

Alcohol and Drugs Misuse Policy



Introduction

The University is committed to promoting the well being of all its employees, students, contractors and visitors whilst ensuring that a professional, effective level of performance and quality of service is maintained.

The University recognises that the abuse of alcohol and misuse of drugs can be a medical condition and should be treated as such. It is concerned about the damage such a condition may cause to the health and work performance of the individual, together with the possible effects this may have on the health and safety of the employees, students, contractors and members of the public.

In cases where an alcohol or drugs related or dependency problem is identified and acknowledged, individuals will be approached in a supportive, caring and consistent manner throughout the University by all managers or employees who may be involved in giving assistance.

This policy is intended to help those with an alcohol or drug problem to be restored to health quickly, to the benefit of themselves, their colleagues and the University, and to return to an acceptable pattern of working. It applies to all University staff without exception regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment or transgender status, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, creed, culture, religion or belief, age or disability.

Policy statement

The University has a duty to provide a safe and healthy working and learning environment for all its employees and students. It is committed to raising awareness of the dangers of alcohol or drugs misuse and to actively discourage the consumption of alcohol or use of drugs on University premises. The University will offer support and encouragement to those members of its community who are affected by alcohol or drugs misuse, to seek help. In the first instance, general advice and information may be obtained from the Personnel Service or any University Occupational Health provider. The University will assist all employees to identify potential alcohol or drug problems and will encourage employees to seek help at an early stage.

No employee, student, contractor or visitor shall in connection with any work-related activity:

- Report, or endeavour to report for duty having consumed drugs or alcohol likely to render him/her unfit or unsafe for work
- Consume or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol whilst on duty, unless with agreement of line management for the purposes of official University entertaining
- Store drugs or alcohol in personal areas such as lockers, cupboards, filing cabinets or desk drawers
- Attempt to sell or give drugs to any other employee or other person on University premises

Attempts to conceal a colleague's problem may be misguided, as it is important to recognise and treat a condition at an early stage when help may stand a better chance of success.

Employees who consider that they may have a problem will be encouraged to seek help and treatment voluntarily, and appropriate medical advice from the University's occupational health providers including amian, the Employee Assistance Programme providers, will be offered in the strictest confidence. Details will only be discussed with the employee's own doctor, or other medical specialist, with the prior agreement of the individual.

Whilst alcohol or drug abuse does not excuse poor work performance or misconduct it may be treated as a mitigating factor, and disciplinary procedures may be suspended whilst opportunity is taken to seek diagnosis and, if necessary, treatment.

Scope and definition

The Health and Safety at Work Act requires employers to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and also requires employees to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

Employers have a duty to conduct their activities in such a way as to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, persons not in their employment who may be affected by these activities are not exposed to risks to their health or safety.

All members of the University community are required to act in a responsible manner with regard to alcohol consumption. They must not allow the consumption of alcohol to affect their judgement, self control, or co-ordination in such a way as would compromise the health or safety of themselves or others within the University community particularly in situations where alcohol is available on University premises, for example:

- Within the Student Union bar
- In dining rooms or catering facilities
- At formally recognised functions/hospitality/social events.

The University is committed to ensuring the availability of non alcoholic drinks at University social functions and on those University premises licenced to serve alcohol.

University responsibilities

The University will take all reasonable steps to reduce, if not eliminate, the risk of injuries or incidents occurring due to individuals suffering from the effects of alcohol or substance abuse.

The University will take all reasonable steps to prevent employees, students, contractors and visitors carrying out work-related activities if they are considered to be unfit or unsafe to undertake the work as a result of alcohol consumption or substance abuse.

The University expressly prohibits the use of any illegal drugs or any prescription drugs that have not been prescribed for the user. It is a criminal offence to be in possession of, use or distribute an illicit substance. If any such incidents take place on University premises, in University vehicles or at a University function, they will be regarded as serious, will be investigated by the University, and may lead to disciplinary action and possible reporting to the Police.

Time off will be granted to allow appointments for assessment to be kept; and for appointments with a treatment provider if this is subsequently recommended and constitutes part of the agreement between the employee, the provider and the University.

The University will normally require information in the form of regular confidential written reports from the treatment provider to occupational health providers, which will include details concerning the treatment goals and timescales agreed; and an individual's compliance with a treatment programme. The need for this information will be explained to the employee prior to their referral to a treatment provider and their consent for this will be sought.

Any relapse during or after any intervention will be viewed sympathetically and due consideration given to further assessment and support.

In circumstances where an employee continually refuses help, or unilaterally discontinues a treatment programme and continues to display unsatisfactory levels of conduct or performance, they will be referred to the disciplinary procedure. Individuals will be informed that their behaviour could result in dismissal.

