



University of  
St Andrews

## Alcohol, drug and substance misuse

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## **Table of contents**

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Policy Statement	3
3.	Aims	3
4.	Definitions	3
5.	Principles	4
6.	Managing problems associated with Alcohol, Drugs or Substance use	4
7.	Dealing with an employee at work who is under the influence	5
8.	Consumption of alcohol during work-related social events	6
9.	Drugs or illegal substances on the premises	7
10.	Intervention and Support	7
11.	Relapse	8
12.	Exceptions to the Policy Provisions	9
13.	Confidentiality	9
14.	Sources of Advice / Voluntary Agencies	9

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The University recognises that its primary responsibility is to ensure a safe, healthy and productive environment for all employees, students and visitors. This can be put at risk by the excessive and/or inappropriate use by employees of alcohol, drugs or substances, whether illicit, prescribed or over the counter, in such a way that their health, work performance, work environment, and/or conduct of relationships are adversely affected.
- 1.2 The University encourages employees with alcohol, drug and substance related problems to seek help voluntarily and is committed to supporting any employee throughout this process.

## **2. Policy Statement**

- 2.1 Employees must ensure that they are fit to carry out their jobs safely and effectively in working environment free from the effects of alcohol, drugs or substances. Consumption of alcohol to the extent that it impairs an employee's capability to carry out their duties and/or the use of drugs or substances is forbidden during working hours. Subject to [section 8](#), the consumption of alcohol during work-related social events is permitted.
- 2.2 A breach of this policy may be deemed to be of a serious nature and an act of gross misconduct and may result in an investigation and any appropriate action under the University's disciplinary policy.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all individuals, working at all grades, within the University including all employees, casual employees, bank workers, agency workers and volunteers regardless of hours of work or contractual status. (Referred to hereinafter as "employees")

## **3. Aims**

- 3.1 This policy aims to:
  - Clarify the University's position on alcohol, drug and substance use at work in order to minimise problems at work arising from their consumption;
  - Support any employee affected by and dealing with alcohol, drugs and substance related problems through encouraging treatment where appropriate;
  - Promote the safe use of alcohol and provide information on consumption of alcohol, drugs or substances;
  - Meet the University's legal obligations to provide a safe and healthy environment to its employees, students and others at work under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
  - Identify the circumstances in which disciplinary action or other University policies are initiated in connection with alcohol, drugs and substance use.
  - Create a climate which encourages the employee not to conceal, deny or cover up any issues of alcohol, drug and substance use and give management and trade unions confidence to deal with these issues.

## **4. Definitions**

- 4.1 For the purposes of this policy alcohol, drugs and substance use is defined as any drinking, drug taking or use of substances including so-called "legal highs", either intermittent or continual, which adversely interferes with social functioning, work capability or conduct in the workplace.

- 4.2 The University will deem an employee to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or substances based on the Head of School/Unit, their appropriate delegate or colleague's, reasonable opinion.

## **5. Principles**

### **5.1 Alcohol, Drugs and Substances at work**

- 5.1.1 All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they are in a fit state to work safely without perception and performance of duties being impaired by alcohol, drugs or substances. Any consumption that affects an employee's performance or results in behaviour contrary to the normal standards of conduct at work could be deemed to be a serious breach of this policy and may result in a disciplinary investigation being initiated.
- 5.1.2 There will be some jobs or specific departments within the University where any consumption of alcohol, drugs or other substance may cause a serious risk to health and safety. This will be identified during risk assessments and where necessary localised rules will be put in place. Any contravention of these localised rules will be deemed as gross misconduct and may result in a disciplinary investigation being initiated.
- 5.1.3 It is recognised that employees may need to bring prescribed or non-prescribed medication to work for their personal use. If an employee has doubt about the safety of prescribed medications and the effect on their work, they should check with their GP. If any employee is concerned about the side effects of medication which may affect their performance at work, then they should notify their line manager so that a risk assessment can be undertaken.
- 5.1.4 The University reserves the right, where there is a reasonable case to do this, to conduct searches for alcohol, drugs or substances, including but not limited to, searches of lockers, filing cabinets, University vehicles or work stations which are on University premises. If alcohol, drugs or substances are found this may result in a disciplinary investigation being initiated.

