HUGHES HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Substance Use Policy

Executive Summary

This policy applies to all current students. It sets out the responsibilities of students and staff, the College's processes and the legal framework for addressing alcohol and substance misuse, and the pastoral guidance and support available to students.

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Approving body: Council	Location: website

1. Policy Purpose

1.1 This policy has been developed to:

- Provide unifying principles to the college's approach to intoxicating substances.
- Give procedural clarity regarding roles and responsibilities to key staff members who may deal with students incapacitated or intoxicated due to substance (alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescription medication) misuse.

2. Scope

2.1 The policy applies to all current students. It applies whether students are on College or University premises or elsewhere undertaking College or University study activities, including premises managed on behalf of the College or University by a third party. It does not apply to staff or senior members, for whom separate regulations exist.

2.2 The College has a legitimate interest in protecting the College community and its own reputation from the potential consequences of substance misuse. It is important to acknowledge that the actions of students whose behaviour causes damage to property, harm to themselves or to others because of substance misuse will need to be considered fully when deciding on an appropriate course of action. Therefore, in situations where substance misuse is significantly affecting a student's academic performance, conduct, relationships or future career options, the situation may need to be considered under a specific College or University procedure, including but not limited to:

- Procedure to Support and Assess Capability to Study (SACS) and the associated actions, for example intermission.
- Fitness to practice procedures within specific departments (at departmental discretion)
- Student disciplinary policy and/or Harassment and sexual misconduct procedure where the behaviour affects others.
- Serious cases involving potentially criminal activity and harm to others may result in a matter being reported to the University and/or the police.

3. Definitions

Substance misuse	The habitual or intermittent use of alcohol, drugs or prescription medication which causes detriment to an individual's health, social functioning and/or academic performance. It can impair the safety of themselves or others and affect attendance, time keeping, efficiency and conduct
Alcohol and drug dependency	Dependency is the most serious form of substance use difficulty and describes a strong, often uncontrollable desire to consume alcohol or drugs that is detrimental to other areas of a person's functioning. There are varying degrees of dependence, and it is important to note that, unlike alcohol and drug misuse, dependence doesn't always involve drinking excessive amounts. Alcohol and/or drug dependency is an illness that can affect people physically and mentally. It can have a negative impact on relationships and can lead to challenges to studies and wider life.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The College has a duty to its students, staff, senior members, and visitors to provide a safe, supportive, and high-quality academic environment where reasonable steps are taken to manage risks. This includes addressing the risks posed by substance misuse, informing students of their responsibilities, and providing information, guidance, and support to those who request it. All community members have a legal and moral responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure their own safety and that of others. This policy outlines the core of the college's approach. Review and monitoring of it is undertaken by college council. The Senior Tutor is responsible for overseeing its delivery, with their welfare team working in partnership with college tutors, porters, event staff and student representatives to deliver it consistently and effectively.

4.2 Students and staff should:

4.2.1 Be aware of this policy and the appendixed operational guidance issued to porters for working with incapacitated or intoxicated students.

4.2.2 Promote a culture of mutual respect within the college community.

4.2.3 Encourage affected students to seek help where appropriate.

4.2.4 Alert an appropriate member of staff to any problems relating to alcohol consumption and/or drug use that they see developing within the college, particularly where legal or health and safety concerns are an issue.

4.2.5 Be aware of the behaviour of students around them and do their best to ensure everyone's safety and wellbeing.

4.3 Porters should:

4.3.1 Be aware of the issues associated with alcohol and drugs misuse

4.3.2 Be aware of alcohol and drug related support services within the College and who has responsibility for this.

4.3.3 Liaise and communicate with college welfare staff in relation to concerns about student alcohol and/or drug misuse.

4.3.4 Report any alcohol or drug related incidents that contravene College or University regulations to the relevant member of college staff responsible for the regulation that has been contravened.

4.3.5 Be alert to the signs of alcohol poisoning and how to act in an emergency, following the protocol outlined in Appendix 2.

