

Proctors' Memorandum on Drugs Misuse

Guidelines from Proctors' Office on Dealing with Drugs Misuse

The use of specified drugs is illegal within the UK, and is inimical to the University's primary objectives of the pursuit of academic study and research. The presence of drugs within the University community is detrimental to the welfare of its members generally, and will not be tolerated. Taking illegal substances, including so-called 'soft' drugs, has a rapid and serious effect on academic study, and is likely to lead to long-term health problems. Although addiction to drugs is sometimes curable, it is often not, and therapy is a prolonged, expensive and specialised treatment, which is certainly disruptive. There are secondary but very real health risks such as exposure to infection with hepatitis, and AIDS. The University also recognises its duty to take firm action to protect people who may be affected or put at risk by drug misuse by other people, such as through dealing and supplying, or from the anti-social behaviour consequent upon misuse. The Colleges and the University are forbidden by law knowingly to allow drug misuse to take place on their premises. Students should be aware that the pastoral and disciplinary frameworks for action set out below, apply to activities within a 'University context' which under the University Statutes is defined as 'activities on University or College premises; in the course of University activity within or outside Oxford, whether academic, sporting, social, cultural, or other'.

The Pastoral Framework

One step which anyone who has become involved with drugs needs to take is to recognise that a problem exists. The University and its constituent Colleges also recognise the need to provide appropriate support to students needing help. A variety of sources of help is available. All consultations will be treated in strict confidence subject to the provisions of the law.

Advice is available at both college and University level. Colleges will supply details of persons within the College (e.g. College Advisers, Chaplain), to whom individuals might turn for advice. The Student Counselling Service provides a source of confidential counselling outside the College context. OUSU's Student Advice Service will assist students in finding appropriate support.

Medical Help. One practical way to start the process of recovery is to recognise the medical issues, and to seek help, from a college doctor, who will be able to provide medical help, and will be bound by the conventions of medical confidentiality. Self-referral to The Ley Clinic at Sandy Croft, Sandy Lane, Yarnton, could be considered. Free and confidential advice can be obtained from LIBRA (01865 749800), or from the National Drugs Helpline 'FRANK' (0800 776600), and other contacts are available at <http://www.talktofrank.com>.

The Disciplinary Framework

Those involved with using or supplying drugs should be aware, however, that the

University and its constituent Colleges must operate within the framework of national legislation. This is reflected in the University Statutes. Statute XI, section 2.(1)(l) makes it a disciplinary offence for members of the University intentionally or recklessly to possess, use, offer, sell, or give to any person drugs, the possession or use of which is illegal.

Personal use of drugs. Students found using illegal drugs within their own Colleges or in College-owned accommodation are likely to be subject to the provisions of their College's disciplinary code. Students found using illegal drugs in another College or on University premises will be referred to the Proctors. In the case of use or possession for personal use of Class C drugs, the University and its constituent Colleges, on the advice of the local police, will normally on the occasion of the first offence, issue formal warnings, together with such conditions (such as drugs counselling) as they think appropriate to enable the student to address the problem. A record will be made of such formal warnings. Disciplinary action (e.g. a fine) may be appropriate at this stage, depending on the circumstances. Further offences, or failure to address the problem, will lead to more serious disciplinary action. In the case of Class A and B drugs (e.g. cannabis, heroin, amphetamine sulphate, LSD, cocaine, crack, ecstasy), the University or College authorities will as a matter of policy report suspects to the local police, and will consider suspending the student while police and court proceedings take place. The University Statutes provide that if a student has been convicted of a criminal offence of such seriousness that a term of imprisonment might have been imposed (whether or not such a sentence was in fact imposed upon the student member), then the Proctors may refer the case to the Student Disciplinary Panel. The Disciplinary Panel has the power to rusticate or expel student members.

Supplying and dealing in drugs will be treated severely. Those suspected of dealing in any drugs (including cannabis) can expect to be referred to the local police. Students should be aware that 'supply' includes all forms of passing drugs to someone else, irrespective of whether payment is made. For example, passing a cannabis joint around a group involves a series of 'supplies'. Suspension while police and court proceedings take place will be considered, and criminal convictions may be treated as indicated above.

[Amended July 2014]