



ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE AT WORK

The Royal Academy of Music moves music forward by inspiring successive generations of musicians to connect, collaborate and create.
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**UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the Academy's approach to managing alcohol or drug misuse at work. We have a duty to take care of the health and safety of all our staff and others affected by our activities. It is important for us to ensure that staff conduct themselves in an appropriate, professional and responsible manner at work and that alcohol or drug misuse does not create a health and safety risk.

At the same time, we genuinely care about the health and wellbeing of all our staff and are invested in creating an environment where everyone can thrive. We recognise that alcohol or drug dependence is a medical condition. If you disclose, or we suspect, that you are misusing alcohol or drugs or have alcohol or drug dependency, we will take a non-judgmental and supportive approach to ensure that you get the help that you need.

SCOPE

This policy applies to anyone working at the Academy. This includes staff, workers, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices.

WHAT IS ALCOHOL OR DRUG MISUSE?

Alcohol and drug misuse is when an individual drinks alcohol, or takes illegal drugs, medicines, or substances such as solvents, in a way that is harmful and are taken in order to alter the taker's mental or physical state. This includes prescription or over-the-counter medication that is then misused, meaning it is used for purposes other than its intended or prescribed use.

The problematic use of drugs and/or alcohol can range from long-term problematic use to intermittent occurrences. It can include consuming harmful amounts of alcohol (resulting in alcohol-related health complications or incidents), a dependence on alcohol, the frequent and excessive use of drugs or a dependence on drugs.

Early warning signs of alcohol or drug misuse include:

- unexplained or frequent absences;
- a change in behaviour;
- behaving in an aggressive or reckless way;
- unexplained dips in productivity;
- accidents or near misses;

- performance or conduct issues;
- sudden changes of mood; or
- breakdown in relationships with colleagues.

If you notice obvious signs of alcohol or drug misuse in a colleague, you should report this to your line manager and the HR department.

DEFINITIONS

'Use' refers to the consumption of alcohol or drugs in a way that is lawful, medically appropriate, and does not cause harm or impairment. This includes taking prescribed medications as directed or drinking alcohol within low-risk guidelines. Use does not negatively affect health, behaviour, mental wellbeing, or workplace performance.

'Misuse' is the unsafe, inappropriate, or excessive use of alcohol or drugs in a way that increases the risk of harm to the individual or others. This includes consuming alcohol above recommended limits, using illegal substances, or taking prescribed medication incorrectly. Misuse may contribute to or worsen physical or mental health issues and can impair judgement, behaviour, and workplace safety.

'Dependence' is a recognised medical condition in which an individual develops a compulsion to use alcohol or drugs, experiences difficulty controlling consumption, and may show tolerance or withdrawal symptoms. It is often linked to or complicated by mental health conditions and typically requires clinical assessment and structured treatment. Dependence significantly affects functioning and can impair safety and performance at work.

'Legal substances' include alcohol, prescription medications, and over-the-counter drugs when used appropriately and in accordance with medical guidance.

'Illegal substances' are those prohibited by law, including controlled drugs taken without a valid prescription.

1. POLICY

- 1.1 It is the Academy's policy to ensure that staff do not use alcohol or drugs in a way that affects the safe and efficient running of the Academy, the health of staff, or the quality of service for students, colleagues, and visitors. We have a duty to ensure a safe working environment and not to expose you and others affected by our activities to any unnecessary risk.

- 1.2 It is strictly prohibited to drink alcohol or take drugs that are likely to render you unfit or unsafe for work during working hours
- 1.3 If we suspect that you are unfit or unsafe to undertake your work because you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you may be suspended from your duties until the matter is investigated.
- 1.4 Everyone is encouraged to take a responsible attitude to alcohol consumption. Members of staff whose conduct or performance is adversely affected due to being under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs at work will be subject to the disciplinary procedure. The Academy recognises that substance misuse may constitute a medical and or social issue and concessions will apply where a staff member is suffering from drug or alcohol dependency, which are outlined in the remainder of this policy.
- 1.5 Whilst drug and alcohol dependency are not, in themselves, defined as disabilities under the Equality Act 2010, it is important to note that the Act may cover conditions arising from, or associated with, the misuse or dependency on drugs or alcohol, such as chronic liver disease or mental health conditions. Although dependency itself is excluded, conditions such as those above may be protected if they independently meet the disability definition of the Act, particularly if these conditions have a substantial and long-term effect on day-to-day activities
- 1.6 Members of staff whose work performance or attendance is affected by prescribed drugs e.g. tranquillisers or antibiotics should normally be treated in accordance with the usual provisions for employees with ill health. Staff should inform their manager if they are taking prescribed drugs that might affect their work performance.
- 1.7 It is illegal to knowingly permit certain drugs to be used, kept or supplied at the workplace. This policy and procedure should not be used to condone in any way the possession of illegal drugs at the workplace. Any indication that illegal substances have been knowingly brought in and distributed by an employee will prompt an immediate disciplinary investigation. If an investigation determines that an employee has distributed illegal substances, the employee would be subject to a sanction for gross misconduct, up to and including dismissal. Depending on the severity, a report may also be filed with the Metropolitan Police.

2. STAFF UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL

- 2.1 The disciplinary procedure will apply to any member of staff who does not suffer from alcohol dependency and are found to be under the influence of alcohol at work, where their conduct affects the safety of themselves or others and/or where conduct or work performance is affected.
- 2.2 The disciplinary procedure will apply to members of staff who do not suffer from drug dependency, are found to be under the influence of non-prescribed drugs at work and where their conduct or work performance is affected.

