

University of the West of England Student Drugs including Alcohol Policy

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Rose Ward Safeguarding Manager

Becky Risley Specialist Drug & Alcohol Practitioner

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UWE Bristol does not condone or condemn the use of drugs including alcohol; we are focused on providing students with the knowledge to be safe and feel supported. We operate a policy of harm reduction that prioritises the welfare and wellbeing of our students and wider community.

We believe that a harm reduction approach is in the best interests of our student community and as an institution as it aims to reduce the negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use and minimise barriers to accessing support.

Introduction and purpose

What do we mean by harm reduction?

UWE Bristol is committed to providing safe, healthy, learning living and working environments for all students, staff and visitors across all campuses. We expect staff, visitors and contractors to abide by the principles of this policy and act in respect to the principles. UWE Bristol recognises that students may choose to engage in the use of drugs including alcohol and therefore we have an obligation to provide best practice interventions and approach that are fundamentally about managing risk and supporting wellbeing. This remains aligned with UUK recommendations and the [city-wide approach](#) adopted by Bristol.

A harm reduction approach is a combination of policy, strategy and practical support alongside where appropriate referring to pathways for clinical interventions aimed at supporting individuals and the wider community, in reducing the risk-taking behaviours associated with drug use including alcohol. The primary focus of harm reduction is the safety and wellbeing of the person and those around them rather than on their use of drugs including alcohol.

At UWE Bristol we recognise that the use and purchase of illicit substances is illegal and may have implications and impact on student studies, wellbeing and future careers, especially on professional courses. Therefore, harm reduction in relation to our student population will include collaborative work with local agencies such as the Police and could trigger other internal disciplinary policies and procedures aimed at supporting students to be healthy, ready and able graduates.

If a student or member of the community is concerned about a UWE students problematic substance misuse including alcohol, they can contact the serious concerns line on 01173284000. Please see the [crisis and serious concerns webpage](#) for more information.

Approach and commitment

UWE Bristol is committed to providing duty of care to all students and want to ensure that education and support is available to all. This commitment helps us to confirm that we are acting responsibly to ensure the safety of all our students and why we have adopted the principles of harm reduction.

The wellbeing of our student community is the key drive of this approach which can only be achieved by working in collaboration with our students and wider community. Therefore, we commit to offer students inclusive and non-judgemental evidence-based support/ advice around their substance including alcohol use. In return we expect a commitment from students to be aware of and understand the harm reduction approach, engaging with information and education about their drug including alcohol use.

What are UWE Bristol's principles of harm reduction?

UWE Bristol's approach to harm reduction hinges on four key principles:

1. **Educate, knowledge and understanding, health education:** Our first principle aims to empower students to be curious and make informed decisions using evidence-based information. UWE Bristol works to support the development of self-confidence and autonomy by providing education and non-judgemental advice around the use of and impact drugs including alcohol. This delivered in form of multiple approaches within various services and procedures at the University and importantly works jointly with Students Union to promote education.
2. **Support:** We are committed to offering support to all students including those who choose not to engage in drug including alcohol behaviours. UWE Bristol recognises that harmful substance use can impact on various aspects of student lives including their mental health, sexual violence or harassment, studies, finances and the lives of others. Therefore, this policy recognises the importance of harm reduction offering not only substance-specific support. The principles of harm reduction are not punitive or mandatory and support is available for those who wish to engage. Communicating local and current risks is a method of harm reduction and information that could benefit others will be valued and shared as appropriate.
3. **Partnership:** We are fully committed to partnership working with key stakeholders at The Students' Union at UWE and within the University, but also our community partners. As the first University and Students' Union partnership to be awarded the [SOS-UK Drug and Alcohol Impact Accreditation](#) we have seen first-hand the impact of collaborative working on creating better student outcomes and raising awareness of harm reduction initiatives.
 - [Bristol is the first harm reduction city](#), which means the city aim to provide judgement free support to lower the risks surrounding drugs including alcohol. At UWE alcohol and many of our students will partake in Bristol's night-time economy. We recognise the importance of aligning ourselves with messaging and support pathways that are city wide. This also means creating strong links and routes to referral with both Bristol and South Gloucestershire community drug and alcohol services to ensure students are accessing the appropriate care and transition of support can be offered beyond UWE Bristol.
 - Finally, the biggest partnership is that with our students and their support systems such as family and friends. UWE Bristol is committed to working with the student voice and providing appropriate platforms to better develop service.

