

Document Details

Document Reference	Policy and Procedure on Student Drug and/or Alcohol Misuse
Document status	Approved
Document owner	Sarah Sweeney - Head of Student Support and Wellbeing
Review period	Every 3 years
Date of first approval	2019 approved by the Student Experience Committee (SEC)
Date of most recent review	2023
Date of next review	2026
Version number	2.0

Version control

Version	Date	Description of changes and name and job title of person responsible for making changes
1.0	25/02/2021	Revised draft for SEC (Thomas Guy, Student Wellbeing Coordinator)
2.0	04/10/2023	Updated version for SEC (Tamsin Bartlett, Student Casework and Data Manager). Updated job and service titles, changes to information related to advice on support and guidance for addiction, new reference to alleged spiking incidents, and an additional section on prescription controlled substances.

Referenced policies and documents

[Student Discipline Regulations](#)

[Fitness to Study Procedure](#)

[Lancaster Social Work Fitness to Practise Policy](#)

DClinPsy Fitness to Practice Policy (available from department)

Lancaster Medical School Fitness to Practice Policy – (please contact the Lancaster Medical School directly for details of their policy)

Policy and Procedures on Student Drug and/or Alcohol Misuse

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out Lancaster University's policy and procedures pertaining to student alcohol and drugs¹ misuse which support the University to safely discharge its responsibilities to students and staff. The University has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for all students and staff, and to take an active role in preventing unlawful actions from taking place on campus. Where student incidents relating to the misuse of alcohol and/or drugs are reported off campus, they will also be subject to this policy. The University seeks to balance an educative and supportive harm reduction approach to student alcohol and drugs misuse with a clear stance that it will not tolerate the possession, use or supply of drugs, or any misconduct relating to the misuse of alcohol and/or drugs.
- 1.2 The University regards dependency or problematic use of drugs and/or alcohol as a health problem and will provide appropriate support to students when requested. The University is, however, concerned when the inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol adversely affects or leads to unacceptable behaviours and/or misconduct, or has an adverse impact on the individual student or other members of the University community. In such cases, the University will normally take action under either the [Fitness to Study procedure](#) or the [Student Discipline Regulations](#) and, depending on the situation, may inform the Police.

2. Aims

- 2.1 The aims of this policy and procedures are to:
- (i) enable the University to meet its obligations regarding the health and safety of its staff, students and visitors;
 - (ii) set out the University's approach to dealing with incidents arising from drug and/or alcohol misuse;
 - (iii) promote an awareness of the health, wellbeing and legal issues associated with alcohol and/or drug misuse to enable students to make informed choices, along with supportive and caring harm-minimising strategies;
 - (iv) facilitate the early identification of problems caused by alcohol and/or drug misuse and encourage students to seek advice, help and assistance voluntarily before their health and/or studies are adversely affected;
 - (v) highlight the support and guidance available and provide clarity on staff roles, boundaries and referral mechanisms;

¹ For simplicity, the term 'drugs' is used within this policy and procedure. The University uses HM Government's guidance in its [list of controlled drugs](#) to identify illegal or misused drugs. The University's definition of 'drugs' also includes any substances defined under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. The term 'prescription drugs' applies to any drug given to an individual under medical prescriptions.

- (vi) outline the procedures involved in supporting students whose actions fall under this policy including:
- students who experience temporary or longer-term alcohol and/or drug difficulties;
 - staff who have a role in advising and supporting students; and
 - staff or students who have a concern about the alcohol or drug difficulties of another student.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy and procedures cover:

- the misuse, carrying, sale, sharing or dealing of psychoactive substances, controlled drugs or prescription drugs (as detailed in footnote 1 above);
- the misuse of alcohol.

3.2 This policy and procedures apply to all registered students enrolled on an undergraduate programme, postgraduate taught programme, postgraduate research programme or other programme of study offered by Lancaster University with the Bailrigg campus as their primary affiliation, including distance learners and those who are suspended from study or intercalating. The University's definition of 'student' can be found within section 2 of the [Student Discipline Regulations](#).

3.3 Where a student is undertaking activities at another institution/organisation, it is the **responsibility of the student** to ensure that they are fully aware of their responsibilities and the policies, procedures, and practices of the institution/organisation where they will be undertaking their activity and abide by them. If this involves travel **outside of the UK**, the student will also be subject to the law of that country.

