

Drugs Protocol

1. Introduction

This protocol document provides further detail on how the University of Buckingham's policies and regulations on dealing with illegal drugs are discharged. It includes a summary of the strategy on drugs; the guiding principles of the strategy and policy; a detailed breakdown of the scenarios in which illegal drugs are likely to be encountered on campus; and the steps taken in response. It also describes as far as possible the responsibilities of the key stakeholders in the process. This protocol should be read in conjunction with Section 5 of the university's Regulations Handbook, and specifically Policy 5.8 of the General Regulations on Drugs and Other Dangerous Substances (<https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/5.8-Policy-on-Drugs-and-Dangerous-Substances.pdf>).

2. The strategy

The University of Buckingham has a strategy, as enunciated by the Vice Chancellor, of making the university the first campus in the UK free of illegal drugs in the UK. We also have a strategy of enhancing our awareness of the mental health of students and ensuring they receive the fullest support in such areas while they are studying with us. It is recognised that these objectives will take some time to complete, but they establish our strategic intent.

3. Guiding principles

- We wish to make the University of Buckingham the first drugs-free campus in the UK, and a sector leader in the support and welfare of all our students.
- Students identified as having problems with drugs will be treated with care and support in the first instance, recognising that drugs problems can destroy careers and relationships, and seriously damage mental and physical health in the long term.
- Interdiction of students possessing illegal drugs will be balanced with preventive measures, such as positive communications to students about the regulations and about the risks; and periodic amnesties, especially in and around evening events on campus. Anonymous reporting mechanisms will also be enabled and advertised.
- At the same time, the possession of certain drugs is illegal in the UK and has to be treated as such. We have a duty to balance the care and support of students with legal and regulatory commitments.
- To this end, we reserve the right to carry out drugs searches on our estate, including in university accommodation and other buildings, and around university social events and communal areas. Such searches may be randomised, and will periodically involve the use of drugs dogs.
- We reserve the right to levy penalties on students for possession of illegal drugs, including reporting the issue to the police (see below), confiscating paraphernalia, levying fines, and deferment or cancellation of studies. While the latter interventions will generally not be the first course of action for a first offence, it will generally be applicable in cases of repeated abuse despite warnings, or for evidence of the dealing of drugs to other students or the public.

- In the majority of cases, all instances of the discovery of illegal drugs on campus and related activities such as suspected dealing will be reported to the police, unless there is a particular reason not to do so (such as the police asking us not to do so). It is not expected, in so doing, that the police will necessarily provide any feedback on the usefulness of such reporting, or take any action.
- In all cases of reporting to the police, and the circulation of particular details amongst stakeholders within the university, appropriate notice will be taken of relevant regulations and duties concerning the disclosure of sensitive and personal information.

4. Key stakeholders

Stakeholder	Key responsibilities
Students First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of initial reporting of drugs use directly/indirectly from student/s. • Liaison with relevant drugs counselling service where available • Management of drugs counselling appointments e.g. booking with students, issuing reminders etc. • Accompanying students to Student Conduct Manager meetings if required. • Providing advice on areas of concern for any forthcoming dog search/security search. • Providing details of final outcome from drugs counselling service as to case management (including recommendation for closure of case or further action required). • Undertaking overall responsibility for education about the risks of drugs misuse.
Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with drugs dogs provider as required.
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting any suspicions or evidence of drugs within campus accommodation to the Security team. • Searching accommodation on suspicion of any drug activity.
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting on reports of drugs use on campus and instigating searches as required. • Managing bookings of drugs dog-accompanied searches of accommodation and estate and providing accompanying staff for the patrols. • Recording and seizing any drugs and related paraphernalia found on campus. • Storing seized items and drugs for collection by the Police. • Providing a standardised report to the Compliance Officer about any drugs finds or related incidents for further investigation/disciplinary action.
OTM/Events staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting any suspicions of drug use/dealing in and around the OTM or other events venues on campus directly to Security.

Compliance Officer/Secretary to Student Conduct Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of all incoming reports about student concerns and discharging of a triage process, considering when and whether a student should be interviewed by the Student Conduct Manager. • Acting as the primary liaison point for all reporting to/from Thames Valley Police. • Acting as primary POC for all incoming complaints from local residents about students. • Maintaining records concerning all student reports and cross-referring these to incoming reports of drugs concerns. • Assisting with trends reports and updates to Senate, Council and other committees as required. • Providing general administrative support to the Student Conduct Manager team, including the drafting of letters to students. • Providing ownership of the master database of all student-related investigations, including actions taken and closure where applicable.
Student Conduct Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making decisions on how and when students should be interviewed on receipt of reports about drugs concerns. • Conducting interviews with students and their supporters as required, in conjunction with the Compliance Officer. • Deciding the outcome of interviews, making reference to a flowchart of escalating sanctions for offences. • Assisting with the drafting of letters to students and to other stakeholders as required, on the outcomes of investigations and interviews. • Recommending the referral of students as necessary to Students First for drugs counselling. • Providing overall responsibility for updating the university drugs policy and associated documents. • Liaison with staff and students regarding drugs forums/information events. • Assist Students' First with promoting drugs educational events.
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring any concerns to Students First, the Compliance Officer, or to Security (depending on the nature and severity of the situation) regarding any drugs-related concerns involving students that are encountered in the course of work.

In addition to the above internal stakeholders, we will also liaise with our key external stakeholder, Thames Valley Police, to stress the importance of them reporting to us any concerns about specific students that arise in their investigations. The Compliance Officer/Secretary to Student Conduct Manager will act as the primary POC for all non-urgent communications with the Police.

