

Alcohol and Substance Abuse Policy

1. The University is required under Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the health and safety of its employees, students and others at work. This policy is not intended to intrude upon the privacy of individuals, particularly in health matters where their condition does not affect their conduct or performance at work. The University is however concerned where health or behaviour impairs the conduct, safety or work performance of its staff. It recognises that the misuse of alcohol or substance misuse may be a cause of such impairment.

2. This policy aims to take positive action to prevent alcohol or substance misuse problems affecting employees and to help those affected, as far as is practicable.

3. All guidance and support provided by the University under this policy will be arranged on the basis of confidentiality to the individual by occupational health and People and Development.

4. Confidential support and advice will be provided to the employee and to line managers.

5. The misuse of alcohol, drugs and other substances respects no boundaries of sex, status or occupation and the Policy applies equally to all University staff without discrimination.

6. Whilst this is a joint policy on alcohol and substance misuse, the situation regarding substances misuses will be distinguished from that of alcohol where appropriate, due to the legal position on their possession and supply. Potential problems do not solely arise from the use of prohibited and other controlled substances. Certain prescribed drugs, such as tranquillisers etc. can cause difficulties with performance at work, and can create dependency problems. Care in their use is essential. Recurrent substance misuse will be treated as a medical/social problem.

7. Treatment for alcohol or substance misuse problems should result in the restoration of acceptable standards of work. Where appropriate advice is sought and followed, there will be encouragement and support in following this course of action. Sick pay will be provided and no formal action will be taken. If appropriate, it may be necessary to suspend on full pay whilst a treatment programme is undergone. Reasons for suspension may include:

- The individuals continued presence presents a threat to the health or safety of other staff, students or third parties
- Presenting a threat to the safety or security of University property or that belonging to other people
- Impeding an investigation being conducted under these or other University procedures or by third parties, including the police.

8. However the University's responsibilities to students and workplace colleagues, and for the general performance of its function, will occasionally give cause for alcohol and substance misuse to be considered under the relevant disciplinary procedures. The use of the disciplinary procedures is most likely if there is no co-operation with appropriate treatment agencies, or compliance with recommended treatment.

Defining the Problems

9. Problems with alcohol at work usually fall into one of two main categories:

- i. An over-indulgence in alcohol which results in socially unacceptable or even dangerous behaviour but which is not related to a physical or psychological dependence
- ii. Where dependency on alcohol continually or repeatedly interferes with the performance of an employee.

10. Problems arising from the first category are likely to be a straightforward case of misconduct whereas individuals in the second category are likely to have associated health absence and long-term performance problems. However, even occasional drinking may be a response to an underlying problem, such as stress.

11. The University recognises that an employee's work performance may also be adversely affected if they have a close friend or relative who has a drink or substance misuse problem. If this is the case professional advice will be made available e.g. through contact with People and Development or the University's Occupational Health Adviser.

12. It is not easy to make a distinction between the two categories of alcohol related problems as described in Paragraph 9 above. Furthermore, some of the symptoms of excessive alcohol intake can be similar to the effects of a range of medical conditions including diabetes and epilepsy. Consequently when dealing with problems caused by suspected alcohol misuse, there must be appropriate medical assessment and a full investigation of all the circumstances before deciding the appropriate action.

Drugs and the law

13. The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 makes it an offence to possess, supply, offer to supply, or to produce controlled drugs without authorisation. The University's legal interpretation will be in line with current legal practice. In situations where an individual is found to have been in possession or under the influence of illegal substances at work or to have supplied them to others, or be taking such drugs at work, the matter will be regarded as gross misconduct and subject to University disciplinary procedures.

Policy statement

14. All employees will be made aware of the long and short term effects of consuming excessive alcohol or misusing substances by the universal circulation of this document and health promotion by Occupational Health. The emphasis of this policy is primarily one of prevention. However, relevant professional staff will be available to detect and act upon any problems that may arise. This Policy will be continually monitored and evaluated.

Action

Action by the Individual

15. If an employee knows or suspects that they have an alcohol or drug related problem they are strongly encouraged to seek help voluntarily. Within the University help would include Occupational Health Adviser, their manager, Chief People Officer or trade union representative. Outside the University, their General Practitioner or local voluntary agencies.

Action by Colleagues

16. It is likely that an employee with an alcohol or a substance misuse problem will come to the notice of colleagues through indication of inadequate or deteriorating work performance. It is in the individual's interest for a problem to be identified and help offered as soon as possible, as prompt action carries the best hope of successful treatment.

17. The first approach should normally be for colleagues to encourage them, with sensitivity, and in confidence, to recognise their problem and to seek advice, either through their general practitioner or specialist agencies. If this fails, colleagues are encouraged to discuss this matter with their line manager so that more formal action may be taken.

18. Reluctance by colleagues to take such an initiative is understandable. Staff and managers could be in breach of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 by 'turning a blind eye' to an employee's alcohol or substance misuse problem. Seek advice at an early stage from Occupational Health or others listed below.

Action by Manager

19. Wherever the Manager becomes aware that a member is misusing alcohol, or it is seen that a member of staff is using prohibited and other substances personally, they should invite the person concerned for a meeting on a confidential basis. This opportunity should be taken to record concern for the health and possible predicament of the member of staff concerned, to highlight the support available, and to urge the member of staff to seek help as soon as possible.

Further Advice

20. Individuals may seek help from the University's Occupational Health Service. Leaflets on alcohol and substance misuse are available from Occupational Health. Additionally, further assistance e.g., revised duties/workloads/hours may be arranged during a treatment programme. The employee may discuss this, or other forms of support direct with their manager, or via People and Development or Occupational Health Adviser.

Status of the Policy

21. This Policy does not confer any contractual entitlements upon Southampton Solent University staff or senior staff. It may be varied from time to time by the Board of Governors having consulted staff and the recognised trade unions.

Useful Outside Agencies

Alcoholics Anonymous

24 Hr Helpline 0845 769 7555

LOCAL Drugs Helpline 0800 776600

Hope UK Solent

St Denys Church Centre, Dundee Road, Southampton, SO17 2ND Tel: 023 80320472

Alcohol Advisory Service

11 Stanley Street, Southsea PO5 2DS

Tel: 023 92296467

References

ACAS - Alcohol and Drugs Misuse HSE - Don't Mix it!

CIPD - Alcohol Policies