Student Alcohol and Legal Highs Policy

Introduction
The University has a legal duty of care to its students, staff and visitors and aims to provide a safe, healthy and high quality study and work environment. This includes addressing the risks posed by the misuse of alcohol or legal highs, informing students of their responsibilities and the code of conduct they should abide by and providing information, advice, guidance and support on request. The University wishes to promote good health practices and maintain high standards of conduct among its students and therefore must be concerned where substance misuse impairs academic performance, personal safety, student health and behaviour and/or the living and learning environment of members of its community.

All students have a legal responsibility to take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others. In certain situations individuals may be subject to disciplinary action under the University’s disciplinary procedures, be suspended or be asked to leave and/or be reported to the police. This policy should be considered alongside Regulation 7, which outlines the code of conduct students of the University should abide by and the conditions in which students may expect to face disciplinary action.

Aims
The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote health and safety and wellbeing by providing information, advice, guidance and support.
- Inform students about the potential consequences of alcohol and legal high misuse.
- Encourage and support mutual respect within The University of York community, create an understanding of acceptable behaviour and promote a supportive community which recognises and respects different attitudes towards alcohol use.
- Provide information on support options where appropriate.
- To support, educate and focus on the boundaries of acceptable and responsible behaviour.
- Encourage individuals with alcohol and legal high-related issues to seek help.
- Signpost information to students and staff regarding students’ responsibilities and the required code of conduct.
- Deliver responsible commercial services where alcohol is available on campus.
- Inform students how alcohol and legal high misuse and their potential consequences may lead to disciplinary and/or legal action.

Scope
The policy applies to all students of the University of York. This includes students who live on or off campus, when students are on study-related activities away from the University and where their conduct or quality of work affects others or the reputation of the University (such as students on University-organised work placements, working in laboratories on research projects, when undertaking
fieldwork, as members of University Clubs and Societies or as members of University sports teams). It applies whether students are on University premises or elsewhere on University business or study activities, including premises managed on behalf of the University by a third party (such as College accommodation).

**Definitions**

‘Legal Highs’ are defined as substances which produce the same or similar effects to illegal drugs but are not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. They are considered illegal under current legislation to sell, supply or advertise as for “human consumption”. Many contain substances that are not safe to consume or legal to possess. If a ‘legal high’ bought by a student then becomes illegal after they have acquired it, that the student bought it before its illegalisation will not be accepted as an excuse. The University of York does not place restrictions on use or possession of prescribed medication beyond what the law denotes. However, if a student feels that they or one of their peers is misusing prescribed medication, the University of York recommends they contact Student Support Service.

‘Misuse’ is defined as the habitual or intermittent use of alcohol, or any drug, or any other substance which causes detriment to an individual’s health, social functioning or study/work performance. Substance misuse can impair the safety of themselves or others and affect attendance, time keeping, efficiency and conduct.

‘Dependency’ is defined as a substance-related disorder in which a person feels a physical or psychological need to drink alcohol or take substances to the point that it takes precedence over other activities. Someone with substance dependence may exhibit signs such as: a strong desire to drink alcohol or take legal highs, a difficulty in controlling their use of substances, a persistent use of substances despite being aware of the harmful effects, an increased tolerance for substances and withdrawal when without alcohol or legal highs.

‘Binge drinking’ is defined as the consumption of an excessive amount of alcohol in a short period of time. The NHS defines it as drinking more than double the lower risk guidelines for alcohol in one session (on average this means 8 or more units for men in a single session and 6 or more units for women in a single session).

‘Pre-drinking/pre-lashing/pre-loading’ is defined as the practice of consuming alcohol at home before going out. When people pre-drink they are over four times more likely to consume over 20 units of alcohol on a night out (including the pre-drinking and drinking when out). This excessive level of consumption is strongly associated with increased health risks and also involvement in other behavioural issues such as nightlife violence and unsafe sexual behaviour.

**Statement**

The University allows drinking in designated and appropriate areas of the campus but does not condone excessive drinking. Nor does the University condone ‘legal highs’. The University of York is committed to promoting a safe and supportive environment in which to learn and work. It will do this as outlined below.

