



Alcohol and Drugs Policy

1. Statement

The University expects all employees to be in a fit and safe condition for work. This policy and procedure covers expectations relating to alcohol and drugs at work, and explains what action the University will take where alcohol or drug misuse has been identified.

2. Scope and definitions

This policy covers all employees. In addition, all individuals working at the University but not employed by the University, e.g. agency workers and contractors, are expected to comply with the policy principles. Those involved in research with controlled substances must do so in line with licensing and safety guidelines.

'Drug' includes: any drug which alters the way the body or mind works, whether legal or illegal; and substances such as solvents being used for a drug-like effect. It excludes prescription and over the counter medicines, except where they are not taken in line with a valid prescription or dosage instructions.

'Misuse' refers to use that is problematic or harmful, either for the individual or others.

3. Principles

- Drinking alcohol during the working day or shift is not allowed, except by permission of the Head of School/Support Group Department (or their nominated deputy) at social occasions, e.g. to mark a celebration. On such occasions, employees are expected to drink responsibly. Non-alcoholic drinks must also be made available.
- Employees¹ have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others who could be affected by their actions in the workplace. Employees must be in a fit and safe condition for work and not attend work under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In some cases the legitimate use of

¹ Where 'employee' is referred to in the principles, this will include all individuals not employed by the University but who are working at the University, e.g. agency workers and contractors. However only employees can receive Occupational Health support.

prescribed medication can adversely affect an employee's ability to do their job. In these cases, the employee must inform their line manager of the adjustments required to their role so that the manager can adjust their duties .

- Employees must not possess, buy, sell, or use drugs at work. The University will report criminal activity related to drug misuse to the police.
- The taking of alcohol or drugs during the working day or shift or being under the influence of such substances during the working day or shift is a serious disciplinary offence. Misuse of alcohol or drugs outside of the working day or shift where it affects an employee's performance, conduct, attendance or safety at work will also be subject to formal action.
- The University will support employees who recognise they have an alcohol or drug problem and are willing to seek help through Occupational Health.
- Managers will handle information sensitively, confidentially, and in line with Records Management guidance.

4. Policy History and Review

Approval Date: May 2018

Approved By: CJCNC

Year of Next Review: 2020

Procedure

1. Alcohol or drugs on University premises

Employees must not drink alcohol or take drugs during the working day or shift, or be under the influence of such substances during the working day or shift. Employees drinking alcohol or taking drugs during the working day or shift will be investigated as part of the disciplinary procedure. Exceptions to this will be for medicines taken in line with a valid prescription or dosage instructions, or where alcohol is served at work with the permission of the Head of School/Support Group Department (or their nominated deputy) for social events, e.g. to mark a celebration. On such occasions, employees are expected to drink responsibly. Non-alcoholic drinks must also be made available.

If an employee is taking medication which is adversely affecting their ability to do their job, they must inform their line manager of the adjustments required to their role. The manager must then adjust the employee's duties to ensure the safety of the employee and others. For example, the employee should not drive or operate machinery if they are taking medication which may cause drowsiness.

Occupational Health advice can be sought on potential adjustments to the role.

Possessing, buying or selling drugs at work is also not permitted and will be investigated as part of the disciplinary procedure. Should criminal activity be suspected, the University will report its suspicions to the police.

2. Managing staff under the influence of alcohol or drugs

Colleagues who suspect an employee may be working under the influence of alcohol or drugs must seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Advisor or speak to the employee's line manager. If it is unclear who the employee's manager is, the concerned colleague should report their concerns to their local College/Support Group HR Advisor.

An employee suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be informed that this is not acceptable and sent home on full pay by an appropriate manager, normally their line manager.

The manager sending the employee home will inform their local College/Support Group HR Advisor. The manager will also consider whether it is safe for the employee to travel home independently or whether they need to be assisted.

Note: If the employee holds an honorary contract with the NHS, the manager will also inform the employee's Clinical Director.

On the employee's return to work, the manager must meet the employee to carry out a brief factfinding investigation and follow the disciplinary procedure. If the manager has cause to suspect criminal activity related to the misuse of drugs, they must seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Advisor on reporting these suspicions to the police. If the employee discloses that they have an alcohol or drug problem and is willing to seek and accept help, the employee will be referred to Occupational Health (see Section 4).

