



## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

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### **Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy**

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<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Head of People and Culture
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Alcohol is a drug, albeit a legal one; and for many people both young and old, it is part of their normal way of life. At the same time there is a wealth of medical evidence regarding the associated health risks for individuals who regularly consume more than the Government's recommended limits. Its misuse is a growing social problem nationwide, particularly among younger age groups, and the effects of drinking alcohol on the body and mind are a major concern.
- 1.2 The Misuse of Drugs Act is the primary piece of legislation aimed at preventing the misuse of drugs. Drugs covered by this Act are known as "controlled drugs" and are categorised as class A, B and C. The law defines a series of offences including possession, possession with intent to supply, supplying or offering to supply and production of certain controlled drugs. Under the Act it is a criminal offence to knowingly allow any premises you occupy or manage to be used unlawfully for the purpose of producing and supplying controlled drugs.
- 1.3 For the purpose of this policy, a drug is defined as any substance that alters the way the body functions physically, emotionally, or mentally. This includes:
- Illegal substances
  - Prescribed or over-the-counter medications
  - Psychoactive substances marketed as "legal highs"
  - Any substance that affects behaviour, perception, or cognition
- 1.4 Alcohol and Drug misuse is a growing problem which has many implications for society and, therefore, the workplace. Such misuse can affect work performance in three main ways:
- A raised blood level from alcohol/drug misuse whilst at work will jeopardise both efficiency and safety, e.g. by increasing the likelihood of mistakes, errors of judgement, accidents etc. Skills may be impaired.
  - Smoking and vaping can lead to addiction problems and may contribute to behaviour issues.
  - The after effects of drinking/drug misuse can impair both work attendance and performance e.g. through a lack concentration, inability to work at normal pace, absenteeism etc.

- Persistent heavy drinking/drug misuse can lead to a range of social, psychological and medical problems and is associated with impaired work performance and attendance.

1.5 The College is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its staff, students and visitors. The College adopts a zero tolerance approach to the misuse of alcohol, drugs and chemical substances by its staff, students and visitors. The College forbids the possession, consumption or the use of prohibited drugs or unauthorised alcohol on the College's premises and facilities. Smoking and vaping is not permitted in College facilities and may only take place in designated areas, which are a suitable distance from buildings.

1.6 The College is committed to supporting individuals affected by alcohol and drug misuse. Where appropriate, individuals will be encouraged to seek help. Dependent on the nature and severity of the issue, a combination of supportive interventions and or disciplinary procedures may apply.

1.7 If the Chief Executive or other senior staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that illegal drug use, supply or related criminal activity is taking place on the College premises, the matter will be reported to the Police immediately. This is to ensure compliance with legal obligations and to avoid liability as a manager or occupier of premises.

## 2. **Objectives**

2.1 To minimise the potential impact of alcohol and drug misuse on individuals and others who may be adversely affected by such behaviour. This Policy applies to all staff, students and visitors without exception.

2.2 To outline the action the College will take when a member of staff or student is:

- Adversely affected by alcohol or drug misuse, or
- Suspected of involvement with the use, supply, intent to supply, distribution, possession, or production of controlled drugs.

- 2.3 To provide clear information and guidance regarding the supply, consumption or misuse of alcohol or drugs on College premises.

### 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 All students and staff who believe a colleague may be adversely affected by alcohol or drug misuse have a duty to report their concerns to a Line Manager (for staff) or Lecturer (students).
- In all cases involving staff, Human Resources must be informed to ensure appropriate support is provided and action is taken.
  - In cases involving students, Student Services will provide support and guidance.
- 3.2 If a staff member or student suspects another individual is involved in the supply, intent to supply, possession or production of controlled drugs, they must report the matter to their Line Manager or Campus Manager.
- The Campus Manager will escalate the concern to the **Chief Executive** or their nominee.
  - The Chief Executive or nominee will notify the **Police** to ensure compliance with legal obligations.
- 3.3 Staff and students must not attend the College under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Staff and students must never drive, operate machinery, or handle hazardous substances or transportable gases if affected by alcohol or drugs. Those whose role involve such activities must not present themselves for work or study after consuming alcohol or drugs as even moderate use can impair judgement and slow reaction times.
- 3.4 All Staff and students are reminded of their own legal responsibilities under:
- Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Order (NI) 1978, which requires individuals to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.
  - The Misuse of Drugs Act, The Criminal Law Act (NI), and The Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order, which may result in criminal proceedings if

unlawful acts are committed.

