

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**  
**POLICY ON ALCOHOL RELATED PROBLEMS**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

It is the responsibility of the University of Aberdeen to provide a safe and healthy environment for its employees, students and others at work. Therefore, where it is recognised that an individual's health and work capability or conduct have been affected by the consumption of alcohol, the University is required to offer guidance by means of an agreed procedure.

In such instances it is the policy of the University of Aberdeen to offer support and assistance to an individual with an alcohol related problem, and their family through appropriate agencies, while maintaining a safe working environment and alerting members of staff to the risks associated with heavy and inappropriate drinking. However, the University's responsibility for the safety of others such as work place colleagues, students and visitors, is such that occasionally an individual's case may be considered under the terms of an appropriate disciplinary procedure.

**2 EFFECTS**

Alcohol abuse can have both physical and psychological effects, including cirrhosis (permanent scarring of the liver), psychiatric disorders including depression, sexual difficulties, irreparable brain damage, high blood pressure and obesity. Many of these are cumulative in effect and may develop undetected over many years.

**3 ACTION**

**3.1 Action by an individual**

Members of staff who suspect or know that they have a problem related to their use of alcohol are encouraged to seek help and treatment voluntarily by making a direct approach to the Occupational Health Service, their Head of School/Administrative Section, a Human Resources Officer or their own General Practitioner.

**3.2 Action by colleagues**

Members of staff who suspect or recognise that a colleague may have an alcohol related problem should encourage that individual to acknowledge their problem and to seek advice either through their General Practitioner or the agencies described above. If this fails, colleagues are encouraged to alert the Head of School/Administrative Section to the situation so that more formal action may be taken.

**3.3 Action by the Head of School/Administrative Section**

Where the Head of School/Administrative Section is made aware that a member of staff has an alcohol related problem, he or she should make arrangements to see the individual as soon as possible. The Head of School/Administrative Section should take the

opportunity to highlight their concern for the individual and advise him/her where support can be found. The Head of School/Administrative Section should urge the individual to seek help immediately.

#### **4 UNIVERSITY SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING**

Where an individual's work performance or attendance is causing concern but has not yet reached a disciplinary stage, and it is suspected that the problem(s) may be alcohol related, the individual will be offered the opportunity to discuss the problem with a skilled counsellor through an appropriate counselling agency via the Occupational Health Service. Counselling is an opportunity for a member of staff to discuss any personal problems. It may prevent such problems continuing to interfere with the individual's work performance and/or attendance patterns.

#### **5 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

The levels of misconduct and failure in performance which may result in alcohol abuse extend over a considerable range. Where the University recognises that alcohol may be a contributory factor and it is aware that the member of staff may have an alcohol related problem, the University may be willing to suspend disciplinary action if there is a willingness on the part of the individual to undergo a course of treatment.

Regrettably, where an individual refuses to accept treatment or where the risk to other students and employees is too great, the individual will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

However, where after investigation it is recognised that an individual who, due to an excessive use of alcohol on random occasions, has behaved in a manner contrary to the normal standard of safety and conduct required, they will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

#### **6 POST TREATMENT**

On returning to work after a course of treatment, the individual will be permitted to return to the same job unless it is deemed that they are unfit or unsuitable to continue in that employment. In such instances, every consideration will be given to finding suitable alternative employment within the University.

If after returning to work following a course of treatment, the individual's work performance again begins to suffer, the individual may be offered the opportunity to accept a further course of treatment. This will be decided at the University's discretion.

When a member of staff has accepted help or treatment and the alcohol related problem has been resolved, their promotional prospects will not be impaired.

#### **7 CONFIDENTIALITY**

The confidential nature of any records of members of staff with alcohol related problems will be strictly preserved.

## **8 GENERAL**

This policy applies to members of staff regardless of position and does not discriminate at any level.

### **8.1 Points of Contact**

For further information, please contact your Human Resources Adviser. Alternatively, you can contact the University's Occupational Health Service at:

NHS Grampian Occupational Health Service Alcohol Advisory & Counselling Service  
Foresterhill Lea  
Aberdeen  
AB25 2ZY  
T: (01224) 553 663