3.4 Students are responsible for anyone staying at Lancaster University premises as a guest or visitor to abide by this policy. Where a visitor or guest's conduct is considered unacceptable, the registered student will be deemed to have accepted responsibility for the conduct of that visitor/guest under this policy and the University reserves the right to take action and/or invoke procedures against the responsible student.

3.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies, including the [Student Discipline Regulations](#), the Fitness to Practise Procedures² and the [Fitness to Study Policy and Procedures](#). Other policies which may be relevant are listed in section 8.1 of the Student Discipline Regulations.

3.6 Under licencing laws any substance can be confiscated immediately if found on licensed premises.

² Please see the Fitness to Practise policies listed on page 1.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 It is the policy of the University that:

- the University does not condone the possession, use or supply of illegal drugs (including the production/manufacture³, misuse and unofficial sale of prescribed drugs), nor the misuse of psychoactive substances or misuse of alcohol on its premises, and will discharge its legal responsibilities in this area (see Appendix 1);
- the misuse of drugs or alcohol is not an acceptable excuse for poor behaviour;
- students are expected to comply with all relevant policies and regulations of the University, including all residential regulations. Where there are potential breaches the University may take action under the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#) and could refer students to the Police;
- where the consumption of alcohol is not illegal, any resultant inappropriate behaviour may contravene the law and/or the University's Student Discipline Regulations;
- any student found having used or being suspected of having used illegal drugs will be provided with the necessary care and attention in relation to their health needs to the extent that this is possible for the University to do. The University's aim is to safeguard the wellbeing of the individual and all other students;
- the University will support any student who wishes to obtain help and assistance to address a drug or alcohol-related issue as far as it is able, using internal or external support services as appropriate;
- where the University has concerns that a student's drug and/or alcohol misuse may impact a student's fitness to study, it may instigate the [Fitness to Study](#) procedure when appropriate. The University has a wide range of support available and links with specific external Alcohol and Drug Services for referrals;
- the University, in collaboration with Lancaster University Students' Union, will work to educate its students and staff on the issues surrounding the misuse of drugs, psychoactive substances, and/or alcohol, and will signpost sources of appropriate help and advice;
- if a student is involved in drug-related misconduct, including conviction, related to a drug-related incident, it is highly likely that there will be implications for their future career choice. Students should be aware of the potential implications of this, especially with regard to their ability to continue with vocational, professional and/or clinical qualifications and the impact of this on their careers in related professions. Depending on circumstances, the University may need to initiate Fitness to Practise proceedings and inform relevant professional bodies (for example the General Medical Council);
- each case will be assessed individually, and any student in possession of, using or dealing illegal drugs (or what are reasonably suspected to be illegal drugs) may be subject to disciplinary action by the University.

³ Except as part of a programme of study.

- 4.2 With specific reference to University property and accommodation, under this policy:
- it is forbidden to have drugs (unless they have been prescribed for personal use by a medical professional) or psychoactive substances brought or otherwise delivered to University property, including University residences.

5. Procedures

- 5.1 Those who witness an incident occurring which involves the misuse of drugs and/or alcohol should not intervene directly. If the incident is happening and needs an intervention, the Police or the University Security Team should be contacted on 01524 594541, with information on where the incident is occurring and any other relevant information. The Security Team will then take the appropriate action.

Concerns or non-urgent incidents can be reported to:

- [The Student Conduct Manager](#)
 - College Deanery (contact individual [Colleges](#))
 - [Security and Porters \(out of hours\)](#)
 - [Student Wellbeing Services](#)
 - [College Advisory Teams](#)
 - via the [UniSafe form online](#) or on the [iLancaster app](#) (Lancaster Staff and Students only). This allows anonymous, named and third-party reporting
- 5.2 The University will determine what response will be made, depending on the circumstances. Whilst in many instances a supportive approach is likely to be taken, the University reserves the right to move straight to disciplinary processes.
- 5.3 Due to the complex nature of alcohol and/or drugs incidents, several key services actively liaise together to develop appropriate responses. The key named referral points for incidents relating to drug and/or alcohol misuse are the University's Student Conduct Manager (in Student and Programme Administration) and the Student Casework Officers (in Student Wellbeing Services). Should these individuals not be available, a senior member of [Student Wellbeing Services](#) will be able to assist.
- 5.4 The following procedure applies following a drugs or alcohol related student incident.
- 5.4.1 If a student is seeking help, support and guidance related to their alcohol and/or drug use and there are no other related issues they will be given appropriate information, support and referral to external services where necessary. This may include referrals to other University processes such as Fitness to Study/Fitness to Practise depending on the concerns raised.
- 5.4.2 Where the University considers that an incident requires disciplinary action, the processes set out in the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#) will be applied.

