

University of Limerick

STUDENT SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy explains the University of Limerick's commitment the health and safety of students and recognition of the potential risks to students' health and safety posed by use of alcohol and/or other substances.

As part of the Healthy UL Campus Initiative, the University of Limerick seeks to develop a comprehensive health promotion programme for students through a three-pronged approach: prevention, promotion and response. In this Policy, the University of Limerick explains its commitment to safeguarding students' health, safety and welfare through support for and delivery of activities intended to reduce harm-related substance use, promote substance use health literacy, and respond to students' substance use support needs, with the aim to promote well-informed lifestyle choices. The policy includes commitment to student-centred, rapid and effective responses to risky and problematic use of alcohol and/or other substances. It is aligned with national policy priorities, strategies and actions intended to reduce harm-related substance use.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 To whom does this Policy apply?

This policy applies to all persons enrolled on a module or programme of study at any award level offered by UL, whether or not they are currently in attendance, studying by distance/online, suspended, on leave of absence or on placement.

1.2.2 In what situations does the policy apply?

Health Promotion and Prevention. The University of Limerick is concerned about students' wellbeing and aims to reduce the impact that substance use may have on students' lives by delivering evidence-based substance-use educational programming, interventions, and other activities.

Response and Treatment. The University of Limerick will provide any student who expresses substance-related concerns or experiences substance-related problems with information, advice, and support. Guidance and further information about supports is provided in Appendix 1.

Fitness to Study or Practice. This policy aligns with existing University policies including but not limited to the Fitness to Study Policy and Fitness to Practice Policy.

Student Code of Conduct. It is beyond the scope of this policy to respond to situations in which a student's while under the influence of alcohol or drugs disrupts their formal academic or non-academic activities and/or endangers their own well-being or the well-being of others. In such instances, policies and procedures intended for response to alleged breaches of the UL Student Code of Conduct will apply.

Following investigation of a complaint against a student under the Student Code of Conduct, when there is concern that substance use is adversely affecting a student, the University Advocate may refer the student to the Substance Use and Gambling Support service for further support and signposting to services, as required and on a voluntary basis.

1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?

Healthy UL recommends a partnership approach to the implementation and monitoring the student substance use policy. The UL Student Life Welfare Officer, the Substance Use and Gambling Support Officer, and the Associate Vice President Student Engagement will agree a plan of oversight, which will include annual policy review.

1.3 Definitions

"Substance" is an umbrella term that refers to alcohol, legal prescription and non-prescription drugs, and illegal drugs.

"Drug" refers to any substance that can produce physical, mental, emotional or behavioural change in a person. This includes prescription drugs taken by a person to whom they were not prescribed and/or drugs taken for reasons other than for which they were prescribed.

"Substance use" refers to use ingestion of alcohol or drugs either intermittently or continuously in ways that may or may not interfere with the individual's health, study/work capabilities or conduct, and/or which may impact on the health and safety of that individual or others.

"'Student" is defined as any person enrolled on a module or programme of study at any award level offered by UL whether or not they are currently in attendance, studying by distance/online, suspended, on leave of absence or on placement.

2. Context

2.1 Legal, Regulatory and Policy Context

This policy will operate within specific legal and regulatory frameworks. The possession and supply of drugs is illegal and covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977, 1984) and the Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act (2010). The University recognises that it is a criminal offence to possess, manufacture or sell illegal drugs.

This policy aligns with current national government policy and strategy including:

- Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018
- National Drugs Strategy Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery, 2017 – 2025
- Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education (2020).

The Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education (DES, 2020) requires each HEI to develop its own drug and alcohol policy. A senior officer should be identified to oversee the policy, develop, implement, and monitor a substance use action plan, and monitor students' substance use trends over time.

The policy also aligns with the Healthy UL Framework 2017-2022.

3. Policy Statements

3.1 Policy Statement Principles

Duty of Care

The University of Limerick has a duty of care to all its students and will promote student safety, wellbeing and health literacy and will provide appropriate referrals to internal and external services to where indicated.

A student can be referred to this policy whether or not the student was found to have breached the Student Code of Conduct, and whether or not a penalty was applied.