4. **Responsibility and Respect:** UWE Bristol recognises that for many people the use of drugs including alcohol is not a social or cultural norm and can be experienced as intimidating, alienating and disruptive. Additionally, people who have previously struggled with problematic use may wish to avoid exposure to drugs including alcohol for their own safety. UWE Bristol is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment that fosters respect for difference and consideration of others. UWE Bristol asks those in our community to consider the impact of peer pressure on others. UWE Bristol is a place of education – antisocial behaviour negatively impacting on others wellbeing and ability to learn will not be tolerated.

Response to drugs including alcohol on UWE Bristol premises

Possession and individual use

Where UWE Bristol becomes aware of personal use and possession on UWE Bristol premises, it will follow harm reduction principles and offer advice and support. Where controlled substances are found, they will be confiscated and safely disposed of in line with protocol agreed with the Police Service.

UWE Bristol takes antisocial behaviour seriously. If UWE Bristol becomes aware that a student's behaviour in relation to use of drugs including alcohol is impacting negatively on others, this may be managed via [Student Conduct](#) and [Professional Suitability](#) processes as appropriate.

Students may be asked to leave seminars, lectures or may not be given access to facilities such as the Sport Centre, centre for music if they are under the influence of substances including alcohol.

If a student is known to be on professional placement and regular alcohol or other drug use is occurring, this will result a discussion with a student program lead which where appropriate will lead to a [Professional Suitability](#) referral and will potentially result in your placement being put on hold.

On a case-by-case basis, including consideration of type and amount of substance, history of similar incidence, impact on others and any presenting risks, UWE Bristol may take further action via [Student Conduct](#), [Fitness to Study](#) and [Professional Suitability](#) processes which could include any or all of the below:

- Provision of or signposting to support services
- Provision of or signposting to educational courses
- Disciplinary sanctions such as fines and written warnings
- A Notice to Quit issued from UWE Bristol accommodation

- Suspension or expulsion from academic programmes.

Response to drugs including in UWE accommodation

UWE Accommodation Services team has a duty of care to support residents who are facing issues relating to drugs use including alcohol, and will work with those who are willing to engage with Accommodation's policies and procedures.

Any person found on premises managed by Accommodation Services having used or being suspected of having used illegal drugs will be provided with the appropriate care and support in relation to substance use including signposting to internal and external services for education and support.

Residents found to be in possession of, or using illegal drugs and psychoactive substances will be approached on a case-by-case basis.

In each case, our aim is to reduce harm caused by such activity through providing support through education and referral or signposting to relevant internal and external support services. However, the possession, use or dealing of illegal drugs and psychoactive substances is a breach of Accommodation Services Terms & Conditions and therefore subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

In some cases, the team may refer cases to the University's Conduct Team who will use the University's [student conduct](#) policy, which forms part of the [Behaviour and health framework for students \(PDF\)](#). There are a range of possible outcomes following these processes from a First Formal Warning to a Notice to Quit, which can be found on the [Behaviour Management](#) page.

This policy is applicable to any persons, visitors, contractors, conference delegate or third-party resident (Kaplan College) working, visiting or residing in Accommodation Managed by UWE Accommodation Services.

Supply and intent to supply

The dealing of drugs will be seen as harmful to the individual, others and to the reputation of UWE Bristol. Where there is reason to believe that a student has been dealing drugs or has invited others on UWE Bristol premises with the intention for them to deal to others, UWE Bristol will ordinarily immediately suspend the student pending internal investigation and/or criminal proceedings.

Regardless of any criminal proceedings and related outcome, UWE will, in accordance with [Student Conduct](#) and [Professional Suitability](#) policies, determine on the balance of probabilities whether the student has been involved in the supply or production of drugs. If it is concluded that the student has this has been the case, UWE Bristol will ordinarily permanently exclude the student. Any illegal drugs that have been confiscated during this process may be provided to the Police as evidence.

Response to drugs including alcohol off UWE Bristol premises

If UWE Bristol becomes aware that a student has been arrested or charged off campus due to criminal offences related to the use or supply of drugs including alcohol, depending on the nature of the offence this may be managed via [Student Conduct](#), [Professional Suitability](#) or [Fitness to Study](#) processes as appropriate. Where charges related to drug dealing have been brought but criminal proceedings do not result in conviction, [Student Conduct](#) and [Professional Suitability](#) processes will continue and if it is decided on the balance of probability that a student has been involved in the supply or production of drugs, then the maximum penalty outcome under conduct cases, could be exclusion from the University.

UWE Bristol takes antisocial behaviour seriously. If UWE Bristol becomes aware that a student's behaviour in relation to the use of drugs including alcohol is impacting negatively on others, this may be managed via [Student Conduct](#) and [Professional Suitability](#) processes as appropriate.

Students living in accommodation with alternative providers are encouraged to review their own drug and alcohol policies.

