



Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse Policy

Authors:	People & Culture
Publication date:	November 2020
Amended:	January 2024
Review date:	January 2027

Table of Contents

Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse Policy	0
<hr/>	
Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse Policy	3
Aim	3
1. Policy Statement	3
2. Scope and exclusions	4
3. Definitions	4
4. Policy requirements	5
5. Roles and responsibilities	6
6. Alcohol at the University	8
7. Recognising possible alcohol, drugs or substance misuse	8
8. Workplace factors	8
9. Procedure	9
10. Confidentiality	9
11. Equality Impact Assessment	10
12. Monitoring	10
13. University sources of support and information	10
14. Related University Policies and Procedures	10
Appendix A: relevant legislation	12

Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse Policy

Aim

Our University Strategy 2019-28 sets out our mission of excellence in education and research, for the benefit of individuals and communities. To help us deliver this we aim to provide a healthy and safe working environment that puts people at the centre of everything we do.

We are committed to creating an enabling environment, in which all our members can thrive, by improving the social and physical environment in which we work and recognising that resilience and mental health are not intrinsic to the individual but influenced by the surrounding environment.

Our people-centred approach shapes the way we support employees and encourages us to look after our own physical and emotional wellbeing and that of others so that we can contribute to the best of our ability.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Whilst many people enjoy drinking alcohol socially and in moderation, there is a growing recognition that alcohol, psychoactive drug and substance misuse may contribute to inefficient working, accidents at work, absenteeism and, in extreme cases, health problems and social breakdown¹. As an employer the University considers that alcohol, psychoactive drugs or substance use should not affect the work performance of an employee or have a detrimental impact on the University or other employees.
- 1.2. This policy is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all employees, students and visitors by having clear rules in place regarding the use, consumption and possession of alcohol and drugs/substances in the workplace and to support those who have reported a problem with alcohol or drug misuse.
- 1.3. The University recognises alcohol, psychoactive drug and/or substance misuse as primarily a health-related problem requiring support. An employee should feel assured that any problem they may have will be dealt with in a fair, sensitive and confidential manner. If an employee feels

¹ CIPD Managing Drug and Alcohol Misuse at Work: A guide for People Management

they have a problem related to alcohol, psychoactive drugs and/or substances, they are strongly encouraged to seek help and discuss it with their line manager.

2. Scope and exclusions

- 2.1. This procedure applies to all permanent and fixed-term employees at the University of Essex, regardless of length of service, during their employment with the University. Employees of the University of Essex Campus Services (UECS) or Wivenhoe House Hotel have their own specific policies and procedures. This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time. Students on work placements are covered by the Student Drug and Alcohol Policy.
- 2.2. The University also expects agency workers, contractors, volunteers and others working on its behalf to comply with this policy. Failure to do so is likely to result in the working arrangements being terminated. Visitors should also comply with this policy.
- 2.3. Issues with absence or a long-term alcohol or psychoactive drug/substances related condition will be managed in accordance with the university's sickness absence management policy.
- 2.4. Where concerns arise due to performance whilst at work, it may be more appropriate, depending on the issue(s) to follow the University's Capability Procedure.
- 2.5. Misconduct in relation to alcohol and/or psychoactive drugs/substances will be dealt with through the University's disciplinary procedure.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, alcohol, psychoactive drugs/substance misuse are defined as:

- 3.1. The consumption of alcohol to the extent that it affects an individual's work performance, normal social behaviour at work, attendance or the safety of themselves and/or others.
- 3.2. The taking of psychoactive drugs and/or substances by an employee, which adversely affects their performance, conduct, attendance or their colleagues at work.
- 3.3. Psychoactive Drug or 'Substance' in the context of this policy includes:
 - illegal drugs e.g. cannabis, amphetamine, ecstasy, heroin, cocaine
 - controlled prescription drugs e.g. methadone, diamorphine, DF118, tuinal, anabolic steroids
 - other prescription drugs e.g. diazepam, temazepam
 - other psychoactive substances including such ('legal highs'), including as synthetic cannabinoids ('spice')

- other substances e.g. over the counter medication, solvents etc. which when used inappropriately or excessively can be dangerous

This list is not exhaustive and subject to change as legal statuses change.