4. Related Procedures

4.1 Response to Drug and Alcohol Use

The University has a dedicated Healthy UL Substance Use and Gambling Support officer who is responsible for overseeing the University's implementation of the actions in the Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education (2020). Their responsibilities include:

- Implement harm reduction, health promotion and early intervention initiatives intended to reduce harmful substance use.
- Disseminate substance use-related information through educational events, awareness campaigns and other activities in partnership with other stakeholders.
- Deliver on-line educational, screening and brief intervention tools.
- Signpost to institution and local drug and alcohol, mental health and other support services.
- Make referral pathways visible and accessible for a range of internal and external support services including alcohol use, drug use, tobacco use, and gambling.
- Develop interventions that are specifically targeted at higher risk groups.
- Deliver a drop-in accessible service for students with substance-use related concerns or questions.
- Establish and promote mechanisms for the University community to raise issues of concern in relation to student substance use.
- Adhere to confidentiality guidelines and data protection legislation when a student presents for support.
- Provide an outline of referral procedures and available support services.
- Monitor and report trends of substance use behaviour (for example, the Healthy UL Survey, the DUHEI study).
- Support continuing membership of the Mid-West Third Level Drug & Alcohol Network.

4.2 Sale and Promotion of Alcohol

- The University will continue to promote the option of living in alcohol free residences on campus.
- Alcohol may only be sold and consumed on campus in designated areas such as licenced clubs and restaurants.
- Open containers of alcoholic drinks found in unlicenced areas may be confiscated as per local council bylaws and through the issuing of on-the-spot fines by An Garda Síochána if applicable.
- Alternatives to alcoholic drinks, including tea, coffee, snacks, should be available at a reasonable price in the licensed clubs during trading hours.
- Clubs, societies, and other groups organising events on- or off-campus may not advertise free or cheap alcohol beverages as the main attraction of the event. Posters or other promotional material contravening this regulation may be removed.
- Marketing, promotional activities and sponsored advertising of alcohol provision and sales by third party commercial and non-commercial parties may not take place on campus or during off-campus activities or events managed by the University of Limerick. This applies to posters, email, concessions, newsletters or other publications (online or otherwise) attempting to utilise the campus and/or ICT services controlled by the University of Limerick.

5. Related Documents

Internal Documents

Student Fitness to Study Policy (2021)

Student Fitness to Practice Policy (2021)

Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures

Smoke and Vape Free Campus Policy (2018)

Policy and Procedures for Student Dignity and Respect (2013)

Data Protection Policy (2018)

6. Document Control

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Supports

Internal Supports

i. Substance Use and Gambling Support Service

Any student may contact the service in relation to provision of information and advice in relation to smoking, vaping, use of alcohol and drugs, and gambling. The service provides health promotion interventions, and signposting and referral to internal and external services as required. Information for significant others affected by substance use is also provided.
Contact sugs@ul.ie for further information.
www.ul.ie/healthy-ul/wellbeing-resources/addiction/substance-use-and-gambling-support-service

ii. Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service

Any student experiencing a difficulty may contact the counselling and wellbeing service (Éist) and arrange an appointment. The counsellors will, if necessary, advise the individual on access to further advice and/or treatment by external services. Drop-In runs Monday to Friday during weeks 1-15 of each semester and Tuesdays and Thursdays off semester. No appointment is necessary, just turn up to CM-073 between 10am - 11:40am.
www.ul.ie/student-affairs/counselling-service

iii. Student Health Centre

The Student Health Centre is available to provide advice and diagnosis in relation to the physical, mental and emotional effects of excessive alcohol and other drug use. Referral to relevant support/treatment by external services can be made if required.

The Student Health Centre is located in Block C, level M (room CM061) in the Main Building. Appointments can be made by calling **061 202 534.**
www.ul.ie/student-affairs/student-health-centre

iv. Chaplaincy Service

The University of Limerick offers a Chaplaincy Service on campus. It is possible to discuss issues of concern in complete confidence with any member of the Chaplaincy team. The chaplains provide a listening service, offer a welcoming space and supportive presence to students. The Chaplaincy operates from its office CM071 in the main building (where a waiting room is shared with Counselling). www.ul.ie/student-affairs/chaplaincy

v. Student Life

The UL students' Union acts as a confidential self-referral facility for students. It provides service to students who are seeking support or have concerns for

either themselves or others. The Union adheres to confidentiality guidelines and Data Protection Policy when a student presents for support.
www.ulstudentlife.ie/

External services

Up to date drug and alcohol services & supports available in the MidWest region
www.mwrdtf.ie/supports/