### **5.2 Alcohol, Drug and Substance use problems**

- 5.2.1 The University will seek to prevent the development of problems relating to alcohol, drugs and substance use by raising awareness of the possible harmful consequences of the use of drugs, alcohol and other substances (prescribed or non-prescribed). In line with health and well-being promotion, the University will seek to promote positive attitudes to sensible drinking by discouraging excessive consumption of alcohol.
- 5.2.2 The University will offer support and provide advice to employees that suffer from alcohol, drug or substance problems and encourage necessary treatment either from within the University or from external agencies.

## **6. Managing problems associated with Alcohol, Drugs or Substance use**

- 6.1 Normally, alcohol, drugs or substance related issues fall into one of two distinct categories:

### **6.2 Conduct related issues**

- 6.2.1 An over-indulgence in alcohol, or the use of drugs and/or substances, which results in unacceptable or even dangerous behaviour at work is prohibited by the University. Serious

inability to work as a result of being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any other substances is considered as gross misconduct under the University's disciplinary policy and may result in a disciplinary investigation being initiated.

- 6.2.2 Any employee who appears under the influence of, and incapable of working effectively or safely due to, alcohol, drug or substance use should be dealt with in accordance with [Section 7](#) of this policy. If appropriate, the employee should be removed from the workplace, and an investigation in accordance with the University's Disciplinary procedure will be conducted which may result in disciplinary action.
- 6.2.3 Each case relating to conduct and alcohol, drugs, or substance use will be dealt with on an individual basis and the most appropriate action will be followed after examining all the evidence available and including, if appropriate, input from Occupational Health Services.

### **6.3 Ongoing Health related issues**

- 6.3.1 When an employee's usage of alcohol, drugs or substances repeatedly interferes with their health and/or work then this matter should be addressed, in the first instance, by the Head of School/Unit and if necessary, a member of Human Resources.
- 6.3.2 The following characteristics, especially in combinations, may indicate the presence of an alcohol, drugs or substance related problem but may also indicate other health problems:
  - Absenteeism: instances of unauthorised leave, frequent Friday and/or Monday absences, leaving work early, lateness (especially returning from lunch), excessive sickness absence, unusually high level of short-term and intermittent absences with, or without, explanation;
  - High accident level either at work or elsewhere such as driving or at home;
  - Work performance: difficulty in concentration, work requires increased effort, individual tasks take more time, problems with remembering instructions or increased number of mistakes;
  - Mood swings: irritability, depression, and general confusion;
  - Appearance: deterioration in physical appearance and/or wellbeing;
  - Often smelling of alcohol.
- 6.3.3 Heads of Schools/Units and Line Managers have an important role to play in identifying problems at work that are being caused or contributed to by an employee's use of alcohol, drugs or substances. Where there is reasonable belief that the deterioration in work performance and/or changes in patterns of behaviour may be due to alcohol, drug or substance use, managers should raise this directly with the employee. At the meeting managers should highlight aspects of performance or behaviour that have given cause for concern and encourage the employee to talk freely about any problems. If an alcohol, drug or substance related problem is acknowledged or suspected, then the employee should be referred to Occupational Health Services with their consent by a management referral through Human Resources.

## **7. Dealing with an employee at work who is under the influence**

- 7.1 Where an employee is suspected of having consumed alcohol, drugs or other substances that affect work performance or result in unacceptable behaviour, the Head of School/Unit will need to take immediate action. Where there is a reasonable belief that an employee is at work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or substances, the following process should be followed:

- Immediately remove the employee from the work area and any potential risks. Speak to the employee to determine if they have consumed any alcohol, drug or any other substance;
- If it is suspected that the employee is under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any other substance, then you should inform them that you suspect that they are under the influence and as a result you are removing them from their work and sending them home with immediate effect;
- If the employee is to be sent home, then consideration should be given to their ability to return home safely;
- However, if it is apparent that the employee is not under the influence, then they should return to work, but Heads/ Line Managers should ensure that the employee is closely monitored in case their condition deteriorates or medical attention is required;
- Record what happened, including any eye witness statements that can confirm the employee is/was under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances;
- Discuss with Human Resources and, in consultation, investigate the matter as soon as possible in accordance with the University's disciplinary procedure;
- Consideration should be given to suspending the employee as appropriate and if the circumstances warrant it. No employee should be suspended without prior consultation with Human Resources.

