Health and Safety - OHS Alcohol and Other Drugs Procedure (Staff)

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure:

a. ensures that the consumption of alcohol and drugs on University premises adheres to all relevant legal requirements and relevant Victoria University (VU) policies;
b. establishes a management approach which seeks to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the misuse of alcohol and other drugs, for both the VU community and the individual; and
c. assists managers and supervisors when considering how to manage alcohol and drug-related issues in their area(s) of responsibility.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to:

a. all staff, contractors and visitors;
b. all University premises and facilities (inclusive of all facilities that are leased and operated by others on behalf of the University); and
c. where University activities, events are being conducted, i.e. both on and off-campus.

Note: This Procedure does not include students. Refer to Student Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy.

Section 3 - Policy/Regulation

(3) Health and Safety Policy.

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Managers/Supervisors	The role of Managers and Supervisors is to ensure a safe, healthy and productive workplace. This can be achieved by: a. advocating a health-promoting, non-judgmental and anti-discriminatory workplace and learning environment; b. establishing and/or observing procedures in the workplace for the identification and management of drug-related health and safety issues; c. ensuring that assistance, advice and support are provided to any staff with drug-related issues of any kind. This includes using internal and external sources of help and advice; d. ensuring that where alcohol is served at University functions, responsible serving practices are observed; e. ensuring incident reporting and investigation mechanisms are implemented using standardised incident report forms; and f. ensuring emergency first aid is available.
Staff	All staff should adhere to the following at all times: a. Staff should not attend work if they are affected by alcohol or other drugs and should seek appropriate leave approval for such absences; b. When staff attend University functions (including social functions) where alcohol is served, they should act in accordance with this and other related policies to ensure their own safety, and the safety of others; c. When staff are representing the University at functions sponsored by another organisation, company or institution where alcohol is available, care should be taken to ensure that their performance is not adversely affected by alcohol consumption; and d. Staff who think they may have an alcohol or other drug issue are encouraged to seek assistance through Victoria University's confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
People and Culture (P&C) / Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW)	P&C business partners and the HSW team will provide the following: a. assistance and advice to VU stakeholders with the implementation of this Procedure; and b. participation in the investigation of any breaches of this Procedure.
Visitors/Contractors	Visitors and contractors must comply with this Procedure at all times while participating in official University activities or while on University premises.

Part B - Harm Minimisation

(4) The management of all drug use, drug-related issues and associated activities are underpinned by the framework and philosophy of 'harm minimisation'. The primary considerations in the management of drug use, drug-related issues and associated activities are:

a. the health, safety and wellbeing of the individual staff member believed to be under the influence of drugs while undertaking University business and activities;
b. the health, safety and wellbeing of other staff and any persons they come into contact with;
c. harm minimisation is not primarily a punitive approach but one that recognises the criticality of support for the substance user; and
d. compliance with legal requirements.

Note: It is not the intention of this Procedure to prohibit the use of alcohol or other legal drugs. But rather to ensure that any potential negative impact in the workplace arising from their legal use is minimised as much as possible.

Part C - Specific Drugs

Illicit Drugs

(5) Illicit drugs are not to be bought, sold, carried or used by staff, contractors or visitors in any part of the University, or when engaged in University business. The same requirements apply to an agency that has entered into a partnership agreement with the University for learning, teaching or assessment for students and/or staff/contractors.

(6) Inappropriate behaviour associated with the use of illicit drugs by staff will be dealt with according to existing University disciplinary procedures in accordance with relevant awards and agreements, and in the case of contractors or their sub-contractors, in accordance with relevant contract provisions. Additionally, if the University becomes aware of illegal behaviour occurring on campus the police will be contacted.

Prescription / Over-the-Counter Drugs

(7) Prescription or over-the-counter drugs may be consumed on University premises in accordance with medical advice, or as detailed on the medication packaging. Staff using prescribed drugs, which may affect their motor skill co-ordination (including use of motor vehicles) or their ability to safely perform any of their duties, should discuss this with their supervisor, to ensure that safety aspects are addressed. Alternatively, a medical certificate setting out the work restrictions may be provided. This information will be treated in confidence.

