

Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse Policy

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1. Introduction

At Strathclyde we want to provide a safe and supportive workplace for everyone. So, it's important that all our staff, and anyone else working on our premises, are clear about what we expect when it comes to drugs and alcohol at work.

Through this policy we aim to ensure early detection and intervention and want you to know that if you're facing challenges around alcohol or drug misuse or dependency, we'll provide you with support. But we also need to keep everyone safe and follow the law, so we need procedures in place for dealing with more serious aspects arising from alcohol, drug, and substance misuse at work.

In this policy you'll find information about our expectations regarding alcohol, drugs, and other substances at work, what support is available for staff experiencing dependency or misuse problems, and the steps we'll take if we suspect alcohol or drug misuse in the workplace.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

2. Who is Covered by This Policy?

This policy applies to all University employees and anyone working on University premises or engaged in work-related activities such as tutors, contractors, agency workers, visitors and external service providers.

3. What We Mean by Alcohol, Drug or Substance Misuse

When we say alcohol, drug and/or substance misuse we mean any drinking, drug taking or use of substances, either occasional or continual, which interferes with or adversely impacts your health, social functioning, work capability or conduct.

Drugs include illegal drugs, Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) (including those formally known as legal highs) and solvents. It also includes taking prescription or over-the-counter medication in a way or dose that's different from what the doctor prescribed or what's directed on the package, such as deliberately taking a larger dose than you're supposed to, taking someone else's medication, or taking medication for another purpose. Drugs and substances include those that come under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

4. Support for Drug and/or Alcohol-Related Problems

At Strathclyde we believe that alcohol, drug, and substance misuse or dependency is, first and foremost, a wellbeing issue which often goes hand in hand with poor mental health. But unfortunately, there's still a lot of stigma and embarrassment around these issues, making it difficult for people to come forward and seek help at an early stage.

If you think you've got a problem with drug and/or alcohol use, we want you to know that you can talk to us about it before it becomes an issue at work and that support is available.

We encourage you to have a confidential discussion with your manager so that they can take steps to ensure you get professional help. Your manager will handle the matter discretely and sensitively, sharing information only with those who need to know.

If you tell us you have an alcohol, drug or substance misuse or dependency problem, we will:

- Offer you a referral to Occupational Health (OH) for advice and support.
- Encourage you to talk to your GP.
- Signpost you to our confidential [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) provider. Our EAP service provides a 24-hour helpline as well as one-to-one counselling sessions.
- Signpost you to our [Wellbeing Hub](#) where you can find information about sources of support for drug and/or alcohol-related problems.
- Discuss with you any potential health and safety risks and what reasonable steps we could take to mitigate these. If you're in a 'safety-critical' job, this could include transferring you to other work or restricting the range of tasks you do.

If you're uncomfortable talking to your manager, you can make a self-referral to Occupational Health instead. This referral will normally be confidential unless it is believed there is a risk of harm to you or another person or where there are safety critical work-related issues involved. Please see our [Occupational Health Guide for Staff](#) (staff login required) for more information.

We want to assure you that if you're facing challenges around alcohol, drug, or substance use that you'll be treated with compassion and understanding, and that a referral for support or treatment will not affect your job or promotion prospects. You'll also be given reasonable time off to attend appointments and mutual aid meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous. If you're signed off work by your doctor, you'll be supported throughout your absence and normal sick pay arrangements will apply. Please see our [Time Off for Medical and Dental Appointments](#) and our [Sickness Absence](#) policies for more information.

As well as offer you support, your manager will remind you of the expectations set out in this policy and explain to you that if you attend for work under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances this could progress to a disciplinary matter. They will document the conversation and keep in touch with you regularly to make sure you're getting the support you need.

5. What We Expect from All Colleagues

Whilst this policy is, in general, designed to provide support where an alcohol, drugs or substance-related problem is disclosed, we also have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of all staff, students, and those working on our premises. We've outlined below what we expect from staff and other individuals working at the University and you must comply with these expectations.

