

Drugs and Alcohol Misuse Policy

Policy Category:	Students
Subject	Drugs and Alcohol Misuse
Approving Authority:	Academic Board
Responsible Officer:	President & Principal
Responsible Office:	Students and Education Directorate
Related Procedures:	Student Emergency Contact Procedure Safeguarding Procedures

Related College Policies:	Safeguarding Policy Fitness to Practise Policy Support for Study Policy and Procedure Misconduct Policy & Procedure
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Effective Date:	June 2023
Supersedes:	February 2017
Next Review:	June 2026

I. PURPOSE & SCOPE

This policy is part of a university approach that promotes a safe and supportive environment in which to study and work. The overarching premise is one of support and education, focusing on making healthy choices, setting a framework of acceptable and responsible behaviour, and the action that may be taken in the event of a breach of acceptable and responsible behaviour.

The university understands that the use of drugs and alcohol can pose serious risks to individuals and communities, which can be exacerbated by inadequate policy and practice responses. Notable harms can include short- and long-term impact on individual physical and mental health, personal finances, relationships, educational attainment and career and life chances as well as local, national and global impact. Therefore, the university aims to respond to the reality of the use of drugs and alcohol, and reduce risk of harm to its students, staff, and visitors.

II. DEFINITIONS

Child	A person under the age of 18.
Drugs	This covers a wide range of substances, including cannabis, cocaine, and heroin, together with the many derivatives or hybrids of these drugs. It refers to any substance controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.
Misuse	This includes the use, possession, trade, distribution, selling, offering for sale, and purchase of drugs, as well as the illegal use of prescription drugs (i.e. the use of prescription drugs that have not

been legally obtained, or have been used in a manner or for a purpose other than as prescribed.)

III. POLICY

1. Aims

- 1.1. In response to the use of drugs, including alcohol, the university has chosen to adopt a policy of harm reduction. ‘Harm reduction’ describes a variety of policy and practice interventions aimed at reducing negative outcomes of the use of drugs, including alcohol, to users, their communities and wider society. It is supported by the [World Health Organization](#), [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) and [European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction](#).
- 1.2. The primary focus of harm reduction is on the safety and wellbeing of the person and those around them rather than on their use of drugs and alcohol. The university will continue to work proactively to reduce the harmful impact of alcohol and other drugs and to prioritise the safety, health and wellbeing of everyone in our community. The university wishes to support students who are experiencing difficulties in the use of drugs or alcohol and offers assistance to students who may need advice or counselling. Information on how the university can help students in this situation can be found in Section 3.
- 1.3. The university acknowledges that in some cases substances are used to alleviate the symptoms of long-term illnesses, disabilities, and trauma. As such, it is recognised that any responses to the use of drugs and alcohol as solely disciplinary issues, fails to identify the complex reasons behind an individual’s use and therefore risks further marginalising certain groups of students.
- 1.4. The university takes any form of drug dealing or supply to others very seriously. As outlined at section 6, any instances will ordinarily result in immediate suspension of a student pending internal investigation and/or criminal proceedings. Where disciplinary action needs to be taken, the focus will be on the individual’s behaviour and its actual or potential impact on others, rather than on their substance use.

2. Legal Context

- 2.1. The misuse of substances known as ‘drugs’ is against the criminal law. Any student who is involved with controlled drugs or other psychoactive substances should familiarise themselves with the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#), [the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#) and [Crown Prosecution Service Guidance](#).
- 2.2. Students should be particularly aware that under Section 4 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, any involvement in facilitating the supply of a controlled drug to another person, even if it is only offered and not supplied and even if no personal profit is made, is seen as a supply rather than possession offence.
- 2.3. The [Criminal Justice Act 1967](#) cites that any person, who is found to be drunk and behaving in a disorderly manner, in a public place may be subject to charges of being Drunk and Disorderly and fined up to £1000. Although the maximum penalty for being convicted of drunk and

disorderly behaviour is a fine, having this conviction on your record can still have a negative impact on your prospects. Any criminal convictions impact on life chances.

- 2.4. A KCL student who breaks the law on drugs or alcohol may be in breach of the university's [Misconduct Policy](#) and/or [the Fitness to Practice Policy](#) and may consider appropriate action in accordance with these policies.
- 2.5. The university aims to take a nuanced, student centred approach to supporting disclosures/incidents involving students and substance misuse. Staff are recommended to seek guidance from their [Designated Safeguarding Officer](#) (DSO). The DSO can seek advice from the [Student Conduct & Appeals Team](#) in order to decide appropriate next steps. The chart in Appendix A indicates the possible outcomes from various disclosures around drug and alcohol misuse.

