Misuse of Drugs Policy

1. Context

1.1 The Drugs Policy is to be used to respond to and manage concerns regarding a student's use of drugs. Research evidence suggests that patterns of drug use carry with it a particularly high risk of behavioural and physical and mental health difficulties including but not confined to:

(i) deterioration in academic performance, leading on occasion to exam failure and drop-out from College.

(ii) unprotected and/or non-consensual sexual activity following drug use, potentially leading to unplanned pregnancy and also carrying a risk of infection with sexually–transmitted diseases.

(iii) physical health problems caused directly by drug use or indirectly as a result of drug-related accidents.

(iv) serious mood disorders and addictive behaviours to which use of drugs and misuse of medication are major contributory factors.

1.2 The Drugs Policy is provided for in Section 1 of the Chapter on Student Conduct and Capacity of the 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College Dublin. This policy does not replace or negate other policies such as the Fitness of Study Policy nor requirements of some courses to also have a Fitness to Practice Policy.

1.3 For the purposes of this policy, the term 'drug' refers to any controlled substance defined by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977, 1984, 2015) and the Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act 2010 and prescription medication where the medicines have not been prescribed for the person in possession of them or using them, and/or prescription medication that is not taken in accordance with a physician's directions.

1.4 Drug use is defined as the occasional, intermittent or regular consumption of any substances that meet the above definition of drugs.

2. Purpose

2.1 The primary purpose of this policy is to clarify the University's views on:

(i) use of drugs and the legislative environment relating to it.

(ii) how this policy interacts with other University policies and student and staff codes of conduct.

(iii) how students using drugs can be supported by identifying concerns and putting in place actions and supports, where possible, to help the student continue in College.

(iv) the responsibilities of staff and students if they suspect a student is using drugs.

3. Benefits

3.1 The aim of the policy is to contribute to the wider aim to create and maintain a College environment which is conducive to the health and well-being of students and staff. Specifically, the objectives are to:

(i) provide an atmosphere free from pressure to use drugs.

(ii) inform all members of the College community of the risks involved in the use of drugs and of the nature of drug-related problems.

(iii) reduce the incidence of drug-related problems amongst College students.

(iv) provide a supportive environment and an effective response system for those who develop drug-related problems.

3.2 This policy provides a structured and transparent procedure for College to deal with cases where there are concerns about a student's use of drugs.

4. Scope

The Drugs Policy applies to all registered students when they are on campus and on all other occasions when they are representing the University or are identifiable as students of the University. This includes students who are on clinical placements, internships and academic exchanges.

5. Principles Underpinning the Policy

5.1 The University does not condone the use of drugs by Trinity students on or off campus and strives to create an environment where students are educated about the potential harm of drugs and choose not to engage in the use of drugs.

5.2 Each student is responsible for their individual actions while on University premises, while attending University events or are identifiable as students of the University.

5.3 The University is committed to supporting and responding to student needs, seeking to ensure a positive student experience, and promoting opportunities for students to develop to their full potential.

5.4 The University has statutory obligations under various legal instruments including the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977, 1984, 2015) and the Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act 2010.

5.5 The University has an additional duty of care to:

(i) maintain campus communities and workplaces free from illegal use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances.

(ii) support students experiencing difficulties from use of controlled substances.

5.6 The University is cognisant of its responsibility to the wider environment within which it operates, including, but not restricted to, the local community and school, clinical and work settings. It has an additional layer of responsibility to ensure that the use of drugs does not put potentially vulnerable patients or children at risk.

6. Policy Statement

6.1 This Policy sets out how the University may respond to instances where a concern is raised regarding a student's use of drugs and the type of action that may be taken to manage the matter.

6.2 This policy defines drug use as the following:

(i) Drug use/possession on University premises or off campus when representing the University or attending University events;

(ii) Drug selling or provision to others;

(iii) Drug use leading to intoxication likely to render the student unfit or unsafe to themselves or others;

(iv) Substance Use Disorder - SUD (i.e. use that is problematic and is repeatedly engaged in by the student. This was previously called substance abuse or 'addiction', but SUD is now used to covers the full spectrum of problematic use.)