Failure to meet these standards may result in disciplinary action, regardless of whether there is a misuse or dependency problem or not. Further details can be found under paragraph 8 (If We Suspect Potential Misuse of Alcohol or Drugs During Working Time).

5.1. Coming into Work

You must always be free from the effects of alcohol, drugs, and substances while working. This means:

- You mustn't come into work if you're under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or substances to the extent that your judgement, behaviour, or ability to carry out your job is affected.
- If you drive to work, then you must be within the relevant legal drink drive limit. You must also ensure your driving isn't impaired by the consumption of any drugs or other substances. This includes prescription or over-the-counter medications. If you're taking these and are not sure if you should drive, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or healthcare professional.

You should be aware that heavy drinking outside of work may mean you could be unfit for work/driving the following day.

If you've been prescribed medication that you think might affect your ability to do your job safely and effectively or may replicate the signs of drug or alcohol intoxication, talk to your manager as soon as possible. They can arrange a referral to Occupational Health so that any potential risks can be assessed, and we can take reasonable steps to mitigate these and support you. If particularly sensitive health issues are involved and you're uncomfortable talking to your manager, you can self-refer to Occupational Health instead. Our Occupational Health Guide for Staff provides more information.

5.2. During Work

Apart from work-related social events where the availability of alcohol has been approved (see below), you mustn't drink alcohol whilst you are working. This includes:

- during your lunch break.
- during downtime between split-shifts.
- when you're working at home or remotely.

You also must not consume, be in possession of, distribute, manufacture, sell or buy illegal drugs or substances whilst on University premises, in any vehicle being used for University business, or during work-related activities. This includes online activity.

5.3. Alcohol at Work-Related Social Events and Activities During the Working Day

We strive to ensure that all work-related social events are inclusive as possible. Colleagues involved in planning such events should take care to respect the views of those who cannot or do not want to drink and to ensure an appropriate balance between rewarding employees and employee wellbeing. For example, certain faiths and religions forbid or advise against alcohol consumption; individuals may not be able to drink because they are pregnant, have medical issues, or because they're recovering from alcohol misuse/ dependency, or people may simply prefer not to drink. Excessive consumption of alcohol can also lead to inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour, for which the University may be found liable. Therefore, you may wish to consider alternative, non-alcohol related events, such as breakfast or lunch time social meet ups.

All events held during the working day where alcoholic drinks will be available must have prior approval from a Head of Department/Director or designated senior nominee. Authorisation must only be given to events held toward the end of the "normal" working day. The University expects responsible consumption of alcohol at these events and Heads of Department/ Directors are responsible for limiting the amount of complimentary alcohol available to prevent excessive consumption or inappropriate behaviour, and to provide non-alcoholic alternatives.

You **must not consume any alcohol** at work-related social events and activities held during the working day if you are returning to work after the event.

And remember, being under the influence of alcohol or any other substances will not excuse any inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour during work-related social events. This includes events held after the working day has ended. If you're at a work-related event or activity and you are found to be in possession of or have taken drugs or if you engage in inappropriate conduct or behaviour due to the effects of alcohol or drugs, you may be asked to leave the event and you'll be invited to an investigatory meeting to discuss the matter. Any inappropriate behaviour will be investigated under our [Disciplinary Procedure](#) and may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you, up to and including summary dismissal.

5.4. Safety-Critical Roles

Many roles at the University are classed as 'safety-critical'. These are jobs that require sustained vigilance or careful attention and where there is potential for serious injury or significant damage to property or equipment in the event of an accident. Examples of safety-critical jobs at the University include:

- Work in a laboratory where hazardous materials including chemicals, radioactive isotopes or biological agents are handled.
- Operating dangerous machinery, for example, workshop machinery, food processing equipment, hand tools, cutting equipment, lasers, and cutting presses.
- Jobs involving work at height, or where an unimpaired sense of balance is essential. For example, working on a roof, scaffold, or ladders.
- Jobs which involve working in confined spaces.
- Electrical maintenance jobs.
- Driving vehicles of any description.
- Security work.
- Jobs involving working with animals.
- Jobs involving working with children, young people, or those with additional needs.