3. GENERAL PROCEDURE

- 3.1 Any action taken in accordance with this procedure will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- 3.2 The extent of alcohol and drug misuse and the problems it creates are recognised. Alcohol or drug misuse may result in costs to the Academy and risks to staff, through misconduct, accidents and poor work performance. It is in the interest of the Academy and all staff that those suffering from illness arising from alcohol or drug misuse are encouraged to seek specialist help as early as possible.
- 3.3 In applying the following procedure, the line manager and Human Resources should be informed as soon as a staff member is known or is believed to be experiencing drug or alcohol dependency.
- 3.4 Where a member of staff is diagnosed with an illness arising from drug or alcohol misuse, time off for treatment and rehabilitation will be treated in the same way as absence for other longer-term medical conditions and will qualify for entitlement under the sick pay scheme.
- 3.5 If we suspect that you are misusing or are dependent on alcohol or drugs, we may refer you to occupational health so that they can advise on the type of support that may be appropriate. Occupational health may also signpost you to external sources of help and advice.

4. THE PROCEDURE IN OPERATION

- 4.1 Members of staff who are aware that they may be experiencing drug or alcohol dependency are encouraged to voluntarily contact the Human Resources team, the Counselling team or any other appropriate source of specialist help. All enquiries relating to drug or

alcohol issues will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and appropriate sensitivity.

- 4.2 Where a line manager becomes aware that a member of staff is misusing drugs or alcohol, either through the normal supervisory process or by some other means, the matter should be referred to Human Resources without delay.
- 4.3 Following the advice from Human Resources, the person should be encouraged to seek assistance from a Counsellor or other source of specialist help. Where a member of staff refuses to accept help, this will not of itself be cause for disciplinary action, but the line manager will monitor the situation.
- 4.4 Where the member of staff agrees to co-operate in undergoing treatment, the required improvement in work performance, together with agreed reasonable timescales, will be outlined, following consultation with the Counsellor or other specialist agency.
- 4.5 The member of staff will be granted the necessary leave to undergo treatment, which will be treated as sick leave. Where a member of staff suffers a relapse after completion of, or during, the recovery programme, each case will be considered individually.
- 4.6 Redeployment can be considered where it would be helpful. Consultation will take place before any decision is made, and will involve the member of staff, their line manager, and the Director of Human Resources. The member of staff may be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative.
- 4.7 Where a member of staff fails to respond to treatment, and conduct or work performance continues to be affected within the agreed timeframe, it may be necessary to consider reviewing and extending the monitoring period, or, ultimately, termination of employment on the grounds of ill-health. Where appropriate, any entitlement to ill-health retirement under the pension scheme may be considered as an alternative.
- 4.8 Where a member of staff's drug or alcohol dependency becomes evident through disciplinary proceedings, consideration will be given as to whether or not to continue with the disciplinary action, and if so, what action is appropriate.
- 4.9 Where a member of staff who is known to have drug or alcohol dependency becomes subject to disciplinary proceedings, account will be taken of the individual's co-operation in treatment, and any other mitigating factors, when deciding what action, if any, should be taken.

- 4.10 In cases of drug or alcohol misuse where there are serious disciplinary offences, it may be necessary to consider disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. This course may be particularly appropriate where health and safety are at risk.
- 4.11 Before any action is taken the Academy will exercise due diligence and seek appropriate professional advice when determining whether a staff members behaviour indicates substance misuse or substance dependency. Each situation will be considered on its individual facts, taking into account observed behaviour, relevant evidence and any input from Occupational Health, Counselling or medical professionals.
- 4.12 **Work-related social events**
You may drink alcohol if you are at an Academy social event or you are entertaining on behalf of the Academy, provided that you are given permission by your line manager or at an approved Academy event.
- 4.12 You should remember that you are representing the Academy during any work-related social event and you should drink in moderation. The provision of free alcoholic drinks by the Academy is not an excuse to drink excessively.
- 4.13 You should also be aware that the Academy's [Equality, diversity and inclusion policy](#) and [bullying and harassment policy](#) continue to apply during any work-related social events. In accordance with these policies, discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment, of any kind will not be tolerated.
- 4.14 The Academy will provide case-by-case assessments, access to occupational health support, and reasonable adjustments where appropriate. Delivering this effectively may also require training for line managers to ensure they are equipped to identify concerns, manage sensitive situations, and support employees effectively.

5. EXTERNAL SOURCES OF HELP

There are various organisations that provide help and support relating to alcohol or drug dependence, including:

- [Alcohol Change](#), which is a national charity working to help reduce problems caused by alcohol;

- [Drinkaware](#), which is an independent charity, which works with others to help reduce alcohol-related harm by helping people make better choices about their drinking;
- [Drinkline](#), which is a free confidential helpline for people who are concerned about their drinking;
- [FRANK \(Talk to Frank\)](#), which offers confidential help and advice on drugs; and
- [The Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#), which has produced guidance on managing drug or and alcohol abuse at work and signposts the help and support available to those affected.
- [Employee Assistance Programme](#), help and support is also available through our employee assistance programme (EAP). You can use our EAP to speak to an independent adviser on a confidential basis about any issue that is troubling you.

6. USEFUL LINKS

[I need to speak to someone](#)

[Support for drug problems](#) (mind.org.uk)

[Drug addiction: getting help - NHS](#)

[Alcohol support - NHS](#)

7. DATA PROTECTION

We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our [Data Protection Policy](#). Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

8. RELATED POLICIES

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Intimate Personal Relationships Policy
- Health and Safety Policy