Response to drugs including alcohol on programmes leading to professional registration and/or a licence to practise in a professional context

Students who are undertaking a programme leading to professional registration need to understand that problematic substance misuse including alcohol may have a serious impact on their studies and professional registration.

For students on programmes leading to professional registration, concerns in relation to drug use including alcohol must be reported to the relevant Programme Team. The Head of School (or nominee) will decide on the appropriate action to take on consideration of the case.

Please find the relevant programmes are listed in [Appendix 1 of the Professional Suitability Policy](#).

Risk to self and/or others

Where there is a potential risk to a student's own and others safety by misadventure due to drugs including alcohol use, please contact the UWE serious concerns team on [Crisis and serious concerns - Health and wellbeing | UWE Bristol](#).

This concern will be triaged, and the relevant programme team be contacted, following this a Coordinated Support Approach (CSA) should be taken as a first step in an aim to mitigate

risk. A temporary suspension from placement can also be authorised and implemented by the Head of School (or nominee) as a precautionary measure where there is an immediate risk to patient safety. The student should always be asked if they would agree to take a period of timeout in the first instance and a suspension from practice should be the last resort if an agreement cannot be established. A CSA meeting can be implemented by the Programme Team at a local level and can therefore be recognised as supportive action under Stage 1 of the [Professional Suitability](#) Policy.

Following the CSA meeting, the Head of School (or nominee) will decide whether a further meeting under Stage 2 or Stage 3 of the [Professional Suitability](#) Policy is required. This would be appropriate if risk cannot be mitigated with a supportive Action Plan.

Emerging low-level concerns

Where drug use is of concern but does not present an immediate risk to self or others, such as occasional/social use of cannabis, the Programme Leader should arrange a Stage 1 [professional suitability](#) meeting with the student. The meeting should be supportive with a focus on learning, development and support. An Action Plan should be agreed and monitored. If the Action Plan is not effective and the concerns continue or escalate, the student may then be required to attend a meeting at Stage 2 or Stage 3 of the [Professional Suitability Policy](#). This could lead to a suspension from studies to mitigate risk to self or others, while the student is encouraged to engage with the support required to enable them to be safe and successful in their studies.

Safeguarding responsibilities

UWE Bristol is committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect and to ensuring that all staff and students are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, are alert to safeguarding concerns and know how to respond to concerns. Children and vulnerable adults are not able to protect themselves from people who may be in care giving roles who are engaging in problematic substance misuse including alcohol and therefore are more vulnerable to harm due to this.

Please report any Safeguarding concerns involving a student to the UWE serious concerns line 01173284000 and familiarise yourself with the [UWE Safeguarding Policy](#).

Related policies and procedures

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty of care on employers to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of staff, students and other users of its premises.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 states that a person is guilty of an offence if driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle in a public place while unfit through drink or drugs.

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 states that the misuse of drugs applies to the ‘nonmedical use of drugs that are only intended for use in medical treatment and the use of drugs that have no medical purposes’ Such drugs are controlled under this legislation The University works within this framework and is therefore clear that the possession and/or use of illegal drugs on its premises is unacceptable and breaches may be subject to disciplinary or legal action.

The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 creates the following criminal offences covering the supply of a psychoactive substance:

- producing a psychoactive substance (section 4 of the Act)
- supplying, or offering to supply, a psychoactive substance (section 5)
- possession of a psychoactive substance with intent to supply it (section 7)
- importing or exporting a psychoactive substance (section 8)
- possessing a psychoactive substance in a custodial institution (section 9).

The Drug Driving (Specified Limits) (England and Wales) Regulations 2014 states that it is illegal to drive if either: a person is unfit to do so because of legal or illegal drugs; or if there are certain levels of certain drugs in their blood.

Review, approval and publication

This document should be reviewed by the Drug and Alcohol Steering Group every two years. The Drug and Alcohol Steering Group will consult with the Safeguarding Steering Group to review any suggested amendments before seeking approval from the University Executive Committee.

Ownership and oversight

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Senior Policy Owner:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Registrar
Policy Author:	Safeguarding Manager
Overseeing committee:	Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee
Compliance measures:	
Related policies, procedures and codes of practice:	Behaviour and Health Framework (Fitness to Study, Student Conduct and Professional Suitability Policies); Safeguarding Policy

Related legislative and/or regulatory requirements	Listed above on pp.8–9
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Version history

Version	Date	Summary of changes	Author
V2.0	9/10/2019	Policy renamed and revised to reflect shift to harm reduction approach	Safeguarding Manager
V3.0	3/2024	Updates including new sections on response to drugs-related issues and students	Safeguarding Manager