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## **Drug & Alcohol Policy: A Harm Reduction Approach**

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Aberystwyth University Harm Reduction Steering Group

**Impact Assessed:**

**Lead:** Director of Student Services

**Date of Next Review:** November 2026

Polisi Cyffuriau ac Alcohol Aberystwyth

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Aberystwyth Drug and Alcohol Policy

November 2024

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# Aberystwyth University Student Drugs including Alcohol Policy:

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## Policy Overview

The Aberystwyth University Alcohol and Drug Use Strategy Group, in collaboration with Undeb Aber and guided by SOSUK standards, has developed this policy to outline the expectations and responsibilities regarding student alcohol and substance use. Created in partnership with Dyfed Drug and Alcohol Services (DDAS) & Choices, the policy reflects the most current, evidence-based approaches to supporting our students.

Aberystwyth University does not condone or condemn drug use, but we prioritise the safety and wellbeing of our community by adopting a harm reduction approach. This policy specifically addresses the use of alcohol, controlled substances under the [Drugs Act 1971](#)<sup>[1]</sup>, substances regulated by the [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#)<sup>[2]</sup>, and the unauthorised use and possession of prescription medicines under the [Medicines Act 1968](#)<sup>[3]</sup> by students.

We are committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all students. In collaboration with Undeb Aber, DDAS & Choices, we have developed a harm reduction approach to drugs, including alcohol, focused on addressing substance use with compassion and practical support. Our goal is to minimise the health, social, and legal impacts of substance use by providing easy access to tailored resources, empowering students, and fostering an informed, open community.

To further this commitment, Aberystwyth University and Undeb Aber are participating in a national accreditation scheme to continually review and enhance our harm reduction approach. This ongoing process involves close consultation with students and various stakeholders, ensuring our strategy remains responsive, effective, and aligned with best practices.

Aligned with the [University's core values](#)<sup>[4]</sup> — transformational, creative, inclusive, ambitious, and collaborative—this policy is designed to ensure that every student thrives in a safe and supportive environment.

### **Policy Focus:**

**Harm Reduction Commitment:** Prioritise safety and wellbeing through a harm reduction approach, focusing on minimising the health, social, and legal impacts of substance use.

**Collaborative Effort:** Developed with input from Undeb Aber, DDAS & Choices, and the Aberystwyth Harm Reduction lead will ensure a well-rounded and effective policy.

**Comprehensive Support:** Offer easy access to on-campus services and external partnerships, providing tailored support for students dealing with substance use.

**Respect and Responsibility:** Promote a safe, inclusive environment where all community members are aware of how their actions impact others.

## **Understanding the Realities of Substance Use in University Life**

We recognise that drug and alcohol use can have serious consequences for health, academic performance, and relationships. While we do not condone their use, we are dedicated to helping our students navigate their university experience safely and positively. For many students, university may be their first exposure to illegal drugs, and we are committed to offering the support and resources they need to make informed decisions

We also acknowledge that students may be affected not only by their own use of drugs and alcohol but also through associations with friends or family members who engage in these behaviours. These experiences can be linked to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and other personal challenges. As we work towards becoming a trauma-informed university, we are dedicated to supporting our community with empathy and understanding through these complex issues

### **Definitions:**

In this Policy, we define key terms related to substance use to make sure everyone understands them in the same way:

**Harm Reduction:** Harm reduction aims to minimise the negative health, social, and legal impacts associated with drug and/or alcohol use. It focuses on promoting positive change and working with individuals without judgement.

**Substance use:** This refers to the harmful use of substances, including both illegal drugs and legal substances such as alcohol, prescription

medications, caffeine, nicotine, and volatile substances (e.g., petrol, glue, paint). Substance use occurs when an individual consumes these substances in a manner that adversely affects their health, performance, conduct, or the safety of themselves and/or others. This may be intermittent or continuous in nature.

**Controlled Drug:** This category includes all substances listed in the Controlled Drugs Acts (Appendix I) or Regulations applicable under the law.

## Aberystwyth University's Approach to Harm Reduction:

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Aberystwyth University's approach to harm reduction has at its heart the principles of Responsibility and Respect, Information and Support.