4. Policy requirements

- 4.1. The University requires all employees to be free from the effects of alcohol and psychoactive drugs/substances whilst working for the University. Employees are expected to behave responsibly at all times and to safeguard their own health & safety and that of those around them. The University does not consider it acceptable for employees to be impaired by alcohol and psychoactive drugs/substances during the course of their duties and it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that alcohol consumption or psychoactive drug/substance misuse does not affect their performance or have a detrimental impact on the university or other employees.
- 4.2. It is not acceptable to be under the influence of alcohol, psychoactive drugs/substances at work or consume alcohol or psychoactive drugs/substances during the usual hours of work (this includes breaks and when working from home).
- 4.3. It is recognised that alcohol may be available at some University events (e.g. parties, conferences, entertaining visitors, etc.). However, employees must be fit for work when conducting duties and are always expected to maintain and be responsible for their own standards of behaviour. Employees should always be aware that they are representing the University at such events and behave in a responsible manner.
- 4.4. Employees found in possession of illegal psychoactive drugs, using illegal psychoactive drugs whilst at work or supplying others with illegal drugs will, without exception, be reported to the police.
- 4.5. In some cases, the legitimate use of prescribed drugs can affect a person's ability to do their job. In such instances employees should inform their line manager and a referral to Occupational Health made to assess the impact on work.
- 4.6. The University recognises the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all employees, including those who may be dealing with addiction to alcohol, drugs, or substance abuse. We are committed to promoting awareness and understanding of substance abuse to eliminate stereotypes and misconceptions, and to signpost those who may be struggling to our available resources listed below.
- 4.7. Safety is the University's top priority. Contravention of these rules may constitute gross misconduct and the University reserves the right to take disciplinary action for any breach of these rules, which may include summary dismissal. In the case of agency workers or contractors, services may be terminated immediately upon a breach of these rules and visitors may be asked to leave.

5. Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1. All employees have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions at work.
- 5.2. Drugs, alcohol and other substance misuse is treatable, and the success rate is likely to be greatest when the individual acknowledges their problem sooner rather than later. Early identification of problems improves the chances of treatment being successful. The workplace provides an opportunity for early intervention.
- 5.3. All employees are responsible for fostering a supportive and non-judgemental work environment that encourages those who may be dealing with substance abuse and addiction to seek help.

Employees

- 5.4. Employees should not attend work if they are under the influence of any substance previously highlighted and should not bring any illegal substances into the workplace or supply illegal substances or collude in doing so.
- 5.5. Employees have a personal responsibility to be fit for work when conducting duties on behalf of the University and to inform their line manager if they are taking prescription drugs that may affect ability to work. This is essential where an individual is engaged in safety critical work and where there may be a need to make reasonable adjustments to work arrangements or put in place other support measures if performance related effects are anticipated.
- 5.6. Employees will be encouraged and supported to seek professional help if they have, or suspect they have, an alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem. In exceptional cases, for example where sensitive health issues are involved and employees are uncomfortable about discussing these with their manager, contact can be made with Occupational Health or People & Culture directly.

Line Managers / Heads of Department

- 5.7. Line Managers play a critical role in supporting employees who have disclosed alcohol, drug or substance misuse issues and they should address any suspected problems at the earliest opportunity. Regular management will ensure that employees feel comfortable to raise problems or concerns at an early stage. This can be a very sensitive issue and it is important to treat all parties concerned with dignity and respect. Line Managers should refer to the Line Manager Guidance for more information.
- 5.8. Where an individual discloses an alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem the individual should be referred to Occupational Health for support. Line Managers should support employees with adjustments to their role to facilitate recovery following receipt of such recommendations from Occupational Health. This may include adjusting work patterns to attend support groups as necessary. The line manager should continue to monitor the situation as part of the normal supervisory relationship. This may include setting any objectives to overcome issues, as appropriate and providing clear instructions regarding expected standards of work.