This is not an exclusive list. As a general rule, jobs with responsibilities that involve use of, or exposure to, hazards which are sufficient to require a documented risk assessment will be considered safety critical. If you're unsure whether you're in a safety-critical role, talk to your manager.

If you're required to take prescribed medication that may cause drowsiness or otherwise affect your work performance, you must not drive, operate machinery, or work with hazardous materials and you must inform your manager straight away. If particularly sensitive health issues are involved and you're uncomfortable talking to your manager, you can self-refer to Occupational Health instead. Our Occupational Health Guide for Staff provides more information.

5.5. Alcohol or Drug-Related Criminal Charges/ Convictions

If you are arrested, charged, or convicted of an alcohol or drugs related offence, you must notify the University immediately so that we can consider the impact this may have on your ability to do your role.

6. What We Expect from Managers

If you're a manager, you are expected to:

- Ensure compliance with this policy and to implement it fairly and consistently.
- Raise awareness and understanding of this policy amongst your staff and clearly communicate which roles and tasks are 'safety-critical'.
- Raise awareness of the support available to staff including Occupational Health and our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider and how to access these services.
- Reinforce the requirement for appropriate and professional behaviour at University social events.
- Have regular check-ins with your staff. This is particularly important if staff work remotely, or you don't see them every day. Be alert to common signs and symptoms that a staff member may be experiencing alcohol, drug, or substance-related problems (see list below) and raise any concerns privately with the individual. If concerns remain, seek advice from Human Resources.
- Support staff who disclose alcohol, drug, or substance-related problems, ensuring they're offered a referral to Occupational Health and/or our EAP service and encouraged to seek professional help.
- Consider whether it is necessary to alter the duties of a staff member who discloses an alcohol, drug, or substance-related problem (for example, where they perform safety-critical tasks).
- Maintain confidentiality unless you have concerns about the safety of your staff member or of other people or where there are work-related issues which are safety critical.

7. If We Suspect Potential Misuse of Alcohol or Drugs Outside of Work

Your manager may have concerns that you are misusing drugs or alcohol outside of work which is infringing on your performance at work. For example, there can be signs and symptoms that may indicate an alcohol, drugs, or substance-related problem, such as:

- Reduced or erratic levels of performance
- Increased sickness absence
- Poor timekeeping
- Changes in behaviour and/or appearance
- Relationships with colleagues
- Higher incidence of errors or accidents

We recognise that these signs may be caused by any number of things, such as a medical condition, mental health issues or work-related problems, so we won't assume that alcohol or drugs is always the cause. Nonetheless, if there are concerns about your wellbeing, it's important that we raise these with you.

Your manager will talk to you privately if they're concerned about your wellbeing and/or performance or notice your behaviour has changed and they'll offer you support. Whilst your manager will aim to keep the conversation confidential, some degree of information sharing is likely to be necessary. For example, they may seek advice from Human Resources and/or a senior manager, particularly if you perform 'safety-critical' tasks. With your consent, they may arrange an Occupational Health referral.

We encourage you to be open about any issues you have and accept the help and support offered. This will assist in your recovery and reduce any impact on your work, colleagues, and students.

8. If We Suspect Potential Misuse of Alcohol or Drugs During Working Time

We will always offer wellbeing support to staff who have alcohol or substance misuse/dependency problems. But we also must ensure the safety of all staff and students at the University and comply with the law. Therefore, even where it's acknowledged that you have an alcohol, drug or substance use problem, the University may still take disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for any behaviour it considers misconduct.

