



Polasaí agus Nósanna Imeachta/Policies and Procedures

Code	QA114
Title	Substance Abuse
Policy Owner	-
Date	-
Approved By	-

1.0 Purpose

The objectives of the Substance Abuse Policy is to ensure that staff are alerted to the risks associated with heavy drinking, to ensure staff who are in need of assistance are enabled to seek help voluntarily from relevant agencies, and to allow a mechanism which allows the disciplinary process to be held in abeyance if work related problems emerge as a result of alcohol abuse while the employee is referred for consultation.

2.0 Description

Although most people who consume alcohol do so in moderation and with a sensible regard for the consequences, there is a minority whose alcohol consumption brings harm not only to themselves but also to those around them including family, friends and work colleagues.

Alcohol related problems are defined as any drinking, either intermittent or continual, which definitely and repeatedly interferes with a person's health and/or capability or conduct at work. Alcohol related problems are widespread in the general community and therefore all organisations will have their share of staff that experience problems with alcohol. There is no reason to believe that any organisation is an exception. Rather than ignore the problem drinker until drastic measures such as dismissal are called for the University has put in place a positive policy which safeguards those who are willing to be helped.

People with a drink problem tend to display a number of recognisable characteristics, some of which are listed below:

1. Decline in work performance
2. Behaviour which is out of character
3. Unexplained absences during the day, seeking isolation, becoming a loner
4. Frequent absences explained as minor illness, especially Mondays and Fridays
5. Change in drinking habits accompanied by a smell of alcohol
6. Trembling hands

However, it should not be assumed that these behaviours only occur in the context of excessive drinking.

2.2 Procedure to be followed

2.2.1 Voluntary Referrals

If a member of staff chooses to refer themselves to one of the Counselling Services approved by the University their action will be entirely confidential. In such circumstances the member of staff can contact the referral agency directly or seek advice from a member of the Human Resources Office.

Neither the Human Resources Office nor the School/Unit need be advised of the voluntary referrals unless it directly affects the ability to work or the availability for work.

If time off work is required then special leave will be approved.

A medical certificate will be required only when time off work is required for Medical treatment.



If special leave is required the referral agency will confirm, to the Human Resources Office, that the appointments have been kept.

2.2.2 Referrals by Management

If in the course of normal supervision there is suspicion of alcohol related problems the direct supervisor will initially discuss the matter with the employee involved.

If the employee agrees that they have an alcohol-related problem then they will be referred to the Human Resources Office for action under the procedure, alternative courses of action such as discipline will be suspended.

If, however, the employee rejects the offer of referral or does not accept that there is an alcohol-related problem the original matter (the issue which first triggered the action e.g. a shortcoming in conduct or attendance) will be dealt with in the normal way.

The Human Resources Office will arrange an interview with an appropriate agency who will report back the outcome and any co-operation required.

If the agency advises that there is no alcohol related problem the issue will be dealt with outside this procedure and may involve the Employee Assistance Programme.

If the employee agrees to the treatment but subsequently breaks this agreement, then management will resume suspended action or alternatively a new agreement for a course of treatment will be drawn up.

If the agreed treatment is successfully completed then suspended action will be rescinded, after six months if there has been no reoccurrence of the problem.

After this time if problems recur each case will be reconsidered on its own merits.

Normal sick leave will apply to any absence required for treatment.

N.B. The same procedure should be applied where other substance abuse problems are involved.

3.0 Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
Director of Human Resources	Policy Owner
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntarily contact the referral agency directly or seek advice from a member of the Human Resources Office • Submit a medical certificate when time off work is required for Medical treatment • Adhere to agreement reached with the University on treatment
Line Manager	If in the course of normal supervision there is suspicion of alcohol related problems the direct supervisor will initially discuss the matter with the employee involved.
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice and support • Process medical certificates submitted • Arrange an interview with an appropriate agency who will report back the outcome and any co-operation required



Agency

If special leave is required the referral agency will confirm, to the Human Resources Office, that the appointments have been kept.

4.0 Related Documents

- [Employee Assistance Program](#)