



RCSI

RCSI Drug & Alcohol Regulations for Students & Scholars

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

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1. Context

RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences is committed to promoting a safe and supportive environment in which to study and work. Specifically, RCSI wishes to create and maintain a drug-free and healthy-alcohol educational and clinical training environment. In partnership with students,¹ RCSI will ensure the health, safety and welfare of patients, students and staff, and the reputation of RCSI, are not jeopardised through drug, substance or alcohol misuse. RCSI recognises its responsibility to comply with legal requirements regarding the use of alcohol and drugs on RCSI premises. It also recognises its responsibility to consider the needs of those who, for personal, cultural or religious reasons, do not drink alcohol. Drug use and alcohol misuse will be best addressed within the broader context of lifestyle issues and a supportive RCSI environment.

RCSI is committed to educating and raising awareness amongst students on the dangers posed by drugs, alcohol and other substances, and to creating a culture of self and peer-care to support wellbeing.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out RCSI's views on drugs, alcohol and illegal substances use and misuse and the responsibilities of RCSI and students relating to drugs and alcohol. Specific objectives of the policy include:

- Promoting the health and wellbeing of RCSI students
- Promoting personal responsibility and social obligation to RCSI and the wider community
- Providing a campus environment where no/low-risk drinking is the 'social norm'
- Providing an environment where not using drugs is the social norm
- Providing education programmes about the adverse effects of drug use and alcohol misuse and ways to intervene if concerned about another's drug or alcohol usage
- Providing tools to support and clear referral pathways for students.

3. Scope

This policy relates to all students registered at RCSI to a programme of study mapped to the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It applies on and off campus.

¹ RCSI students include undergraduate and postgraduate students and postgraduate research scholars

4. Policy Statement

Working in partnership with students, RCSI will strive for an educational environment that is drug use and alcohol-misuse free. RCSI will never condone taking illicit drugs or misusing drugs or alcohol. Creating this culture and promoting engagement with RCSI services will be through education and support. Ensuring no harm – to students themselves, their peers, patients and colleagues – by educating, nurturing and support, will be the core of our approach.

a. Education:

We - RCSI faculty, staff, and students - are committed to raising awareness and educating our community:

- i. Regarding the impact and dangers of drug use and alcohol misuse.
- ii. On the available support systems should they have concerns regarding the use of drugs or alcohol misuse by themselves or others.
- iii. Through the provision of additional training for those in leadership positions and positions of influence in this area.
- iv. By hosting on-campus events with experts in the area of prevention, addiction support etc.
- v. By designing targeted interventions for high-risk groups.

b. Nurture

We recognise the importance of creating a culture where zero drug and low/no alcohol use is the norm, alongside early intervention, and where necessary, harm reduction. We acknowledge that students may feel vulnerable and be afraid to seek help for themselves or others.

Students have a responsibility to seek help and the University will take a supportive approach to their studies, as long as the student engages with the help and support available and there is no risk of harm to themselves, patients, peers or staff.

i. RCSI Services – contact information

- (1) [CoMPPAS - Student Welfare and Wellbeing](#) - our social worker-led student welfare service provides direct, confidential and practical help and guidance. They can arrange for specialist service referrals and interventions to assist students with drug and/or alcohol concerns.
- (2) [Mercers Medical Centre](#) .It is important to note that while Mercer's is affiliated with

RCSI, the University does not have access to any part of the clinical notes of any student. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance to Mercer's. Notes will not be released from Mercer's Medical Centre without the consent of the patient.

ii. External Services including HSE

<https://www.drugs.ie/phone> Drugs.ie is managed by the HSE National Social Inclusion Office. Information and tools about drugs, where to get help and services available are provided in a range of languages.

<https://www2.hse.ie/alcohol/> HSE Drugs and Alcohol Helpline: Freephone 1800 459459 for confidential information and support.

<https://niteline.ie/> - Niteline is run by students for students. They are a listening, support and information service run by and for the students of DBS, MU, NCAD, RCSI, TCD, TUD & UCD and their affiliate colleges. You can talk about anything; no problem is too big or too small.

Phone: 1800 793 793 between 9pm and 2.30am every night of term.

[RCPI: Tackling Alcohol Health Harm](#) – RCPI are committed to reducing alcohol health harm in Ireland and have a range of policy documents and resources available to assist health professionals to reduce harm in people.

[Alcoholics Anonymous \(AA\)](#) Ireland – Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

[Narcotics Anonymous \(NA\)](#) Ireland – Narcotics Anonymous message: An addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use and find a new way to live. Anyone who wants to stop using drugs may become a member of Narcotics Anonymous. Membership is not limited to addicts using any particular drug. Those who feel they may have a problem with drugs, legal or illegal, including alcohol, are welcome in NA. Recovery in NA focuses on the problem of addiction, not on any particular drug.

c. Support

We will support students who seek help for themselves or others. Within this context, it is important that RCSI students and scholars understand they are prohibited from attending any educational environment whilst they have any of the following in their systems: alcohol; illegal drugs; controlled substances; designer (synthetic) drugs; over-the-counter, prescription-only drugs used outside of the recommended or prescribed manner; legal “highs” or psychoactive mushrooms. RCSI students should not:

- i. Misuse alcohol on or off campus including when representing RCSI at sporting or other events;
- ii. Attend the educational environment if they could be impaired by alcohol;
- iii. Be involved in the supply or sale of drugs;
- iv. Bring drugs or use drugs on any RCSI or affiliated clinical sites.