- 5.9. The line manager may also refer an employee to Occupational Health (OH) who does not disclose any alcohol or drug/substance misuse problem but where they still have grounds for concern over the individual's behaviour or performance and reasonable grounds for believing alcohol or drug misuse, or some health problem, may be a factor. The line manager may also refer an employee to Occupational Health if the line manager has reasonable grounds for believing alcohol or drug misuse, or some health problem, may be a factor in affecting the employee's behaviour or work performance. Any disclosure to Occupational Health will be covered by the rules of confidentiality (see [Section 10 Confidentiality](#)).
- 5.10. Where a line manager suspects an individual is intoxicated, or the consumption of alcohol, drugs or other substances has influenced work performance or conduct, immediate action should be taken. After taking advice from People & Culture Employee Relations Team the line manager should suspend the employee from working and send them home to remove them from the potential risks. Consideration should be given to their ability to return home safely.

People & Culture

- 5.11. People & Culture will support line managers and employees on the understanding and application of the Policy, where necessary, and ensure that training is put in place to support line managers particularly around having difficult conversations.
- 5.12. Occupational Health (OH) will provide the following support:
- respond to referrals from line managers
 - assess whether an individual has an alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem
 - provide advice and guidance on how best to help an individual who has a problem with behaviour or work performance which might be related to alcohol or substance misuse
 - advise on fitness for work and any temporary or permanent adjustments to duties such as work restrictions or redeployment particularly for any safety critical or driving roles
 - advise on support measures that could enable the individual to work safely whilst receiving treatment for any problem
 - monitor an individual's progress which may include liaising with GPs/Specialists and other agencies
 - provide a confidential service to employees which may include counselling, assessment or referral to another outside agency who can provide expert professional assistance,
 - promote health education and awareness campaigns relating to alcohol and substance misuse and signpost staff to services in the University

Employees with concerns about a colleague

- 5.13. In the interests of the individual, employees who are concerned that a colleague is exhibiting symptoms of an alcohol or drug/substance- related problem should notify their line manager (particularly if the person is involved in a safety critical job). It is particularly important that the appropriate line manager is advised of these problems where symptoms start to affect work or working relationships or present a safety hazard or reputational risk. Such notification will be handled in a confidential and sensitive manner.

6. Alcohol at the University

- 6.1. Within the range of University activities there are times where alcohol is available at employees and student events. Great care should be taken in planning events to respect the views of anyone who does not drink, in some cases for religious reasons, or does not wish to drink alcohol, and non- alcoholic drinks must always be made available. Employees should also act responsibly and professionally around students who may attend departmental social events. Employees should not be intoxicated in front of students.
- 6.2. Individuals should consider not drinking alcohol if they are driving afterwards. If the member of employees is over the drink drive limit, they should make alternative travel arrangements.
- 6.3. The University has a duty of care to ensure that those attending events where alcohol is available and who will be driving immediately afterwards are fit to do so. Every effort should be made to dissuade an individual who is obviously intoxicated from driving.

7. Recognising possible alcohol, drugs or substance misuse

- 7.1. Alcohol, drugs or substance misuse can show in a wide variety of ways. As well as episodes of acute intoxication or drunkenness longer term misuse may show up as changes in a person's work or academic performance, their social behaviour or relationships, a decline in their mental and physical health or through deterioration in their appearance or self-care. Please refer to the Line Manager Guidance for the common signs of alcohol, drugs and substance misuse.

8. Workplace factors

- 8.1. Line managers should be aware of any workplace factors, including working conditions, workplace customs, practices and environments, that could increase the risk of individual alcohol, drug or substance misuse. Please refer to the Line Manager Guidance for a list of workplace factors.
- 8.2. To prevent work related stress an individual should talk to their line manager about their job demands, ensuring clarity about the role and expectations, take initiative regarding developmental needs and make sure of training, support and resources available. A stress risk assessment can be a useful tool in assessing stress at work.

- 8.3. If a line manager is concerned that workplace factors may be causing an employee stress, they should discuss the matter with the individual concerned and seek advice from People & Culture.