7.2 Consumption of alcohol, drugs or any other substances may result in the following symptoms, although these are not exhaustive and may also be indicative of other health problems:

- Slurred speech;
- Stumbling or having difficulty maintaining balance and walking independently;
- Trouble making eye contact;
- Feeling excessively cold or warm (to oneself or to the touch);
- Shortness of breath;
- Erratic behaviour;
- Withdrawn or aggressive behaviour;
- Queasiness and vomiting;
- Unconsciousness.

7.3 Whilst the University will make reasonable attempts to be supportive to an employee who has an alcohol, drug or substance related problem, any employee who is incapable of working due to intoxication may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **8. Consumption of alcohol during work-related social events**

- 8.1 The University does not exercise a total ban on the consumption of alcohol in a social situation during the working day (e.g. lunchtime events, retirement presentations, exhibitions). However, employees are expected to exercise appropriate self-control over their alcohol consumption.
- 8.2 The University expects all employees to demonstrate responsible behaviour at work, work-related functions and work-related social events, including external training courses, and to act in a way that will not have a detrimental effect on the University's reputation. If you entertain clients, colleagues from other institutions, or represent the University at external events where alcohol is served, you are considered to be "at work" regardless of whether

you do so outside of your normal working hours. Consequently, the University expects you to remain professional and ready for work at all times.

- 8.3 Employees who are required to attend work following work-related functions and work-related social events where they have consumed alcohol must ensure that they are free from the effects of alcohol and capable of carrying out their duties to the required standard.
- 8.4 Heads of Schools/Units or an appropriate delegate should act to prevent the excessive consumption of alcohol by employees at such events and take steps to address any unacceptable conduct that may occur.
- 8.5 The consumption of alcohol during work-related functions and work-related social events is permitted on the basis that there should always be an equal availability of non-alcoholic drinks, and where possible these events should be held towards the end of the 'normal' working day.
- 8.6 The University expects all employees to comply with the drink-driving legislation at all times. The University's reputation will be damaged if an employee is convicted of a drink-driving offence. If your job requires you to drive and you lose your driving licence, the University may invoke disciplinary procedures and you may be dismissed. Committing a drink-driving offence outside or during working hours or while working for the University may, depending on the nature of the employee's role, result in disciplinary action being taken.

## **9. Drugs or illegal substances on the premises**

- 9.1 An employee who knowingly takes mood or performance altering drugs or substances on University premises and where such drugs have not been prescribed on medical grounds for that employee, will be deemed to be committing an act of gross misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- 9.2 Disciplinary action will be taken if any employee is found to be buying, selling or dealing in drugs and/or substances; is in unlawful possession of drugs and/or such substances; has stolen drugs and/or substances from the University; or is or has been involved in the attempted illegal manufacture of drugs and/or substances, whether on University premises or in other locations. In these situations, the University will notify the Police.

## **10. Intervention and Support**

- 10.1 Alcohol and drug related problems may develop for a variety of reasons and over a considerable period of time. The University is committed, in so far as possible, to treating these problems in a similar way to other health issues. Support will be provided where possible with a view to supporting full recovery, allowing an employee to return to work and to the full range of duties (see 10.6). This may include:
  - A referral to Occupational Health Services or appropriate treatment providers, where necessary in conjunction with the employee's GP.
  - Time off to attend treatment as recommended by the Occupational Health Services, GP or specialist and recognition of the period of absence for treatment as periods of sickness absence.
  - Reasonable adjustments to duties or other work-placed support during the period of treatment.