3. Assistance for Students

- 3.1. Any student who has or fears they may have a drug/alcohol dependency is encouraged to seek professional assistance and advice as soon as possible.
- 3.2. A student's own GP may often be the most appropriate source of such advice, but the universities own NHS Health Centre and/or Counselling Service can also offer support and guidance. Contact details for the King's College London Health Centre and Counselling Service are as follows:
 - [King's College NHS Health Centre](#)
 - [KCL Counselling and Mental Health Support](#)
- 3.3. Students should also refer to the following resources:
 - [Student Space - Support for students recovering from addiction](#)
 - [HEART - Higher Education & Recovery Talk](#)
 - [How can I get support for difficulties with drugs & alcohol?](#)

4. Student Responsibilities

- 4.1 Students on Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) programmes are expected to behave professionally and competently and be aware of their health and conduct to ensure they are safe to be around patients, clients and members of the public, as well as comply with professional codes of conduct. These students should familiarise themselves with the [Fitness to Practise Policy](#) and Procedure and their own PSRB codes of conduct to avoid putting their professional registration and future career at risk. Inappropriate use of drugs and alcohol or related antisocial behaviour is likely to require investigation by the university under the Fitness to Practise Policy.
- 4.2 Students living in university halls of residence or managed accommodation should familiarise themselves with the relevant terms and conditions as they may be putting their accommodation at risk if they misuse drugs or alcohol. The [KCL Residential Discipline Policy](#) clearly states that possession or use of unlawful drugs will be taken extremely seriously.

4.3 Students in privately rented accommodation should be aware that their landlords must operate in the context of national legislation and under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 would be committing a criminal offence were they to knowingly permit the use, production, or supply of controlled drugs on their premises.

5. KCL's approach to harm reduction

- 5.1. Wellness, Wellbeing, Welfare, and Residential Welfare Support staff are committed to doing everything possible to keep students who use drugs and alcohol safe and well. In line with this policy, wellbeing staff will be guided in their support for students by the principles underpinning harm reduction approaches.
- 5.2. The university is committed to providing education and advice around the use of drugs and alcohol. Communicating local and current risks is a method of harm reduction and available information that could benefit others will be shared as appropriate e.g. knowledge articles featured on Student Services Online, delivery of training to staff.
- 5.3. The use of drugs and alcohol can impact on mental health. Some people use drugs and alcohol to improve or cope with a mental health condition, while such use may also trigger or worsen a mental health condition. People with mental health concerns are more vulnerable to problematic use and related harms. Support is available if any student wants or needs support to address any part of their use of drugs and alcohol. Support will be person centred, compassionate and kept confidential unless there are serious concerns about the risk of significant harm to any person or where the behaviour requires referral under the Fitness to Practise Policy.
- 5.4. Excessive use of drugs and alcohol can impair judgement and mental capacity, reduce inhibition, and increase vulnerability to abuse, accidents and misadventure as well as presenting serious risks to short-term and long-term health.
- 5.5. It is recognised that for many people the use of drugs and 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 and alcohol for their own safety. The university is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment that fosters respect for difference and consideration of others. As such, members in our community are asked to be aware of how their behaviour may impact on and be experienced by others. This should include consideration of the impact of peer pressure on others, how individuals contribute to peer pressure and to aim for positive impact on others.
- 5.6. Antisocial behaviour that negatively impacts on others' wellbeing and ability to learn will not be tolerated.

