

Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health
Misuse of Non-Prescription Drugs and Alcohol: Student Policy and
Procedures

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1 Introduction

The misuse of alcohol and/or non-prescription drugs is inconsistent with the high standards of personal behaviour that society and the registration bodies (eg GMC, GDC, RCSLT, HPC, RPSGB and NMC) expect from medical, dental or other health practitioners. The Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences believes that the safety of patients and other service users is of paramount importance, and has developed this policy to set out clear standards of behaviour for students registered on programmes in the constituent Schools within the Faculty.

It is recognised that the misuse of alcohol and/or non-prescription drugs can be a medical condition, and should be treated as such. However, the misuse of alcohol and other substances can damage the health, and academic and/or clinical performance of the student, together with creating potential risks to the health and safety of staff, other students, patients and members of the public. The Faculty has a duty of care to those staff, students, patients and members of the public and need to take timely and appropriate action to safeguard their wellbeing.

The policy is aimed at ensuring that all students involved in alcohol or non-prescription drug/medicine misuse are offered specialist help in overcoming their condition, but also at ensuring that Schools have procedures in place to determine whether the student is fit to proceed on their programme of study, or to qualification, and potentially to registration.

2. Definitions

Alcohol misuse is a regular excessive consumption and/or dependence on alcohol. It may cause an individual to experience social, psychological, physical or legal problems and may affect a student's work, whether on placement or during periods of study.

Drug/medicine misuse is the taking of an illicit or other chemical substance into the body in an unprescribed manner. This would include the taking of prescribed and non-prescribed drugs in a manner not in accordance with the prescription guidance given by a medically qualified practitioner.

3. Policy

3.1 Prevention

Schools within the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences will seek to prevent the development of alcohol and drug/medicine related problems through the promotion of substance misuse awareness for students. In many cases this will be done by means of core sessions within the curriculum.

3.2 Assistance

Schools will assist all staff and students to identify potential alcohol or drug/medicine problems, and will encourage students to seek help at an early stage. Students who consider that they may have a problem will be encouraged to seek help and treatment voluntarily, and appropriate medical advice from the Student Occupational Health Service will be offered in the strictest confidence. Details will only be discussed with the student's own doctor, or other medical specialist, with the prior agreement of the individual.

3.3 Performance

Whilst alcohol or drug/medicine abuse does not excuse poor academic or professional performance, it may, at least on a first occasion, be treated as a mitigating factor, and disciplinary, progress or fitness to practise procedures may be suspended whilst opportunity is taken to seek diagnosis and, if necessary, treatment.

3.4 Standards

Students should not consume alcohol or other substances which might affect their performance during the working day. It should be noted that the consumption of alcohol during the working day is prohibited in many hospitals and community healthcare settings, including the Trusts associated with the Faculty. Students who work or study on Trust premises are required to comply with all the provisions of Trust policies.

Students should not consume alcohol or other substances which might affect performance immediately prior to attending for work, nor attend work under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

Students should never be affected by the consumption of alcohol or other substances which might affect performance whilst at work. Students must be mindful that the effects of alcohol or other substances can last for many hours.

The Faculty considers the abuse of drugs/medicines at any time and in all places is unacceptable for students on programmes leading to a professional healthcare qualification. The use of any illicit drug may be a disciplinary as well as a criminal offence (ref. Regulation XVII – Conduct and Discipline of Students).

Students are expected to maintain a satisfactory and acceptable standard of behaviour at all times. This includes weekends and vacation periods.

Students who are subject to a police caution or conviction relating to alcohol or drug misuse must reveal this to the school. Failure to do this will be considered as a serious fitness to practise issue. The regulatory authorities consider that this requirement to disclose applies throughout the whole of a student's undergraduate studies, not just at the point of admission. In the case of any conviction relating to the misuse of alcohol or drugs/medicines, the relevant regulatory authority will be informed.

Members of staff have a responsibility to raise any concerns they may have about a student in relation to drugs/medicines or alcohol. Staff and students should not 'cover up' or collude with colleagues whose behaviour or performance is affected by alcohol or other substances. Colleagues should be encouraged to seek help immediately.

All students have a personal responsibility to check with their pharmacist or General Practitioner (GP) about performance affecting side effects resulting from taking prescription or over the counter medication. Students should inform their tutor immediately about any possible side effects, if appropriate.

4. Procedures:

4.1 In the first instance, the School will deal with the problem. The School should immediately refer the student to the Student Occupational Health Service for assessment. Any action taken in accordance with this procedure will be confidential, as far as is possible bearing in mind the overriding duty of care which the School has for the safety of patients, staff and the public.

