



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy

Policy Summary:	The Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy provides guidance on the University's procedure in relation to substance and alcohol misuse.
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Principles

This policy is designed to raise awareness of alcohol and substance related health problems and give clear guidance to both managers and employees as to the action that should be taken where they know or suspect a fellow employee, or any other contractor/visitor, may be misusing alcohol or other substances. This policy seeks to ensure that all workplace issues relating to alcohol and substance misuse affecting employees are dealt with in a supportive and equitable manner.

QMU recognises that employees may wish to consume alcohol outwith their working day and in their social hours, there is however growing awareness that any effects of alcohol on the workplace are matters that need to be addressed. The World Health Organisation (WHO 2002) has estimated that excessive alcohol consumption is a major cause of health and social problems and loss of economic productivity in the UK. The Office of National Statistics Surveys (2005) indicates that 11% men and 3% women in the UK are to some degree dependent on alcohol.

In addition to reductions in organisational efficiency, the inappropriate use of alcohol as well as substance misuse can create health, safety and welfare problems in the workplace. As with any other health and safety issue QMU's approach is to prevent the problem arising wherever possible. If, despite QMU's attempts at prevention, alcohol and substance misuse problems do occur, it is important that procedures are in place to manage them with professional support. QMU also recognises it has and must comply with a duty of care in relation to all employees and visitors to the University

Policy Aims

The main aims of the policy are:

- maintain a safe working environment at all times
- promote a sensible attitude towards alcohol among employees, insofar that it relates to the workplace
- encourage employees who suspect or know they have a problem with alcohol or drugs to seek help, and treat them with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Monitoring and Review

Human Resources are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and supporting procedures. The policy will be reviewed as required and in line with the HR policy review schedule and appropriate employment legislation.

Equal Opportunities

QMU is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and the terms of this policy and are designed to ensure the fair and transparent treatment for all staff irrespective of the equality characteristics or contractual status.

Learning and Development

Human Resources will provide learning and development for all managers and staff involved in the implementation and application of this policy. This will be reviewed and extended in line with the on-going development of the policy.

Scope of the Policy

This policy is relevant to all employees of the University.

1.0 Definition of alcohol and substance misuse

1.1 Sensible levels of alcohol intake are much lower than most people may think: three units per day for men (equivalent to a pint and a half of 4% beer) and two units for women (equivalent to a 175 ml glass of wine). Alcohol is a drug, which takes effect quickly, but wears off slowly. It takes approximately 20 minutes to take effect and approximately one hour for the body to get rid of one unit (Scottish Council on Alcohol 2004).

1.2 Substance misuse refers to any use of illegal substances and the misuse of prescribed drugs whether deliberate or unintentional. Alcohol misuse is where the consumption of alcohol leads to deterioration in an individual's health, conduct, attendance or work performance. In cases of alcohol and substance misuse, when this is continued or repeated behaviour it can be as a result of dependency on the alcohol or substance involved.

1.3 Volatile substances include all substances which contain Butane or Propane gas, trichloroethylene and tetrachloroethylene. These substances (or others which have similar effects) are found in the following:

- gas refills
- lighters
- aerosols
- air fresheners
- paint thinners
- correcting fluid

Volatile substance abuse refers to inhalation of these substances.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy is concerned with the effects of alcohol and substances in the workplace and accordingly is restricted to employees of QMU. Visitors and staff seconded from other organisations that work alongside QMU staff should be made aware of this policy and are expected to strictly adhere to the policy guidelines even though not covered by procedural details.

2.2 Legislation

QMU has statutory duties under Health and Safety legislation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees, visitors and contractors and to comply with the *Misuse of Drugs Act (1971)*.

2.3 Alcohol and Substance consumption at Work

Subject to the provisions within 2.6 below, the consumption of alcohol and/or illegal or non-prescription (with the exception of "over the counter"

medication) substances is normally prohibited at work for all employees, however in some circumstances, consumption of alcohol may form part of the curriculum e.g. Hospitality and Events courses where wine tasting may be applicable. Individuals who are suspected of being under the influence of either alcohol, or suspected of misusing any other substances whilst at work may be suspended pending investigation and referred to the Occupational Health Service for medical opinion. If suspended, line management will advise on safe modes of travel home.

2.4 Disclosure of Driving Licence Disqualification

Some QMU employees drive as part or all of their working day. If your job requires that you drive at work you must disclose any driving convictions and/or disqualification to your line manager, which does include disqualification or convictions from a drink driving offence. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action.

2.5 Safety Critical Situations and Working with Operational Machinery

Individuals, as outlined in 2.1 above, suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or substances whilst undertaking safety critical situations or working with operational machinery will be managed as in clause 2.3 above.

2.6 Authorised Consumption of Alcohol

Line managers may authorise, at their discretion, alcohol consumption for defined social events. All individuals are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

3.0 Identification

Alcohol and substance misuse problems often manifest themselves as health problems. Some possible indicators of alcohol, drug and substance abuse are listed below:

- anxiety or depression
- deterioration in relationships with colleagues
- sudden mood changes
- unusual erratic behaviour
- irritability or aggression
- fluctuations in concentration and energy
- persistent lateness
- short term absences (showing a pattern)
- impaired work performance
- deterioration in personal hygiene / appearance
- increase in accidents
- a smell of alcohol on the breath

It must be borne in mind that the indicators may have other casual factors, but may allow for the identification of alcohol or substance misuse.

4.0 Alcohol and substance testing

- 4.1 QMU will not normally undertake alcohol and substance testing on QMU employees.

