



Student Alcohol and Drugs Policy

Introduction

Dublin City University (hereinafter the 'University') is committed to providing a safe environment conducive to the academic, social, and personal development of all members of the University community. The University will take a health-led approach to ensure that the health, safety, and welfare of our students, as well as the reputation of the University and its students, are not jeopardised through drug and alcohol use or misuse. Furthermore, the University is committed to promoting healthier lifestyles in the DCU student community through the prevention and response to alcohol misuse and drug use and misuse. This includes minimising the harm caused by the use or misuse of substances, promoting rehabilitation and recovery, offering trauma-informed support and guidance to students who may require it and providing education and information campaigns.

This policy sets out DCU's commitment to a healthier community where student health and well-being are paramount. All members of the University community should be aware that everyone has a duty to take responsibility for their behaviour and to actively support a university culture of respect and safety. However, dealing with issues relating to alcohol or drug use or misuse can sometimes be stressful and distressing for all parties concerned. Support is available through the university and externally through the health system. Students may wish to speak to [Student Counselling](#), [Student Health](#) within Student Support and Development, or to the [Students' Union](#).

The policy has been developed in accordance with the national HE framework, *Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education*, 2019, as well as the *Action Plan on Drug Use in Higher Education Institutions*, 2019. The policy and procedures have also been informed by the HSE Strategy, *Reducing Harm, and Supporting Recovery - A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland, 2017–2025*.

Purpose

The policy provides an understanding of prevention and response to alcohol and drug use and misuse and explains what is meant by a health-led approach to reducing harm and supporting recovery. The policy's partner documents, the [DCU Healthy Campus Charter](#), [DCU Student Charter](#), the [Guidelines for Staff Dealing with Medical or Psychological Emergencies](#), and [DCU Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#) clearly explain the steps that individuals can take if support is needed or in an emergency, and the responsibilities of the DCU Community.

The purpose of this policy is:

1. Promote and protect the health, safety and well-being of the student community.
2. Minimise the harms caused by the use and misuse of substances and promote harm reduction, rehabilitation, and recovery.
3. Outline the trauma-informed supports available to students who are in crisis and those who seek assistance as a result of substance use/misuse.
4. Enhance a culture that is free from the pressure to consume alcohol and other harmful substances while simultaneously encouraging help-seeking behaviour.
5. Promote the importance of personal responsibility and social obligation, including to the university and the local community.
6. Educate the student community on health risks and other risks associated with consumption and additionally, about the link between trauma and substance misuse.
7. Inform the student community of the university's statutory obligations and duty of care under various legal instruments.

Scope

This policy covers all registered students of the University - on campus and on all other occasions when they are representing the University or taking part in a university-sanctioned activity. This includes the following:

- On any university campus.
- At any other university or other place (including abroad) where students are representing the University or engaged in a university-sanctioned activity,
- At events such as social functions, conferences, sporting events, field trips, or assignments that are related to the university or are university-sanctioned activities.
- Any virtual setting related to any university-related activity, e.g., including but not limited to Zoom meetings, Loop, and Microsoft Teams.

Where students are undertaking a placement or internship in another organisation, they should make themselves aware of the relevant policies and supports in these organisations. University regulations also apply to students on placement or internship.

Policy Statement

The DCU believes that a safe, respectful, supportive, and positive community is among the university's greatest strengths and has the potential to enhance the living, learning, and working experience of all members of the university community. This policy outlines DCU's commitment to a healthier community where student health, safety and well-being are paramount. This policy and accompanying documents are an important part of a wider framework in operation at DCU and represent the wider ethos and culture of the university which aims to promote and support positive, respectful behaviour through education programmes, awareness raising, visible leadership and a community culture of wellbeing. Substance use and misuse are broad terms encompassing alcohol and legal and illegal psychoactive drugs in addition to performance-enhancing drugs used in a sports or academic setting.

This policy has been informed by the national HE framework, [Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education, 2019](#), as well as the [Action Plan on Drug Use in Higher Education Institutions, 2019](#).

The policy has also been informed by the [HSE Strategy, Reducing Harm, and Supporting Recovery - A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland, 2017–2025](#). Furthermore, it provides clear areas of focus that will inform the DCU Drug and Alcohol Action Plan.