#### **4. Misuse of Alcohol / Drugs**

- 4.1 The College is committed to supporting any student or staff member experiencing issues related to alcohol or drug misuse or dependency. Individuals will be encouraged to seek help voluntarily at the earliest opportunity, and will be offered access to advice, support, and, where appropriate, treatment.
- 4.2 Where the College becomes aware that individuals have such a problem, they will be invited to discuss their situation with their Line Manager and/ or Human Resources or Student Services and offered the opportunity of professional advice and help.
- 4.3 Time off for treatment may be granted at the discretion of the College. Continued employment cannot be guaranteed where substance misuse impacts conduct, capability, or safety. Refusal of treatment, failure to complete a programme, or relapse following treatment may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- 4.4 Should the staff member or student refuse help, or drop out of a treatment programme, this will not be automatic grounds for dismissal or removal from a course, but any unacceptable behaviour or level of performance thereafter will be subject to normal disciplinary procedures.
- 4.5 In the event of a relapse during or after treatment, the College will consider the case sympathetically, taking professional advice into account. Each case will be considered on its merits, however the College may, at its discretion, allow one further opportunity for treatment following a first lapse. Any subsequent relapse will be managed under the disciplinary procedure.
- 4.6 Staff and students have the right to be accompanied or represented at any stage by a recognised Trade Union representative for staff, and for students - a student representative, or a friend. Any disputes regarding the applicability of this policy will be addressed through the College's standard complaints or disciplinary procedures.

- 4.7 The treatment record of any member of the College is confidential, and the College will endeavour to maintain confidentiality about individual problems, subject to the provisions of the law. However, the College reserves the right to record and disclose where proper, the numbers and occupation of those who have received such treatment while in their employ or responsibility for the purposes of furthering research, without disclosing names or personal details.
- 4.8 In cases involving students, counselling and any subsequent treatment that may be recommended, if expected to be prolonged may result in a recommendation to suspend studies due to personal mitigating circumstances.
- 4.9 Staff and students seeking treatment for the misuse or dependency of prescribed drugs or alcohol will be given support appropriate to individual needs to be agreed by the individual and Human Resources or Student Services as appropriate.

## **5. Supply and Consumption of Alcohol**

- 5.1 Alcohol must not normally be consumed on College premises or grounds. An exception may be made for College approved functions held on licensed premises where alcohol is served to invited guests or members of the public attending events delivered as part of the vocational education curriculum.
- In such cases, while the College may provide alcohol, individuals are expected to consume it responsibly.
  - Consideration must be given to whether it is appropriate to consume alcohol if the individual is returning to work or study afterwards.
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of licensees and those organising College events to ensure that:
- No person under the legal drinking age is served or permitted to consume alcohol on College premises or grounds.
  - All alcohol service complies with relevant licensing laws and College safeguarding policies.

## **6. Supply, Possession and Production of Controlled Drugs**

- 6.1 Any individual, whether they are a staff member, student, or visitor to the College, who is suspected of possessing, intending to supply, supplying, offering to supply, or producing any substance, whether legal or illegal, that impacts physical, emotional, or mental functioning, will be reported to the Police and temporarily suspended from the College pending the outcome of Police investigations. The possession of over-the-counter medication or medication prescribed to them for their own personal use is permitted. Following the conclusion of any police investigation, including potential court proceedings, the College will determine appropriate disciplinary actions in line with the College's disciplinary policy.
- 6.2 Any member of staff or student whom the College has reasonably believes to be using any substance, legal or illegal that affects the way in which the body functions physically, emotionally or mentally on College premises, will be subject to disciplinary action and will be reported to the Police.
- 6.3 Any person who is not a member of staff or student of the College who is suspected of attempting to enter any College premises to supply, offer to supply, attempting to supply or produce any substance, legal or illegal that affects the way in which the body functions physically, emotionally or mentally will be refused access, and the Police will be informed.

