

Drugs and Alcohol Harm Reduction Policy



BATH SPA
UNIVERSITY

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Bath Spa University is committed to supporting the health, wellbeing, and safety of its students. The University does not condone the possession, use, or supply of illegal drugs on its premises. However, the University recognises the realities and potential risks associated with alcohol and other drug use.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the University's whole-institution, health-led, harm reduction approach. The University aims to:
 - Reduce risks and potential harms linked to alcohol and drug use.
 - Promote wellbeing through education, prevention, and support.
 - Enable students to make informed choices without fear of stigma or automatic punishment.
- 1.3 The University's approach is consistent with national Higher Education sector good practice, including aligning with guidance published by Universities UK and SOS-UK.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all Bath Spa University provision for students aged 18 and over. Students under 18 are covered by the [Policy and Procedure for Students Under 18](#). Educational Partners are encouraged to adopt the same principles outlined in this policy.

2. Definitions

- **Harm Reduction:** A public health approach that reduces risks and negative consequences of drug and alcohol use without requiring abstinence. It promotes informed choices, safer practices, early intervention, and access to non-judgemental support.
- **Drugs:** Substances covered under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971), Novel Psychoactive Substances, prescription medication used without a prescription, and substances misused contrary to their intended purpose. Examples include cannabis, MDMA, ketamine, cocaine, heroin, and counterfeit or unregulated substances.
- **Alcohol:** Any beverage containing ethanol, regardless of strength.
- **University Premises:** All locations managed by Bath Spa University or its partners, including academic buildings, accommodation, and Students' Union venues.

3. Policy

- 3.1 This policy is underpinned by the following principles, which sets out the University's harm reduction approach to drugs and alcohol. The principles provide a framework for education, support, partnership, and shared responsibility, to ensure a consistent, proportionate whole-University approach that is centred on student wellbeing.

3.2 Education and Knowledge

Students are provided with accurate, evidence-based information so they can make informed decisions. This is achieved through a combination of resources and activities, including:

- Online information, workshops, campaigns, and events across the academic year (e.g. Welcome Week, assessment periods).
- Clear guidance on the effects of substances, safer practices, legal risks, and sources of help.
- Access to harm reduction tools such as reagent testing kits, nitazene test strips, and 'Check Your Drink' strips.
- Encouraging early help-seeking, with referral routes to specialist drug and alcohol services for confidential, expert support.
- Participation in the national SOS-UK Student Drug and Alcohol Survey to inform future practice.

3.3 Access to Advice and Guidance

Students are encouraged to speak openly with Student Wellbeing Services, who offer specialist and non-judgemental advice.

- Disclosure of personal use will not trigger automatic disciplinary procedures, unless there is serious risk to self or others, or suspected criminal activity.
- Clear signposting to local and national services, including NHS and specialist organisations, will be provided.

3.4 Collaboration and Partnership

Bath Spa University and Bath Spa Students' Union work in partnership to embed a harm reduction approach to drugs and alcohol. The University collaborates with local and national services, including specialist support providers, local authorities, NHS services, police, and probation services.

3.5 Respect and Responsibility

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own decisions and consider how their behaviour may impact others. Respect for peers, staff, and the wider community is central to this policy. Any behaviour linked to substance use that negatively affects the health, safety, or experience of others may be addressed through University procedures.

4. Response to Drugs and Alcohol

4.1 Possession and Individual Use

Possession or use of illegal drugs or unauthorised prescription medication on University premises is not permitted. Where possession occurs, responses will be proportionate and consider intent, context, and risk. Cases without evidence of intent to supply will focus on education and guidance, with

disciplinary action reserved for high-risk or repeated behaviour or criminal intent. If intoxication leads to unsafe or disruptive behaviour, it may be addressed under the [Accommodation Code of Conduct Procedure](#) and/or the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).

4.2 **Supply and Intent to Supply**

The University distinguishes clearly between personal use and intent to supply.

Personal use is addressed through health-led, educational measures and interventions.

- Supply or intent to supply is a serious criminal offence and a breach of University regulations. Allegations will trigger formal investigation under the [Accommodation Code of Conduct Procedure](#) and/or the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#), possible referral to the police, and possible sanctions including expulsion.
- Safeguarding escalation will be considered if exploitation or coercion is suspected.

4.3 **Spiking**

Incidents of drink or drug spiking are treated with the utmost seriousness. Spiking is dangerous, a criminal act, and is considered a Safeguarding concern. Wherever possible reported incidents will be investigated under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#) and may lead to disciplinary sanctions and/or criminal proceedings.

4.4 **Off-Campus Use**

Students are expected to uphold Bath Spa University values and the [Student Code of Conduct](#) during placements, trips, or while representing the University. Where off-campus drug or alcohol use creates serious risk, reputational harm, or affects professional registration, the University may intervene in line with existing policies and procedures, such as the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).

4.5 **Courses Leading to Professional Registration**

Students enrolled on programmes requiring professional registration are held to additional standards of behaviour. Substance misuse in these cases may trigger a [Fitness to Practice](#) review, in line with professional body requirements. This process may run alongside or separately from University disciplinary procedures.

4.6 **Conduct and Expectations**

The University's harm reduction approach is balanced with clear behavioural expectations:

- Students are expected to attend their programmes of study and must not be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances.
- Illegal substances must not be used on University premises.
- Alcohol use must be legal and not harmful or disruptive.
- Students must not be under the influence of substances in ways that compromise their own safety or that of others.

Where these expectations are not met, the University may respond through early intervention, advice, or disciplinary action.

4.7 **Risk to Self or Others**

In situations where a student's drug or alcohol use presents a risk to themselves or others, the University will treat this seriously and responses may include:

- Referral to internal or external services.
- Review under [Fitness to Study](#) or [Fitness to Practice](#).
- Safeguarding escalation.

5. Monitoring and Community Collaboration

- 5.1 We will monitor trends and strengthen our response by gathering information from security reports, disciplinary records, and wellbeing services. Participation in the national SOS-UK Student Drug and Alcohol Survey and collaboration with external partners ensures our approach is evidence-based and responsive.

Document Details

Responsible Office: Student Wellbeing Services

Responsible Officer: Director of Student Wellbeing Services

Approving Authority: Vice-Chancellor

Date of Latest Approval: 23 February 2026

Effective Date: 24 February 2026

Related Policies and Procedures: Accommodation Code of Conduct, Student Disciplinary Procedure, Fitness to Study, Fitness to Practice, Student General Regulations, Safeguarding

Supersedes: N/A

Next review due: February 2031