

# Downing College Alcohol Policy

This Policy has been developed by the College in consultation with student representatives, the Senior Tutor, Tutors, the College Nurse and Porters.

## Aims

Downing College is committed to promoting a safe and supportive environment in which students can live, study and work.

In order to do so, the College aims to:

- encourage and support a culture of safe drinking and mutual respect within the College community
- Promote a community which is supportive and which recognises and respects different attitudes towards alcohol use
- Work to create an understanding of acceptable behaviour and sanction responsible use of disciplinary action where appropriate
- Assist students to make informed decisions about alcohol use
- Recognise the link between responsible behaviour and an enjoyable learning experience and seek to promote a social environment in which all may benefit
- Take very seriously the legal duty of care to students, staff and visitors and aim to provide a safe, healthy and high quality work and study environment
- Recognise that staff have a duty of care to be alert to indicators of student alcohol misuse and/or dependency and to take appropriate action when necessary
- 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 alcohol misuse which puts the wellbeing of students at risk
- Provide support to students who are seeking help or have concerns about their alcohol use or that of their friends
- Work with all relevant partners to deliver responsible commercial services where alcohol is available on site.

## Introduction

This policy is part of the College's work to promote a safe and supportive environment in which students can live, study and work. The overarching premise is one of support and education, focusing on boundaries of acceptable and responsible behaviour.

The College has a legal duty of care to its students, staff and visitors and aims to provide a safe, healthy and high quality academic environment. This includes addressing the risks posed by alcohol misuse, informing students of their responsibilities and providing information, advice, guidance and support to those who request it. All students have a legal and moral responsibility to take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others. Guidance on roles and responsibilities within the College are included in Appendix A.

## Who is covered by the policy?

The policy applies to all students. It applies whether students are on College or University premises or elsewhere undertaking College or University study activities, including premises managed on behalf of the College or University by a third party.

## Misuse

Alcohol misuse is defined as the habitual or intermittent use of alcohol which causes detriment to an individual's health, social functioning and/or academic performance. It can impair the safety of themselves or others and affect attendance, time keeping, efficiency and conduct.

## Dependency

Alcohol dependency is considered to be the most serious form of drinking problem and describes a strong, often uncontrollable desire to consume alcohol. There are varying degrees of dependence and it is important to note that, unlike alcohol misuse, dependence doesn't always involve drinking excessive amounts. Alcohol dependency is an illness that can affect people physically and mentally, can have a negative impact on relationships and can lead to study or social problems.

## Binge drinking

Binge drinking is a form of alcohol misuse and is defined as drinking eight or more units of alcohol in one session if you are a man, and more than six units in one session if you are a woman<sup>1</sup>. Studies have revealed that drinking a large amount of alcohol over a short period of time may be significantly worse for our health than frequently drinking moderate amounts.

To reduce health risks from drinking, the [Chief Medical Officers \(CMO\) guidelines](#) recommends that people should not drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week on a regular basis and we should spread these units over three or more days and have several alcohol-free days a week.

Measurements of alcohol for some other popular drinks are listed below.

- A standard glass of wine (175ml) at 12% abv is 2.1 units, and a large 250ml glass is 3 units.
- A measure (35ml) of spirit (40% abv) is 1.4 units.
- A bottle (275ml) of ordinary strength alcopops (5% abv) is 1.4 units.
- A shot (35ml) of spirits, typically between 35-40% abv, is 1.3 units.
- A pint (568ml) of low strength (3.5-4% abv) beer, or lager, is 2.3 units.
- A standard measure of port, or sherry, (50ml) is 1 unit.

## Preloading

Preloading is the practice of consuming alcohol at home or a friend's house before going out to pubs, bars or clubs. When people pre-load they are considered four times more likely to consume over 20 units on a night out (including preloading and pub/bar/club drinking)<sup>2</sup>. This level of consumption is strongly associated with increased health risks and also increases the risk of night time violence and unsafe sexual behaviour.

