



College Alcohol Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy history

The original College Alcohol Policy was prepared by the Sub-Committee on Alcohol and presented to the Working Party on Health Promotion in 2002. It was approved by Board on 17th April 2002. In 2013-2014, the College Alcohol Policy Group, which reports to the Student Life Committee, reviewed and updated the policy.

1.2 Background

One of the actions recommended by the National Alcohol Policy (1996) was the development and implementation of campus alcohol policies for universities and other third-level educational institutions in Ireland. The College alcohol policy was formulated in 2002, based on the Framework for Developing a College Alcohol Policy produced by the Minister for Health and Children in October 2001. The College Alcohol Policy Group was re-constituted in 2013 with the following terms of reference.

1. To review progress in the implementation of the 2002 policy
2. To update the policy and recommend action points
3. To submit a report to the Student Life Committee

The group was asked to prepare an updated policy and action plan in relation to alcohol and the student body. The group has drawn on a template from the Irish Universities Student Services Network (IUSSN) - *Effective Management of Alcohol Use in Irish Universities*. The IUSSN document categorises three types of policies that work; individual level initiatives, whole student body actions and the greater environment. Initial action points in this document focus on the first two types of policies/actions, both of which are matters for College. Subsequently, the issues of alcohol use in the wider community and the issue of illicit drug use will be considered.

1.3 Rationale

There have been a number of changes in the internal and external environment since 2002. Externally, adult per capita alcohol consumption in Ireland has decreased in the past 10 years, from 14.2 litres in 2002 to 11,7 litres in 2012. The Department of Health has produced its first ever national substance misuse strategy, incorporating alcohol. This has been endorsed by Government. Of particular relevance to College, the strategy encourages the provision of alcohol-free venues for young people, the wider use of screening and brief intervention services to slow progression to problem drinking patterns and the development of data collection and epidemiological indicators of prevalence and patterns of alcohol use among specific populations. Internally, one of the major changes in College has been the increased internationalisation of the student body, both undergraduate and postgraduate. Through College's Globalisation Strategy the numbers of international students will increase significantly by 2020. The enrollment of international students from countries with lower drinking levels than Ireland makes this a



very important initiative to continue and promote. A supportive alcohol policy will be important as the student profile evolves.

It is accepted that alcohol consumption in our society is legally and culturally normative. Students who are over the age of eighteen – and the vast majority of College students are in this category – are legally entitled to purchase and consume alcohol. It is clear, however, that alcohol consumption contributes to an array of personal and social difficulties of an acute and a long-term nature. While regular consumption of even moderate amounts of alcohol may create health risk, the research evidence suggests that patterns of consumption amongst younger drinkers may involve binge drinking, carrying with it a particularly high risk of behavioural and physical and mental health difficulties including but not confined to:

- alcohol-related deterioration in academic performance, leading on occasion to exam failure and drop-out from College.
- drunken behavior, on campus, in halls of residence or in sporting facilities - which causes offence or creates risk for other members of the College community or of the wider community.
- unprotected sexual activity following excessive drinking, potentially leading to unplanned pregnancy and also carrying a risk of infection with sexually-transmitted diseases.
- physical health problems caused directly by alcohol consumption or indirectly as a result of alcohol-related accidents.
- serious mood disorders to which alcohol is a major contributory factor.

The theoretical rationale for the policy proposals being made here is that of population health, which emphasises the role played by environment in influencing and shaping individual lifestyle choices. While not discounting the role played by individual predisposition or vulnerability, the health promotion perspective suggests that environmental strategies have an important role to play in fostering moderate or low-risk drinking practices both in the general population and amongst specific sub-groups, such as third-level students. The drinks industry advertises and otherwise promotes its product throughout society, but it would appear that the promotion of alcohol in third-level colleges has been particularly aggressive, leading at times to a normalisation of high-risk drinking. Campus alcohol policies based upon health promotional principles represent an explicit attempt by college authorities, in partnership with student unions and student societies, to counteract such aggressive alcohol promotion.