- 5.4.3 If the situation requires it, a risk assessment will be undertaken to determine the most appropriate course of action and identify any immediate support. This will be done following the standard procedures set out in the Student Disciplinary Regulations. In some situations, this could lead to temporary suspension and/or exclusion from the University or its constituent parts.
- 5.4.4 Appeals procedures (e.g. against the outcome of risk assessments or disciplinary outcomes) are set out in the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#).
- 5.4.5 In line with our regulations, items may be confiscated. These items will be stored by the University Security Team and may be handed over to the police for disposal.
- 5.4.6 The University reserves the right to refer to the Police. Examples of occasions which may raise such concerns include:
- (i) dealing/supplying⁴ drugs;
 - (ii) violent, aggressive or threatening behaviour;
 - (iii) repeat offences – the individual has previously received a formal written warning and penalties for drug-related offences, through implementation of student disciplinary procedures;
 - (iv) Instances where an individual is accused of a spiking incident.

In these cases, internal disciplinary and wellbeing procedures will still be followed.

6. Advice, guidance and support

- 6.1 The University regards an individual's dependency or problematic use of either drugs or alcohol as a health problem. If a student reports a dependency issue or problematic use, the University will consider how best to support them. The University offers a range of advice, guidance and support services to students with drugs and/or alcohol concerns. These services are freely available to all students who wish to access help and support. Students can contact the following services:
- [Student Wellbeing Services](#)
 - [Lancaster Medical Practice](#)
 - [Students' Union](#)
- 6.2 Student Wellbeing Services or the Students' Union will provide initial advice and support, including study-related needs. Student Wellbeing Services or the Students' Union may signpost to outside agencies where a need for more specialist support and treatment is identified.

⁴ The University will use the legal definitions of 'supply' in line with the following:
Supplying or offering to supply a controlled drug, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, s.4(3)
Possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply it to another, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, s.5(3)

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 *Staff responsibilities*

University staff have a responsibility to respond and manage alcohol and/or drug misuse in the following ways:

- familiarise themselves with this policy;
- attend alcohol and drug awareness training, where it is appropriate for their role;
- if a student does disclose an alcohol and/or drug difficulty:
 - listen to the student's concerns;
 - clarify their role and the areas they can support;
 - be aware of professional boundaries and limits of expertise and refer to the services listed above;
- treat any disclosure of alcohol and/or drug use seriously and refer the student to the Student Wellbeing Services. Student Wellbeing Services will identify whether referral to external services would be helpful;
- where relevant to their role, work with Student Wellbeing Services to create a collaborative action plan under the [Fitness to Study/Practise](#) procedures (see relevant departmental website/handbook) to give the student the best chance of success;
- report incidents in progress as set out in section 5 above.

7.2 *Student responsibilities*

Students are expected to:

- seek help and support from services as soon as they are able to if they are experiencing problems related to drug and/or alcohol use. This support can be sought from services external or internal to the University;
- seek help from the University if events or circumstances have triggered a previously managed condition which is now affecting their ability to fulfil their course requirements. Students can seek help from LUSU Advice, their College Advice Team or the University Student Mental Health Service;
- be aware of their impact on others; taking and acting on advice from academic and Student Wellbeing Services staff;
- contact their Academic Tutors/Supervisors if they feel that their capacity to learn *is being affected by changes in their health and wellbeing*.

7.3 *Student Wellbeing Services responsibilities*

The [Student Casework Officers](#) based in the University's Student Wellbeing Services team can be asked to provide support to any students experiencing issues related to alcohol or drugs misuse. This may involve referral to Lancaster Medical Practice (or equivalent NHS service) external agencies where this is the most appropriate option.

The team can also provide information on relevant colleagues and external organisations who can provide support. The Associate Director (Student Wellbeing and Inclusion) has responsibility for the University's Student Wellbeing Services team and is therefore responsible for the provision of pastoral and specialist support to students.

7.4 *Student and Education Services responsibilities*

The [Student Conduct Manager](#) within the Student and Programme Administration team is the primary point of contact relating to disciplinary procedures. The Student Conduct Manager can provide advice on procedural matters relating to the University's consideration of alcohol and/or drugs misuse incidents that will be dealt with under the Student Discipline Regulations. The Head of Student and Programme Administration has overall responsibility for the handling of cases under the Student Discipline Regulations.