Institutional Leadership

Recognising the widespread prevalence of alcohol and drug challenges in society, the University acknowledges the various consequences these issues can pose for students, including health problems, absenteeism, diminished academic performance, accidents, or inappropriate behaviour. As part of DCU's [Care and Connect](#) approach, the university ensures that education and the promotion of healthy choices are a priority. Furthermore, appropriate guidance and assistance are available to students encountering difficulties related to alcohol or drug consumption, whether for themselves or others. Any support will be confidential, and students will not be penalised for seeking help. See the section on '[Support Provision](#)'.

It is important to note that while the University has adopted a harm reduction approach, any student found to be involved in the supply of illegal drugs, criminal activities, or antisocial behaviour will face university disciplinary action and potential referral to the Gardaí. Similarly, drink or needle spiking, which is defined as “the act of putting a drug in someone's drink or injecting a drug in someone's body, to make them unconscious, extremely tired or unable to function properly”¹, will be considered a breach of the Student Code of Conduct and Discipline, and disciplinary measures will be taken as appropriate. Additionally, disciplinary action is taken against students

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/spiking>

who violate codes of conduct or behavioural standards as a result of alcohol or substance use.

Where appropriate, the University will take a supportive approach and endeavour to ensure that a student's future welfare and educational potential are not detrimentally affected as a result of substance misuse. There may be circumstances however where action will be taken under other University regulations, such as the [Student Fitness to Study Policy](#), [Student Fitness to Practise Policy](#) or the [Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#). These circumstances may include instances where there is a perceived danger to or serious concern about a student or other members of the Community.

The University has statutory obligations and a duty of care to students under various legal instruments, including the Misuse of Drugs Act ([1977](#) and [1984](#)) and The [Criminal Justice \(Psychoactive Substances\) Act 2010](#), [Intoxicating Liquor Act, 2008](#), [Public Health \(Alcohol\) Act, 2018](#) and the [Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997](#). The University is also cognisant of its responsibility to the wider environment within which it operates, including, but not restricted to, the local community and school, clinical and work settings. It has an additional layer of responsibility to ensure that the misuse of substances does not put potentially vulnerable patients or children at risk.

Student Engagement

Alcohol

Taking into account the [DCU Healthy Charter](#), [Intoxicating Liquor Act, 2008](#), [Public Health \(Alcohol\) Act, 2018](#), and the [Responding to Excessive Alcohol Consumption in Third Level \(REACT\)](#) project, students are encouraged to engage in educational and promotional activities to gain knowledge of healthy choices, harm reduction, and help-seeking behaviours when it comes to consumption of alcohol. If alcohol-related incidents occur on a university campus or during a university-related activity, students are encouraged to engage confidentially with university support services. See the section on '[Support Provision](#)'.

No DCU student should:

- Attend, or endeavour to attend, college or placement, having consumed alcohol.
- Consume alcohol to such an extent that renders them incapable of functioning normally and making decisions about safety.
- Put pressure on their peers or other individuals to consume alcohol against their wishes.

Drugs

No DCU student should:

- Attend, or endeavour to attend, college or placement, having consumed drugs likely to render the student unfit or unsafe for such activities.
- Use drugs on university premises or when representing the University off-campus at sporting or other events.
- Bring drugs onto university premises.
- Attempt to sell or supply drugs to any other person on university premises or at university-related activities.

Community Engagement

The University will work with local communities and relevant organisations to inform campaigns and ensure information relayed to students is evidence-based and up to date with the latest drug and alcohol trends. Furthermore, the University will engage in research and education around harm reduction to create evidence-based educational and promotional activities.

Support Provision

Students identified as experiencing substance misuse are directed to specialised support services to mitigate potential physical and psychological harm. In addition, the University provides a range of trauma-informed, formal, and informal resources and interventions aimed at minimising or eradicating the harm associated with alcohol and substance use.

Although the University strongly discourages the use of illegal drugs, it fully acknowledges that students who misuse drugs may find themselves isolated and afraid to seek help. In the first instance, there are staff that a student can speak with informally and in confidence to get general advice on the next steps. These include staff in the [Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre](#), [Students' Union](#) or [Office of Student Life](#). Additionally, the University understands that dependence on alcohol or drugs is considered an illness. [The Student Health Centre](#) and the [Counselling and Personal Development Service](#) can provide professional, confidential help and guidance to students who require assistance with their substance use.

