

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Policy

1. Introduction

Alcoholism and drug abuse are recognised as major causes of ill health, lost productivity, job loss and family break-up.

The University expects all its staff, workers and contractors to perform their duties safely, free from over-use or after effects of alcohol and free from use or after effects of non-prescribed drugs* or misuse of prescribed drugs.

The University recognises that alcoholism and drug abuse are medical conditions and should be treated as such. However, while individuals may be no more responsible for acquiring this condition than some other forms of illness or disease they do have a responsibility for its proper treatment once diagnosed. Early diagnosis and professional medical help offer the best chance of a cure and the University encourages those with an alcohol or drug problem to seek help.

The aim the policy is to help the individual to return to an acceptable working pattern and to control their problem through appropriate professional assistance in the interests of their own health and safety and the safe and efficient working of the University. However, it must be recognised that the ultimate sanctions of disciplinary action or termination on health grounds must remain when all efforts at help have failed.

2. Responsibility

Managers have a general duty to ensure the health and safety of their staff, workers and contractors. This means that staff, workers and contractors must not be allowed to continue to work where this places the employee or other workers at risk.

Managers, the People Hub, Union Representatives and colleagues all have a responsibility to ensure that the substance abuser is encouraged to seek help and advice as early as possible.

Staff, workers and contractors should consider their responsibility under the Health and Safety Act 1974. This means that they must take reasonable care of themselves and others who could be affected by what they do.

3. Individual's Motivation and Request for Help

The prime motivation is from the individual; until they recognise they have a problem, difficulties will occur. There is little doubt that failure by the individual to accept their problem is likely to lead to loss of job ultimately. The purpose of this policy is to try and

avoid this and to give the individual what help is available in a structured, formal and confidential way. It is damaging to the individual and the University to ignore or conceal drinking or drug related problems.

4. Medical Involvement

The manager and/or a Senior People Services Adviser will discuss with the individual the appropriate ways of seeking help from their GP and expert bodies such as the local Alcoholics Anonymous or Drug Abuse advisors. This initial meeting will be completely confidential between the individual and the manager and/or Senior People Services Adviser. An appropriate programme of treatment including medical treatment where necessary may be recommended by the individual's GP.

Where an individual has been referred to the University's occupational health provider by Management and/or the People Hub, regular progress reports will be made by the University's occupational health provider to the relevant parties. These reports will not include medical details unless written permission has been given for release of this information by the individual. The individual concerned will be given copies of all progress reports, which will remain confidential to the University's occupational health provider and the relevant parties.

5. Job Security

A member of staff with an acknowledged alcohol or drug problem will be expected to co-operate fully with an agreed programme of treatment and maintain a satisfactory standard of work performance and conduct. If after help and advice, there is a reappearance of alcohol or drug related problems at work, consideration will be given to a further programme of action although this cannot be continued indefinitely.

Provided that these requirements are met, the member of staff will normally be able to continue working in the same job subject to satisfactory performance. However; there may be circumstances where a change of job will be required. It should be the aim to maintain the person in their original job or to reinstate them to it as soon as possible, once a programme of treatment has been successfully completed and satisfactory performance has been sustained.

6. Failure or No Progress

Should the individual refuse to accept the diagnosis or professional help offered, or discontinue a treatment programme, then further acts of misconduct or unsatisfactory performance would have to be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedures and may lead to dismissal. Strenuous efforts will be made to persuade the individual that the treatment programme is necessary and that they have a genuine medical problem which is likely to cause deterioration, not only of physical and mental health but also their ability to earn a living.

If, despite the staff member's full co-operation, their health through alcohol/drug abuse is impaired to the extent that they are unable to achieve a satisfactory standard of work performance, then there may be no alternative but to terminate the employment on the grounds of incapacity through ill-health, subject to medical evidence and advice.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

8. Useful References

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Guidance
Guide to Managing Sickness Absence

*non-prescribed drugs include Class A, Class B, Class C drugs and psychoactive substances (known as “legal Highs”)