

Student Drug and Alcohol Policy Statement

May 2024

Background

1. The University's mission is underpinned by our institutional commitments to excellence in research and excellence in education, supporting every student from every background to succeed. This policy statement sets out the arrangements the University has in place to respond to drug and alcohol use by our students, which support the University's focus on safeguarding and promoting student wellbeing and enabling them to realise their full potential to succeed on their programmes of study in as safe, healthy and inclusive an environment as possible.
2. The majority of our students are adults, and the University 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, our approach to drug and alcohol use 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 their use on members of the University community and our commitment to supporting positive student outcomes.

Principles

3. The University's approach to managing student drug and alcohol misuse is underpinned by the following principles:
 - The University's commitment to student achievement within a safe, healthy and supportive environment for all students, staff and visitors.
 - Zero tolerance in response to the possession or use of illegal drugs or the supply of any drugs, or unacceptable behaviour relating from the misuse of drugs or alcohol on University premises.
 - Openness and transparency to promote knowledge, awareness and understanding among students in support of informed choices.
 - Partnership working within and outside the University, underpinned by a One University approach that crosses team and organisational boundaries appropriately, based on the appropriate and legal sharing of data.
 - The University's 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.

Support and Advice

4. Extensive general information and advice about drugs and alcohol is provided online via the University's dedicated alcohol and drugs dedicated webpages. If a student has concerns about drug or alcohol use, individual support is available via the Student Wellbeing & Inclusivity Service (SWIS) or the National Health Service (NHS). SWIS provides individual support for students and Wellbeing Assessors are able to refer students for substance misuse support. Regular Wellbeing drop-in sessions provide a confidential route into the service.
5. The University works in partnership with Open Road, a charity that provides support for people with substance misuse issues across Essex. They offer 1:1 confidential, open and non-judgemental support for students with their substance use and to increase their knowledge around different types of substances and their respective effects and complement the SWIS support. Students can self-refer if preferred.

Unacceptable Behaviour

6. The University's Code of Student Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour that the University expects and the action that will be taken where behaviour falls below those standards. The Code forms part of a range of measures the University has in place to safeguard and promote a safe culture across the University community. Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not normally be accepted as a mitigating factor or an excuse for behaviour leading to breaches of the Code. Proportionate action will be taken under the Code in response to allegations and students may be referred to a drug and alcohol awareness course as part of any sanctions imposed.

Drug and Alcohol Education and Awareness

7. The University's commitment to raising awareness and understanding of drug and alcohol use is delivered in a range of ways:
 - Individual support provided by SWIS seeks to promote awareness for individual students.

- Information published online and in partnership with external organisations, such as Open Road and the NHS.
- The range of penalties available to decision-makers under the Code of Student Conduct include drug and alcohol awareness training.

Reporting and Analysis

8. The University Senate, via the Student Experience Committee, receives annual reports on the operation of the Student Wellbeing & Inclusivity Service of the Code of Student Conduct, which include trends in 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.

Oversight and Review

9. On behalf of the University Senate, the Academic Registrar is responsible for ensuring the arrangements described in this policy statement operate effectively and are monitored and reviewed appropriately and remain fit for purpose in supporting the University's mission. The statement is reviewed biannually by the appropriate Committee of Senate to ensure it continues to meet the University's requirements and sooner if circumstances require it.

Richard Stock

Academic Registrar

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