## **7. Substance Misuse**

- 7.1 All staff, students, contractors and their employees are strictly prohibited from consuming alcohol and drugs during the working day, including meal or rest breaks. The effects of alcohol or drug use can significantly increase risk of accident, injury and harm to the individual and others. This prohibition applies across all College premises and activities.
- 7.2 Staff, students and visitors to the College are permitted to bring over-the-counter medication or medication prescribed to them by a healthcare provider for their



personal use and are responsible for the safe-keeping of their medicine and administering the correct dosage in accordance with the healthcare provider's instructions. Students, staff and visitors to the College should make their Line Manager, Lecturer or host aware of the nature of any illness that may require prescribed medication to be administered while on College premises in the event that this information may be needed in an emergency situation. If it is suspected that a member of staff or a student is over-dosing on prescribed medicine, this will be reported to the Line Manager or Lecturer.

7.3 Staff should be aware of the dangers of solvents and aerosols. This includes Tippex fluid and pens, Tippex thinners, glue, marker pens and spray deodorants. If a member of staff suspects a student of solvent abuse, then they should follow the procedure for any drug misuse.

7.4 All members of staff are responsible for the safe storage and use of solvents in their classroom or work area. Where possible they should be locked away when not in use. This includes white board markers, glues and paints. Cleaners and Caretakers should also ensure that their stores are locked and that all solvents are secured.

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluating**

8.1 This policy will be periodically reviewed to reflect changing circumstances and trends in drug and alcohol use.

## **9. Information, Education and Support**

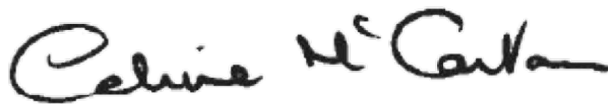
9.1 The Human Resources department will provide information for staff on alcohol misuse; Student Services will provide information for students. Where possible, health promotion activities may be undertaken which may include alcohol and/or drug awareness programmes.

9.2 Additional support is available from:

- NHS Direct- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- NHS General Practitioners
- SWC Human Resources department
- SWC Student Services
- Alcoholics Anonymous - 028 9035 1222
- Inspire Addiction Services - 028 9066 4434
- Breakthru - 0808 800 2020
- Trade or Student Union

9.3 While the College provides signposting to these services, it is the responsibility of the individual to engage with appropriate support. Access to external services is not an entitlement and may be subject to availability, eligibility, or referral processes.

Signed Principal and Chief Executive:



Date:

19.11.25

Signed Chair of the Governing Body:



Date:

19/11/2025

## **Appendix 1: Student Procedure for Handling / Reporting Incidents**

Drugs within this Policy include any substance, legal or illegal that affects the way in which the body functions physically, emotionally or mentally.

A suspected drug related incident is described as:

- Suspect drugs found on the College premises
- A student suspected of being in possession of drugs
- A student found to be in possession of drugs
- A student is suspected of being under the influence of drugs.

When an incident occurs, the member of staff involved should:

- Make the situation safe and send for support.
- Administer first aid if necessary and report the incident as soon as possible.
- If a suspect substance is found it should be secured in a safe place until dealt with by the Police.

The incident will in the first instance be reported to the Safeguarding Officer and then to the Chief Executive, who will contact the Police in the area. The parents will also be contacted and made aware of the situation. The incident will be recorded by the member of staff involved and by the Safeguarding Officer. The Board of Governors will also be informed.

