

POLICY ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Approved at Board Meeting

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Internal and external circulation

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Drug use and drug abuse occur in many societies around the world today. Adults and young people use and abuse drugs for a number of reasons, with a range of complex causes and varied consequences.
- 1.2 Unfortunately, drug use is unlikely to disappear. It threatens to have a growing impact on educational institutions. Li Po Chun United World College (the College) recognises that its students will in all likelihood be exposed to drugs at some time in their life and it recognizes the need to equip the students with the knowledge, skills and strategies to handle this exposure. Drug abuse impinges on students and schools in many ways: from physical effects on individuals such as inattention and depression, negative effects on their social relationships and interactions, declining academic and creative performance, through to legal and moral issues surrounding possession of and dealing in drugs. Therefore, in view of these points, and in light of the College's responsibilities to the wider community, it has developed this Policy on Substance Abuse (Policy).
- 1.3 In preparing this Policy, the College has consulted *School Administrative Guide* prepared by the Hong Kong Education Department¹ in 2001 (section 3.7.7) to ensure that this policy is consistent with Hong Kong requirements. Consultation has also occurred between the Principal and officers from the Hong Kong Police, the principals of other international schools in Hong Kong, as well as College teachers and students. Further consultation has occurred with leading Adolescent Psychologist, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg. The College has made every effort to ensure that this Policy reflects the current realities amongst the College's students and the expectations of the wider community within which the College is situated.
- 1.4 Drafts of the Policy were circulated and discussed with staff and students prior to its finalisation and approval by the Board.
- 1.5 The Policy is based upon the following principles:
 - a) that the College is an educational institution, and therefore has responsibilities:
 - to inform its students about the consequences of choosing to use drugs;
 - to promote healthy lifestyles and personal responsibility; and
 - to help students learn from mistakes that they might make.
 - b) that to be effective, any policy on substance abuse must include alcohol and nicotine as major causes of drug-related harm;
 - c) that a harm-minimisation approach is effective;
 - d) that drug use occurs along a continuum ranging from non-use, experimentation, occasional/situational use, habitual and intensive use. Some young people use drugs for the pursuit of pleasure, others for self-medication to reduce psychological pain or suffering;

¹ Now the Education Bureau

- e) that there is a need for a standardised approach to drug education and welfare procedures to be maintained across both 1st and 2nd Year levels;
- f) that there is a need to ensure that the College staff will implement this Policy with care and support for students;
- g) that there exists a well-formulated drug education program within the College;
- h) that this Policy will have consequences for the whole College community, including students, teachers, and parents/ guardians; and
- i) that there will need to be a biennial evaluation of the outcomes of this policy.

2. APPLICATION AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 This Policy applies to College students at all times when on College premises. It also applies to students not on College premises during the school year where any negative impact upon the reputation of the College and/or the students' performance may occur.

2.2 For the purpose of this Policy a drug is defined as

Any substance, with the exception of food and water, which, when taken in to the body, alters its function physically and/or psychologically. This includes all drugs of addiction or dependence, which can be defined as including analgesics, alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, steroids, amphetamines, as well as solvents that may be inhaled, such as glue and petrol.

Unless the context indicates otherwise, this definition shall apply throughout the Policy.

3. REASONS FOR COLLEGE DRUG POLICY

This substance abuse policy has been established to:

- Publish guidelines that are relevant to the College;
- Ensure that all incidents of substance abuse are handled justly;
- Address prevention, intervention and sanctions in regard to drug use;
- Be consistent with Hong Kong laws;
- Be consistent with the UWC Student Common Code of Conduct; and
- Provide for ongoing student educational programs and initiate drug information sessions for staff and parents.

4. HARM MINIMISATION

Harm-minimisation takes into account the relationships between people, their drug use and the environment in which their drug use occurs. A harm-minimisation approach supports targeted strategies designed to have maximum impact in reducing negative effects of drug use.

Outcomes may include abstinence or **prevention** of illegal and harmful drug use, **intervention** to reduce or control use of less harmful substances, and **implementation** to reduce the harmful consequences of drug use for the community. These specific aspects of the Policy are set out below.