9. Procedure

- 9.1. When the line manager becomes aware of an employee's alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem they should:
- keep accurate, confidential records of instances of any poor performance or other problems
 - have a conversation with the employee in private as early as possible in the process
 - concentrate on the instances of poor performance that have been identified
 - ask for the employees reasons for poor performance and ask whether it could be due to a health problem, without specifically mentioning alcohol or drugs
 - if appropriate, discuss the University's Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Misuse policy and the support available; where an individual discloses an alcohol or drug/substance misuse problem make a referral to Occupational Health for support. If a line manager has concerns that an employee's performance is impacted by any health issue then a referral to Occupational Health can be made. If there are concerns that it may be drug or alcohol related then this should be made reference to in the referral so the process remains transparent and the employee is aware that this will be explored. The employee can refuse to engage with Occupational Health however will need to be made aware that any decisions (relating to conduct/performance) will be made without the benefit of Occupational Health knowledge
 - in conjunction with Occupational Health and People & Culture agree future action
 - if necessary, request that the employee refrains from work temporarily, or undertakes restricted/different duties for a period, to ensure their own safety and that of others
 - ensure the employee is given the opportunity to attend treatment within work time. Any absence for treatment and rehabilitation will be regarded as normal sickness absence
 - where possible enable the employee to return to their existing job following treatment. If the employee is unable to fulfil those duties the University will consider alternative duties
 - arrange regular meetings to monitor progress and discuss any further problems/relapses should they arise
 - a flowchart of support can be found in the Line Manager Guidance

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1 Strict confidentiality will be adhered to and the employee's consent will be sought when disclosure of information about a drug or alcohol problem to management is thought necessary.

There may, however, be situations when disclosure of personal information without consent is deemed necessary in the public interest, for example, safety critical concerns, however this will be communicated to the employee.

11. Equality Impact Assessment

11.1 The University has conducted an Equality Impact Assessment on this policy and is satisfied that its application should not result in a differential and negative impact on any groups of employees identified under the Equality Act 2010.

12. Monitoring

12.1 [People, Culture and Inclusion Advisory Group \(.pdf\)](#) will monitor the impact of this policy.

13. University sources of support and information

- [University Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)
- [Wellbeing Directory](#)
- [Work-Related Stress](#)
- [Lone Working Health and Safety](#)
- [Stress Management Guidance for Line Managers](#)
- [Report and Support](#)
- [Mental Health First Aid](#)
- [Zero Tolerance of Harassment and Bullying](#)
- [Working from Home](#)
- [Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse Line Manager Guidance \(.pdf\)](#)

Please contact Occupational Health at ohquery@essex.ac.uk if you have further questions about the local support available.

14. Related University Policies and Procedures

- [Health and Safety policy](#)
- [Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Stress Management Policy \(.pdf\)](#)
- [Disciplinary Procedure](#)

- Capability Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Flexible Working
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy
- Zero Tolerance Policy
- Student Alcohol and Drug Policy

Appendix A: relevant legislation

- The Health and safety at work act (1974) (section 2) places a duty on the University to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.
- The Management of Health and Safety at work regulations (1999) places a duty on the University to assess the risks to the health and safety of employees. This means the University can be prosecuted if it knowingly allows an employee to continue working while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and their behaviour places the employee themselves or others at risk.
- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 makes it an offence for someone to knowingly permit the production, supply or use of controlled drugs on their premises except in specified circumstances (for example drugs prescribed by a doctor).
- The Road Traffic Act (1988) states that any person who, when driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle on a road or other public place, is unfit to drive through drink or drugs shall be guilty of an offence
- The Equality Act (2010) states that dependency on alcohol or other illicit drugs does not constitute a disability. However, if disability is due to the cause or effect of addiction, it is covered.

Document Control Panel

Field	Description
Title	Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse Policy
Policy Classification	Policy
Security Classification	Open
Security Rationale	N/A
Policy Manager Role	Policy and Projects Officer
Nominated Contact	develop@essex.ac.uk
Responsible UoE Section	People & Culture
Approval Body	University Steering Group
Signed Off Date	11 March 2024
Publication Status	Published
Published Date	19 March 2024
Last Review Date	January 2024
Minimum Review Frequency	3-Yearly
Review Date	January 2027
UoE Identifier	0107

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as braille, please contact the nominated contact at develop@essex.ac.uk