If the fact-finding investigation confirms there is a disciplinary case to answer and where an alcohol or drug problem is disclosed, in most cases disciplinary action will be suspended while the employee seeks professional help via Occupational Health. Note: where misuse of alcohol or drugs involves gross misconduct, disciplinary action will not be suspended.

3. Supporting staff with an alcohol or drug problem

Individual Awareness

For support to be offered by the University, an employee who recognises they have an alcohol or drug problem must inform their manager who will refer them to Occupational Health (see Section 4).

Colleague Awareness and Support

If an employee is aware that a colleague has an alcohol or drug problem (see Appendix 1 for information on recognising signs of substance misuse), they can encourage the colleague to acknowledge their problem and to seek professional help. The employee should also alert their local College/Support Group HR Advisor or the colleague's manager to their concerns. If it is unclear who the employee's manager is, the concerned colleague should report their concerns to their local College/Support Group HR Advisor.

Manager Awareness and Support

If a manager is made aware or suspects that a member of their team has an alcohol or drug problem, they should seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Advisor.

The manager must meet with the employee to raise their concerns. The manager must give examples of when the employee's attendance, behaviour and/or performance has been a cause for concern and ask if these are due to an underlying problem with alcohol or drugs. The manager must also express concern for the health and welfare of the employee and highlight the available support via Occupational Health.

Where the employee confirms they have a problem or suspects they have a problem, the manager must refer the employee to Occupational Health (see Section 4). Note: Where the employee holds more than one contract with the University or if the employee holds an honorary contract with the NHS, the manager will also inform the employee's other manager/Clinical Director of the employee's disclosure. Following the employee's disclosure, the manager must do a risk assessment to consider if any changes should be made to the employee's duties, in particular if the employee's role involves safety critical duties (e.g. driving, clinical duties, operating machinery). This risk assessment should be reviewed following OH advice.

Where the employee denies having a problem with alcohol or drugs, the manager must make it clear to the employee that they will manage their attendance, behaviour and/or performance in line with the appropriate policy and without the support available through this policy.

4. Referral to Occupational Health and Treatment

4.1 Referral and Consent to Treatment

The referral to Occupational Health must be made by the manager with the employee's knowledge of the purpose of the referral. It is not Occupational Health's role to inform the employee that the manager suspects the employee has an alcohol or drug problem. Referral information is available at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/occupational-health/managers/referral/management-referral>

At the Occupational Health (OH) referral, the employee will be asked to give their consent to:

- attending OH consultations,
- following a treatment plan,
- allowing OH to request medical reports, and
- allowing OH to provide reports to the manager and HR.

Refusal to provide consent will result in withdrawal of OH support for treatment under the terms of this policy, and OH will inform the manager of this. The manager must then contact their local College/Support Group HR Advisor to seek advice on next steps.

4.2 During Treatment

During treatment, the employee may either be at work or on sick leave. Sick pay entitlement is covered in the [Conditions of Employment](#). Employees attending work during treatment will be allowed reasonable paid time off work to attend counselling or other appointments.

If the employee fails to attend a scheduled appointment, OH will ascertain the reason for this, and before a further appointment is offered, discuss with the manager whether OH support should continue to be offered.

An employee may be offered a six month extension to a treatment plan if the original timescales will not be met but OH advises the employee is making good progress in their recovery. Any extension requires agreement from the manager and OH.

If the employee fails to comply with their treatment plan, or the expected progression is not met within the agreed timescales, OH will inform the employee and their manager. The manager must then seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Advisor regarding next steps, e.g. re-instating the disciplinary procedure.

5. Following Treatment

When the employee has completed their treatment plan and made the expected recovery, OH will inform the individual and their manager. The manager will meet with the employee to acknowledge this and explain that they will manage the employee's attendance, behaviour or performance as normal.

If the employee appears to have a relapse, the manager must seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Advisor regarding appropriate next steps. Further advice from OH may be requested and consideration will be given to whether additional treatment and rehabilitation time is appropriate in the circumstances.

APPENDIX 1: Recognising signs of alcohol/drug misuse

Signs to indicate an alcohol or drug-related problem can include:

- persistent short term absence
- unauthorised absence
- poor time keeping
- reduced work performance
- deterioration in appearance
- increased accidents at work
- abnormal fluctuations in concentration and energy
- sudden mood swings
- unusual irritability or aggression

However these signs can be caused by a number of other factors, and should be regarded only as indications that an employee *may* be misusing alcohol or drugs.

Further information is available at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/health-wellbeing/healthy-workplaces/alcohol-drugs>