

# **Chemistry Building, Department of Chemistry**

## **Misuse of Non-Prescription Drugs and Alcohol: Student Policy and Procedures**

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## 1 Introduction

The misuse of alcohol and/or non-prescription drugs leads to an increased likelihood of an accident when working with hazardous substances and equipment and is inconsistent with the high standards of personal behaviour that society and professional bodies expect from persons working with chemicals.

The Head of Department believes that when working with chemicals, Health and Safety is of paramount importance, and has developed this policy to set out clear standards of behaviour for students registered on programmes in the Chemistry Building.

It is recognised that the misuse of alcohol and/or non-prescription drugs can be a medical condition, and should be treated as such. However, the misuse of alcohol and other substances can damage the health, and academic and/or practical performance of the student, together with creating potential risks to the Health and Safety of staff and other students. The Department has a duty of care to those staff and students, and needs to take timely and appropriate action to safeguard their wellbeing.

The policy is aimed at ensuring that all students involved in alcohol or non-prescription drug/medicine misuse are offered specialist help in overcoming their condition, but also at ensuring that the Department has procedures in place to determine whether the student is fit to proceed on their programme of study or to qualification.

## **2. Definitions**

Alcohol misuse is a regular excessive consumption and/or dependence on alcohol. It may cause an individual to experience social, psychological, physical or legal problems and may affect a student's work, whether on placement or during periods of study.

Drug/medicine misuse is the taking of an illicit or other chemical substance into the body in an unprescribed manner. This would include the taking of prescribed and nonprescribed drugs in a manner not in accordance with the prescription guidance given by a medically qualified practitioner.

### **3. Policy**

#### **3.1 Prevention**

The Department will seek to prevent the development of alcohol and drug/medicine related problems through the promotion of substance misuse awareness for students.

#### **3.2 Assistance**

The Department will assist all staff and students to identify potential alcohol or drug/medicine problems, and will encourage students to seek help at an early stage. Students who consider that they may have a problem will be encouraged to seek help and treatment voluntarily, and appropriate medical advice from the Student Occupational Health Service will be offered in the strictest confidence. Details will only be discussed with the student's own doctor, or other medical specialist, with the prior agreement of the individual.

#### **3.3 Performance**

Whilst alcohol or drug/medicine abuse does not excuse poor academic or practical performance, it may, at least on a first occasion, be treated as a mitigating factor, and disciplinary, progress or fitness work procedures may be suspended whilst opportunity is taken to seek diagnosis and, if necessary, treatment.

#### **3.4 Standards**

Students should not consume alcohol or other substances during the working day which might affect their performance.

Students should not consume alcohol or other substances immediately prior to attending for work which might affect performance, nor attend work under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

Students should never be affected by the consumption of alcohol or other substances which might affect performance whilst at work. Students must be mindful that the effects of alcohol or other substances can last for many hours.

The Department considers the abuse of drugs/medicines at any time and in all places is unacceptable for students on programmes leading to a professional qualification. The use of any illicit drug may be a disciplinary as well as a criminal offence (ref. Regulation XVII – Conduct and Discipline of Students).

Students are expected to maintain a satisfactory and acceptable standard of behaviour at all times. This includes weekends and vacation periods.

Members of staff have a responsibility to raise any concerns they may have about a student in relation to drugs/medicines or alcohol. Staff and students should not 'cover up' or collude with colleagues whose behaviour or performance is affected by alcohol or other substances. Colleagues should be encouraged to seek help immediately.

All students have a personal responsibility to check with their pharmacist or General Practitioner (GP) about performance affecting side effects resulting from taking

prescription or over the counter medication. Students should inform their tutor immediately about any possible side effects, if appropriate.

#### 4. Procedures:

4.1 In the first instance, the Department will deal with the problem. The Department should immediately refer the student to the Student Occupational Health Service for assessment. Any action taken in accordance with this procedure will be confidential, as far as is possible bearing in mind the overriding duty of care which the Department has for the safety of patients, staff and the public.

4.2 Students who believe they have an alcohol or drug/medicine misuse related problem are encouraged voluntarily to seek confidential help and treatment. Help may be obtained from the Student Occupational Health Service, Student Counselling Service, or their own GP.