4.1 Prevention

- 4.1.1 The College's major objective is education. A program in drug awareness education should address many issues related to drug use—in particular, the following:
- (a) Accurate information about legal and illegal drugs as defined in Section 2, which focus on benefits as well as risks.
 - (b) Personal drug use in which risk-taking is examined in a non-judgmental manner. This approach acknowledges that many young people will use drugs, mainly but not only tobacco and alcohol, at some stage in their lives. However, through appropriate drug education strategies, they will acquire the knowledge to make informed decisions about drug use and be able to minimise any harmful effects associated with it.
 - (c) Attitudes in which stereotypes and myths are challenged.
 - (d) Harm-minimisation as a form of education that includes information and knowledge about drug usage as well as opposition to it.
 - (e) The law and drugs, which includes an examination of the law, its rules and legal rights.
 - (f) Giving and receiving help, which focuses on skills to help both oneself and others.
 - (g) Community action, which allows students to explore responses to drug use in the local and national environments.
- 4.1.2 Appropriate prescribed drug use needs to be monitored. The College Nurse should be notified about any prescribed medication to be taken on College premises.
- 4.1.3 All members of the College community, including staff, students and parents, have a responsibility to discourage the abuse of all drugs which are detrimental to health and well-being.

4.2 Intervention

- 4.2.1 The intervention procedure is designed to address incidents of drug use in a way which is in the best interest of all parties, while at the same time, conforming to legal requirements.
- 4.2.2 The College is a smoke-free campus as it is acknowledged that illegal substance abuse is more likely in an environment where smoking tobacco is permitted.
- 4.2.3 The College will not permit students, while on College premises and whether or not under College supervision, to:
- (a) Smoke tobacco;
 - (b) Consume or possess alcoholic beverages;
 - (c) Be in a drunken state on campus;
 - (d) Deliberately inhale solvents;
 - (e) Possess drug-related equipment such as syringes (unless prescribed for medical reasons and with the knowledge of the College staff), bong or pipes;
 - (f) Possess, use, or be under the influence of drugs prohibited in accordance with Hong Kong law; or
 - (g) Be under the influence of drugs, except for medical reasons.

These prohibitions apply on any College excursion or other organised function (e.g., dinner or social function).

- 4.2.4 Irrespective of what individuals may think or feel, the law regarding the **SALE** or **POSSESSION** of illegal drugs is clear, and penalties are provided for the prosecution of offenders.

Should the Principal, Head of Residences or Head of House believe that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion of drug use or possession, s/he may, in the presence of the student and another teacher, search personal property, or request the Police to do so. If unlawful substances are found, the School Board and police will be notified of the situation within 24 hours. Parents and National Committees will also normally be notified. A report will also be forwarded to the College Supervisor, copied to the Chairman, informing them of the situation and any action taken.

- 4.2.5 Any student found to possess or use illegal substances will normally be asked to leave the College immediately and permanently. Even though such a student will have lost the right to remain at the College (in accordance with the UWC Student Code of Conduct), at the total discretion of the Principal, after consulting with the Head of Residences and the Tutor, and bearing in mind the student's previous record and conduct, as well as the College's responsibility to help students learn from their mistakes, the Principal *may* choose to offer an alternative consequence to the student, this being:

- In return for being permitted to remain at the College, the student provides a written undertaking not to possess or use drugs again while enrolled at the College; and
 - The student agrees in writing to undertake a course in drug counseling; and
 - (S)he agrees to be the subject of drug testing from time to time, both at random intervals of time and immediately whenever there are grounds for suspicion or an allegation is made; and
 - If drug testing yields a positive result, then the student must leave the College immediately and permanently without further right of appeal. Refusal to accept a drug test when required by the College would be taken as an admission of guilt and treated accordingly.
- 4.2.6 The option offered in section 4.2.5 would not be available to a student trafficking (i.e. distributing) drugs to other students of the College.
- 4.2.7 Any information provided or discovered will be treated confidentially until a thorough investigation has been completed, at which time it may be deemed necessary to reveal such information.

