

The University of Queensland Union College

Drugs Other Than Alcohol Policy and Procedure

Purpose and scope

We want Union College to be a safe, healthy and respectful place to live and learn, where you can focus on your studies and life without exposure to avoidable harm. This policy explains how we manage smoking, vaping, illicit drugs and the misuse of prescription and other substances within our community.

We:

- Prohibit the use, possession, sale or supply of illegal substances on our premises and at any college-related event
- Prohibit the misuse, diversion, sale or supply of prescription medications and other substances, such as nitrous oxide
- Operate on the principle that adult community members are responsible for what they consume, but that this responsibility is subject to a legal and regulatory framework and our duty of care to you and others.

Drug use or misuse does not reduce your personal responsibility to comply with the Resident Code of Conduct, the Addressing Concerns and Complaints Policy, and other Union College policies.

It 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, which is a core concern of the Australian Universities Accord.

This policy applies to:

- All residents of Union College
- All staff, contractors and volunteers
- All visitors and guests on college grounds, and
- Anyone attending or participating in college events and activities off campus.

Everyone covered by this policy is responsible for knowing and following it, as well as for their own behaviour.

This policy covers illicit drugs, misuse of prescription medications, vaping, and smoking. Alcohol is managed under a separate policy - see our Responsible Consumption of Alcohol Policy (RES0301). Lawfully prescribed medicinal cannabis, prescribed by an authorised medical practitioner under therapeutic access schemes, is addressed in our separate Medicinal Cannabis Policy (RE0303).

Strategic and legislative context

We align this policy with:

- The Australian Universities Accord's vision of a higher education system that supports student safety, wellbeing and success, including in student accommodation
- The Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education expects student accommodation providers to adopt a whole-of-organisation approach to safety and to manage environmental and situational risks, including those linked to substance use
- The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 and related frameworks emphasise safe learning, working and living environments.

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

- Drugs, poisons and controlled substances laws that prohibit possession, supply and trafficking of illegal drugs
- Queensland's Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) Amendment Bill 2024 and related laws tightly regulate nicotine-containing vaping products, making most consumer products illegal. Therapeutic vapes with ≤ 20 mg/mL nicotine may be accessed by adults through pharmacies after consultation, while higher strengths require a prescription
- Work Health and Safety laws that require us to manage drug-related risks to health and safety
- Criminal and public order laws that apply to drug-related conduct.

All activities at Union College must comply with these laws and with our policies and procedures.

Our approach: safety, wellbeing and harm minimisation.

We recognise that:

- Using illegal drugs or misusing prescription medications can seriously affect decision-making, physical and mental health, personal safety and academic participation
- Substance use can increase the risk of violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, and can make it harder for you or others to give or withhold consent, protect yourself, or support friends.

Our primary priority will always be your safety and the safety of others. We use a harm-minimisation approach that:

- Addresses any immediate risk to life or safety first
- Encourages early help-seeking and access to support services
- Uses fair and proportionate behaviour management responses where needed to protect the community and uphold our standards.

We address concerns and incidents in accordance with our Addressing Concerns and Complaints Policy (RES0102) and the Resident Code of Conduct (RES0101), and we cooperate with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and other authorities as required or when serious risks are present.

Smoking and vaping

We support you if you are trying to stop or reduce smoking or vaping, and we set clear limits to protect others from harm caused by smoke and aerosols.

- Smoking is only permitted in the designated area on Upland Road at the front of campus.
- You must not smoke in your room, in any building, or in any indoor or outdoor public space on campus, except in the designated smoking area.
- The University of Queensland campuses are smoke-free, and we expect you to respect these rules while on UQ grounds.

Vaping and electronic cigarettes:

- Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, personal vapourisers) and nicotine-containing products are generally illegal for retail sale in Queensland, except when supplied as therapeutic vapes under health regulations.
- Adults aged 18 and over may access therapeutic vapes with nicotine ≤ 20 mg/mL from pharmacies without a prescription after consultation; stronger products require a prescription.
- You must not use, possess, supply, or sell illegal vaping products on campus or at college-sanctioned events.

We may act under this policy and other college policies if you breach these requirements.

Illegal drugs, prescription medications and other substances

We:

- Prohibit the use, possession, cultivation, manufacture, sale or supply of illegal drugs by any resident, staff member or visitor on our premises or at any college event
- Prohibit the non-medical use, misuse, diversion, sale or supply of prescription medications and other substances (for example, nitrous oxide)
- Consider the sale or supply of illegal drugs or prescription medications by a resident to be serious misconduct that will result in referral to QPS, and may result in immediate suspension or possible expulsion.

If your doctor prescribes medication, we understand this is private information. We suggest that you:

- Keep medications in a locked box in your room
- Keep details of your medications private, and share them only with other residents or visitors who are directly supporting you with your medical condition
- Consider informing the Resident Wellbeing Lead so we can support you appropriately. This information will be kept confidential in line with our privacy obligations

- Report theft or loss of your medications to us and to QPS immediately.

Seeking help and support

We encourage you to seek support as soon as possible if you are concerned about your own use of drugs, smoking or vaping, or about a friend. Talking early about concerns is a sign of strength, not weakness.

