

Harm Reduction Policy

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Version Control History

Reviewer	Date of Change	Summary of Revisions made
Wellbeing & Learning Support Manager	June 2026	New Policy developed

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1. Policy Statement

UHI Inverness is committed to providing a safe, healthy, inclusive and productive working environment for all students, staff, volunteers and visitors. Personal wellbeing and health and safety are always a priority, and we take a zero tolerance approach to anything which risks that. UHI Inverness recognises the growing challenge the harmful use of drugs and alcohol pose to our society, and the college are committed to proactively supporting any concerns in relation to drugs and alcohol which may impact on individuals.

UHI Inverness believes that the harmful use of drugs and alcohol is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of individuals and could adversely affect the safe and efficient working of UHI Inverness.

UHI Inverness supports the work of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and its endeavours to prevent and reduce alcohol and drug related harm in Highland. We recognise that Highland and Scotland face key socio-economic challenges underpinning harmful alcohol and drug use. UHI Inverness want to play a pro-active role in education, prevention and early intervention which are key to promoting informed, healthy choices around alcohol and drug use. As part of our wider commitment to wellbeing, UHI Inverness will:

- Deliver regular awareness workshops / campaigns
- Promote a culture of care and responsibility
- Provide clear referral pathways for students to counselling, health services, and external partners
- Provide support for staff through the employee assistance programme
- Train staff and students to respond supportively and signpost effectively

The aims of this policy are to clearly state UHI Inverness' position on the use of drugs and alcohol and to support our ability to provide a safe environment for everyone who works and learns at UHI Inverness.

The policy also aims to ensure that learners and staff:

- Treat individuals with dignity and respect
- Facilitate the early intervention and support available for any concerns individuals experience associated with the harmful use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Seek advice, help and assistance if they have any concerns
- Have an awareness of the health, wellbeing and legal issues associated with alcohol and/or drug use to enable individuals to make informed choices, along with supportive and caring harm-minimising strategies

2. Legislative Framework / Related Policies

2.1. Legislative framework

- The National Collaborative Charter of Rights 2024
- [Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Scotland's Alcohol and Drugs Strategic Plan 2026-2035](#)
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016
- Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Mental Health Act 2007
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Equality Act 2010

2.2. Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance.

Publicly available UHI Inverness policies and procedures can be accessed via our website: [About us – Publications](#). Staff and Board Members can access the full range of internal policies and procedures through the Quality SharePoint site.

- Support to Study Procedure and Guidance
- Gender Based Violence Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Mental Health Strategy
- Mitigating Circumstances Procedure
- Student Mental Health and Counselling Policy
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- PVG Scheme Membership for Students Procedure
- PVG Scheme for New and Existing Staff Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- [Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategic Plan 2025-2030](#)
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy & Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Staff Wellbeing Policy and Guidance
- General Teaching Council Scotland Code of Professionalism and Conduct

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all learners and staff at UHI Inverness in line with Highland's Drug and Alcohol strategy and the whole systems approach needed to meet the needs of people with problem alcohol and drug use.
- 3.2. UHI Inverness recognises the Charter of Rights for people affected by substance use and are committed to removing any stigma as a barrier to people getting the support they need. The college will adopt the new approaches outlined in the Charter which prioritise health, dignity and inclusion and will be guided by the international guidelines on human rights and drug policy. All cases which require intervention will be treated confidentially and with sensitivity to protect the rights of individuals.
- 3.3. The policy applies to observable behaviours both on UHI Inverness campus premises and in external settings where UHI Inverness has responsibility including, for example, UHI Inverness: supported trips, transport, approved work placement. It does not encroach an individual's personal life out with UHI Inverness and respects the right of an individual to a personal life and personal choices within that.
- 3.4. Reasonable suspicion is based on observable signs and behaviours, not assumptions or stereotypes. Indicators may include but are not limited to:
 - Slurred speech
 - Unsteady gait or loss of coordination
 - Aggressive, hostile, erratic, or inappropriate behaviour
 - Confusion or disorientation
 - Possession of alcohol / drugs in restricted areas
 - Irritability, agitation, restlessness or euphoria
 - Confusion, paranoia, hallucinations or delusions

UHI Inverness are aware of a potential overlap in indicators which are a side effect of prescribed medication for ill-health or some disabilities. UHI Inverness will pay cognisance to this and consider each situation individually to best support students and staff.

- 3.5. The policy applies to a range of situations where an individual's behaviour raises concerns due to suspected influence of alcohol or drugs on UHI Inverness campus or in external settings where UHI Inverness has responsibility. Such concerns include, but are not limited to:
 - Individuals disclosing / using / under the influence of drugs, solvents or psychoactive substances ('legal' highs)