4.2 Students who believe they have an alcohol or drug/medicine misuse related problem are encouraged voluntarily to seek confidential help and treatment. Help may be obtained from the Student Occupational Health Service, Student Counselling Service, or their own GP.

4.3 The student is entitled to be accompanied by a member of the University or a Students Union Representative at any meetings or discussions about the matter.

4.4 Where a student is diagnosed as suffering from illness related to alcohol or drug/medicine misuse, time off for recovery will be treated in the same way as absence for any other medical conditions.

4.5 Where a student refuses to accept help, suffers a relapse, or fails to respond to treatment, difficulties relating to study or clinical performance will be dealt with under the normal University procedures without special consideration being given.

4.6 Where a school becomes aware or has cause to suspect that a student is suffering from alcohol or drug/medicine misuse, which in the opinion of the school renders the student unfit to complete the programme of study, or which renders the student a possible danger to others with whom they come into contact as part of that programme, the following procedures should be followed.

- i. The case should be referred to Progress Committee.
- ii. The student should be notified by letter that they are required to attend a Progress Committee to discuss their fitness to continue on the programme of study, and that they should provide a statement of mitigation, which may include medical evidence, within 10 days of receiving the letter.
- iii. The school Progress Committee will then meet with the student, and review the medical evidence provided to consider whether the student is fit to continue on the programme of study, and whether they require treatment and/or monitoring. Progress Committee will determine the outcome on the basis of the medical evidence provided, the circumstances surrounding each case, and after due consideration of

the relevant professional guidelines appropriate to the programme of study.

- iv. The Progress Committee may then either:
 - o Confirm that the student is fit to continue their programme of study.
 - o Refer the student to the University Student Occupational Health Service for a second medical opinion.
 - o Require the student to interrupt their programme of study until such time as they are certified fit to return to their studies.
 - o For students following a programme of study governed by Fitness to Practise procedures, the Progress Committee may refer the student directly to the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee.
 - o If the Progress Committee considers that the circumstances constitutes misconduct (eg a criminal offence), it may be dealt with under the provisions of Regulation XVII – Conduct and Discipline of Students.
- v. The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of Progress Committee within 5 working days.
- vi. If the student refuses or fails to provide medical evidence, the Progress Committee will make a recommendation as in 4.6.iii above, based on the available evidence.

4.7 The student may appeal against the decision to the Registrar and Secretary within 14 working days of the notification of the decision.

4.8 If it is considered that there is an immediate danger to other members of staff, students, or members of the public, the student may be excluded, pending a disciplinary hearing under the provisions of Regulation XVII.

Procedures where illegal drugs have been discovered

- a. Ask someone to witness your actions,
- b. Put the drugs in an envelope or plastic bag and seal this carefully, either by sticking down the envelope flap or by sealing the bag with a label, sellotape or similar.
- c. Sign the seal or label and add the date and time. The drugs should be handled and packaged with care but not stored, as this can be done lawfully only by the police.
- d. Telephone the local police immediately and inform them of what you have found. Follow their instructions about what to do with the drugs, Drugs may be destroyed without delay if the police have given this advice (they will also give advice on the destruction method).
- e. Do not carry the drugs to the police station or anywhere else – you could be stopped and charged with possession. However, individuals can be in possession of drugs in order to prevent someone from committing an offence.
- f. As soon as possible, record your actions in writing, sign and date this, and ask the witness to sign and date this record as well. Keep this record safe.
- g. Inform the Head of School and Head of School Administration as soon as is practicable.

Resources

General

Student Occupational Health Services:

Waterloo Place, 182/184 Oxford Road 0161 275 2858
Gateway House, Piccadilly (Nursing students) 0161 237 2919
Web: www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/healthandsafety/studentOH.htm

Student Counselling Service:

5th Floor, Crawford House, Precinct Centre, Booth Street East
Tel: 0161 275 2864, e-mail: counsel.service@manchester.ac.uk
Web: www.manchester.ac.uk/counselling

Alcohol

Alcoholics Anonymous (0161 236 6569) provides free group support from recovering alcoholics for those who wish to remain teetotal.

Drinkline (020 7332 0202; 6pm to 11pm every day) is a national alcohol helpline for confidential help and advice.

Drugs

National Drugs Helpline: (0800 776600) provides free information and advice.

North West England Narcotics Anonymous: (0800 1076299) provides free group support from recovering addicts for people recovering from narcotics addiction.