6. Response to drugs and alcohol on campus

Possession and individual use

- 6.1. The university aims to take a nuanced, student centred approach to supporting disclosures or incidents involving students and substance misuse. Staff are recommended to seek guidance from their [Designated Safeguarding Officer](#) (DSO). The DSO can seek guidance from the [Conduct and Appeals Team](#) in order to decide appropriate next steps.
- 6.2. Where the university becomes aware of personal use and possession on a campus, it will follow harm reduction principles and offer advice and support. Where an incident or concern involves a student under the age of 18, the university will always endeavour to include the voice of the young person when addressing a safeguarding concern around drug/alcohol misuse (in line with [the rights of children and young people](#)).
- 6.3. Where controlled substances are found, they will be confiscated and safely disposed of in line with protocols agreed with the Police.
- 6.4. If the university becomes aware that a student's behaviour in relation to use of drugs and alcohol is impacting negatively on others, this may be managed via the [Misconduct Policy](#) and [Fitness to Practise Policy](#) as appropriate. In cases involving healthcare professional students, it is possible that concerns will be shared with faculty via their Designated Safeguarding Officer so that consideration can be given to appropriate next steps. It is important to note that if a student over the age of 18, in residences, is found to be providing a student, under the age of 18, with alcohol, then the student aged over 18 may be subject to disciplinary procedures per, [Residences Discipline Policy](#).
- 6.5. Incidents of "spiking", when a perpetrator administers a substance to someone without their knowledge is an assault; a serious crime that carries a 10-year penalty for the offence. Such actions may also be the subject of King's internal processes if the perpetrator is a King's student, including student misconduct investigations, with penalties up to and including expulsion. In circumstances where a student is also a member of staff then disciplinary processes will be instigated which could result in termination of their employment.
- 6.6. Response to concerns around drug/alcohol misuse will be dealt with 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. Further action may be taken via
 - [Misconduct Policy](#)
 - [Support for Study Policy](#)
 - [Fitness to Practise Policy](#)
 - [King's Residential Discipline Policy](#)
 - Provision of/or signposting to support
 - Provision of/or signposting to education
 - Penalties such as formal warnings, community service, or suspension.
 - Termination of a King's Residences License Agreement
 - Suspension or expulsion from academic programmes

Supply and intent to supply

- 6.7. Dealing of drugs is seen as a harm to others. Where there is reason to believe that a student has been dealing drugs or has invited others on university premises with the intention for them to deal to others, the university will ordinarily immediately suspend the student pending internal investigation and/or criminal proceedings.
- 6.8. Regardless of any criminal proceedings and related outcome, the university will, in accordance with [Misconduct Policy](#) and/or the [Fitness to Practise Policy](#) as appropriate, investigate and take appropriate action
- 6.9. Where controlled substances are found and drug dealing is suspected, they will be confiscated and may be provided to the Police as evidence.

7. Response to drugs and alcohol off campus

- 7.1. If the university becomes aware that a student has been arrested or charged off campus due to criminal offences related to the use or supply of drugs and alcohol, depending on the nature of the offence this may be managed via the [Misconduct Policy](#) or the [Fitness to Practise Policy](#), as appropriate. Where charges related to drug dealing have been brought but criminal proceedings do not result in conviction, the University may still act under its own procedures.

8. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

- 8.1. Information may be shared within King's to signpost to appropriate support and will not be shared outside the university unless the student consents to this or there are serious concerns about the risk of significant harm. Where a student has caring responsibilities for children or vulnerable adults and the nature of their use of drugs and alcohol presents a risk to those they care for, information may need to be shared externally under Section 12 of the [Safeguarding Policy](#).
- 8.2. Where a decision is to be made about contacting any student's Emergency Contact, staff should refer to the [Student's Emergency Contact Procedure](#).

9. Policy Implementation and Review

- 9.1. It is the responsibility of the Head of Welfare – Student Services, to review this policy every 3 years.
- 9.2. The university will further develop the policy where necessary in line with the changes in legislation and best practice guidance and following internal review of the effectiveness of existing procedures.

Appendix A: The following chart indicates the possible outcomes from various disclosures around drug and alcohol misuse

Scenario	Action	Likely outcome
Student in residences consumes too much alcohol and becomes distressed and unwell, needs support from other members of residences and Welfare Leads in returning to their room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with DSO • DSO to seek guidance from C&A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in by Welfare Leads, offer of a further support around the student's wellbeing.
A student is on a Geography field trip. They have taken ecstasy, starting to hallucinate and behave in a way that is putting themselves and others at risk of harm. An ambulance is called and they are taken to hospital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with DSO • DSO to seek guidance from C&A • Referral to Student of Concern with consent from student wherever possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOC Welfare team will reach out to offer support • Student invited to a Support for Study Stage 2 to reflect on the incident, checking on the welfare of the student and identifying any support needs.
A medical student discloses that they are finding placement stressful. They are finding that their alcohol consumption is increasing, they never drink the night before a placement but are regularly consuming one or two bottles of wine a night to help them sleep.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with DSO • DSO to seek guidance from C&A • Referral to Student of Concern with consent from student wherever possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information very likely to be shared with faculty so that consideration can be given to appropriate next steps. These may be informal or formal e.g. Fitness to Practice per 2.5 Reporting anything that give cause for concern relating to themselves or another
A student living in residences has been arrested by the Police and charged with "Possession with intent to supply". They have been released on bail and return to halls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with DSO • DSO to seek guidance from C&A • Referral to Student of Concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student suspended pending outcome of Police investigation per regulations 8.9 • Student required to leave halls pending outcome of Police investigation • Possible action taken through Misconduct after outcome of Police investigation