Alcohol and Drugs Policy

1. Policy Statement

This policy and procedure covers expectations relating to alcohol and drugs at work. It also explains what action the University will take where alcohol or drug misuse has been identified.

2. Scope

This policy covers all employees and all individuals working at the University but not employed by the University, for example, agency workers and contractors. Those involved in research with controlled substances must do so in line with licensing and safety guidelines.

3. Definitions

**Alcohol**
any drink containing ethanol.

**‘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.

**Employee**
someone working under an employment contract at the University of Edinburgh.

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

4. Principles

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:
4.1 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, you are expected to drink responsibly. Non-alcoholic drinks must also be made available.

4.2 You have a responsibility to take reasonable care of yourself and others who could be affected by your actions in the workplace. You 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 prescribed medication can adversely affect your ability to do your job. In these cases, you must inform your line manager of the adjustments required to your role so that the manager can adjust your duties. Occupational Advice can be sought on potential adjustments to the role.

4.3 You must not possess, buy, sell, or use drugs at work. The University will report criminal activity related to drug misuse to the police.

4.4 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 your performance, conduct, attendance or safety at work will also be subject to formal action under the Disciplinary Policy.

4.5 The University will support you if you recognise that you have an alcohol or drug problem and are willing to seek help through Occupational Health. Only an Employee of the University of Edinburgh will receive support from Occupational Health.

4.6 Managers will handle information sensitively, confidentially, and in line with Records Management guidance.

5. Links to Other Relevant Policies and Guidance
You may find it useful to refer to the University’s other policies:

Disciplinary Policy
Occupational Health
6. Policy History and Review

Approval Date: May 2018
Approved By: CJCNC
Year of Next Review: 2026
Procedure

1. Managing staff under the influence of alcohol or drugs

If you suspect a colleague may be working under the influence of alcohol or drugs you must seek advice from your colleague’s manager. If it is unclear who the colleague’s manager is, you should report your concerns to your local HR Partner.

If you are suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs you will be informed that this is not acceptable and will be sent home or requested to cease work for the day if working off campus.

If you are sent home or requested to cease work for the day, if working off campus, your manager will inform their local HR Partner. Your manager will also consider whether it is safe for you to travel home independently or whether you need to be assisted.

**Note:** If you hold an honorary contract with the NHS, the manager will also inform your Clinical Director.

On your return to work, your manager must meet with you to carry out a brief fact finding investigation and follow the disciplinary procedure. If your manager has cause to suspect criminal activity related to the misuse of drugs, they must seek advice from their local HR Partner on reporting these suspicions to the police. If you disclose that you have an alcohol or drug problem and are willing to seek and accept help, you 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 you seek professional help via Occupational Health. In cases where the misuse of alcohol or drugs involves gross misconduct, disciplinary action will not be suspended.

2. Supporting staff with an alcohol or drug problem

2.1 Individual Awareness

For support to be offered by the University, you must recognise you have an alcohol or drug problem and must inform your manager, who will refer you to Occupational Health (see Section 3).
2.2 Colleague Awareness and Support

If you are aware that a colleague has an alcohol or drug problem, you can encourage the colleague to acknowledge their problem and to seek professional help. You should also alert your colleague’s manager to your concerns. If it is unclear who the employee’s manager is, you should report their concerns to their local HR Partner.

2.3 Manager Awareness and Support

If you are made aware or suspect that a member of your team has an alcohol or drug problem, you should seek advice from your local HR Partner.

You must meet with the employee to raise your concerns. You 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. You 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, you must refer the employee to Occupational Health (see Section 3). Where the employee holds more than one contract with the University or if the employee holds an honorary contract with the NHS, you will also inform the employee’s other manager/Clinical Director of the employee’s disclosure. Following the employee’s disclosure, you 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). A general risk assessment form is available on the Health and Safety webpage. This risk assessment should be reviewed following Occupational Health advice.

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

3. Referral to Occupational Health and Treatment

3.1 Referral and Consent to Treatment

The referral to Occupational Health must be made by your line manager, with your knowledge of the purpose of the referral. It is not Occupational Health’s role to inform you that your manager suspects you have an alcohol or drug problem. Referral information is available here.
At the Occupational Health (OH) referral, you will be asked to give your consent to:
- attending OH consultations,
- following a treatment plan,
- allowing OH to request medical reports, and
- allowing OH to provide reports to your manager and local HR Partner.

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

### 3.2 During Treatment

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

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

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

If you fail to comply with their treatment plan, or the expected progression is not met within the agreed timescales, OH will inform you and your manager. Your manager must then seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Partner regarding next steps.

### 4. Following Treatment

When you have completed your treatment plan and made the expected recovery, OH will inform you and your manager. Your manager will meet with you to acknowledge this and explain that they will manage your attendance, behaviour or performance as normal.
If you appear to have a relapse, your manager must seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Partner 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.