

The University of Manchester

Policy on The Harmful Use of Substances or Alcohol by Students

Note: any reference in this Policy to named officers should also be read as a reference in each case to a delegated nominee.

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1. Context

- 1.1 The University is committed to supporting its students and recognises the impact that the harmful use of substances or alcohol can have on a student's health and wellbeing and the wider University community.
- 1.2 The University understands that some students may choose to use drugs, including so-called 'legal highs', or alcohol during their time at University, or to engage in the inappropriate use of prescription drugs.
- 1.3 The harmful use of alcohol can be defined as incidences or patterns of drinking that result in harm to someone's health, interpersonal relationships and/or ability to function.
- 1.4 It is acknowledged that though the term 'legal high' is in popular use, these substances are still in fact illegal to supply. Therefore, this policy considers legal highs a controlled substance.
- 1.5 Students registered on certain professional practice programmes are subject to specific requirements for the declaration of issues relating to the harmful use of substances or alcohol, as required by external regulators.
- 1.6 To encourage and maximise safety, the University seeks to ensure that students have the resources, support and knowledge needed to make informed choices and reduce harm.

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1 This Policy covers all students registered at the University including post-graduate research students.

2.2 This policy does not supersede obligations that the University has to external regulators for professional practise programmes or students' obligations to comply with the requirements of these regulators. When issues relating to the harmful use of substances or alcohol are declared and/or identified and appropriate support is sought by the student, they will be considered as a health issue.

2.3 Support for students' health and wellbeing through this policy is delivered in accordance with the [Policy on Supporting Health, Fitness and Return to Study](#):

3. General Principles

3.1 First and foremost, the University will take a supportive, harm reduction approach to issues around students' harmful use of substances or alcohol and endeavour to ensure that a student's future welfare and educational potential is not detrimentally affected as a result of such misuse.

3.2 This means that, in general, students found in possession of or under the influence of controlled substances, or through the harmful use of prescription drugs or alcohol, will be offered or required to engage with educational interventions and support.

3.3 Where a student is believed to be involved in the supply of drugs, the University will consider whether a report to the Police is required. Initial consideration around this is given to the staff involved in attending and responding to the situation and/or upon consultation with other appropriate colleagues.

3.4 Students suspected to be involved in the supply of drugs will usually be considered under other University procedures as at 3.9 below.

3.5 Where students report health, wellbeing and/or practical difficulties due to the influence of substances or alcohol, attending staff should treat these situations as health incidents and respond accordingly, such as through the administration of first aid or similar intervention, including the support of emergency services if appropriate. Students should therefore always be willing to approach University staff and to be frank about issues related to substances or alcohol in order to get support, without fear of punishment.

3.6 There is specific [guidance and education](#) for students in University residencies if they are found in possession or under the influence of controlled substances, or through the harmful use of prescription drugs or alcohol. That guidance follows the principles of this policy in prioritising education and support.

3.7 A range of support is available (within and outside the University) to students affected by issues related to the harmful use of substances or alcohol. This includes support from the University's Counselling and Mental Health Service, the Occupational Health Service, the Students' Union Advice Service, the University GP service, and the support teams relevant

to the student's programme. The [Student Support pages](#) provide details of the support available from the University.

3.8 Students and staff can find information and support for issues related to the harmful use of substances or alcohol on the [Student Support website](#).

3.9 There may be circumstances, however, where action must be considered under other University regulations such as the [Policy on Supporting Health, Fitness and Return to Study](#), [the Procedure for Suspending a Student](#), [Regulation XVII on Conduct and Discipline of Students](#) and [Fitness to Practise](#) procedures in programmes with practical training in a professional role with regulator requirements.

3.9.1 These circumstances may include instances where there is a perceived danger to or serious concern about a student or other members of the community that requires further action; where a student fails to comply with planned treatments; where a student continues to engage in the harmful use of substances or alcohol and does not engage with support services; or where a student's harmful use of substances or alcohol has consequently led to other behavioural concerns.

3.9.2 It should be noted that a student may be subject to more than one process as a result of the harmful use of substances or alcohol, though usually only one process at a time. For example, a student on a professional course with regulator requirements may be seen under the [Policy on Supporting Health, Fitness and Return to Study](#) but then referred into a Fitness to Practise Procedure.

3.10 The harmful use of substances or alcohol cannot be used as a mitigating circumstance if a student is in breach of any other University policy or procedure but the University may, at its discretion, consider the effect of the harmful use of substances or alcohol in its application of those policies/procedures.

3.11 Where controlled substances are found in the possession of a student or elsewhere they will be confiscated for destruction, usually by University Campus Support and Security staff. This is except in cases of suspected supply as at 3.3 above where substances may be passed to the police as evidence.

4. Research, Awareness Raising and Review

4.1 The University will keep its approach to issues related to the harmful use of substances and alcohol updated and informed by research and expert thinking, from within or outside of the University.

4.2 The University will work in partnership with the Students' Union and other student groups to raise awareness on harm reduction issues.

4.3 The University will make available support information and learning materials so that students can more easily make informed choices. It will also share information about drugs in local circulation which are known to have a wider health concern.

4.4 This policy will be subject to ongoing review. The University reserves the right to impose more stringent requirements and consequences around a particular substance should

significant health concerns arise. It is not expected that this provision would be applied in anything other than extreme circumstances.

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