



A joint harm reduction approach to managing student substance use

Middlesex University and Middlesex University Students' Union are working in partnership to develop and deliver a harm reduction approach to managing student substance use.

Whilst we do not endorse the use of substances, the wellbeing, health and safety of our students is of upmost importance. We are committed to protecting our university community from the potential harm and risks of student substance use and ensuring that all students benefit from a safe university experience. Our harm reduction approach prioritises support and education. It focuses on informing students of the risks and wider implications associated with substance use whilst helping ensure that students struggling with substance use are able to access appropriate and effective support.

We are currently developing a student substance use policy which will articulate our harm reduction approach and inform our ongoing commitment to delivering work in this area and keeping our students and staff safe. The policy will set out our commitment to delivering a harm reduction approach and making positive change in 4 key areas, as summarised below.

Our commitment

Education – we are committed to discouraging the harmful use of substances by helping students to make informed and responsible decision-making regarding substance-use, including educating on the potential risks and harms of substance-use and providing evidence-based information on safe-usage and harm reduction strategies. To support this commitment, all students and staff will have access to the Staying Safe Programme (a learning and wellbeing platform with over 30 modules presented by experts and students, covering various aspects of drug-use).

Guidance – we are committed to encouraging students to access effective support by developing appropriate referral pathways, promoting internal and external services and embedding a pro-active approach to delivering early intervention in response to substance-use related incidents. If you would like to know more about substance use, please see useful links in the “Research the risk, reduce the risk of harm” section” on our [substance-use UniHub page](#).

Support – we are committed to developing services and training staff to provide person-centred, compassionate, non-judgemental and safe support to students who may be struggling with substance use, whilst collaborating with external support agencies and specialists to deliver a joint-up approach to help ensure students receive effective support. For any student who may be struggling with substance-use, we encourage them to [access our support and wellbeing services here](#).

Response – we are committed to developing policies and procedures which encourage responsible behaviours regarding substance-use, including clearly setting out the behaviours which may result in the possibility of disciplinary action and the proportionate steps that may be taken to mitigate against risks associated with substance-use related incidents. To drive forward this important work, we have partnered with SOS ([Students Organising For Sustainability](#)). As well as supporting us to implement a harm reduction approach across the University, we will participate annually in their research to ensure our approach is evidence-based and informs how best we can support our students.