Any of the following actions will be treated as a serious conduct issue and, in some circumstances, could lead to your dismissal:

- Coming into work under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances
- Consuming alcohol whilst at work (other than for staff in non-safety critical roles attending work-related social activities where alcohol has been approved)
- Taking, or unlawfully being in possession of, drugs or other substances whilst at work
- Distributing, manufacturing, selling, or buying illegal drugs or other substances
- Inappropriate or unprofessional conduct during work-related social events due to the effects of alcohol, drugs, or other substances.

The decision to take disciplinary action and the level of sanction issued will depend on the individual circumstances of the case such as:

- the seriousness of the misconduct
- the nature of the job that you do. For example, whether you are in a safety-critical role and/or whether any other person has been, or could potentially have been, placed at risk by your misuse of alcohol, drugs, or other substances.

8.1. If We Suspect You Are Under the Influence of Alcohol at Work

If your manager has reasonable grounds to think you're under the influence of alcohol whilst you're at work, they'll speak to you about the situation. This applies even if you're working from home or remotely.

If they think your work capability or conduct is impaired, or if there is a safety concern for you or your colleagues, you'll usually be suspended from work and invited to an investigatory meeting at a later date.

Wherever possible, your manager will:

- consult with Human Resources or a more senior manager before suspending you from duty.
- Arrange for a second person to be present during the conversation.

We'll always take steps to ensure your safety in this situation. For example, if you have come to work by car, we'll arrange for you to get a taxi home.

8.2. If We Suspect You Are Misusing Drugs or Substances

You will normally be deemed as having committed an act of serious misconduct and potentially gross misconduct, if you are believed to:

- be under the influence of drugs or substances
- be buying or selling drugs and/or substances
- be unlawfully in possession of drugs and/or substances
- have stolen drugs and/or substances from the University, or
- be involved in the attempted illegal manufacture of drugs and/or substances

If your manager has reasonable grounds to think you're involved in any of the above activity, they'll speak to you about the situation. This applies even if you're working from home or remotely.

Where appropriate, you'll usually be suspended from work and invited to an investigatory meeting at a later date. We may also report your activity to the police if we suspect criminal activity.

Wherever possible, your manager will:

- consult with Human Resources or a more senior manager before suspending you from duty.
- Arrange for a second person to be present during the conversation.

We'll always take steps to ensure your safety in this situation. For example, if we believe you're under the influence of drugs or other substances and you have come to work by car, we'll arrange for you to get a taxi home.

In addition to the above, acts involving illegal activity will be reported to the police, regardless of whether the act has taken place during working hours or on University premises.

8.3. Mandatory Referrals to Employee Assistance Programme/ Occupational Health Service

If an alcohol, drugs, or substance misuse/ dependency problem is identified during the disciplinary process, we will generally give you the opportunity to undergo appropriate treatment to support you to return to full health and achieve the necessary standards of performance and behaviour at work. This is unless the disciplinary issue is judged so serious as to merit dismissal irrespective of the disclosure of a misuse/ dependency problem.

Where appropriate, you will be referred to the University's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider and/or our Occupational Health Service for advice and professional support. Your ongoing cooperation with any support, treatment, or training offered will be required and may, in certain circumstances, be a condition of your continuing employment with the University. Where this is the case, this will be made clear to you.

If you do not make satisfactory progress, fail to cooperate with support, treatment or training, or where further conduct or capability issues arise, the University will consider all the circumstances of the case in determining appropriate further steps.

9. Reporting a Concern

If you're concerned that a colleague may have an alcohol, drug, or substance use problem, we encourage you to report this to your manager or HR.

Similarly, if you suspect that someone you work with (including contractors, agency workers and other service providers) is misusing alcohol, drugs or other substances at work and placing themselves or others at risk, you must notify management immediately. This is particularly important if the individual is performing safety-critical tasks.

10. Further Information and Support

If you have any queries about this policy, please talk to your manager or contact [Human Resources](#).

A list of external support organisations for individuals with, or affected by, alcohol, drug or substance misuse/ dependency problems can be found on our [People Hub](#) (staff login required).

11. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis. To see when the next review is due, please see our [Policy Review Schedule](#) (staff login required) on our People Hub.