7.5 *Director of Students, Education and Academic Services Responsibilities*

The Director of Students, Education and Academic Services (or nominee) is accountable for the application, monitoring and review of this Policy, expected to be every three years, unless any material issues arise which warrant an earlier review. When necessary, the Director of Students, Education and Academic Services will propose revisions to this Policy for consideration and approval by the relevant committee(s).

8. Prescription Medication – Controlled Substances

- 8.1 A 'Controlled Substance' is a drug or chemical whose manufacture, possession, or use, is regulated by a government body. Due to the potential for abuse, controlled substances have specific regulatory requirements for their acquisition, storage, security, inventory/record keeping, disposal, importing and exporting. This can also include the requirement for personal or institutional licences, registration, or the submission of relevant information to the relevant body.
- 8.2 In some instances, students may be prescribed controlled substances as part of a legitimate medical treatment programme. In cases such as this, students are expected to follow the usual national regulations regarding controlled substances. This includes ensuring that their prescription is kept in a safe, secure location and is not shared or supplied to other individuals. In exceptional circumstances, complex cases involving a prescription of controlled substances may be reviewed by the Associate Director (Wellbeing and Inclusion) and may be subject to a risk assessment process led by the Student Wellbeing Services.
- 8.3 Students receiving a prescription of controlled substances are also expected to adhere to all other Lancaster University policies and guidelines including the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#) and the [Terms and Conditions of Residence at Lancaster University Accommodation](#).

Legal Obligations

Misuse of Drugs

Legislation relating to misuse of drugs, including the definitions of terms and categorisation of substances, are contained primarily within two acts of Parliament – the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 – Current penalties for possession and dealing can be found on the Home Office Tackling Drugs [website](#). Substances are categorised as Class A, B or C.
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 – The act prohibits and disrupts the production, distribution, sale and supply of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in the UK (specifically those not covered by the Misuse of Drugs act). Note: *Possession* of any substances covered by this Act is *not* punishable under the law, although substances will be confiscated and potentially tested. If found to contain drugs that contravene Misuse of Drugs Act, further penalties may be applied.

The University will balance legal, health and safety, wellbeing, educational and professional conduct responsibilities. The legal context is of paramount importance and the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 confirms that the University has no legal obligation to report every single illegal drug-related incident to the police. However, it does make it clear that in the event of such an incident, the University must take clear action to address the situation and ensure that it does not recur. The University must, therefore, be able to demonstrate that in the event of an illegal drug-related incident on its premises:

- meaningful action is taken to prevent and/or discourage any recurrence (i.e. it is not knowingly condoning such illegal drug-related activity) through the implementation of disciplinary procedures and other appropriate measures;
- risk assessments are completed where appropriate, and any health and safety issues dealt with;
- facilitated by Student Wellbeing Services, appropriate support and guidance are offered to individuals, including making drug-related educational material available and offering support through existing University services or via referral to appropriate agencies;
- individuals are made fully aware of the facts concerning illegal drug use and are informed of both the University's legal position and its policy;
- the impact of an incident on others (e.g. fellow students) is taken into account.

The University reserves the right to immediately inform the police where appropriate.

Where the use of drugs involves smoking, additional disciplinary action will be taken for breach of university regulations which ban smoking throughout University premises, accommodation and in University vehicles in compliance with our legal duties under the Health Act 2006.

Misuse of Alcohol

It is legal to consume alcohol but where the consumption of excess alcohol leads to anti-social behaviour there may be legal consequences. In such cases the University will consider the most appropriate course of action, taking into account the relevant factors outlined in the *Misuse of Drugs* section of this appendix.

- Licencing Act 2003 – For people under 18, it's against the law:
 - for someone to sell them alcohol;
 - for them to buy or try to buy alcohol;
 - for an adult to buy or try to buy alcohol for them;
 - to drink alcohol in licensed premises (such as a pub or restaurant).
- However, for someone aged 16 or 17 and accompanied by an adult, they can drink (but not buy) beer, wine or cider with a meal.
- A person aged 16 or under may be able to go to a pub (or premises primarily used to sell alcohol) if they are accompanied by an adult. However, this isn't always the case. It can also depend on the specific conditions for that premises.
- It is illegal to give alcohol to children under 5.