4.4 Tutors and College welfare staff should:

4.4.1 Be aware of the signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug misuse and dependency

4.4.2 Alert students to the potential impacts of alcohol and drug misuse

4.4.3 Through induction events, meetings, and new student health questionnaires, be aware of students who come to university with substance use difficulties, in to allow for early intervention and support.

4.4.4 Follow-up with students who have been identified by Porters or bar staff as potentially needing intervention/support.

4.5 MCR Welfare Officer(s) should:

4.5.1 Offer information about services available to students who have concerns about their alcohol and/or drug use.

4.5.2 Work with College staff and Fellows to encourage and promote a culture of mutual respect within College.

4.5.3 Provide and support educational events, awareness campaigns and activities that promote student health and wellbeing in cooperation with other parts of the Collegiate University.

4.5.4 Ensure that student-related policies reflect attitudes to alcohol and drugs which are conducive to student wellbeing.

4.5.5 Ensure that social events are not themed around excessive drinking and that publicity for these events is not themed exclusively around alcohol.

5. Policy Statement

5.1 Hughes Hall is committed to promoting a safe and supportive environment in which students can study, learn, and live. All members of the college should be aware that drinking alcohol to excess and taking controlled substances or drugs (other than under medical direction) is dangerous and may be illegal. However, substance use happens for a variety of reasons, including as a coping response to abuse and trauma. As a college we acknowledge the wider variety of backgrounds and experiences our students join us with and endeavour to provide our students with non-judgmental and non-stigmatising support options.

5.2 The College aims to:

- Encourage and support a culture of mutual respect within the College community.
- Recognise a link between responsible behaviour and an enjoyable learning experience and seek to promote a social environment in which all may benefit.
- Work to create an understanding of acceptable behaviour, acknowledging that students are representing the College in the wider community of Cambridge. The College notes that in some cases, where substance use leads to breach of the rules of behaviour, disciplinary action may be appropriate.
- Take seriously our duties to students, staff and visitors and provide a safe, friendly, and healthy work and study environment.
- Provide guidance and information to staff and students and provide them with the knowledge on what to do if a student or visitor is incapacitated through substance abuse and how to seek assistance.

5.3 Support for those with alcohol and/or drug dependency:

5.3.1 It is recognised that moderate alcohol consumption for many students will be an enjoyable and relatively harmless element of university life. However, in a university with a student population size as large as Cambridge, it is highly likely that some students will experience challenges with managing their usage of alcohol and/or drugs. Alcohol and/or drug dependency is an illness and if a student proactively and voluntarily discloses a problem with alcohol or drugs to the College, they should be reassured that they will be treated with sympathy and sensitivity and every effort will be made to assist them in finding the support that they need, under the general principles of Harm Reduction (Appendix 1). Support might be offered through the College Health Practitioner, Senior Tutor and Tutors or the University Student Support Services. Referrals to external support agencies may also be considered. Wherever possible, the disclosure of information by students will be kept confidential within

the College welfare team, unless the student consents for such a disclosure to be shared or if the student or others are at serious risk of harm.

5.3.2 Students should be aware that unauthorised possession of certain controlled substances or drugs, including cannabis, is a criminal offense. This can also apply to prescription medications, which are only for the use of the person for whom they were prescribed and should not be shared or used by anyone else. Students who have unauthorised possession or make unauthorised use of any such drug, or who supply any person with such a drug or knowingly assist them to obtain unauthorised possession of it, render themselves, independently of or in addition to any penalty they may suffer on conviction by a Court of Law, liable to disciplinary action.

