

Written By:

Student Health Services

Approved By:

Executive Committee

Institute of Technology Sligo Student Alcohol Policy

Bodies authorising and/or adopting Policy: IT Sligo and ITSSU

Approved at: Executive Committee, 11 January 2016

Responsible Department or Person: Registrar

1. Foreword

The analysis of The *National Alcohol Diary Survey* (2013) revealed that 7.3% of males and 5.0% of females who drank in the previous 12 months missed days from work or college due to alcohol-related illness. This figure rose to 19.1% (in the year prior to the survey), for young people aged 18–24 years and equates with 4.5 person work- or study-years. When the proportion of working or study days missed is applied to the total working and student population in Ireland, 736,486 work or study days were likely to have been lost in 2013.

The national lifestyle survey (SLÁN, 2007) shows the vast majority of young adults consume alcohol. The survey revealed that 50% of young people engage in high-risk alcohol consumption when they typically consume alcohol and about one-third consume over the recommended sensible weekly limit, reporting on average seven standard alcoholic drinks per sitting. It was reported in the CLÁN report (2003) that one in ten students used alcohol to forget worries and one in twenty used alcohol when anxious or depressed. Over one-third of students thought that when someone is drunk, they should not be considered as responsible for their actions as when they are sober.

In October 2001, the Minister for Health and Children launched a “Framework Document for Developing a College Alcohol Policy”. IT Sligo’s alcohol policy has been informed by this Framework and the work of many advisory groups and reports. The document takes a “health promotion approach” following the publication of The National Health Promotion Strategic framework (2011) and is aimed at promoting the health of the population by reducing the prevalence of alcohol-related problems.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to proactively raise awareness of the consequences related to the harmful misuse* of alcohol in order to prevent harm.

3. Scope

This policy relates to all registered students in IT Sligo. The Institute of Technology Sligo is concerned for the well-being of its students and recognises that harmful*alcohol consumption is a matter of concern amongst students.

3.1 Public Health alcohol policy

The public health or health promotion perspective on alcohol problems provides theoretical rationale for the alcohol policy proposed in this document. Over the last three decades, the public health approach (endorsed by the World Health Organisation; an approach that is concerned with the health of the community as a

whole. Public health is community health). It has emerged with a weight of evidence-based scientific research. This approach recognises:

- Alcohol as a contributing factor to a spectrum of health, behavioural and social problems.
- Alcohol consumption in terms of its toxicity, it's potential to create dependency and its negative impact on human behaviour.
- Consumption levels and consumption patterns as being highly predictive of the incidence and prevalence of problems in any given society or social group.
- Acute alcohol related problems, such as accidents, violence, injuries and deaths, are linked to excessive alcohol consumption on any one occasion. In many cases, these problems can occur when only light or moderate drinkers engage in occasional heavy alcohol* consumption sessions.
- 'Binge drinking'* can cause distress and harm to the individual and to the family and friends of the individual.

3.2 Institute Environment

As well as a place of academia, IT Sligo is a community made up of various types of social interactions in which alcohol can sometimes have a central role.

In third level education, diversity of opinions and freedom of choice have long been a part of the academic tradition. However, freedom of choice is associated with personal responsibilities which include the obligation to respect the rights of others and to comply with the institute's rules and regulations as referred to in IT Sligo Student Charter <http://itsligo.ie/files/2010/02/Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

IT Sligo is envisaged as a place of positive learning experiences while striving for academic excellence. The importance of promoting a supportive community where students in need of assistance are given the necessary support is central to the ethos of IT Sligo. The Institute is obliged to provide a safe environment for all. Any activity or practice that constitutes a hazard must be eliminated or minimised to reduce injury or harm through a risk assessment from provided by the IT Sligo Health and Safety Officer. When people engage in high-risk drinking, academic performance, health, personal relationships and safety suffer. Alcohol issues cannot and should not be managed in isolation. They must be seen within a broader context of lifestyle issues and a supportive college environment.

3.3 Student Life

The period of late adolescence and early adult life is a transitional phase for students. College can be particularly demanding for mature students, where often students face life circumstances that could possibly interfere with academic commitments. New freedoms, relationships and environments are encountered by all ages, which can be challenging in a person's life. Evidently, first year students can be the most vulnerable group affected by social events in college due to a lack of coping skills which can lead to an over reliance on alcohol.

Socialising is an important facet of college life for students and many social events such as end of year balls and Raise & Give Week are part of this socialising. However, the cost can over-stretch students both financially and academically in time contributing to poor attendance in college, exam failure and student drop out. Students reported a wide range of negative outcomes related to consuming alcohol. These included spending too much money on alcohol. Other issues included increased aggression, violence, risky sexual behaviour, injuries, mood changes, increased lack of control, memory loss and antisocial behaviour.

4. Policy Aims

3.1 Aims & Objectives

The overall aim of this policy document is to prevent harm and possible consequences to students of IT Sligo in relation to alcohol use disorder and alcohol dependence*.