4.3 Implementation

- 4.3.1 In the case of student use, possession or intention to supply drugs on the College property, the procedures listed in Section 4.2 will be closely adhered to by the Principal, acting on behalf of the College Supervisor.
- 4.3.2 Because of the care and concern that members of the College community should show for one another, and being aware of the harmful effects of drugs, all staff and students have a responsibility to report evidence or suspicion of drug use by students.
- 4.3.3 The College will establish a check-list of short-term actions to be taken by staff on discovery of drug use, including, for example, establishing lines of communication amongst concerned people.
- 4.3.4 In the event of a student appearing to be under the influence of a drug or drugs, the College administration will seek medical advice.
- 4.3.5 The College will maintain a directory containing local clinics, counsellors and agencies to which students who are under the influence of a drug, or who otherwise have a drug problem, can be referred. The directory shall include access to emergency services and all appropriate staff will have a copy of this directory.
- 4.3.6 The College will attempt to notify parents/guardians before referral to medical agencies or as soon as possible thereafter. However, in situations deemed to be an emergency, the College may act *in loco parentis* without first notifying parents/guardians, but will do so at the earliest available opportunity.

4.4 Consequences

4.4.1 Consequences are the actions that will be taken when any student infringes this Policy. Any such consequences that arise will be designed with prime consideration for the emotional and physical health and welfare of the students of the College. All consequences will be applied at the discretion of the Principal acting on behalf of the College Supervisor in consultation with relevant staff members and, where necessary, the Board. All actions will be consistent with the UWC Student Common Code of Conduct.

5. COLLEGE PROTOCOL ON ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, SOLVENTS AND ILLEGAL DRUGS

5.1 Alcohol

5.1.1 The consumption of alcohol by students is not permitted on College premises or at events sponsored by the College.

5.1.2 Students found drinking or in possession of alcohol, or supplying alcohol to other students on the College campus will lose their right to remain in the College, and be liable to a range of sanctions dependent on the circumstances, including whether or not previous offences have been recorded. The sanctions will normally include informing and consulting with parents and National Committees.

5.2 Tobacco

5.2.1 The College is a declared smoke-free environment. As a health promoting school, the College accepts the responsibility to discourage the use of tobacco strongly. In accordance with the UWC Student Code of Conduct, any student who smokes (on or off campus) while enrolled at the College loses the right to remain at the College, as the use of tobacco is seen as a breach of trust of the agreement the student signed (the UWC Student Common Code of Conduct). Any consequences of smoking will also normally include informing and consulting with parents and National Committees.

5.3 Solvents

5.3.1 Solvent abuse, sometimes referred to as 'glue sniffing', is the use of any solvent for other than its primary purpose, particularly for the achievement of a state of altered awareness. Students will be liable to a range of sanctions dependent on the circumstances, including whether or not previous offences have been recorded. The consequences may include some or all of the following:

- (a) immediate suspension (the length of suspension will be determined by the Principal and Head of Residences in consultation with relevant staff);
- (b) informing and consulting parents;

- (c) notifying police (if an issue of illegality arises);
- (d) referral for counselling;
- (e) a '2nd Chance Option', whereby the student will be referred for counselling to a psychologist or counsellor together with a mandatory requirement for the student to undergo random drug testing (blood and/or urine) at any time during the College year at the discretion of the Principal;
- (f) other actions deemed appropriate by the College Supervisor through the Principal; or
- (g) expulsion, particularly in the case of a repeated offence.

5.4 Illegal Drugs

- 5.4.1 The possession and/or supply of illegal drugs is an offence and is against the law. The College will view either offence as a **very** serious matter.
- 5.4.2 Any student found supplying illegal drugs is committing an offence against the law. The Principal will inform the College Supervisor, parents and police, National Committee, and the student will normally be expelled. In exceptional circumstances, the alternative consequence outlined in 4.2.5 may be invoked at the discretion of the Principal.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE

- 6.1 This policy will be posted in a public place, such as on the College's website.
- 6.2 This policy was approved by the Board on 16th November 2010 and replaces the previous edition of the Policy dated 20th October 2005.
- 6.3 This policy will be reviewed by December 2012 or as necessary.