The University of Queensland Union College
Responsible Consumption of Alcohol Policy and Procedure
Statement of Commitment

Union College is committed to being a safe environment for emerging adults to live, study and grow. We are committed to providing an environment that is inclusive, education-oriented and supportive.

Introduction

Union College acknowledges that our residents are at a period of growth, change and exploration as they emerge into young adults. However, Union College expects responsible consumption of alcohol amongst our community. The consumption of alcohol can affect your health, judgement, and safety, as well as the safety of others, and your capacity to participate in and succeed in higher education.

Purpose

We want Union College to be a safe, healthy and respectful place to live, learn and socialise. This policy explains how we manage alcohol use in and around our community so that you can participate in social life without exposing yourself or others to avoidable harm.

We:

- Encourage and promote a responsible attitude toward alcohol
- Permit the responsible consumption of alcohol by adults over 18, within reasonable limits and controls
- Emphasise harm minimisation, moderation, protective behaviours and informed consent
- Recognise our obligations under Commonwealth and Queensland law, the Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol, the Australian Universities Accord and the Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All residents of Union College
- All guests and visitors on our premises
- All staff, contractors and volunteers when acting in connection with college events or activities involving alcohol.

This policy addresses alcohol specifically. The use of other drugs and substances is addressed in our Drugs Other Than Alcohol Policy. See that policy for information about illicit drugs and substance misuse and the use of medicinal cannabis.

Our principles: harm minimisation, safety and respect

We design this policy to support responsible practices rather than to be restrictive or punitive. These principles guide it:

- Harm minimisation, moderation and protective behaviours underpin the supply and consumption of alcohol.
- Education and training are key to safe decision-making.
- Legislative, insurance, risk and legal requirements must be met at all times.
- Resident events must be well planned, safe, enjoyable and inclusive.
- The reputation of Union College within the University and broader community must be protected.

We operate on the basic principle that you are an emerging adult and are responsible for what you consume. Still, the responsibility of your safety is within our duty of care to you and others, as well as our obligations as a student accommodation provider under national higher education reforms.

Legal and regulatory context

We comply with all relevant Commonwealth and Queensland laws and regulations, including:

- Liquor and licensing laws governing the sale, supply and consumption of alcohol
- Laws prohibiting the sale or supply of alcohol to people under 18
- Work health and safety laws that require us to manage alcohol-related risks
- Criminal and civil laws relating to assault, sexual assault, property damage, public order and nuisance.

All conduct under this policy is also governed by all other resident policies. This means that conduct that breaches any other policy cannot be excused by the consumption of alcohol, and violations of those policies due to the influence of alcohol will also be considered a breach of this policy.

We draw educational material from the 2020 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol, which emphasise that there is no completely safe level of alcohol consumption, only higher or lower levels of risk.

Education and seeking support

We aim to prevent alcohol-related injury and harm through harm minimisation and education. This includes:

- Providing up-to-date information about the short- and long-term effects of alcohol
- Offering education and training about safer alcohol use, bystander skills and respectful relationships

- Encouraging you to think ahead about your consumption, hydration, food intake and transport.

If you are worried about your own or someone else's drinking, we encourage you to seek support early. You can:

- Talk to the Resident Wellbeing Lead, who is proficient in working with residents who have wellbeing matters in relation to drugs and alcohol and can work with you to identify appropriate external supports
- Ask for help to contact external services such as Alcohol and Drug Support QLD (Adis), Headspace, university counselling services, Legal Aid Queensland, Lifeworks, or emergency services (000) and police (131 444).

Personal conduct and alcohol-free areas

You are expected to:

- Make safe, considerate decisions about alcohol consumption
- Avoid behaviour that harms or disturbs others, or damages property, because of alcohol use
- Follow all restrictions on where and when alcohol may be consumed on campus.
- Continue to behave in a manner that reflects our values and protects our College's reputation

We:

- Designate specific alcohol-free areas and set drinking restrictions on campus, which you must respect
- Set conditions for alcohol at events, including in the Dining and Innes Rooms, to ensure safety and compliance with licensing and risk requirements.