All staff will be made aware of this procedure. College staff are not permitted to search students' clothing or possessions. However, it is acceptable to ask the student to empty pockets and school bags. Staff may search College property such as lockers or desks.

### **Confidentiality**

The College recognises the importance of confidentiality in building trust with students. However:

- Legal obligations under drug legislation and safeguarding laws override confidentiality in certain circumstances
- Under the Children (NI) Order, the welfare of the young person is paramount

If a student discloses drug use to a Lecturer:

- The Lecturer must explain that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed
- The student should be signposted to confidential support services
- Students should be encouraged to speak with their parents or guardians.

### **Procedure for Handling Alcohol Misuse**

1. Students are not permitted to bring alcohol onto or consume alcohol in College premises.
2. Students must not attend the College under the influence of alcohol.
3. Breaches of these rules will be addressed under the College's Disciplinary Policy

## **Appendix 2: Staff Procedure for Handling / Reporting Incidents**

The College is committed to supporting any staff member experiencing issues related to alcohol or drug misuse or dependency. Individuals will be encouraged to seek help voluntarily at the earliest opportunity, and will be offered access to advice, support, and, where appropriate, treatment.

Where a staff member suspects that a colleague is under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances or is misusing alcohol, drugs or other substances, they should report the matter immediately to their Line Manager and/ or Human Resources.

Where the College becomes aware that individuals have such a problem, they will be invited to discuss their situation with their Line Manager and/ or Human Resources and the relevant action will be taken, in accordance with the policy.

Staff have the right to be accompanied or represented at any stage by a recognised Trade Union representative, staff representative, or a friend. Any disputes regarding the applicability of this policy will be addressed through the College's standard complaints or disciplinary procedures.

The treatment record of any member of the College is confidential, and the College will endeavour to maintain confidentiality about individual problems, subject to the provisions of the law. However, the College reserves the right to record and disclose where proper, the numbers and occupation of those who have received such treatment while in their employ or responsibility for the purposes of furthering research, without disclosing names or personal details.

Any member of staff suspected of possession, possession with intent to supply, supplying, offering to supply, or producing any substance legal or illegal that alters physical, emotional, or mental functioning will be reported to the Police and suspended from the College pending the outcome of Police investigations. Once the investigation and any related legal proceedings are concluded, the College will determine appropriate disciplinary action.

## **Procedures for Handling Alcohol Misuse**

South West College takes a zero-tolerance approach to alcohol misuse and staff are strictly prohibited from consuming alcohol during the working day, including during meal or rest breaks.

If a staff member has concerns that a colleague is in breach of this policy, they should raise the matter immediately with their Line Manager and/or Human Resources who will deal with the matter in accordance with the policy.

## Related Documentation

Title	Location	Owner
Employee Standards Policy	Gateway	Head of People and Culture
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Gateway	Head of People and Culture

## Change Log

Location	Change from deletion/ addition	Change to
V3 Throughout	Refresh definition revised for clarity; wording reviewed.	

## Communication

Who needs to know (for action)	All staff
Who needs to be aware	All staff

## Communication Plan

Action	By Whom	By When
Upload to Gateway	N Nugent	On approval
Circulation to all staff	Head of People & Culture	On approval

## Document Development

Details of staff who were involved in the development of this policy:

Name	Role
Eimear Rushe	Former Head of HR
Siobhan Gorman	HR & Equality Officer
Camilla James	Head of People and Culture

Details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this policy:

Name	Organisation	Date
Staffing Committee		
Governing Body		

## Approval Dates

Approved by	Date
Governing Body	19 November 2025

**Document History**

Issue no. under review	Date of review:	Persons involved in review	Changes made after review? Yes/No If Yes refer to change log	New Issue No.	If changes made was consultation required?	If changes made was Equality Screening required?
V1.0	22.01.2024	Camilla James Siobhan Gorman	Yes	V2.0	N/A	N/A
V2.0	18.09.2025	Camilla James Siobhan Gorman	Yes	V3.0	N/A	N/A