6.3 Should a student or staff member suspect that a student is carrying out any of these activities they should not investigate the matter themselves. They should seek the advice of the College Health Centre, Student Counselling, College Disability Service, the Tutor, the Postgraduate Support Officer or the Warden of Trinity Hall on how best to support the student. They may also directly inform the Junior Dean or College Security.

6.4 The University recognizes dependency on drugs as a treatable condition and offers programs and services for students with substance dependency problems. Students who have or are concerned that they may have a drug dependency problem are encouraged to seek assistance from the student support services including the College Health Service, the Student Counselling Service and the College Disability Service. These services can also refer students to external support services. Information obtained regarding a student during participation in such programs or services will be

treated as confidential in a manner similar to that outlined in the College Student Mental Health Policy & Guidelines (Section 4.3).

6.5 Where possible, the University endeavours to take a supportive approach and treat concerns regarding a student's use of drugs with sensitivity and understanding. However, in certain situations where the student is a perceived danger to themselves or others, or where the student has not complied with a treatment programme, or where a student continues to use drugs, the case may be referred to the Junior Dean under Schedules 1 and/or 3 of the Chapter on Student Conduct and Capacity in the University Statutes (including the policies on Discipline, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practice) or its statutory obligations (see Section 5.4). The University may also:

(i) determine that a student's registration with the University may be suspended and/or terminated.

(ii) report the student to the Gardai in accordance to its statutory obligations.

6.6 Matters dealt with under this Policy will be dealt with according to the individual circumstances. Whilst the University anticipates that such cases will be exceptional, it reserves the right to vary the process it follows in dealing with a matter in the interests of fairness and/or health and safety.

6.7 Roles and Responsibilities: All members of the University community should be aware of this policy. There is much to be gained in the health and social wellbeing of Trinity College students by College continuing and enhancing a policy that addresses the issues accompanying the use of drugs. The following members of the community hold special responsibility:

(i) The College Health Service and the Student Counselling Service are responsible for assisting and advising students who are experiencing drug use, including referral to external specialised services if required.

(ii) As part of the existing scheme of training and support for College Tutors and Postgraduate Support Officers, specific training modules on drug-related problems and on the value of brief interventions should be provided.

(iii) Training on drug-related problems and their management should also be provided for the Junior Dean and Assistant Junior Deans, Warden and Assistant Wardens of Trinity Hall, Security Services Manager.

(iv) The Dean of Students, in cooperation with the Students Union should carry out periodic surveys on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards drugs.

(v) The Students Union provides supports to students and are responsible for educating students on the potential dangers of drug use and, when necessary, for the referral of students to the professional support services in College.

6.8 Reference in this Policy to any named University role, is to be read as including reference to nominees.

6.9 Any decision made under this Policy will retain full force and effect during the currency of any appeal.

6.10 The student shall have the right of access to all evidence/information being considered by the University in accordance with the FOI and Data Protection Acts. The University would not provide information where a professional view states that the release of information would adversely affect the student or increase risk to others.

6.11 If the student fails or refuses to engage with the procedure provided for herein the University will continue with any procedure described in Section 6.5.

7. Responsibility

7.1 Responsibility for the review of this policy lies with the Dean of Students.

8. Related Documents

8.1 This Policy is adopted and is being implemented pursuant to the provisions of the 2010 Consolidated Statutes of the College ("the 2010 Statutes").

9. Document Control

9.1 This Policy will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and at least every three to five years. The Dean of Students will convene the review panel and act as chairperson.

9.2 Dates approved:

Student Life Committee:	26 May 2020
University Council:	30 September 2020
University Board:	14 October 2020

9.3	Date revised policy approved:	14 June 2023
9.4	Date revised policy effective from:	14 June 2023
9.5	Policy reviewed with no changes:	August 2026
9.6	Date of next review:	Academic Year 2031/32