4.1.1 Aim 1

Raise awareness of alcohol related issues and encourage the participation of all Institute members in implementing the alcohol policy.

Objectives

- Explore opportunities for brief interventions to reduce high risk alcohol consumption
- Provide alcohol education and information for all students at various times throughout the year, i.e. informational leaflets on campus, ePUB online intervention tool (See appendix 2)
- Promote the implementation of ePUB to the college website available to all students for personal use
- Inform management/staff on ePUB/other resources available to students which will benefit those in need of these resources

4.1.2 Aim 2

Provide supportive services to those who may require assistance during their time in IT Sligo.

Objectives

- Promote a caring environment and services for those who experience difficulties related to alcohol dependence*
- Provide accessible information on alcohol misuse for students at all times in the Student Health Centre, on campus and on the college website
- Provide confidential and supportive services for students who may require assistance as a result of alcohol abuse. These include; student health services, student counselling services, chaplaincy services, access to ePUB on college webpage and referral to external resources, i.e. MABS, HSE, NWDATF.

4.1.3 Aim 3

Promote and support healthy lifestyle choices and alternatives to alcohol use and availability within the Institute.

Objectives

- Promote personal responsibility of students and social obligation to the Institute in line with the Student Code of Conduct, <http://itsligo.ie/files/2010/02/Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>
- Enhance a campus environment where low-risk alcohol consumption is the 'social norm' by promoting alcohol-free activities such as "Off the booze, On the Ball" or other alternatives to alcohol-centred social activities
- Provide an atmosphere free from peer pressure to consume alcohol for those who choose not to consume alcohol
- In the instance of an event taking place on the college grounds where alcohol will be served, an alcohol free option will be available
- At such an event, a risk assessment must be carried out by the IT Sligo Health and Safety Officer. Alcohol consumption must be restricted to certain areas in such events

5. Responsibilities for Delivery

It is the responsibility of the Registrar of IT Sligo to implement this policy in an active manner. It is also the Registrar's responsibility to oversee implementation of the Disciplinary Procedure in relation to breaches of Code of Conduct as outlined in the Student Charter (See Appendix 1, 5.21). It is the obligation of the student to take personal responsibility for their actions in terms of the Code of Conduct <http://itsligo.ie/files/2010/02/Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

6. Policy Measures

IT Sligo believes in an integrated approach, with policy measures that encourage those who drink to treat alcohol with due regard for its effects and to moderate their consumption so that associated risks are reduced (thus moderating the demand for alcohol). Students must take personal responsibility for their alcohol consumption habits and consequence if excess alcohol consumption exists.

The four policy areas are:

1. Increasing awareness and education through ePUB online alcohol intervention prevention tool (see appendix 2), alcohol awareness days on campus etc.
2. Encouraging alternatives and choice to alcohol related activities, choices etc.
3. Providing campus support services including Student Health Centre, Student Counselling Services and Chaplaincy Services and Student Union Welfare Service.
4. Monitoring marketing, promotion, sponsorship and campaigns

6.1 Increase Awareness and Education

- As part of the institute community, both staff and students play an active role in promoting a supportive and caring college environment. This enables students and staff to make choices that promote health and well-being
- An online prevention intervention tool, ePUB, is available on the college website to all students and staff for personal use
- Promotion of safe alcohol use should be part of the student mentoring programme and first year induction
- Opportunities will be sought by staff members and ITSSU officers to actively involve the student body in the development, promotion and delivery of an educational programme/campaign on alcohol consumption and related issues. All opportunities should be promoted through the college Facebook/Twitter page, Connect magazine and the Wire

6.2 Encourage Alternatives and Choice

- IT Sligo will continue to invest in sports and society led activities as social alternatives

- ITSSU will develop and promote alcohol free programmes including cultural, social and entertainment activities for students
- ITSSU will link up with local and national programmes that promote the non-abuse of alcohol

6.3 Providing Campus Support Services

- The student health service, together with the Student Union will work to increase awareness of the hazards of alcohol misuse to students availing of their services.
- The Student Health Service will assist students identified with alcohol misuse risks or concerns and make referrals to appropriate services.
- IT Sligo staff, Student Health staff, Student Counselling service and the Student Union will promote the Assertive Outreach Alcohol & Drugs Service (self-referral), the HSE Alcohol and Substance Misuse Counselling Service for Young People (referral) and the North West Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force (NWRDATF) and Holistic Therapy Services, as off-campus resources to students in need.
- Students who present to Students Union or members of staff with concerns about their own or another person's use of alcohol will be encouraged to seek confidential assistance on and off campus.
- The Institute will be supportive by assisting students or groups who wish to establish self-help groups such as Alcohol Anonymous, AI Anon etc.
- The Chaplaincy Service will raise awareness to students in need of available services on and off campus.

