

Student Drugs including Alcohol Policy

April 2026

Contents

Introduction and Purpose	3
What do we mean by harm reduction?	3
What are UWE's Principles of Harm Reduction?	3
Response to Possession and Anti-Social Behaviour	4
Response to Drugs including Alcohol in UWE Accommodation	5
Supply and Intent to Supply	5
Response to Drugs including Alcohol on Programmes Leading to Professional	
Registration and/or Licence to Practice in a Professional Context	5
Risk to Self and/or Others	6
Emerging Low-Level Concerns	6
Safeguarding Responsibilities	6
Related Acts and Laws	6
Review, Approval and Publication	7
Ownership and Oversight	7
Version History	7

Introduction and Purpose

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.

What do we mean by harm reduction?

UWE Bristol is committed to providing safe and healthy learning, living and working environments for all students, staff and visitors across all campuses. 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.

Harm reduction combines policy, strategy, and practical support, alongside referrals to clinical interventions where appropriate. Its purpose is to help individuals reduce risk-taking behaviours linked to drug and alcohol use. 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 can affect your studies, wellbeing, and future career—particularly for students on professional courses. Our harm reduction approach therefore includes working closely with local agencies, such as the Police, and may involve internal disciplinary processes. These measures are designed to support students in becoming 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 0117 3284000. Please see the [crisis and serious concerns webpage](#) for more information.

What are UWE Bristol's Principles of Harm Reduction?

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

1. **Education:** We aim to empower students to make informed decisions through evidence-based information and non-judgemental advice about drugs and alcohol. Education is delivered through multiple services, external partners and in partnership with The Students' Union.
2. **Support:** We have a duty of care and provide support for all students, including those who do not use drugs or alcohol. Harmful substance use can affect mental health, safety, studies, finances, and relationships. Support is voluntary, non-punitive, and includes sharing up-to-date risk information.

3. **Partnership:** We work closely with our Students' Union, national and local agencies, and community services across Bristol and South Gloucestershire to ensure students have access to appropriate care and information. As an [SOS-UK Drugs and Alcohol Impact](#) accredited organisation, we align with Bristol's city-wide harm reduction approach and maintain strong referral pathways beyond UWE Bristol. Our biggest partnership is with students themselves to ensure our approach meets their needs.
4. **Responsibility and Respect:** We are committed to creating a safe, inclusive environment. Drug and alcohol use can be intimidating or harmful to others, and anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated. We ask all members of our community to respect differences and avoid peer pressure.

Response to Possession and Anti-Social Behaviour

Where controlled substances are found, they will be confiscated and safely disposed of in line with protocol agreed with Avon and Somerset Police.

UWE Bristol takes anti-social 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.

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.

Students may be asked to leave seminars, lectures or may not be given access to facilities such as the Sport Centre or Centre for Music if they are under the influence of drugs 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 programme lead which, where appropriate, will lead to a [Professional Suitability](#) referral and will potentially result in the 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 Alcohol in UWE Accommodation

UWE Accommodation Services team has a duty of care to support residents who are facing issues relating to drug use including alcohol. Residents found to be in possession of, or using illegal drugs will be approached on a case-by-case basis. Our aim is to reduce harm caused by such activity through providing education and referral or signposting to relevant internal and external support services. However, the possession and/or use of illegal drugs is a breach of Accommodation Services [Terms and Conditions](#) and therefore could be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

In some cases, the team may refer cases to the Student Casework Team who will use the University's [student conduct](#) policy. 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.

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

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 and terminate their UWE Accommodation contract.

Regardless of any criminal proceedings and related outcome, UWE Bristol 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 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 on Programmes Leading to Professional Registration and/or a Licence to Practice in a Professional Context

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

If students are unsure if they are on a professional course, they should consult with their course lead or reference the relevant [policy](#).

Risk to Self-and/or Others

Where the use of drugs including alcohol results in potential risk to the safety of a student or others due to misadventure, please contact the UWE [Serious Concerns Line](#).

All concerns will be triaged, and the student will be risk assessed. The relevant policy and procedure will then be followed. This may be the Safeguarding Policy, [Professional Suitability Policy](#) or the Co-ordinated Support Approach, depending on the nature of the risk and concerns. The student's Programme Team will be liaised with in accordance with the policy or process being followed.

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 [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, a review will take place. 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 at risk from abuse and neglect and to ensuring that all staff and students are aware of their Safeguarding responsibilities. Children and Adults at Risk are not able to protect themselves from people who may be in care giving roles and engaging in problematic substance misuse including alcohol and therefore are more vulnerable to harm.

Please report any Safeguarding concerns involving a student to the UWE Serious Concerns Line (0117 3284000) and familiarise yourself with the [UWE Safeguarding Policy](#).

Related Acts and Laws

- **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 Misuse of Drugs Act 1971** states that the misuse of drugs applies to the 'non-medical 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.

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 relevant stakeholders to review any suggested amendments before seeking approval from the University Executive Committee.

Ownership and Oversight

Document name:	Student Drugs including Alcohol Policy
Version number:	4.0
Equality Analysis:	
First approved by:	Academic Board, 9/10/2019
This version approved by:	Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee
Effective from:	March 2026
Next review date:	March 2028
Senior Policy Owner:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Registrar
Policy Author:	Head of Safeguarding
Overseeing committee:	Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee
Compliance measures:	
Related policies, procedures and codes of practice:	Fitness to Study, Student Conduct and Professional Suitability Policies; Safeguarding Policy
Related legislative and/or regulatory requirements	Listed above on pp.8–9

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
V4.0	3/2026	Minor wording amendments and reflection of university structures.	Head of Safeguarding