Part D - Smoking of Tobacco / E-cigarettes

(8) VU is committed to providing staff with a safe and healthy working and learning environment. As part of this commitment, the University is reducing the risk of smoking-related harm to all occupants by becoming a Tobacco / Smoke-Free University.

(9) Smoking is prohibited on all University premises and facilities. This includes:

a. all buildings and properties;
b. all internal and outdoor areas (excluding carparks); and
c. all University vehicles.

(10) In line with the requirements of the Tobacco Act 1987 (Vic) and the Victorian Governments Department of Health (DH) guidelines, VU includes e-cigarettes in the broad definition of smoking. As such the principles that apply to tobacco smoking apply equally to all forms of e-cigarettes.

Part E - Alcohol

(11) While alcohol may be consumed on University premises at certain functions, such consumption is to be in accordance with all relevant licensing and other legal requirements and in a manner that reflects responsible service and consumption.

Licensing University Premises

(12) Where alcohol is served at designated licensed University premises the provisions of the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 (Vic) and any other relevant legislation (local, state or commonwealth) must be observed. The University has adopted Responsible Service Guidelines as recommended by Liquor Control Victoria. These guidelines must be observed in all licensed areas of the University.

University Functions

(13) Where alcohol is served in situations not covered by the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 (Vic) such as University functions (or social functions organised or sanctioned by the University), the University must meet its duty of care obligation to staff, contractors and visitors under Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

(14) In such cases, the appropriate senior manager should ensure that the service of alcohol occurs responsibly. As a guide, the Responsible Service Guidelines should be adopted as far as is reasonably practicable. No charge may be made for alcohol supplied outside licensed areas (including charges for the combined supply of alcohol and food).

(15) It is recognised that some official functions involve entertaining guests of the University and this may possibly involve the serving of alcoholic beverages. No staff should feel obligated to consume alcohol in these work-related situations. Staff must ensure that their consumption of alcohol is kept to appropriate limits and that they maintain appropriate standards of behaviour. Supervisors must also ensure they take all reasonably practicable steps to maintain a safe working environment during the function.

Driving Vehicles and Plant

(16) Staff must ensure that any alcohol consumed does not affect their performance at work. Furthermore, particular care needs to be exercised when staff drive University vehicles or use another plant (e.g. forklifts), to ensure that any alcohol consumption at work does not affect motor skill coordination. All staff must comply with the provisions of the Road Safety Act 1986 (Vic) in relation to alcohol and driving University vehicles and other plants.

(17) The University expects that a person driving a vehicle (whether a University vehicle or not) that involves the transporting of staff, students or other persons for University purposes will have a zero-alcohol reading while performing this task.

Part F - Assistance/Information

Identification

(18) While there are a number of work-related issues (absenteeism, poor health, poor work performance, etc.), which may be caused by alcohol use or drug misuse, they may also be caused by other personal or work issues. Unless a staff member identifies themselves as having an issue with alcohol or other drugs, the supervisor or manager should not assume the issue is alcohol or drug-related. The focus should remain on clearly identified work performance issues.

Assistance

(19) Staff who may have an alcohol or other drug consumption issue are encouraged to seek assistance through Victoria University's confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP). In the context of a manager providing counsel to staff, it may be appropriate for the staff member to be encouraged in a non-judgmental manner to initiate contact with the EAP provider.

(20) For those staff experiencing problems with alcohol or drug use (who may have identified themselves voluntarily or who may have been identified through a process of documented deteriorated work performance), there are different types of assistance available to support and assist them. These include:

a. self-help resource materials to help people reduce or stop their drinking or drug use (these materials can be obtained through resources specified on the OHS Intranet site);
b. referral to external advisory and counselling services (EAP program as specified on the OHS Intranet site); and
c. access to leave such as Sick Leave and Leave Without Pay - if the staff member is wishing to undertake a

professionally approved rehabilitation or detoxification program. Such periods of leave should be specified and agreed to in conjunction with their supervisor/manager.

(21) Any staff member or contractor who is suspected of being adversely affected by alcohol or any other drug is not allowed to work until they are fit to safely perform their job. The staff member or contractor who is suspected of being adversely affected by alcohol or any other drug should not be accused of being drunk or of using drugs. The supervisor should inform the staff member or contractor of work performance concerns in terms of their behaviour and their ability to perform all tasks safely. If this person is assessed as not being fit for duty, safe transportation home is to be arranged by the supervisor.

