



# Ruskin College Oxford

## STUDENT DRUG POLICY

**Created:** March 2011

**Approved:** Governing Executive

**Last Reviewed:** April 2019

**Responsibility for Review:** H&S and Governing Executive

**Date of Next Review:** April 2021

## Student Drug Policy

### 1. Introduction

The use of specified drugs is illegal everywhere within the United Kingdom and, if it happens in College, undermines Ruskin's primary objective of the pursuit of academic study in a safe and mutually supportive environment. The presence of illegal drugs within the College community is detrimental to the general welfare of its members and will not be tolerated. Taking any illegal substance, including so-called 'soft' drugs, has a rapid and serious effect on academic study and can lead to long-term health problems. Although addiction to drugs is sometimes curable, it often is not and treatment is prolonged, expensive and specialised, which is certainly disruptive to study. Furthermore, there are secondary but very real health risks such as exposure to infection with hepatitis and AIDS or being sold substances that have been adulterated.

Ruskin College also recognises its duty to take firm action to protect people who may be affected or put at risk by the misuse of drugs by others, such as through dealing and supplying, or from the anti-social behaviour consequent upon misuse. **Ruskin is forbidden by law knowingly to allow drug misuse to take place on any of its premises.** Consequently, this Policy has been developed in consultation with Thames Valley Police and the Ruskin Student Union to give us a workable and helpful way forward. The Policy has been authorised by the Governing Executive of the College who have entrusted it to the Principal to implement.

### 2. Which drugs are we talking about?

This policy covers all classes of illegal drugs and those considered "legal highs", without exception (appendix 1). Everything that follows in later sections of this document applies equally to them all.

A drug is defined as a chemical substance which can change the way a human body works, either physiologically or psychologically. Within this definition fall the legal substances mentioned above, as well as solvents such as lighter fuels, adhesives, aerosol deodorants, etc., when misused; and illegal substances such as spice, nitrous oxide, ketamine, ecstasy, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana.

The College notes that alcohol, when misused, can also give rise to anti-social behaviour and disruption of various kinds. For the individual, it can prevent them from studying effectively and can, over time, lead to major health problems. Consequently, we are also concerned about alcohol misuse. Alcohol is not an illegal substance in the UK and it is covered separately under College policy, not under this drugs policy. For example, inability to meet attendance requirements as a result of alcohol consumption can potentially be regarded as gross misconduct under the Student Disciplinary Procedures. Alcohol can also be implicated in other instances of gross misconduct, such as criminal damage and violence, which are treated very seriously at Ruskin.

### 3. What will we do about suspected drug-taking at Ruskin?

Students found using illegal drugs on College-owned premises will be subject to the provisions of the Student Disciplinary Procedures. These are carefully framed to allow different measures to be used in different circumstances, with help and support underpinning the approach wherever possible.

4. How will we know that drug-taking is going on? Drug-testing at Ruskin

- Where a student is suspected or known to have been supplying drugs to one or more other people in College, the local police will be informed immediately. Students should be aware that 'dealing' includes supplying drugs to others (even sharing a 'spliff'), irrespective of whether payment is made. Where a named student is involved, they will normally be suspended from College during any criminal investigation or court proceedings, as is already allowed for under the Student Disciplinary Procedures.
- Reasonable grounds to suspect drug use, whether or not it is known who might be involved, may lead to a search of student rooms and, if necessary, of students themselves. Under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (amending the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 [Colleges] and itself amended by the Education Act 2011) the Principal has powers to search for drugs without consent, which can be delegated to other staff. The search must normally be conducted by a member of staff the same gender as the student being searched and there must normally be another member of staff present who is also of the same gender where reasonably possible except where the member of staff carrying out the search reasonably believes that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if they do not conduct the search urgently, and that it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out by a member of staff of the same gender as the student or for the search to be witnessed by another member of staff. The search must never go below the clothing next to the skin. Reasonable force may be used where necessary to enable the search to be carried out. When possessions are searched, the student should be present and there should be another member of staff present as a witness with the same grounds as above for making an exception to the search being witnessed by another member of staff. Where illegal drugs or other prohibited items are found, they will be labelled and securely retained until they can be handed over to the police. Further searching for drugs may, if necessary, be carried out by the police using sniffer dogs or testing equipment.
- In any of the above situations, if a student discovered to be using or supplying illegal drugs is on a vocational course, the Programme Co-ordinator and the student's tutor will be involved with the College management in thinking about any implications for registration on the programme or for work-based study or for suitability for social work or for the writing of references. Similarly, if the College is in partnership with the student's employer, in social work or trade union studies for example, the normal expectation is that the employer will be informed (by the College if not by the student).

5. Admissions

Applicants who disclose, or whose GP discloses about them, a history of drug misuse will need undertake a risk assessment prior to being offered a place. The College is mindful of the adverse effect of illegal drugs on study and community living. A student who fails to disclose current or recent drug use that later comes to light may be deemed not to have met the medical clearance if the Safeguarding Lead has thereby been deprived of the opportunity to comment on the student's full fitness to study and the student's place at the College may therefore be withdrawn.

6. Are we being unduly harsh?

Ruskin recognises that illegal drugs are endemic in contemporary society and that, once addicted; it is extraordinarily hard to stop using them. We further recognise that, by then, the user may be caught up in a social group that encourages drug use and even in a criminal context where threats and danger may be ever present. As a result, we do understand that a student who has become involved in drug-taking needs as much help as punishment. This we will endeavour to provide. However, we will not do so to the detriment of the wider community of the College and we consider it important to combine support with a firm stand against drugs on our premises. This is the only way we can help former users in their mammoth effort not to slip back into harmful ways and prevent others from being encouraged to break the law. Our culture will be one of Zero Tolerance and we will take firm action, but we will not be unreasonably punitive at any stage.

We also realise that society is more tolerant of some drugs than others and that there is constant debate about the best ways of tackling the contemporary drug problem, with some arguing that only legalisation will bring it into the open and allow effective help to be given. For Ruskin, though, it is essential to work within the current law and, if anything, to be more vigilant than others simply because we have vulnerable people living in our midst and because it is our job to help them grow and develop through the opportunities that the College can provide. Consequently, again, this policy will be applied to all kinds of illegal drugs, in any amounts, regardless of wider social attitudes.

7. What can you do to help?

We therefore ask students and staff to share with us in our aim of keeping Ruskin clean of illegal drugs. If you know of someone you suspect may be using drugs, or if someone becomes thin and ill over a period of time, or if you see a stranger regularly calling at someone's room for very short periods or a vehicle coming and going, again for very short periods and maybe at night, let the Warden or Assistant Warden know. They will know who to pass this information on to. You are also welcome to speak to any member of the College management direct if you have concerns of any kind about drugs.

You are not protecting a friend or fellow student by keeping quiet about their problems – you are only preventing them from getting help more quickly. Even if your suspicions turn out to be unfounded, it is important to get them checked out. It is best for everyone at Ruskin if we keep our College safe and drug-free.

Thank you for your help in being aware of, and implementing, this policy.