5. Initial reporting of finds

- Any persons finding any suspicious or illegal drugs or associated paraphernalia are to report to the Security team in the first instance. Security should be called to the area,

items are not to be touched or removed unless posing a health and safety risk to any persons.

- Security will record and seize items, taking photographic evidence and keeping the items in a secure safe for subsequent collection by the Police.
- Incident Report/Room search report and photographic evidence of all known information to be submitted via email to the Compliance Officer within 24 hours of the find.
- If a welfare concern exists for the student/s involved, Students First should be contacted.
- If a criminal act is in place or has taken place, the matter should be reported by Security to the Police via 101 or in an emergency, 999. A security report should be filed to this effect. The Compliance Officer will be responsible for less immediate liaison with the Police and should be made aware of all contact with them (see paragraph 6 below).
- If the drugs are found in University accommodation and there is a health and safety risk posed to Accommodation or Housekeeping staff, the Accommodation Manager should be advised accordingly by Security.
- In the event of any member of staff detecting a smell of cannabis in a particular area, Security are to be called for further investigation. In line with the university policy on Drugs and other dangerous substances, Security/Accommodation/Students First staff have authorised rights to search a room on suspicion of any drug use; this may include the use of drugs dogs.

6. Reporting mechanisms to the Police

Security are to be the main point of contact with the Police for immediate and time-sensitive reporting of drugs-related matters. This could include but is not restricted to:

- Drugs finds on campus.
- Reports or concerns from local residents/students/staff of a time-sensitive manner of any suspicions in terms of potential drugs dealing or drugs-related issues.
- All other non-urgent liaison with and reporting to/from the Police is the responsibility of the Compliance Officer, who will keep a record of all communications with the Police.

Reports to the Police will be provided in a standardised format and emailed to the TV Police Community team inbox. Where issued by Security, a record of the email is to be kept and noted on the Security shift report.

Any information or feedback provided to Security regarding the safety of students on campus, must be shared in an appropriate manner (taking account of general data protection requirements) and the risks managed accordingly.

7. Circulation of details around stakeholders

On receipt of drugs find or reported concerns, the Security team will report within 24 hours to the following areas:

- The Compliance Officer, via email with completed report and photographic evidence.

- Students First, via email with completed report.
- If time-sensitive, to the Police, via email with completed report.
- To any other parties deemed appropriate but on a need-to-know basis.

8. Subsequent reporting around stakeholders

Once the initial report has been received, subsequent reporting may be made to the following, depending on the circumstances and the involvement of relevant stakeholders. In all cases, careful consideration will be made of general data protection requirements:

- The Student Conduct Manager
- Security, in particular to note actions taken by Student Conduct Manager or to provide further information to be reported to the Police
- Students First, in particular in connection with drugs counselling referrals
- Student Fees, in the form of a standard template to inform staff of fines imposed.
- The Medical School, with reporting to the Concerns Officer
- The Students Union management
- Accommodation
- Personal tutors of relevant students
- Other school staff, such as the Dean.

9. Ongoing reporting mechanisms for each case

It is recognised that Security and the Student's Union management will have a particular need to receive timely updates on cases concerning students on campus, particularly where there may be sanctions imposed such as bans from all or parts of the campus, since these stakeholders are on the "front line" and are likely to come into contact with the students in question at any time. Taking data protection issues into account, timely updates to these stakeholders on the progress of specific cases will be treated as a priority.

Students First will provide the primary interface and liaison with external counselling and support services where applicable.

The Compliance Officer will manage subsequent communications with the Student Conduct Manager s and other relevant stakeholders on counselling or other welfare issues involving students, taking account of general data protection issues.

Where applicable, Students First will coordinate with the Compliance Officer and relevant Personal Tutors on specific fitness-to-study recommendations.

10. Sanctions

The general approach to sanctions resulting from infringements of the drugs policy will be one of an escalating level of punishment up to, and including expulsion, where deemed appropriate. Note that the general policy is not one of "zero tolerance" leading to immediate expulsion, but rather one of balancing education and support with appropriate sanction in the objective of moving towards a drugs-free campus.

On completion of investigations, the Student Conduct Manager team will make a value-judgement in each case whether to apply one or more of the following sanctions:

- The imposition of a fine of between £100 and £500 depending on the severity of the case and the degree of contrition shown by the student, and a formal written warning explaining that further infringements will result in escalating action being taken.
- Partial or full bans from attendance at the OTM and/or events, for a specified period
- Suspension from studies and from the campus, pending a fuller investigation.
- Expulsion from the university.

It is recognised that each case is different and requires a flexible imposition of the above measures, but the general principle is that repeated infringement of university regulations following an initial formal warning will be treated with due severity. It is also stated as a principle that the university reserves the right to take action and impose sanctions independently of whether or not the police are investigating the case in question, unless we have been formally asked not to do so.

11. Closure of cases

Students involved in any disciplinary action will have a letter sent to them to confirm the outcome of any investigation, including details of any sanction or conditions imposed on them and the reasons for such.

As noted above, Security and the Student's Union management will receive basic information about the closure of a case in order to know whether and how a particular student's attendance on campus is affected. The Student Fees office will receive basic information about any fine imposed using a standardised template, and Students First will also receive basic information outlining the closure of case. These reports will be retained by each area in accordance with general data protection regulations.

Where applicable, upon completion of drugs counselling where applicable, information will be provided to the Compliance Officer for the purpose of updating records on the outcome of student-related cases. The Student Conduct Manager will be subsequently informed of successful completion. A letter will then be sent from Student Conduct Manager to the student/s to thank them for engaging in the process and successfully completing their counselling.

The general principle is that the Compliance Officer will provide primary responsibility for the master database of all student-related cases, including details of action taken and closure where applicable.