- 10.2 The University expects that if an employee recognises that they have a problem with alcohol, drugs or other substances, they should try and seek help voluntarily and as soon as they can. The first point of contact may be with their own GP, a specialist/help organisation (details at end of policy), or with Occupational Health Services. Employees can confidentially self-refer themselves to Occupational Health Services for advice and support if they have a usage problem and arrange a confidential appointment at any time. However, the unit is not a treatment service and will only provide advice on dealing with the problem and information on external agencies for treatment.
- 10.3 If an employee finishes a programme of treatment and does not fully return to work as anticipated upon completion of treatment then Human Resources and the Head of School/Unit will meet with the employee to discuss what further action should be taken.
- 10.4 If a Head of School/Unit or appropriate delegate has reason to believe that an employee is suffering from the effects of alcohol, drug or substance use which is causing deterioration in their work or behaviour at work, they should meet with the employee. In addition, if an employee discloses they have an alcohol, drugs or substance use problem, the Head of School/Unit or appropriate delegate should meet with the employee to discuss the matter. The first approach should normally be for the Line Manager to encourage the employee to recognise their problem and to seek advice either through their GP or Occupational Health Services. The Manager should also explain their concern and any impact on the employee's work. If an alcohol, drugs or substance related problem is acknowledged, then the employee can be referred, with their consent, to Occupational Health Services through Human Resources.
- 10.5 If, after meeting with the employee, discussing the behaviour that has caused concern, and offering the employee and opportunity to account for their behaviour, the Head of School/Unit considers that an employee is suffering the effects of alcohol, drug or substance use which affects their work performance or attendance and they refuse an offer of treatment, then the matter may be dealt with under the University's disciplinary or capability procedures.
- 10.6 Upon resumption of duties, or on return to work following a period of treatment, the employee will normally be able to return to the same job. Reasonable adjustments will be put in place to assist the employee at work. If it is decided that the effects of the employee's problems render them unfit or unsuitable to resume work and being at work would be inconsistent with the long term resolution of the problem then the University's capability procedures will be invoked. Redeployment to another role with the University may be considered.
- 10.7 If an employee acknowledges an alcohol, drug or substance related problem and they undertake treatment and/or rehabilitation, any related performance or disciplinary action may be suspended or discontinued pending the outcome of the treatment.

## **11. Relapse**

- 11.1 Where an employee having received treatment suffers a relapse, the University will consider the case on its individual merits. In these circumstances the Head of School/Unit should seek advice from Human Resources to determine the appropriate course of action.

## **12. Exceptions to the Policy Provisions**

12.1 It is recognised that in the course of academic research within the University, there may be a requirement to have illegal drugs, alcohol or substances onto University premises. If this is the case, then the appropriate Head of School should be notified in advance and permission sought. However, these substances are not to be used for personal consumption and should be stored in a secure facility at all times; a breach of this condition will result in an investigation and possible disciplinary action.

## **13. Confidentiality**

13.1 The University aims to ensure that the confidentiality of any employee experiencing alcohol, drug or substance related problems is maintained appropriately by Human Resources and/or Occupational Health Services, Heads of School/Unit, Line Managers and where it is necessary to inform them, colleagues. However, it needs to be recognised that in supporting employees some degree of information sharing is likely to be necessary.

## **14. Sources of Advice / Voluntary Agencies**

- Own GP/Health Centre
- Human Resources – <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/businesspartner/>
- Fife Alcohol Support Service - <https://www.fassaction.org.uk/>
- University Occupational Health Services- 01334 462572, <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ehss/Occupationalhealth/>
- University Equality and Diversity self-help guide - <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/edi/Self-Help/Alcohol/>
- Alcoholics Anonymous, National Helpline 0845 769 7555.
- Drinkline 0800 917 8282
- Scottish Drugs Forum, 0141-221-1175, <http://www.sdf.org.uk>
- National Drugs Helpline, 0800-77-66-00 (24 hour)
- Action on Addiction- <http://www.actiononaddiction.org.uk/>

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