

THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

POLICY STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS CONCERNING DRUGS

1. Scope

This University Policy Statement applies to all University of Kent students.

2. Purpose

- (i) The University is committed to safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of its students, and considers the misuse of drugs a disciplinary offence. For the purposes of this policy drugs will be referred to as psychoactive substances;
- (ii) The University accepts its responsibility to promote good health by raising awareness of the risks of misusing psychoactive substances;
- (iii) The University respects the privacy of students but it must, however, be concerned where a student's behaviour impairs their conduct, safety or academic performance and/or adversely affects other students, staff, campus life or the wider community.

3. Policy Content

This Policy indicates how the University:

- (i) seeks to provide a healthy and safe environment for students and others;
- (ii) provides support for students with a substance misuse problem;
- (iii) deals with a substance misuse problem or incident which affects the conduct, safety and academic performance of an individual student, other students, staff, campus life and/or the wider community.

4. Definition of a Psychoactive Substance

- (i) The Psychoactive Substance Act 2016 defines a psychoactive substance as: "any substance which (a) is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it, and (b) is not an exempted substance". Nicotine, alcohol and caffeine are exempt from being classified as a psychoactive substance, as are medical products defined by the Human Medicines Regulations (2012) and drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971).
- (ii) For the purpose of this Policy, substance misuse refers to taking a psychoactive substance, either intermittently or continuously, which interferes with an individual's health, work capabilities or conduct, or which affects the work performance and/or safety of the individual and/or others.

Note: Use of the term "misuse" does not imply that psychoactive substances have a correct use.

- (iii) Legal highs are psychoactive substances, and the terms are used interchangeably throughout this document. The NHS defines legal highs as:

"Substances that have similar effects to illegal drugs like cocaine or cannabis. They are sometimes called club drugs or new psychoactive substances (NPS).

“Many of these drugs are now controlled, but some are still legal to possess. This does not mean they are safe or approved for people to use. Some drugs marketed as legal highs actually contain ingredients that are illegal to possess.”

The NHS also advises that:

“Legal highs can carry serious health risks. The chemicals they contain have in most cases never been used before in drugs for human consumption.

“This means they haven't been tested to show they are safe. Users can never be certain what they are taking and what the effects might be.”

The possession, taking or selling of illegal drugs and drug dealing are criminal offences and will in no circumstances be tolerated by the University. The possession and taking of ‘legal highs’ is not a criminal offence, but it is a criminal offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, import or export any psychoactive substance. It is a criminal offence to use University IT facilities, including devices connected to the University network, or your network login or email account to purchase, obtain free of charge or arrange supply of a legal high. Any criminal activity involving a psychoactive substance will constitute a breach of the licence agreements for the University’s and Liberty Living’s residential accommodation for students and may lead to automatic termination of licence agreements.

5. Principles

The University recognises:

- (i) that addiction to psychoactive substances may, in some cases, be considered a medical condition and in such cases it should be treated as such and in the strictest confidence;
- (ii) its responsibility to comply with the law in relation to any offences by students/others on its premises involving psychoactive substances;
- (iii) that it may be appropriate to consider action against students under the Regulations on Student Discipline in Relation to Non-academic Matters in cases of breaches of the criminal law involving psychoactive substances and these Regulations. Normally any such proceedings would follow the completion of police enquiries and action by the police or the court except that the Vice-Chancellor (or delegate acting on their behalf) may exclude a student from University facilities and/or premises;
- (iv) students must not undertake their academic commitments (e.g. lectures, seminars, practical and laboratory sessions or work placements) while under the influence of psychoactive substances.

6. Substance Misuse

- (i) Students are strongly advised not to put their academic and other activities at risk by substance misuse. Students are also advised not to compromise their health by being with or reliant on someone who has taken psychoactive substances (e.g. as a car passenger);
- (ii) The University will take action to prevent injury, damage or other serious risk where, as a result of substance misuse, students act in such a way as to endanger themselves and/or others. A student believed to be under the influence of psychoactive substances, may, for example, be asked to leave a lecture, seminar, practical workshop or laboratory session. In

appropriate circumstances the Support to Study Procedure may be invoked to help a student receive professional specialist support and advice;

- (iii) An ongoing substance misuse problem will not constitute an acceptable excuse for bad behaviour or performance or exempt the student(s) concerned from the normal consequences of inappropriate performance or misconduct;
- (iv) The Regulations on Student Discipline in Relation to Non-academic Matters indicate how the University deals with offences against the law (such as assault, rape, theft and involving drugs/psychoactive substances and alcohol) and breaches of these Regulations (such as in the case of disorderly, insulting and anti-social conduct arising from the influence of psychoactive substances by students. The Regulations provide for penalties including warnings, fines, exclusion from University premises and termination of registration.

7. Substance Misuse: Help for Students

- (i) The University provides facilities for students to find out about substance misuse and to obtain confidential advice and help about drug consumption. In Canterbury this is provided via the University Medical Centre (an NHS practice located on campus and available for student use), with similar external provision at Medway from the Sunlight Centre. Specialist advice and support is also available from 'Turning Point' an external charitable organisation that works closely with the University. Other student services are provided on the Canterbury and Medway campuses, including counselling from Student Support and Wellbeing, welfare support provided by the College Masters, Chaplaincy and the Students' Unions (Kent Union and Greenwich & Kent Students' Unions Together Advice Centres);
- (ii) The University encourages students' who suspect that they have a drug misuse problem to seek assistance voluntarily from the services referred to above or alternatives (such as a General Practitioner);
- (iii) The University supports health campaigns promoted by the Medical Centre, its Student Services, Kent Union and Greenwich & Kent Students' Unions together.

8. Review of Policy and Documents

This policy will be kept under regular review by the Managing Student Conduct Group and Student Experience Board.

The following documents, referred to above, may be found on the University's website:

Support to Study Procedure and Regulations on Student Discipline in Relation to Non-academic Matters:

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/regulations/general.html>

9. Further Information

College Masters are available to support students with drug-related problems or refer them to the Wellbeing Team for counselling or to arrange further support.

Contact Details

College Masters: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/student-services/masters/>

Counselling: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/student-wellbeing/counselling/>