If your alcohol consumption is consistently excessive, or you behave unacceptably because of alcohol, we may act under the Resident Code of Conduct (RES0101).

Events, under-18s and visitors

Alcohol at resident or college events must be:

- Approved and supervised in line with this policy and licensing requirements
- Planned so that events are safe, enjoyable and inclusive, with clear expectations about behaviour and consumption.

Where external guests attend events:

- The Deputy Head of College/Deputy CEO must approve the event in advance and receive a complete list of attendees, including any under-18s, before the event starts.
- Alcohol must never be supplied to anyone under 18, and steps must be taken to prevent underage drinking.

Visitors to Union College are expected to follow this policy and all related rules. You are responsible for your guests' behaviour.

Being an ethical bystander

We want a community where you look after yourself and each other.

If there is injury or risk of injury due to excessive alcohol or other substances, you are encouraged to call for help immediately, regardless of who has been drinking or what rules may have been broken.

To be a proactive, ethical bystander:

- Notice when a situation may require help (for example, someone who is very intoxicated, isolated, or being pressured)
- Take responsibility for intervening safely, whether by checking in with the person, getting friends to help, or contacting staff or emergency services
- Be ready to intervene by building your skills and confidence, and by seeking support when you need it.

Alcohol, informed consent and respectful relationships

You have the right to make choices about alcohol and sexual activity free from peer pressure and with a clear understanding of the facts and potential outcomes. This is informed consent.

You should understand that:

- Intoxicated people cannot give informed consent. You should consider not engaging in sexual activities with an intoxicated person, regardless of your own level of intoxication (but especially if you are not under the influence of alcohol)
- Informed consent requires people to be free from pressure, coercion or manipulation
- Informed consent requires knowledge of the relevant facts and what is being agreed to.

In the context of alcohol:

- Everyone has the right to know the alcoholic content and strength of a drink
- Everyone has the right to enough information to understand what they are agreeing to
- Everyone has the right to opt in or out of drinking or sexual activity without fear, pressure or penalty, and to change their mind at any time.

Sexual activity should only occur where verbal and positive consent is freely given and maintained by all parties.

Alcohol can:

- Affect the ability to communicate clearly

- Make people more likely to miss, ignore or misread signals
- Narrow focus ("tunnel vision") and increase aggressiveness.

If you are not confident that your partner can consent, sexual activity should not occur.

These expectations align with national standards for preventing gender-based violence in higher education and student accommodation. For comprehensive definitions of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct, see our Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (RES0202). For the broader framework of gender-based violence prevention, see our Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy (RES0201).

Safer alcohol consumption and harm minimisation protocols

We provide information based on the 2020 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol, which state that there is no completely safe level of alcohol use, only different levels of risk. General tips include:

- Setting limits in advance and pacing your drinks
- Eating before and while you drink
- Alternating alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Avoiding mixing alcohol with other drugs or medications
- Planning safe transport and having a buddy system at events.

We may implement enhanced harm minimisation protocols where risk is higher (for example, large events, periods of celebration or stress), which can include:

- Increasing trained supervision and first-aid presence
- Clearer briefings about consent, bystander expectations and support services
- Early intervention where someone appears to be at risk.

Roles, responsibilities and intervention

We are responsible for:

- Implementing this policy
- Setting standards for events and environments where alcohol is present
- Responding to reports of alcohol misuse or harm
- Ensuring staff are trained to support residents and manage incidents.

You are responsible for:

- Knowing and following this policy
- Making safe decisions about alcohol

- Seeking help when needed, and cooperating with any interventions or conditions put in place to protect safety.

If there are serious concerns about alcohol-related behaviour or safety, we may:

- Intervene directly to keep someone safe
- Place conditions on attendance at events or residence
- Take action under the Resident Code of Conduct
- Involve emergency services or police where necessary.

Review and continuous improvement

We review this policy regularly, and earlier if

- There are changes to Commonwealth or Queensland legislation, public health guidelines or licensing rules
- New expectations arise from the Australian Universities Accord, the National Student Charter, the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence or related reforms
- We identify issues through incidents, data or feedback that require updates.

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