If there is a perceived risk caused by a student's use of drugs and/or alcohol misuse, in such a way that their health, performance, or any other person or patient's safety could be perceived to be adversely affected, then RCSI will work with the student involved to remove this risk. This could involve students' engaging in treatment and support; being monitored; practising under supervision; taking a leave of absence, or in some cases being required to leave the programme.

Every effort will be made to support the student's welfare and their future career. However, this may not always be possible, particularly if the student refuses to seek help; does not co-operate with treatment or behaves in a manner which places themselves or others in immediate or continued risk. Action may be taken under the relevant RCSI Regulations.²

5. Responsibilities

a. RCSI

- i. RCSI recognises the place of moderate alcohol consumption in many areas of society. We wish to create an environment within RCSI which promotes a healthy attitude while accepting the potential of alcohol misuse to adversely affect the wellbeing of individuals.
- ii. Commits to providing a supportive environment which assists in informing students to make healthy choices that promote health and wellbeing.
- iii. Provides support to those who may require assistance (counselling or referral to appropriate medical services) during their time in RCSI, as far as is reasonably practicable.
- iv. Student Services & the School of Postgraduate Studies are responsible for assisting and advising students in running events in a safe and healthy way.
- v. CoMPPAS is responsible for assisting and advising students, including referral to external specialised services if required.
- vi. Registry Services is responsible for advising staff and students on the relevant policies and regulations and their applications.
- vii. Will provide appropriate training as required to key student-facing staff.
- viii. Staff who suspect that a student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, especially if the

² RCSI Codes of Conduct; RCSI Fitness to Study; RCSI Disciplinary Regulations

student is showing behaviour that could put themselves or someone else in danger, should:

- (a) Seek help for the student by informing the relevant first aider/front of house staff if it is during normal operating hours
 - (b) Dial 999 if the student is in imminent danger or their health is at risk
 - (c) Inform registry@rcsi.ie as soon as possible.
- ix. Staff who suspect that a student may have a problem with drug dependency or alcohol misuse should seek advice from registry@rcsi.ie or CoMPPAS sw@rcsi.ie.

b. RCSI Students

- i. Should ensure they are in a fit state and not in any way impaired, to attend an educational, research or clinical environment.
- ii. Must never be under the influence of drugs, or alcohol in any formal educational, research or clinical environment.
- iii. Must be responsible for their actions at all times. Students are reminded of their obligations to respect the rights of others and to comply with RCSI rules and regulations and the relevant RCSI Codes of Conduct.
- iv. Must not be in possession of any drugs or alcohol in any formal educational, research or clinical environment. RCSI does not permit the possession or use, of any intoxicant on RCSI property, except at an approved RCSI-organised special event.
- v. If concerned about a fellow student, should seek help by contacting sw@rcsi.ie or Mercer's Medical Centre. If there is imminent risk to the other student:
 - (a) During an RCSI event, they should inform an RCSI Student Services representative, front of house staff or Security
 - (b) If in an emergency, they should ring 999.
- vi. Students should notify RCSI Learning Access and Facilitation Services at learningsupport@rcsi.ie if they are taking prescribed medication that could affect their ability to work or study.

c. Students' Unions – Undergraduate and Postgraduate

- i. The Students' Unions (SUs) are available as a point of contact and support.
- ii. SU's will regularly publicise support services through their social channels.
- iii. SU's will organise a range of activities and calendar of events that are educational and informative.
- iv. SU's will organise a number of alcohol-free social events.
- v. At the planning stage for any events at which it is intended to serve alcohol, students must

apply in advance for an alcohol permit.

- vi. Any sponsorship funding obtained by students (Unions, Societies etc.) may not be used to fund alcohol at events.

6. Alcohol at social events

RCSI has a diverse student population and for many, socialising around alcohol is not always the norm. All student events on RCSI premises where it is intended that alcohol will be available must be approved through the relevant procedures. The Student Services Office will oversee the schedule of undergraduate social events and related expenditures to promote a responsible approach to alcohol use among students.

Sponsorship of student events by drinks companies is prohibited.

7. Monitoring

To protect the physical and mental wellbeing of students, the safety of patients and to assure the maintenance of a healthy drug-free environment, issues of ongoing concern in relation to a student with a drug or alcohol problem can require a student to be subject to drug or alcohol testing/monitoring.

8. Appendices

8.1 Supports and Related Documents

[RCSI Code of Conduct](#)

[RCSI Postgraduate Scholars Code of Conduct](#)

[RCSI Code of Conduct BScATT](#)

[RCSI Disciplinary Regulations](#)

[RCSI Fitness to Study Policy](#)

[CoMPPAS - Student Welfare and Wellbeing](#)

[Mercers Medical Centre](#)

8.2 Definitions and Legislative

Background Definitions

Alcohol, drug and substance misuse is defined as the intermittent or continual use of alcohol or any drug or substance which impacts health, functioning or performance in placement or study,

which affects efficiency, productivity, safety, attendance, time-keeping or professional conduct.

Drug – this includes any substance (other than alcohol) that produces physical, mental, emotional or behavioural changes in the user. It also includes any medicines where the medicines have not been prescribed for the person possessing or using them and/or such medicines which are not taken in accordance with the directions.

Legislative Background

RCSI is cognisant of the legal framework within which these regulations will operate. The possession and supply of drugs is illegal and covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977) and the Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act (2010). RCSI recognises that it is a criminal offence to take, possess, manufacture or sell illegal drugs. This policy aligns with current national government policy and strategy including;

- Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018
- National Drugs Strategy Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery, 2017 –2025
- Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education (2020).