2 Aims and Objectives of the College Alcohol Policy

The aim of the policy is to contribute to the wider aim to create and maintain a College environment which is conducive for the health and well-being of students and staff. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- provide an atmosphere free from pressure to drink for those who choose not to drink.
- promote low-risk drinking and discourage high-risk drinking amongst those who choose to drink.



- inform all members of the College community of the risks involved in alcohol consumption and of the nature of alcohol-related problems.
- reduce the incidence of alcohol-related problems amongst College staff and students.
- provide a caring environment and an effective response system for those who develop alcohol-related problems.

3 College Alcohol Policy

Notwithstanding the overall reduction in per capita alcohol consumption in Ireland since the 2002 policy, the need for a pro-active College policy remains. The majority of the student body in College falls into the highest drinking demographic and there is much to be gained in the current and future health and social wellbeing of Trinity College students by College continuing and enhancing a policy that is supportive of students.

3.1 Individual level action points

- Disseminate this document among the student body.
- Provide alcohol awareness sessions to all Freshers at orientation. The Students' Union should be encouraged to repeat such advice as part of its welfare activities during the course of the year.
- Use the College communication system to provide ongoing awareness and information.
- Advertise the availability of online and face to face screening and brief intervention services.
- Further promote and make more available e-PUB
- Promote the College health and counselling services' supports, including onward referral.
- Introduce the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test at intake for all clients attending the Student Counselling Service.
- Peer-led initiative for alcohol education through the Student2Student framework.
- Establish a student counselling post with a specific brief for substance use.

3.2 Whole student body initiatives

- Expand the range of alcohol free events in College, especially through the Student2Student initiative. In addition, the Students' Union, Graduate Students' Union, societies and sports clubs should work towards the provision of increased attractive alcohol-free events.
- A preference for alcohol-free accommodation should be part of the application process for those students who request it and should be provided as much as possible, without pre-designating specific rooms/blocks as alcohol free.
- Continue with the existing policy of not allowing alcohol promotions in College.
- Recruitment by student societies during Freshers' Week and the advertisement of specific events by student societies should not identify access to free or cheap alcohol as a primary incentive to membership or attendance.
- No events should be organised which encourage the rapid consumption of alcohol, nor should alcohol be awarded as a prize or reward for competitive events.
- Staff serving alcohol in the College catering outlets and Pavilion bar and at Trinity events (e.g. Trinity Ball) should be provided with training in the Responsible Serving of Alcohol (RSA).



- Non-alcoholic drinks and food should be served at events at which alcohol is provided.
- College prohibits the practice whereby drinks companies appoint a student representative to promote their products on campus.
- Where possible, capitated bodies (SU, GSU, CSC, DUCAC and Publications) should respond to any reports of advertising on social media (e.g. Facebook events) in breach of the alcohol policy internally within their organization and request that alterations be made to advertising of the event.
- Drink company sponsorship of student society events should cease

3.3 College responsibilities

- Enhanced provision should be made to the College health and counseling services to address alcohol problems in the student body.
- As part of the existing scheme of training and support for College Tutors, specific training modules on alcohol-related problems and on the value of brief interventions should be provided.
- Training on alcohol-related problems and their management should also be provided for the Junior Dean, the Warden of Trinity Hall, the Facilities Officer, the Chief Steward and their assistants.
- College should work towards the provision of attractive alcohol-free social spaces on campus.
- Mechanisms should be put in place to measure progress in relation to the 15 actions above.
- Periodic surveys on alcohol knowledge, attitudes and behaviours should be carried out.

3.4 Wider environment

- College should publicly support wider societal efforts to lessen alcohol related harms
- IUSSN should re-activate an alcohol policy group.

4 Monitoring the College Alcohol Policy

Once it has been adopted, the Student Services Committee should set in place a system for monitoring the College Alcohol Policy at least every two years.

5 Financial Support

Alcohol places a large burden of extra work on Health Centre and Counselling staff in the form of treatment of overuse of alcohol, injuries obtained while under its influence and psychiatric treatments for patients who misuse alcohol. Successful implementation of this policy will be dependent on financial support from the Board.

6 Members of Committee:

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