6. Associated Documents

- Procedure to Support and Assess Capability to Study (SACS) and the associated actions, for example intermission.
- Student disciplinary policy.
- Harassment and sexual misconduct procedure.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Harm Reduction Principles

The College recognises that students draw on a variety of coping mechanisms when presented with challenges and that some of these may offer short-term relief whilst carrying longer-term, less desirable consequences (including legal, psychosocial, and financial implications). As such, we recognise the need for an approach to situations when substances (both illegal ones and those that are less regulated, such as alcohol) are used for situational coping that:

- Is rooted in high-quality evidence.
- Is proportionate (to the full picture of risks inherent in that situation, particularly harm to others).
- Is non-stigmatising, non-shaming and seeks to avoid excluding individuals wherever possible whilst signposting them to meaningful change options.
- Does not downplay the dangers inherent in substance abuse both for the user and those around them.
- Recognises complexity and the interface of substance use with a variety of societal factors such as discrimination, abuse, and trauma.
- Offers concrete options for reducing reliance on the substance in question.
- Does not take a categorical 'using or not using' approach and emphasises feasible paths to reduction.

Adapted for our college context from the Harm Reduction Coalition (2024).

Accordingly, the College works with the Mental Health Advice Service (who have recently launched a substance use reduction peer support group) and regional drug and alcohol providers Change Grow Live to provide meaningful support options to students where we suspect there may be a substance use element. We also work directly with the students, in accordance with the above principles, to encourage them to reduce usage appropriately, to resolve the stressors that have led to their reliance on substances, make them aware of the impact of their actions and to minimise any effects on others. We naturally take a more severe approach to anyone found to be dealing substances on-site as this involves harm to others. The Welfare Team, Porters and the Deans collaborate to ensure regulations

are upheld by all college community members. We do work constructively with the police, in particular our assigned liaison sergeant, where necessary for consultation and enforcement, again proportionately to the level of harm involved.

Appendix 2: Porters' process for dealing with an intoxicated and incapable student:

Porters should conduct an initial first aid triage on the student (see details on suspected alcohol poisoning below).

Call 999 if they show signs of alcohol poisoning, or if you are unsure of other injuries that might be deemed life threatening.

Call 111 for advice if the situation is non-life threatening.

Important: when speaking to a 999 or 111 operative, make it clear that we cannot monitor a student in college, we do not have the facilities to do so. Emphasize that if they are not taken to hospital, they will be left on their own in their college room to recover; that may change the guidance you receive.

If in doubt, 999 should be called and/or the student should be sent to A&E.

If you are still concerned about the advice received and risk to the student, **call the welfare phone to speak to a duty Tutor** for support.

Once the situation is under control, **complete an incident report** to record action taken.

Suspected alcohol poisoning

Alcohol poisoning occurs when someone has consumed more alcohol than their body can process over a short period of time. The signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning include:

- Confusion
- Severely slurred speech or loss of co-ordination
- Vomiting
- Irregular or slow breathing
- Hypothermia (pale or blue-tinged skin, or on black or brown skin this may be easier to see inside the lips, on the gums and under the fingernails, caused by low body temperature)
- Being unable to coordinate movement, for example, being unable to stand, walk, or pick things up
- Involuntary urination or defecation
- Having a seizure or fit/Loss of consciousness.

If a student displays one or more of the above symptoms dial 999 immediately and follow instructions from the clinician. **While you are waiting:**

- Take the student to a more private location (e.g. the College Health Practitioner's waiting room)**
- Keep the student sitting up and awake
- Offer them water if they can drink it
- If the student has passed out, lie them on their side in the recovery position
- Check they are breathing properly
- Keep them warm
- Stay with them and monitor their symptoms until help arrives.

**If after midnight when the Lodge is single staffed, call the Duty member of staff to cover the lodge while you wait with the student.

8. Implementation / Communication / Training

The policy implementation is led by the welfare team, with important contributions from the tutor and porter teams. Compliance is monitored via regular meetings between teams (for example the tutor meetings to which the head porters are invited) and via analysis of incident reports. Dedicated training is not required beyond this policy, because specialist help will always be sought with any clinical impairment, as per Appendix 2. However, a yearly refresher in best practice between welfare and porter teams is delivered by the Head of Student Wellbeing and Welfare/Safeguarding Lead.