4.3 The student is entitled to be accompanied by a member of the University or a Students Union Representative at any meetings or discussions about the matter. 4.4 Where a student is diagnosed as suffering from illness related to alcohol or drug/medicine misuse, time off for recovery will be treated in the same way as absence for any other medical conditions.

4.5 Where a student refuses to accept help, suffers a relapse, or fails to respond to treatment, difficulties relating to study or practical performance will be dealt with under the normal University procedures without special consideration being given.

4.6 Where the Department becomes aware or has cause to suspect that a student is suffering from alcohol or drug/medicine misuse, which in the opinion of the Department renders the student unfit to complete the programme of study, or which renders the student a possible danger to others with whom they come into contact as part of that programme, the following procedures should be followed.

- i. The case should be referred to Progress Committee.
- ii. The student should be notified by letter that they are required to attend a Progress Committee to discuss their fitness to continue on the programme of study, and that they should provide a statement if mitigation, which may include medical evidence, within 10 days of receiving the letter.
- iii. The Department Progress Committee will then meet with the student, and review the medical evidence provided to consider whether the student is fit to continue on the programme of study, and whether they require treatment and/or monitoring. The Progress Committee will determine the outcome on the basis of the medical evidence provided, the circumstances surrounding each case, and after due consideration of the relevant professional guidelines appropriate to the programme of study.
- iv. The Progress Committee may then either:
  - o Confirm that the student is fit to continue their programme of study.
  - o Refer the student to the University Student Occupational Health Service for a second medical opinion.

- Require the student to interrupt their programme of study until such time as they are certified fit to return to their studies.
- If the Progress Committee considers that the circumstances constitutes misconduct (e.g. a criminal offence), it may be dealt with under the provisions of Regulation XVII – Conduct and Discipline of Students.

v. The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of Progress Committee within 5 working days.

vi. If the student refuses or fails to provide medical evidence, the Progress Committee will make a recommendation as in 4.6.iii above, based on the available evidence.

4.7 The student may appeal against the decision to the Registrar and Secretary within 14 working days of the notification of the decision.

4.8 If it is considered that there is an immediate danger to other members of staff, students, or members of the public, the student may be excluded, pending a disciplinary hearing under the provisions of Regulation XVII.

## **Appendix 1**

### Procedures where illegal drugs have been discovered

- a. Ask someone to witness your actions,
- b. Put the drugs in an envelope or plastic bag and seal this carefully, either by sticking down the envelope flap or by sealing the bag with a label, sellotape or similar.
- c. Sign the seal or label and add the date and time. The drugs should be handled and packaged with care but not stored, as this can be done lawfully only by the police.
- d. Telephone the local police immediately and inform them of what you have found. Follow their instructions about what to do with the drugs, Drugs may be destroyed without delay if the police have given this advice (they will also give advice on the destruction method).
- e. Do not carry the drugs to the police station or anywhere else – you could be stopped and charged with possession. However, individuals can be in possession of drugs in order to prevent someone from committing an offence.
- f. As soon as possible, record your actions in writing, sign and date this, and ask the witness to sign and date this record as well. Keep this record safe.
- g. Inform the Head of Department and Head of Department Administration as soon as is practicable.

## **Appendix 2**

### Resources

#### **General**

Student Occupational Health Services:

Waterloo Place, 182/184 Oxford Road 0161 275 2858

Student Counselling Service:

5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Crawford House, Precinct Centre, Booth Street East

Tel: 0161 275 2864, e-mail: [counsel.service@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:counsel.service@manchester.ac.uk)

Web: [www.manchester.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/counselling)

#### **Alcohol**

Alcoholics Anonymous (0161 236 6569) provides free group support from recovering alcoholics for those who wish to remain teetotal.

Drinkline (020 7332 0202; 6pm to 11pm every day) is a national alcohol helpline for confidential help and advice.

## **Drugs**

National Drugs Helpline: (0800 776600) provides free information and advice. North West England Narcotics Anonymous: (0800 1076299) provides free group support from recovering addicts for people recovering from narcotics addiction.