## Health

The short and long-term effects of alcohol consumption are wide-ranging and can have a significant impact on a person's body, lifestyle and mental health<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_395191.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_395191.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/alcohol-pre-loading-and-nightlife-violence.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-facts/health-effects-of-alcohol/>

## Personal safety

An estimated 23,000 alcohol-related incidents take place in Britain each week<sup>4</sup>. The risks of short-term harms like accidents or injuries increase between two to five times when drinking five-seven units (equivalent to 2-3 pints of beer)<sup>5</sup>. 35% of women and 9% of men have reported receiving unwanted sexual contact on a night out. This ranges from things like grabbing and groping, to serious sexual assaults<sup>6</sup>.

Being out in the city under the influence of alcohol therefore puts students at greater risk of harm. The College recommends that students familiarize themselves with useful tips to help stay safe whilst drinking by visiting the [Drinkaware](#) and [NHS](#) web resources. [Watch the College's Safe Night OUT film.](#)

See Appendix B for guidance in the event of alcohol poisoning.

## Respecting the rights of others

The College recognizes that there will be differing attitudes to alcohol amongst the student body and that a strong social emphasis on alcohol is insensitive to those whose cultures do not endorse the use of alcohol and to those who choose not to use it for other reasons. In a 2016 survey of Cambridge students, nearly a third of respondents indicated that they did not consume alcohol. The College will therefore strive to ensure that facilities and events are accessible for all students including those who choose not to drink alcohol, either due to personal preference, culture or because of religion or belief.

Students should ensure that the rights of those wishing not to drink alcohol are fully respected, regardless of the reason. The College will not tolerate disrespectful or exclusive behavior which marginalizes students who choose not to consume alcohol.

## Peer pressure

It is irresponsible and dangerous to encourage or pressure others to drink any more alcohol than they ought or wish to. Participation in competitive drinking games including 'pennyng', the spiking of drinks with any/extra alcohol or pressurizing others to take part in an 'initiation' to student societies are strictly prohibited and any student engaging in such activities will be subject to the College's disciplinary procedures and sanctions. The offence will be considered aggravated if there is an element of intimidation or bullying, that is, the person being encouraged to consume alcohol has indicated their reluctance to do so.

## College Functions and other Events

Those responsible for organising College functions should ensure that excessive quantities of alcohol are not available to guests and that only sensible drinking takes place. This also holds for events organised by the JCR and the MCR and by College clubs and societies. The National Union of Students runs an alcohol awareness campaign which provides useful advice. Organisers of student events should always make sure that good quality alcohol free alternative drinks are available.

College Staff have a responsibility to ensure that dinner in Hall is enjoyable and civilised for all present. Diners should exercise restraint and not drink to excess; hosts should look after their guests and friends look after one another. If a diner does not exercise restraint, they will be asked to leave the Hall, as will any diners playing competitive drinking games who do not stop when asked. Diners whose drinking

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Sexandyoungpeople/Documents/st\\_alcoholsafety1.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Sexandyoungpeople/Documents/st_alcoholsafety1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-facts/drinking-habits-and-behaviours/binge-drinking/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/staying-safe-while-drinking/sexual-harassment/>

leads them to behave without consideration for the Staff may also be required to leave.

The College Bar Staff have a responsibility to ensure that College members and their guests do not drink to excess; those who do will be refused further service and may be asked to leave the Bar. It is illegal for Bar staff to serve someone who is clearly inebriated.

Student societies that have initiations which involve drinking, and encouraging other to drink, to excess are strongly discouraged; drunken behaviour resulting from such initiations will be considered to be in breach of discipline (see next section).

### **Violence or antisocial behavior**

For a small minority of students, alcohol can play a significant role in situations where violence or antisocial behaviour occurs.

Violence and antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated and may be subject to the College's or University's disciplinary procedures. Excessive alcohol consumption will not be considered a mitigating factor.

Students should be aware that they are responsible for their own actions and will be held fully liable for any expense arising from breakages, damages or additional cleaning to College or University property resulting from antisocial behavior.