5.0 Methods of workplace intervention

- 5.1 Employees whose behaviour comes to the attention of management through work deterioration, work accident or any other identifying factor will be asked to attend a meeting with their line manager.

The meeting will be confined to aspects of work performance behaviour and/or attitude, unless there is clear evidence of substance misuse or if the employee identifies alcohol/substance misuse as the reason for poor work performance.

Should an employee attribute their problems to alcohol/substance misuse, QMU will offer the individual the opportunity for specialised professional assistance, help and support. The line manager or Human Resources may, in the first instance, refer the individual to the University's Occupational Health service. Also available to the employee is the employee assistance service which is free and confidential.

- 5.2 Colleagues, who have concerns that a fellow employee is involved in alcohol or substance misuse, should in the first instance notify their line manager.
- 5.3 Where a member of staff has acknowledged they have a dependency on alcohol or other substance and is required to have time off work for medical treatment, this will normally be treated as sick leave with entitlement to receive normal benefits under QMU's usual sick pay arrangements. A positive rehabilitation plan may not normally require complete absence from work.
- 5.4 Occupational Health procedures can ensure fitness to work and linked with GP and specialist support networks, whilst maintaining medical confidentiality. Line management can monitor and evaluate work performance, attendance and conduct and communicate progress as appropriate with Human Resources.

6.0 Confidentiality

- 6.1 Any case which involves alcohol/substance misuse related problems will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. Particular care will be taken to ensure that the confidential nature of personal records of staff with alcohol/substance related problems is preserved.

7.0. What happens if a disciplinary offence is committed?

- 7.1 If a disciplinary offence arises, the disciplinary policy will be applicable. If there is evidence of alcohol or substance misuse as one of the factors, this will be taken into account but will not exempt the member of staff from the

consequences of misconduct, poor performance or other considerations. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and support given wherever it is reasonable and appropriate to do so. A referral to the Occupational Health Service may be arranged by management to obtain an independent medical view.

- 7.1` QMU has a responsibility to support staff that may have become dependent on alcohol or drugs at the earliest opportunity, but will require them to commit to help themselves and follow treatment and professional advice.

8.0. Occasional misuse of alcohol or substances

- 8.1 If the view of the Occupational Health Service is that there is no dependency problem, any cases of poor performance attendance or conduct will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate QMU policies and procedures, this may include the Disciplinary procedure. Where safety is a risk to the employee or to others this will always be an over-riding priority.

9.0. What if someone declines treatment/help?

- 9.1 The decision to undergo treatment is voluntary and no individual can be forced into accepting help. Appropriate QMU policies and procedures will apply whilst at work where conduct, work performance or sickness absence problems occur.

10.0 What happens if the problem should recur?

- 10.1 Where an employee receiving treatment suffers a relapse QMU will consider each case on its merits, based where appropriate on occupational health advice. If appropriate, further medical reports may be sought from the Occupational Health Service. This will always be with the permission of the employee, to assist the Occupational Health Service to fully support the rehabilitation of the individual. Any medical reports will remain confidential between the Occupational Health Service, Line Manager and Human Resources.

11.0 Who has responsibility for the policy?

- 11.1 All staff and managers have a responsibility to understand and behave consistently with this policy. Human Resources and the Occupational Health Service can all play an additional supportive role.

- 11.2 Members of staff have a responsibility to:

- be aware of the effects of alcohol and substance misuse
 - be familiar with this policy
 - be aware of their own responsibilities under the relevant Health and Safety legislation:
- Under section 7 of the Health and Safety Act, every employee has a duty to take care for their own health and safety whilst at work as well as those who may be affected by their actions. Employees must cooperate fully with their employer in relation to Health and Safety at Work.

➤ Regulation 14 of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) states that employees must ensure that they operate machinery and equipment in the correct manner, therefore employees must advise their employers if any medication which they are taking will impair their use of machinery or equipment which they are required to operate whilst at work.

- identify potential problems and encourage colleagues to seek help voluntarily
- seek help for themselves as necessary
- know of support networks (see Appendix 1)
- be aware of safe drinking levels (see 1.1)

11.3 Managers have a responsibility to:

- promote healthy practices in the workplace
- communicate this procedure effectively
- be alert to staff working patterns and be prepared to intervene early if signs of a problem develop
- seek advice from the Occupational Health Services or Human Resources at an early stage if they see signs of a problem
- respond positively to agreed treatment programmes
- ensure that staff have reasonable working conditions.

11.4 Any further questions on this policy or any aspects of alcohol, or substance misuse should be referred to Human Resources.

APPENDIX 1 - SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Employees should have access to the advice and services of competent professionals for support in alcohol or substance misuse related problems. Contact can be made confidentially with:

- The General Practitioner, who has the main duty of care
- A confidential referral to the Occupational Health Service. This may also lead to a referral of the employee to their GP
- Our free and confidential Employee Assistance Service (0800 389 7851)
- Staff should also feel able to talk to their own line manager about any problem they have

Community Networks

Contact Telephone Numbers –these will be made available and known to all staff and held within the Occupational Health Service:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| • Alcoholics Anonymous | 0845 7697 555 |
| • LIBRA (for women by women) | 0131 661 0111 |
| • Al Anon (10.00am – 10.00pm) | 0141 339 8884 |
| • North Edinburgh Drugs Advice Centre | 0131 332 2314 |
| • Samaritans | 0131 221 9999 |
| • Drug Prevention Group | 0131 553 2841 |

Further details of support networks in Edinburgh and East Lothian can be downloaded from the following links:

[Directory of drug and alcohol support services in East Lothian](#)

[Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership – Service Directory](#)