Employee's responsibilities

Individuals are required to attend work in a manner in which they are capable of performing their roles, and without causing danger to themselves or others.

Employees must inform their line manager regarding any prescribed medication that may have an effect on their ability to carry out their work safely, and must follow any instructions subsequently given. Drugs that cause drowsiness must not be used whilst at work.

Disruptive/interruptive behaviour, due to the effects of alcohol, taking illegal drugs or misuse of drugs, in a place of work or study will not be accepted and may result in disciplinary action being taken against an individual.

Those individuals who work in an area with machinery; in a laboratory or who drive as part of their duties, have a particular responsibility to ensure that they are not affected by alcohol which can impair their ability.

Any employee suffering from drug or alcohol dependency should declare such dependency to enable the University to provide reasonable assistance, treating absences for treatment and/or rehabilitation as any other sickness absence.

Support and encouragement will be offered by the University in dealing with an alcohol related problem - however, employees must be prepared to consider accepting treatment and advice from the most appropriate form of treatment provision for this support to continue. Failure to accept treatment could result in disciplinary action.

Action

Employees who are identified as possibly experiencing alcohol/drug related problems, whether by observation, poor performance or conduct or by their own voluntary action, will be given the following assistance: Initial discussion to examine the possible causes of deterioration in work performance or conduct. This discussion will normally be carried out by the line manager and the member of staff may be accompanied by a workplace colleague or Trade Union representative if they so wish.

The University is concerned with work performance, safety and conduct. Drinking or drugs offences committed by individuals which are not due to an alcohol or drugs related or dependency problem, will be considered to be misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken.

In cases where an alcohol/drugs related or dependency problem is identified and acknowledged, the individual concerned will be advised of the help and support available and will be expected to take advantage of this. They will be treated in the same manner as if they had any other health issue

If a possible alcohol/drug related problem comes to light through behaviour which could result in disciplinary action, the above procedures will apply. The employee has the right to refuse the offer of help and such a refusal will not, in itself, be a matter for disciplinary action. However, staff refusing to undertake treatment, when appropriate, will be advised that unacceptable performance or behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with normal disciplinary procedures.

If a problem comes to light through performance/behaviour which is subject to disciplinary action and the employee chooses to accept referral for assessment and possible treatment, the University may suspend such action, unless the behaviour appears to constitute gross misconduct, subject to the following:

- complying with the referral and attending any Occupational Health provision for assessment of the problem;
- co-operating with any programme of support/treatment which will help him/her to overcome the problem;

- agreeing to the treatment agency liaising with the appropriate Occupational Health provider with regard to the level of attendance for and co-operation with treatment;
- improving work performance/behaviour to an acceptable level within a time scale agreed to by the employee and management.

An employee referred for assessment who is subsequently shown not to have an alcohol/drug related problem, or does not comply with the above conditions, may be subject to disciplinary action in the usual way. Where an employee who agrees to accept treatment subsequently fails to achieve a satisfactory level of performance or behaviour, a further offer of help may be made. Each case will be fully reviewed and a suitable course of action followed, which may include management action.

It is acknowledged that relapse is a possibility, and in such cases a further offer of help may be made, dependent on the circumstances.

All agreements entered into under this policy will be confirmed in writing as soon as is practicable and reasonable. Members of staff have the right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or Trade Union representative at all stages of this policy and will be reminded of that right at each stage.

Communicating the policy

All employees will be informed of the Alcohol and Drugs Abuse Policy.

Information on the policy will be included on the Staff Wellbeing web pages. Various other means of communication will be used which may include publicity in the form of leaflets and posters, and presentations.

Training will be provided to all staff including Senior Management and heads of departments, and other Senior Managers so that there is a clear, uniform understanding of:

- early recognition of alcohol related problems and causes
- appropriate responses, i.e. source of help, advice and support.
- raising the issue in a sensitive way
- implementation of the Policy

Student Course Representatives must be made aware of the Alcohol and Drugs Abuse Policy as part of their general induction so that they share the same understanding as staff within the University.

Health Promotion for Alcohol and Drug Awareness will be delivered in conjunction with any of the University occupational health providers and the local Primary Care Trust. The University will raise awareness amongst staff and students by providing appropriate information and advice on alcohol. Health promotion campaigns will seek to promote a culture which enables individuals to make informed choices about drinking behaviour and drugs abuse.

Related Policies

Occupational Health Policy
Stress Policy
Stress Management Procedures
Health Surveillance Procedures
Sickness Absence Policy
Sickness Absence Procedures

Disciplinary Procedure
Grievance Procedure
Professional Code of Conduct
Violence and Aggression at Work Policy
Dignity and Respect at Work Procedure