Any Fellow of the College or the Porters may stop a gathering within College if it is causing disturbance to other members of the College or the neighbouring community, and make a report to the Dean and the Senior Tutor.

Any instances of antisocial behavior may also have reputational issues for the College and/or the University.

### **Support for those with alcohol dependency**

It is recognized that moderate alcohol consumption for many students will be an enjoyable and relatively harmless element of university life. However, in a University with a student population size as large as Cambridge, it is inevitable that some students will have or develop a problem with alcohol.

Alcohol dependency is an illness and if a student proactively and voluntarily discloses a problem with alcohol to the College, they should be reassured that they will be treated with sympathy and sensitivity and every effort will be made to assist them in finding the support that they need.

Support might be offered through the College Nurse, College Counsellor, Senior Tutor and Tutors or the University Counselling Service. Referrals to external support agencies may also be considered.

Wherever possible, the disclosure of information by students will be kept confidential within the College welfare team, unless the student consents for such a disclosure to be shared or if the student or others are at serious risk of harm.

Whilst the College encourages any student with a concern about alcohol to disclose it to the College so that full pastoral and study support can be provided, it is recognized not all students will wish to do so. Students wishing to seek help outside of the Collegiate University may find the following resources of help:

- UCS self-help leaflet  
<http://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/selfhelp/selfleafpdf/manalco/view>
- Visit a General Practitioner
- Drinkline is the free national alcohol helpline. 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am – 8pm, weekends 11am – 4pm)
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>
- Inclusion Cambridge <http://www.inclusion-cambridgeshire.org.uk/>
- Drinkaware <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>
- NHS <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx%20/>
- Alcohol Concern <https://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/>
- Addaction <https://www.addaction.org.uk/>

### **Implications for alcohol misuse**

The College has a legitimate interest in protecting the College community and its own reputation from the potential consequences of alcohol misuse. It is important to acknowledge that the actions of students whose behaviour causes damage to property, harm to themselves or to others as a result of alcohol misuse will need to be considered fully when deciding on an appropriate course of action. Therefore in situations where the misuse of alcohol is significantly affecting a student's academic performance, conduct, relationships or future career choice, the situation may need to be considered under a specific College or University procedure, including but not limited to:

- Fitness to study
- Fitness to practice
- Intermission
- Disciplinary
- Harassment and sexual misconduct

Very serious cases involving potentially criminal activity may result in a matter being reported to the University and/or the police.

## **Appendix A – Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Students should:**

- Be aware of this policy and any supporting documents.
- Respect the wishes and beliefs of those who do not drink.
- Not engage in antisocial behaviour, violence, competitive drinking games or society initiations.
- Proactively and voluntarily disclose concerns if they are concerned about their alcohol use.
- Seek help or support if they have been asked to do so, including as part of a disciplinary sanction or fitness to study/practise process.
- Encourage other students to seek help where appropriate.
- Access information about the potential impacts of alcohol misuse to physical and mental health and relationships.
- Alert an appropriate member of staff to any problems relating to alcohol consumption that they see developing within the College, particularly where legal or health and safety concerns are an issue.
- Be aware of the behaviour of students around them and do their best to ensure everyone's safety and wellbeing.

### **All College Staff should:**

- Be aware of the policy referral procedures within the College for dealing with student alcohol-related issues. Encourage students to access appropriate support if there are concerns about their wellbeing in relation to alcohol.
- Be mindful of the potential impacts of excessive alcohol when conducting risk assessments on proposed events and activities.
- Ensure there is no misuse of/pressure to misuse alcohol during College social functions.
- Ensure non-alcoholic drinks are available at these occasions.

### **College Fellows should:**

- Be mindful that they are a role model to students and their own drinking behavior and attitudes contribute to the overall College culture.
- Be mindful of the potential impacts of excessive alcohol when conducting risk assessments on proposed events and activities.
- Ensure there is no misuse of/pressure to misuse alcohol during College social functions.
- Ensure non-alcoholic drinks are available at these occasions.