You can:

- Speak to the Resident Wellbeing Lead, Deputy Head of College/Deputy CEO or another trusted staff member
- Ask for help to contact external services, including:
 - Alcohol and Drug Support QLD (Adis) – 1800 177 833 (confidential advice and counselling)
 - Headspace
 - The University of Queensland counselling services
 - QUT and Griffith University counselling and wellbeing services
 - Emergency services (police, ambulance) – 000
 - Non-urgent police – 131 444
 - Legal Aid Queensland
 - Drug Arm.

We handle these conversations sensitively and, wherever possible, confidentially. However, if we believe there is a serious risk to you or others, we may need to act to keep people safe and to comply with the law.

Responding to incidents and concerns

If you are concerned that someone is in immediate danger due to drugs or other substances (for example, they are unconscious, having a seizure, struggling to breathe or severely confused), you must:

- Call 000 for emergency services, and
- Contact a staff member or the duty phone immediately.

If there is no immediate emergency, but you suspect that a resident is:

- Using, possessing or being supplied illegal substances, or
- Misusing, selling or supplying prescription medications or other substances,

you should notify the Resident Wellbeing Lead or Deputy Head of College/Deputy CEO as soon as possible.

When we receive information about suspected drug use, possession or dealing, we will:

- Assess the immediate safety of the person and others and take any urgent protective steps
- Offer support to those directly affected, including referral to health and counselling services
- Decide whether the matter needs to be reported to QPS or other authorities, considering the seriousness of the behaviour and our legal obligations
- Decide whether to impose interim measures to protect others (for example, restricting access to specific areas, changing room allocations, or temporarily suspending a resident from the college)
- Decide on next steps under our Addressing Concerns and Complaints Policy (RES0102) and Resident Code of Conduct (RES0101).

Residents found:

- Selling or dealing illegal substances, or
- Coercing or pressuring others to take illegal substances

will be reported to QPS. This behaviour may result in immediate suspension from residence while we investigate, and, if the allegations are substantiated, you may face expulsion. The Head of College/CEO may ask QPS to search areas of the College if there is sufficient evidence of drug use on campus.

Visitors who use, sell or supply illegal substances on campus will be instructed to leave, banned from returning, and reported to QPS.

We will use our behaviour management processes, guided by procedural fairness and our obligations under the forthcoming National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence, when drug-related conduct intersects with safety, harassment or violence concerns.

Links to safety, gender-based violence and wellbeing

We recognise that:

- Substance use can increase the risk of accidents, injuries, self-harm, exploitation and gender-based violence, including sexual assault and harassment
- Some students and staff, including First Nations people, people with disabilities, LGBTIQA+ people and international students, may face higher risks and additional barriers to seeking help.

Therefore, we:

- Expect you and your fellow residents to manage events, parties and social gatherings in ways that do not encourage or normalise risky drug use
- Integrate messages on drug-related risk and harm minimisation into our broader education on consent, respectful relationships and bystander action

- Ensure our responses to incidents are trauma-informed, victim-survivor-centred where harm has occurred, and consistent with our gender-based violence actions and obligations.

Educative focus and community responsibility

We are a learning community. Our approach to drugs other than alcohol is not purely disciplinary; it is also educative and supportive. We will:

- Provide you with accessible information on the health and legal risks of drug use and misuse
- Promote harm-minimisation strategies and safer choices
- Encourage peer support and early help-seeking
- Use data and feedback to refine our education and prevention work in line with the Universities Accord's emphasis on evidence-informed, student-centred practice.

At the same time, everyone has a shared responsibility to keep the community safe by:

- Following this policy and other college policies
- Looking out for each other and acting when something does not feel right
- Reporting serious concerns to staff promptly.

Drug or substance misuse may increase risk factors for gender-based violence, sexual misconduct and other harms. Where drug use intersects with allegations of sexual misconduct or gender-based violence, investigations will apply to both this policy and our Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (RES0202) and/or Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy (RES0201).

Substance use may also impair consent capacity, as addressed in our Responsible Consumption of Alcohol Policy (RES0301) and Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (RES0202).

Any breaches of this policy are also breaches of the Resident Code of Conduct (RES0101) and will be managed through procedures in our Addressing Concerns and Complaints Policy (RES0102).

Review and continuous improvement

We review this policy at least annually, alongside the Resident Handbook and related policies, to ensure it:

- Reflects current law, including any changes to Commonwealth and state legislation on drugs, tobacco, vaping, medicines and student safety
- Aligns with the Australian Universities Accord, the Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education and the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence
- Continues to meet best-practice standards for student safety, wellbeing and harm minimisation.

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Topic: Cigarettes, vaping, cannabis and other drugs on campus

Approval Authority: Head of College

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Review Date: December 2026 (or earlier to reflect legislative or regulatory changes)

Audience: Current and future residents, parents and carers, Union College workers and Board, key stakeholders and regulators

DISCLAIMER: Union College's policies and procedures for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, including sexual misconduct, are designed to be consistent with and aligned with The University of Queensland's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and associated procedures, as well as UQ's broader frameworks and commitments relating to gender equality, respect, and safe, inclusive campus communities.