6.4 Monitoring Marketing, Promotions and Sponsorship

6.4.1 Marketing and Promotions

- The advertisement of specific events by student's clubs/societies or ITSSU should not identify access to free or cheap alcohol as an incentive to attend.
- ITSSU will develop and provide alcohol free programmes including cultural, social and entertainment activities for students
- No student should operate as a representative for any alcohol company
- The advertisement of alcohol and alcohol promotions on campus including provision of alcohol vouchers are prohibited by any internal or external bodies.

6.4.2 Sponsorship

The institute will implement a "two year phasing out process". This will commence in September 2015 leading to an absolute ban of alcohol related sponsorship (monetary form, e.g. branded clothing, gear, bags etc.) by September 2017 within Clubs and Societies.

- A proactive approach by the Institute will be pursued as a top priority, to help student organisations find an alternative to sponsorship from the alcohol industry
- Sponsor alternatives to the alcohol industry will be explored,

7. Workplace Health and Safety

The health, safety and welfare of the class are paramount in a class situation or other academic activity. The institute is subject to the provision of safety, health and welfare at work legislation and related regulations. A student must not attend class or any other academic activities, laboratories or workshops or when on fieldwork if under the influence of alcohol.

8. Review System for this Policy

Any issues regarding the Policy should be monitored annually by the Registrar.

Following review, this policy shall be brought to the attention of all bodies involved including IT Sligo staff, ITSSU, NWDATF representative.

9. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approved by	Issue Date
000	New Policy		2003
001	Revision		2006
002	New Policy	Gerry Hegarty	2013
003	New Policy	Executive Committee	2016

Appendix 1

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Alcohol Dependence - Implies the need to repeat a dose of alcohol or other drugs in order to feel happy or to avoid feeling sad.

Binge Drinking - It is when we have 6 or more standard alcohol drinks in one sitting. 'Binge drinking' is a form of harmful alcohol consumption that is likely to increase our risk of accidents, injuries, violence and poisoning.

Harmful Use – Pattern of psychoactive substance that is causing damage to health. The damage may be physical, e.g. depressive episodes secondary to 'heavy' alcohol intake. Commonly, but not invariably, has adverse social consequences; social consequences in themselves, however, are not sufficient to justify a diagnosis of harmful use.

Harm reduction – Describes policies or programs that focus directly on reducing the harm resulting from the use of alcohol

Hazardous Use – Pattern of substance use that increases the risk of harmful consequences for the user. Some would limit the consequences to physical and mental health (as in harmful use).

Heavy Alcohol Consumption – A pattern of alcohol consumption which exceeds some standards of moderate alcohol consumption or, more equivocally – social drinking. Heavy is often defined in terms of exceeding government recommendations, i.e. 11 standard alcoholic drinks per week for female and 17 standard alcoholic drinks per week for a male.

Misuse of Alcohol – Use of substance for a purpose not consistent with legal guidelines or government recommendations.

(World Health Organisation.(1994).Lexicon of Alcohol and Drugs Terms. p 5-45.)

Appendix 2

What is e-PUB?

The Alcohol eCHECKUP TO GO for Colleges & Universities is a personalised, evidence-based, online prevention intervention developed by psychologists at San Diego State University. In Ireland, the Alcohol eCHECKUP TO GO is titled and presented under the trade name the ***electronic Personal Use Barometer (e-PUB)***.

Aims of e-PUB

- **Reduce levels of dangerous and destructive alcohol consumption** on college campuses with a special focus on high-risk groups, i.e. first-year students.
- **Strengthen a culture of safety & health** by reducing harms and providing customised links and information about your campus and local community resources.

Overview of e-PUB

The programmes are self-guided and require no face-to-face contact time with a counsellor or administrator. Over 600 universities and colleges in the US, Canada, Australia and now Ireland are using e-PUB. Irish colleges such as NUI Galway, NUI Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin, University Cork, University College Dublin, Cork Institute, Tralee Institute and University of Limerick are all subscribers of ePUB. The programmes is personalised to not only the college itself but each user has its own ID number. This enables each user to get specific feedback. The personal feedback, used in conjunction with counselling, or as a stand-alone intervention, includes information that has been shown to be particularly motivating to high school and college-aged young adults:

- Quantity and Frequency of Use
- Amount Consumed
- Normative Comparisons
- Physical Health Information
- Amount and per cent of Income Spent
- Negative Consequences Feedback
- Explanation, Advice and Local Referral Information

Appendix 3

Working Group of Policy

Colin McLean – Registrar

Gerry Hegarty - Student Affairs Manager

Stephanie Mellett – Public Health and Health Promotion Intern

Eilish Corley – Student Health Service Nurse

Caroline Kennedy-Crawford – Student Health Service Nurse

Dr Siobhan McNally – Psychologist, Student Counselling Service

Sean O’Connor – North West Regional Alcohol and Drug Task Force Coordinator

Marian Hargadon - Student Services Officer

Margaret McLoone – Public Health and Health Promotion Lecturer

Máire McCallion – Public Health and Health Promotion Lecturer

Stephen Doak/Cillin Folan – Student Union

Ray Cotter – Chaplain

Brain Mc Sharry/Tommy Mc Gee – Health and Safety