### **Tutors and/or College Nurse should:**

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of alcohol misuse and alcohol dependency.
- Alert students to the potential impacts of alcohol misuse.
- Through induction events, meetings and new student health questionnaires be alert to picking up students who come to University with a problem with alcohol to allow for early intervention and support.
- Follow up with students who have been identified by Porters or bar staff as potentially needing intervention/support.
- Act as a confidential self-referral facility for students.
- Provide information, advice and support to students presenting with alcohol-related

issues (Nurse).

- Adhere to confidentiality guidelines and data protection legislation when a student presents for support for an alcohol-related issue.
- Have in place systems of referral to the UCS and community-based alcohol support agencies (Nurse).
- Raise concerns to the Senior Tutor if a particular alcohol-related welfare issue is presenting repeatedly.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that students with alcohol-related issues do not present a risk to themselves or others.
- Monitor trends and patterns in alcohol use and consumption amongst the student body.

**Porters should:**

- Be aware of the issues associated with alcohol misuse.
- Be aware of alcohol-related support services within the College and who has responsibility for this.
- Liaise and communicate with College welfare staff in relation to concerns about student alcohol misuse.
- Report any alcohol-related incidents that contravene College or University regulations to the Senior Tutor/Dean.
- Be alert to the signs of alcohol poisoning and how to act in an emergency.

**JCR/MCR Welfare Officers should:**

- Offer information about services available to students who have concerns about their alcohol use.
- Work with College staff and Fellows to encourage and promote a sensible approach to alcohol use within the College.
- Provide and support educational events, awareness campaigns and activities that promote student health and wellbeing in cooperation with other parts of the Collegiate University.
- Ensure that student-related policies reflect attitudes to alcohol which are conducive to student wellbeing.
- Ensure that social events are not themed around excessive drinking and that publicity for these events is not themed exclusively around alcohol.
- Ensure that facilities/events organized by the JCR/MCR are accessible for those students who choose not to drink alcohol for whatever reason, and that the suite of events available to freshers includes alcohol-free activities as standard.

**Bar staff should:**

- Ensure that patrons are in a fit state to be served (no visible signs of drunkenness).
- Ensure that alcohol is not be served to anyone under the age of 18.
- Ensure that any person who appears to be intoxicated is not served alcoholic drinks.
- Ensure that any customer attempting to buy alcoholic drinks for someone who appears to be intoxicated are refused.
- Ensure that patrons who appear to be intoxicated are asked to leave the premises.
- Report issues of antisocial behavior resulting from excessive alcohol consumption to the Duty Porter
- Alert the Senior Tutor/Dean in cases where students consistently drink significantly in excess of the recommended low risk guidelines.

## Appendix B

### In an emergency: Alcohol poisoning

Alcohol poisoning occurs when someone has consumed toxic levels of alcohol over a short period of time. In the most severe cases, alcohol poisoning can lead to coma, brain damage and can even be fatal.

The signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning include:

- confusion
- severely slurred speech
- loss of co-ordination
- vomiting
- irregular or slow breathing
- hypothermia (pale or blue-tinged skin caused by low body temperature)
- stupor (being conscious but unresponsive)
- passing out and being unconscious

### When to seek medical help

If you suspect a fellow student may have alcohol poisoning and they are in College accommodation, contact the Porters' Lodge immediately for help. If they are not in College, dial 999 immediately to request an ambulance. While you're waiting:

- try to keep them sitting up and awake
- give them water if they can drink it
- if they've passed out, lie them on their side in the recovery position (<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Accidents-and-first-aid/Pages/The-recovery-position.aspx>) and check they're breathing properly
- keep them warm
- stay with them and monitor their symptoms

Never leave a person alone to 'sleep it off'. The level of alcohol in a person's blood can continue to rise for up to 30-40 minutes after their last drink. This can cause their symptoms to suddenly become much more severe. You also shouldn't give them coffee or any more alcohol, put them under a cold shower or walk them around. These won't help someone 'sober up' and may even be dangerous.