- Encourage and support mutual respect within the whole of the University community.
- Work with staff and students to create an understanding of acceptable behaviour.
- Take educational and pastoral steps to raise student awareness of the dangers of substance misuse and assist them in making informed decisions.
- Promote new social norms around responsible drinking habits in order to create a community which is inclusive, supportive and which recognises and respects different attitudes to drug and alcohol use.
- Recognise the link between responsible behaviour and an enjoyable learning experience and promote a social environment from which all may benefit.
- Discourage students from indulging in excessive and harmful alcohol consumption, binge drinking, pre-drinking or ‘legal highs’.
- Encourage students who are concerned about their use of substances to seek advice, help, support and assistance.
- Encourage students who feel peers have a substance dependency or misuse problem to seek support and advice.
- Commit to acting promptly when concerns are raised (by student, peer or member of staff) providing early intervention and support where possible.
- Take action to support those in distress and invite students with substance misuse issues to discuss their problems and offer them the opportunity to take professional and confidential advice, help and support through medical, counselling and other pastoral help.
- Be sympathetic to problems that arise from substance misuse without condoning such misuse. The University of York regards problems like substance dependency as a health problem and will be sympathetic to students who report to a Member of a College Welfare Team, YUSU, the GSA or Student Support Services and agree to a programme of rehabilitation. The University will also be sympathetic to students who suffer relapses during or after a period of treatment.
- Provide guidance and information to staff and students to help them develop the confidence to know what action to take if they are concerned about drug and alcohol misuse, the health and safety of fellow students, of staff members, or of themselves.
- Take seriously its legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its students, staff and visitors and aim to provide a safe, healthy and high quality learning environment.
- Recognise that staff with responsibilities for teaching and the support and welfare of students and those who manage others have additional responsibilities to promote, to be alert to indicators of drug and alcohol misuse and to take appropriate actions when necessary.
- Work with all relevant partners to deliver responsible commercial services where alcohol is available on campus.
- Sanction disciplinary action if and when appropriate. Lack of engagement with the policy or a failure to respond may lead to formal disciplinary action being applied. If disciplinary action is applied, the University will vary its responses to the severity of the situation.
- Undergo an annual review process in order to ensure the statements, roles, aims and information presented in this policy is accurate, in order to check that the policy is being implemented and in order to check that the policy has been effective at reducing the level of substance misuse on campus.
Appendix A – Steps following disclosure of misuse

These are the steps and actions that may be taken in the case of an alcohol or substance misuse problem.

1. The student feels that either they or a peer has an issue with alcohol or substance misuse.
2. The student makes contact with a Supervisor, Tutor or a member of the College Welfare Team, YUSU, GSA, or Student Support Services.
3. The member of staff contacts Student Support Services, discloses the student’s name, a method of contacting them (such as university email) and the nature of the student’s problem.
4. The student contacts (or is contacted by) Student Support Services.
5. A meeting is arranged to discuss misuse, implications for health and the student’s programme of study, and options available to the student for support and treatment.
6. The student and Student Support Services agree on a course of action and treatment.
7. Student Support Services or other member of department staff to communicate with other relevant offices and departments as agreed with the student regarding treatment.
8. The student’s treatment is monitored by Student Support Services and progress is discussed between Student Support Services and the student, with further adjustments agreed if required.
9. In the event of a disagreement between a student and their department and/or Student Support Services on how their treatment is progressing, the Academic Registrar may be asked to make the final decision.
Appendix B – Contacts

On Campus

Colleges
Each college has a welfare team, check your college website for details or ask at your college reception.

Department
Academic Supervisor

Campus Security
01904 323333 (for urgent calls)
01904 324444 (for non-urgent calls)

Graduate Students’ Association (GSA)
Representation, Advice and Welfare Coordinator advice@yorkgsa.org

Student Support Services
student-support@york.ac.uk

YUSU
Welfare and Community Officer
Academic and Welfare Manager

Off-campus

Alcoholics Anonymous
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Drug and Alcohol Support
www.gdas.co.uk

Al-Anon
http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/

FRANK
http://www.talktofrank.com/

Compass
http://www.compass-uk.org/
Appendix C: Roles

Students should:
- Be aware of their responsibility as a member of the University community
- Seek help if they feel they have a misuse problem
- Encourage others with misuse problems to seek help
- Understand the effects of misuse on themselves and those around them
- Alert appropriate members of staff to any misuse problems
- Co-operate with investigations
- Take advantage of the advice and support available
- Access this policy and supporting documents.

All University academic and support staff should:
- Be aware of this policy and procedure
- Ensure students are aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities
- Encourage and promote sensible drinking and misuse prevention
- Be aware of the signs of misuse
- Encourage students who disclose a misuse problem to seek help
- Refer students with problems relating to alcohol or substance misuse to the appropriate person or team.

Colleges should:
- Discourage misuse during College social functions
- Ensure publicity for college events does not encourage misuse.

Commercial Services should:
- Ensure pricing policies do not promote excessive drinking.

Front of House staff should:
- Act as the first point of contact and information for students with concerns
- Be available to intervene in situations if asked to by students
- When appropriate, escalate cases to the correct person or team
- In less serious cases, offer help to students that display signs of misuse.

STYCs should:
- Encourage sensible drinking
- Discourage use of legal highs
- Aid and assist the College teams.

Security Services should:
- Carry out initial investigations into reports of misuse
- Support the College Teams in diffusing cases of substance misuse
- If necessary, contact outside agencies and services for assistance.

Student Support Services should:
- Act as a confidential self-referral facility for students
- Have relevant information available for students
- Observe the procedures and code of conduct for the University
- Maintain professional and confidentiality boundaries
- Have systems of referral to other agencies
• Make sure students are aware of what counselling services and medical services are available to them.

**Unity Health should:**
• Have relevant information available for students
• Maintain professional and confidentiality boundaries
• Have systems of referral to other agencies
• Develop awareness of counselling services and medical services
• Offer information and advice concerning Student Support Services
• Encourage and promote sensible drinking and misuse prevention
• Encourage a positive approach to health and well-being
• Support University of York educational events, awareness campaigns and activities that promote health and well-being.

**YUSU and GSA should:**
• Offer information and advice about Student Support Services
• Encourage and promote sensible drinking and misuse prevention
• Support awareness campaigns that promote health and well-being
• Support activities such as sport clubs and societies that promote health and well-being.