(22) If a staff member affected by alcohol or another drug is sent home to recover, normal sick leave entitlements apply.

Part G - Incidents

Dealing with Drug-Related Incidents

(23) Staff may observe or be confronted by incidents involving drugs. These include the following:

a. Persons using drugs;
b. Persons collapsed evidently due to drug or alcohol use;
c. persons trafficking drugs;
d. persons behaving under the influence of drugs or alcohol; and
e. drug-related paraphernalia (syringes etc.) having been discarded.

(24) Depending on the circumstances, staff should take appropriate action while ensuring their own safety and the safety of others is preserved. Such action includes calling relevant emergency services, seeking first aid assistance from University First Aiders and notifying University Security. An incident report should be completed in all cases involving risk or actual injury (e.g. needle stick injury).

Incidents

(25) Any alcohol and other drug-related incidents are to be recorded within the VU online Incident Reporting System.

Part H - General

Handling Injecting Equipment and Associated Paraphernalia

(26) Staff should avoid touching any injecting equipment and other paraphernalia that may be associated with drug use. Staff are required to report the location of injecting equipment and associated paraphernalia to Security immediately to ensure safe collection and disposal by appropriately trained personnel. It should be noted that action to protect others from damage (e.g. erecting a barrier) should be taken pending disposal of such items.

Promotional Activities and Gifts

(27) The University will avoid promotional activities that encourage excessive alcohol consumption or condone activities within the University that exert social pressure on staff to consume alcohol.

(28) The provision of alcohol as a gift or expression of thanks can be culturally inappropriate and potentially harmful for many staff members. The provision of gifts other than alcohol is encouraged. Victoria University-sponsored gifts for staff should not include alcohol.

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(29) HESF: Standard 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety.

(30) Compliance Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations and FPP Requirements 2025: Standard 20 Compliance with Laws.

Section 6 - Definitions

(31) Alcohol – Is classified as a Drug. It is classified as a Central Nervous System (CNS) depressant, which means that drinking alcohol slows down brain functioning, neural activity, and further reduces the functioning of various vital functions in the body.

(32) Drugs – Includes a range of substances incorporating prescribed medications, over the counter or non-prescription medications, legal and illicit drugs. For the purposes of this Procedure the following categories of drugs are referred to:

a. illicit drugs, e.g. heroin and cocaine;
b. legal drugs, e.g. alcohol and tobacco;
c. prescription medication; and
d. over-the-counter or non-prescription medication.

(33) Duty of Care – Is the University's obligation to take reasonable steps to avoid foreseeable harm to all individuals at the University inclusive of contractors and visitors. For the purposes of this Procedure means all staff and contractors as defined below:

a. Staff: any person who has a current employment contract with VU.
b. Contractor: any person paid for providing services for VU that is not under a current employment contract.

(34) E-cigarettes – are devices that heat and vaporize a liquid that is then inhaled, simulating the act of smoking. E-cigarettes can also be known as e-shisha, e-cigar, e-pipes, e-hookahs, vape pens, hookah pens and vape pipes. The liquid ingredients vary, however typically contain chemicals, including solvents and flavouring agents, and may or may not contain nicotine.

(35) Harm Minimisation – Refers to policies and programs that are designed to build safe, healthy and resilient communities through preventing, responding and reducing alcohol, tobacco and other drug-related health, social and economic harms. Refer to National Drug Strategy 2017-2026.

(36) Illicit Drugs – Refers to drugs that the law deems illegal to use, possess, cultivate or traffic.

(37) Possession – Is a term used to describe having or holding in one's power or command any quantity of illegal drugs.

(38) Trafficking – Is a term generally used to describe illegal trade, sale and exchange of specified quantities of drugs.

(39) University – Refers to all Victoria University campuses and locations where university-related activities including teaching, learning, assessment and graduation activities of VU take place.

(40) Visitor – Refers to any person attending a University campus or function, engaged in business related to the University, or serving as a volunteer within the University.

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