hatfields House  
 0208 508 5983  
[askthehub-lc@essex.ac.uk](mailto:askthehub-lc@essex.ac.uk)

Southend Campus  
 Second Floor, The Forum  
 01702 328444  
[askthehub-sc@essex.ac.uk](mailto:askthehub-sc@essex.ac.uk)

### Students' Union Advice Centre

Colchester Campus  
 01206 874034  
[suadvice@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@essex.ac.uk)

Southend Campus:  
[suacsou@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suacsou@essex.ac.uk)

Loughton Campus:  
[suaclo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suaclo@essex.ac.uk)

Further details of information, advice and guidance services at our campuses are available at <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/contact/help.aspx>

### External organisations:

#### Your GP

Colchester Campus - Health Centre  
 01206 794484  
[hcentre@essex.ac.uk](mailto:hcentre@essex.ac.uk)

Talk to Frank (national drug education service)

0300 123 6600  
[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

Drinkaware – Drinkline (national alcohol helpline)  
0300 123 1110  
[www.drinkaware.co.uk/](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/)

Open Road (Drug and alcohol services in Essex)  
0844 499 1323  
[www.openroad.org.uk](http://www.openroad.org.uk)