Staff can refer students to the relevant internal or external supports that will support them to recover from their substance dependency in a safe environment. Students are encouraged to seek immediate help in instances of consuming a substance that may cause them harm so that appropriate support and/or medical attention can be provided without judgement or fear. Should a student or staff member suspect that a student is under the influence of alcohol or drugs and needs support or medical assistance, they should inform a member of the Student Health Centre (Call 01700 5143 or 087 4087936) or DCU Campus Security (Call 01 700 5999) immediately. Alternatively, use the DCU Safe Zone App to alert Security on campus.

Roles & Responsibilities

All members of the DCU Community should be aware of the policy. The following members of the Community hold special responsibility for its implementation.

The DCU Community

All members of the community are encouraged to promote and support a Healthy Campus that adopts a holistic understanding of health, takes a whole campus approach, and aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health and well-being of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential.

Student Support & Development

- Foster a culture of help-seeking behaviour and a safe environment for those who require assistance in relation to the consumption of alcohol/drugs and are experiencing adverse effects (or need medical intervention).
- Support students who require medical or psychological intervention due to substance use or misuse via the Student Health Service and the Student Counselling Service.
- Promote a student culture that is free from the pressure to consume alcohol.
- Provide holistic support to students to help them with their academic performance, and to graduate.
- Assist in the response to emergencies along with other university services such as Security, First Responders, and any other third party, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- To the extent that this is possible, help protect the health and safety of the students from the impact of substance misuse by other students.
- Promote this policy and associated guidelines to ensure DCU is a healthy campus, and nurture a student community that is healthy and well.
- Coordinate and manage the Care and Connect approach to health and well-being that includes a prevention and harm reduction strategy for substance use and misuse in the student community.
- Develop and implement actions and campaigns around harm reduction, alcohol & substance misuse and recovery, using a holistic, trauma-informed and evidence-based approach.
- Collaborate with the Care and Connect Healthy Choices Group to support the Drug and Alcohol Action Plan that encourages the student community to make healthy choices in relation to their health and well-being.
- Educate the student community on the potential risks of drug misuse and alcohol misuse so that they can make informed choices around alcohol and/or drug consumption.

Additionally, Student Support and Development will work in partnership with the Office of Student Life and the Students' Union on the following:

- To the extent that this is possible, protect the health and safety of the students from the impact of substance misuse by other students at Club and Society or Students' Union organised events.
- Promote this policy and associated guidelines to ensure DCU is a healthy campus and nurture a student community that is healthy and well.
- Promote a student community culture that is free from the pressure to consume alcohol.
- Educate the student community on the potential dangers of drug misuse.

Chief Operations Officer

Oversees the University's legislative responsibilities and provides administrative supports for the Student Disciplinary Committee that considers complaints under the Student Code of Conduct and Discipline.

Sanctions

Any DCU student violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action as provided for under the Student Code of Conduct and Discipline, in addition to penalties by other competent authorities. Violation of this policy may also result in referral to the University's Student Fitness to Practise Policy or the Student Fitness to Study Policy.

Related Documentation

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies / procedures / guidelines.

- [DCU Healthy Charter](#)
- [DCU Student Charter](#)
- [JED Framework](#)
- [Guidelines for Staff Dealing with Medical or Psychological Emergencies](#)
- [Student Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- [Student Fitness to Practise Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#)

- [Sexual Misconduct Study Policy](#)
- [Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Policy](#)


Contact

Any queries regarding this Policy should be directed to Deirdre Moloney, Student Policy Officer, Student Support and Development, deirdre.moloney@dcu.ie or Úna Redmond, Chair of the Care and Connect Healthy Choices Subgroup for Alcohol and Drugs, una.redmond@dcu.ie.

Policy Review

This policy will be periodically reviewed as and when changes are required by the Care and Connect Healthy Choices Subgroup for Alcohol and Drugs. However, it will go through a comprehensive review in 2029.

Version Control

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End.