- Individuals distributing or in possession of drugs, solvents or psychoactive substances ('legal' highs)
 - Individuals consuming and/or being under the influence of alcohol on campus with the exception of sanctioned alcohol use during arranged events such as graduations and other public events authorised by Executive Management Team (EMT).
 - UHI Inverness having a reasonable suspicion of any individuals under the influence of alcohol, drugs, solvents or psychoactive substances ('legal' highs) on UHI Inverness campus or in external settings where UHI Inverness has responsibility, see indicators in 3.4.
 - Individuals eliciting behaviours, such as those listed in 3.4, giving cause for concern as a result of the inappropriate use of prescribed medication / not using as prescribed.
 - UHI Inverness having a reasonable suspicion of any individuals dealing, producing or being in possession of drugs, solvents or psychoactive substances ('legal' highs).
 - Police or other credible disclosures made to UHI Inverness concerning an individual and a drug/alcohol related concern.
 - Where the health and safety of any member of our learning community is placed at risk or where there is an aspect of criminality, UHI Inverness may consider disciplinary action if deemed appropriate. Any disciplinary action will be taken under UHI Inverness's Student / Staff Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure and the Student / Staff Disciplinary Procedure.
- 3.6. As outlined in the UHI Inverness Student Code of Conduct, the following behaviours constitute misconduct and may result in disciplinary action:
- The supply, attempted supply, or involvement in the supply of controlled substances or non-prescribed medication
 - The supply, or involvement in the supply, of alcohol to individuals under the legal drinking age, or in areas where an alcohol ban is in place
 - The use, possession, or consumption of controlled substances on any campus or during college-related activities
 - The consumption of alcohol prior to participating in practical activities, where this may impact safety, judgement, or performance
 - The failure to inform appropriate staff of the use of prescribed medication where potential side effects may pose a risk to the student, other students, or staff.
- 3.7. As outlined in UHI Inverness's Staff Code of Conduct Procedure:
- Drugs and alcohol issues within UHI Inverness will be dealt with through the provision of positive support and practical assistance. Staff who believe they have an alcohol or drug related problem are

encouraged to seek specialist advice and support as soon as possible. If a staff member notices a change in a colleague's pattern of behaviour, they should encourage them to seek assistance through their line manager or a member of HR. An individual may consult with a HR Business Partner or, alternatively, their line manager.

- It should be recognised that the nature of UHI Inverness's business, particularly in relation to contact with children and adults at risk, is such that incidents relating to inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol whilst within UHI Inverness may also be treated as a disciplinary issue and potentially amount to gross misconduct.
- Any member of staff found to be supplying or in possession of illegal drugs will face disciplinary actions in line with the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Supplying or being in possession of illegal drugs will be regarded as Gross Misconduct which may result in summary dismissal and the matter will be referred to the police.

3.8. In relation to both staff and students, where a drug or alcohol issue is connected to an underlying health condition, UHI Inverness will take steps to ensure the staff member is treated fairly and in line with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010. If the condition meets the definition of a disability, UHI Inverness has a duty to consider and implement reasonable adjustments to support the staff member in performing their role safely and effectively. This may include adjustments to duties, working patterns, supervision arrangements, or access to specialist support services.

3.9. UHI Inverness works collaboratively with the UHI halls of residence accommodation team to support any individuals where there is a concern around alcohol or drug use. In addition, our Student Code of Conduct aligns with the UHI halls of residence student tenancy agreement. This provides our students with supportive measures both on campus and within their living arrangements.

3.10. UHI Inverness will support individuals who have concerns of being 'spiked' and will encourage victims to report this crime to Police Scotland in addition to accessing our wellbeing services.

4. Compliance

4.1. UHI Inverness recognises and complies with its legal responsibilities under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and will not tolerate the use or supply of any illegal/harmful substances, or the inappropriate use of alcohol or volatile substances, psychoactive substances ('legal' highs) on its premises.

- 4.2. UHI Inverness recognises the potential linkages between problem alcohol and drug use and wider concerns and will comply with its legal and statutory obligations arising from legislation including the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003, the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 and other relevant guidance and regulations.
- 4.3. In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, UHI Inverness has a legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and wellbeing of all its employees, students, and visitors. This includes taking proactive steps to prevent risks associated with the inappropriate use of drugs and alcohol within the UHI Inverness environment.
- 4.4. UHI Inverness will implement appropriate policies, provide relevant training, and take reasonable measures to identify and manage substance use that could impair an individual's ability to study safely. By fulfilling these obligations, the college aims to maintain a safe and supportive environment that promotes the wellbeing of the entire UHI Inverness community.
- 4.5. Where there is police involvement in relation to students, as per the Student Code of Conduct Policy, UHI Inverness will be unable to investigate any incidents whilst an official police investigation is underway. However precautionary actions may be taken to reduce risk, ensure the safety of others and protect the integrity of the police investigation. UHI Inverness will consult with the police during this period, and appropriate support will be provided to any learners or staff involved.

5. Monitoring

- 5.1. This is a UHI Inverness wide policy; and all staff and learners must comply. Reporting on this policy will always be anonymised and will come to EMT on an annual basis. The Quality team have oversight of the procedures in place for reviewing and monitoring to ensure currency, implementation and effectiveness are considered appropriately.
- 5.2. The following performance indicators will be used to monitor implementation of the Harm Reduction policy:
 - Number of workshops delivered on harm reduction

- Number of learner referrals to specialist drug and alcohol support services
- Number of incidents recorded on the health and safety reporting system linked to drugs and alcohol use
- Number of incidents recorded on student halls tracker associated with drugs and alcohol use
- Number of student disciplinaries associated with drugs and alcohol use
- Further breakdown of these indicators will be used to identify any emerging patterns.

6. Review

- 6.1.** This policy and supporting arrangements will be formally reviewed every year and in an on-going way to ensure currency of content, arrangements, new legislative requirements and to provide a framework for the setting and reviewing of health and safety improvement objectives. The review will include consultation with the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.