**Responsibility and Respect** – The University recognises that for many people substance use is not a social or cultural norm and can be experienced as intimidating, alienating and disruptive. Additionally, people who have previously struggled with problematic use may wish to avoid exposure to drugs including alcohol for their own safety.

Aberystwyth University is committed to provide **a safe and inclusive environment** that fosters respect for difference and consideration of others.

The University asks those in our community to be aware of how behaviour may impact on and be experienced by others. The University also asks those in our community to consider the impact of peer pressure on others, how individuals contribute to that and aim for positive impact on others.

**Aberystwyth University is a place of education – antisocial behaviour that negatively impacts on others’ wellbeing and ability to learn will not be tolerated.**

Incidences where students have been found to be in possession of and/or dealing drugs will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

**Information** – In order to maintain a duty of care, Aberystwyth University aims to empower students to use evidence-based information to promote informed, responsible decision-making. The University works to support the development of self-confidence and assertiveness skills, so that individuals are resilient to peer and other pressures.

## **Signposting & Support**

Aberystwyth University is committed to educating and advising on drug and alcohol use, ensuring that all community members are informed and have access to appropriate support. For students needing assistance with substance use, we provide several pathways:

- **Self-Referral:** Students can use the [DDAS self-referral form](#)<sup>[5]</sup> to access support services.
- **Support Services:** If a student requires help with substance use issues, Aberystwyth University is committed to offering direct support or referring them to suitable external resources. Our Student Wellbeing Service is available through [self-referral](#)<sup>[6]</sup> or by telephone at 01970 621761.

We provide compassionate, person-centered and trauma informed support and maintain confidentiality. However, in cases where there is an immediate and serious risk to an individual's safety or the

safety of others, confidentiality may need to be breached in line with the [Safeguarding Policy](#)<sup>[7]</sup>. Some situations may also require referral to the [Student Rules and Regulations](#)<sup>[8]</sup>.

Whilst we would always seek to support students, some situations may also require referral to the Support to Study process, Student Rules and Regulations and/or Professional and Statutory Body (PSRB) Regulations'

## Reporting Concerns:

- **General Concerns:** Individuals can report concerns via our student reporting system [Report and Support - click on 'Report Student Wellbeing Concern'](#)<sup>[9]</sup>.
- **Serious Risks:** If there is a serious risk to others, contact Security, call 101, or dial 999 immediately.

## Health and safety risks

Aberystwyth University strongly encourages every member of its community to take individual responsibility for their own safety and to actively contribute to the safety of others. This can be achieved by being 'Active Bystanders,' which involves safely challenging or intervening when witnessing unacceptable or dangerous behaviours. Recognising when someone is in danger and knowing how to intervene safely or seek professional help (e.g., calling 999) is essential.

## References:

1. *Misuse of drugs act 1971* (1979) *Legislation.gov.uk*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/38/contents> (Accessed: 13 August 2024).



2. *Psychoactive substances act 2016* (2016) *Legislation.gov.uk*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/2/contents/enacted> (Accessed: 13 August 2024).

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4. Aberystwyth University (2023) *Strategic plan and mission, Strategic Plan & Mission : Aberystwyth University*. Available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/about-us/strategic-plan/#:~:text=Our%20Values%20Transformational%20Creative%20and%20innovative,Inclusive%20Ambitious%20Collaborative%20Our%20Core%20Objectives> (Accessed: 13 August 2024).
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8. Aberystwyth University (2023) *Student Rules and Regulations, Rules and Regulations for Students : Academic Registry , Aberystwyth University*. Available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/regulations/student-rules-regs/> (Accessed: 13 August 2024).
9. Aberystwyth University (2023) *Report + Support, Report + Support - Aberystwyth University*. Available at: <https://reportandsupport.aber.ac.uk/> (Accessed: 13 August 2024).



<b>Policy Title</b>	Harm reduction Policy
<b>Data Approved</b>	
<b>Approving body</b>	Student Experience Committee Academic Board
<b>Previous review date</b>	
<b>Next review date</b>	
<b>Related policies / procedures / guidance</b>	
<b>Implementation date</b>	
<b>Policy owner (job title)</b>	Head of Student Wellbeing
<b>Unit/ Service</b>	Student Services
<b>Contact Email</b>	

Version Control:

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason For change</b>
2?	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2024	Accessibility and Reformatting
2.1	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Head of Wellbeing rewrite