Procedure: Alcohol and other drugs in the workplace

Purpose

To inform all University staff of the University's expectations about the use of alcohol and other drugs in the workplace.

Procedure

1. This policy outlines the University's expectations about the use of alcohol and other drugs in the workplace. It should be read in conjunction with the University's Code of Conduct.

2. The use of prescribed drugs and medicines, alcohol or illegal substances may affect the performance or conduct of a staff member at work. Under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) (the Act), the University has a duty of care to:
   - protect the health and safety of its staff members while they are at work,
   - take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that students, contractors and the general public are not exposed to risk to their health and safety, and
   - ensure that staff members affected by alcohol or other drugs are not putting themselves or others in danger.

3. The Act also places obligations on individual staff members:
   - not to take any action that creates a risk, or increases an existing risk, to the health and safety of others; and
   - to co-operate with the University to the extent necessary to enable the University to comply with occupational health and safety requirements.

Prescribed drugs and medications/medicines

4. Many modern medications are used to control medical conditions or diseases that can affect people's ability to lead a normal lifestyle. Staff members using such medications must consider, in consultation with their physicians, whether there are possibilities of medication problems arising in the workplace.
5. In particular, a staff member must not operate vehicles or machinery (e.g. tractors, self propelled lawn mowers, cranes or lifting devices) if taking prescription drugs that may impair their ability to do so safely.

6. It is important that the staff member makes supervisors and colleagues aware of any likely problems and brief them on the actions to follow to assist the staff member to overcome difficulties. The specific actions will depend on the nature of the medication and the probability of problems arising.

Alcohol and other substances

University's responsibilities

7. The University considers that the use of alcohol or other drugs is primarily a health issue for individual staff members. However, where a staff member's performance or conduct affects the health and safety of the staff member, students, and/or others in the workplace, the University is committed to managing the issue appropriately. This may include providing appropriate education and training (including information sources on prevention methods and services available) to staff, and in particular, supervisors and managers, concerning the use, misuse or abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and/or taking disciplinary action, or action under the Guidelines for Managing Performance (document forthcoming) if necessary.

8. Where the use of alcohol or other drugs is identified as a problem in the workplace, the University will:

- advise the staff member that his or her performance or conduct is unsatisfactory and that disciplinary action may be taken if the problem is not resolved;
- facilitate (and support) the staff member in seeking access to counselling, treatment and rehabilitation to address the problem;
- assist, where reasonably practicable, an affected staff member who is prepared to undertake rehabilitative treatment by temporarily adjusting workloads and/or performance expectations until the staff member is able to resume the normal requirements of the position;
- maintain normal confidentiality and privacy including, wherever possible, of any records and information regarding alcohol or drug related problems disclosed voluntarily to the University by the affected staff member or becoming known to the University; and
- apply the relevant disciplinary provisions where the staff member, for
example, refuses to address the alcohol or drug related problem, or the problem continues.

Responsibilities of staff

9. The University expects staff members to carry out their duties safely and to refrain from any conduct, including alcohol or other substance abuse or misuse, which would adversely affect their performance and/or put at risk the health and safety of themselves or others in the workplace.

10. In particular, staff members must not:
   - drive a personal or University vehicle on University business in circumstances where the staff member would breach applicable road transport legislation regarding driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs (see the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Act 1977 (ACT).
   - operate machinery and/or undertake any other high-risk activity in the course of their work within 8 hours of drinking any alcohol (zero alcohol blood level limit applies). It should be noted that as each individual processes alcohol at different rates, staff should ensure they desist from consuming alcohol earlier than 8 hours if they believe they process alcohol slowly (see footnote 1).
   - report for work or remain at work under the influence of alcohol [1] and [2] or any illegal substance that adversely affects their performance. Where a staff member is suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substance and the supervisor considers that the staff member, the University, or its staff, students or others, are at risk they will make the necessary arrangements to ensure their safety and have the effected staff member absented from the workplace. The staff member will not return to the workplace until fit to do so.

11. Staff members must comply with the University’s Code of Conduct at all times. In particular, staff members must:
   - carry out their duties in a professional, responsible and conscientious manner;
   - carry out official directions and policies in a faithful, impartial and transparent manner; and
   - refrain from any conduct including alcohol or substance abuse or misuse, which could adversely affect personal work performance or the safety and well-being of others.

12. Conduct that presents a serious risk to the safety of staff, students or
visitors to the University is deemed serious misconduct under the Managing misconduct, serious misconduct and suspension procedure and may lead to disciplinary action (including dismissal) without informal counselling or prior warnings.

Professional support

13. The University recognises that the use of alcohol and/or other drug may or may not be related to external personal factors temporarily affecting the staff member. There are a range of professional support programs available to staff members experiencing alcohol and/or other drug related problems and the University is committed to providing all reasonable rehabilitation support to its staff members.

14. Where to get more information or help:

- University Health Service telephone: +61 2 6125 3598
- Adviser to Staff telephone: +61 2 6125 3616
- Occupational Health and Safety telephone: +612 6125 2193
- Human Resources Division telephone: +61 2 6125 3346
- Counselling Centre telephone: +61 2 6125 2442
- Employee Assistance Program telephone 1300 360 364 (Davidson Trahaire Corpsych)

Notes:

[1] See ACT Policing Drink Driving webpage for guidance on staying under the current legal limit.

[2] A staff member would be considered to be under the influence of alcohol if his/her blood alcohol concentration level exceeded the stipulated allowable level in the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Act 1977 (ACT) for driving a vehicle following the consumption of alcohol. It should be noted that blood alcohol levels continue to rise for a period after the intake of the last drink and that this time period should be factored when estimating or measuring blood alcohol levels prior to commencing work.
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