

# Alcohol and Legal Highs - Guidance for Students

## Introduction

The University has a duty of care to its students, staff and visitors and aims to provide a safe, healthy and high quality study and work environment.

The University is committed to promoting a safe and supportive environment in which to learn and work. Our [Student Charter](#)<sup>1</sup> outlines expected standards of behaviour and consequences of misconduct. Students also have a responsibility for their own safety and that of others.

While students misusing alcohol and legal highs may not be breaking the law, such behaviour on University property may still warrant action under the University's disciplinary procedures or Tenancy Agreement. There may also be occasions when the University takes action against students if alcohol or legal highs are used in the community, for example, if the behaviour brings the University into disrepute, or the student is on a professional programme and the behaviour brings into question their fitness to practise ([Section 3 of Handbook of Student Regulations](#)<sup>2</sup>)

Where possible, notwithstanding any criminal or disciplinary factors that may apply, the University will offer support to students who are reported for misuse of alcohol or legal highs.

## Definitions

### Legal Highs

These are substances which produce effects similar to illegal drugs but are not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. They are considered illegal under current legislation to sell, supply or advertise as for "*human consumption*". Many contain substances that are not safe to consume or legal to possess. If a 'legal high' bought by a student then becomes illegal after they have acquired it, purchase before its illegalisation will not be accepted as an excuse.

### Prescription drugs

The University does not place restrictions on use or possession of prescribed medication beyond what the law denotes. However, if a student feels that they

---

<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/student-charter/>

<sup>2</sup> Available at [www.northumbria.ac.uk/handbook](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/handbook)

or one of their peers is misusing prescribed medication, the University recommends they contact [Student Support and Wellbeing](#) for advice.

### Misuse

This is the habitual or intermittent misuse of any substance, which causes detriment to an individual's health, social functioning or study/work performance. Substance misuse can impair the safety of themselves or others and affect attendance, time keeping, efficiency and conduct.

### Dependency

When a person feels a physical or psychological need to drink alcohol or take substances to the point that it takes precedence over other activities. Someone with substance dependence may exhibit signs such as: a strong desire to drink alcohol or take legal highs, a difficulty in controlling their use of substances, a persistent use of substances despite being aware of the harmful effects, an increased tolerance for substances and withdrawal when without alcohol or legal highs.

### Binge drinking

The consumption of an excessive amount of alcohol in a short period of time. The NHS defines it as drinking more than double the lower risk guidelines for alcohol in one session (on average this means 8 or more units for men in a single session and 6 or more units for women in a single session).

### 'Pre-drinking/pre-lashing/pre-loading'

The practice of consuming alcohol at home before going out. When people pre-drink they are over four times more likely to consume over 20 units of alcohol on a night out (including the pre-drinking and drinking when out). This excessive level of consumption is strongly associated with increased health risks and also involvement in other behavioural issues such as nightlife violence and unsafe sexual behaviour.

## **On Campus Further Advice and Support**

Student Support and Wellbeing Services:

[Student Support and Wellbeing](#)

[Keeping Healthy Keeping Safe](#)

[Self Help Guides](#)

[Ask4Help@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:Ask4Help@northumbria.ac.uk) or tel: 0191 227 4646

Campus Security:

[Safety on Campus](#)

Northumbria University Student Union:

<https://www.mynsu.co.uk/>

**Off-Campus Further Advice and Support**

[Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

[Drug and Alcohol Support Newcastle Council](#)

[Al-Anon](#)

[FRANK](#)