

Royal Northern College of Music

Alcohol and Substance Misuse

Policy & Procedure

Department: Human Resources

**Document owner: Director of
Human Resources**

**Approval Committee: Human
Resources Committee**

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RNCM
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COLLEGE of MUSIC

1. Introduction

It remains the general expectation of the College that no employee will report for work while under the influence of substances or alcohol. The College does not consider it acceptable for staff to be impaired by alcohol and/or substances during the conduct of their duties and this may form the basis for disciplinary action, including conduct or capability dismissal depending on the circumstances.

This policy applies to all those who work on College premises, including staff, agency and casual workers, and contractors.

This policy relates to all members of staff/workers during hours undertaking work and when undertaking activities on behalf of the College or attending College-related social events. Employees should always be aware that they are representing the College at such events and behave in a responsible manner. Please refer to **Appendix 1** which sets out the College's 'Protocol for the supervision of the sale and/or consumption of alcohol'

2. Definitions

- Substances – includes prescription medicines where the prescription medicines have not been prescribed for the person possessing or using them and/or such prescription medicines which are not taken in accordance with a physician's direction. This includes any substance (other than alcohol) that produces physical, mental, emotional or behavioural changes in the user.
- Substance Misuse – drinking alcohol, taking drugs or a substance, either intermittently or continuously, such that it adversely interferes with an individual's health, work performance or conduct or affects the work performance and/or safety of themselves and/or others.
- Controlled Drug – includes all chemical substances or drugs listed in any controlled drugs acts or regulations applicable under the law.

3. Fitness to work and safety critical roles

If in the opinion of the manager the member of staff is not fit for work due to the effects of alcohol or drugs/substances, steps should be taken to ensure the individual is safely sent home and any meetings should be postponed until the following day where practicable.

Members of staff working with machinery, performing work defined by the College as safety critical or driving in the course of their work must not consume alcohol during the working day, or shift, and should ensure that their performance is not impaired by alcohol or drugs/substances (whether illegal or not). This includes alcohol or drugs/substances consumed prior to starting work.

Members of staff prescribed medication which may affect their fitness to drive, operate machinery or potentially compromise the safety of themselves or others in any aspect of their work have a responsibility to declare this to their manager and to refrain from such activities if so affected. An example may be a member of staff working at heights suffering from drowsiness caused by strong pain relief medication.

4. Managing work performance affected by alcohol or substance use

4.1 Informal discussion

Where a manager suspects a member of staff may have a problem with alcohol or drug/substance misuse that is affecting their work performance, the manager should in the first instance hold an informal discussion with the member of staff in order to:

- Consider if their poor performance is health-related and if so to urge them to seek medical help.
- To offer the College's assistance where appropriate – this may include providing information about Health Assured (confidential telephone counselling service), adjustments or restrictions to work duties or hours for a specified period including a review of any safety issue, time off for attendance at any treatment, a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.
- Document any outcomes, actions or support agreed, and arrange a date for a further meeting with the member of staff in order to monitor their progress and any further problems arising.
- Advise them to discuss the matter with a colleague, friend, or a family member.
- Managers should keep accurate records of instances of poor performance or other problems that might be related to an alcohol or drug/substance problem.

4.2 Supporting policies

If the work performance of a member of staff continues to be adversely affected by alcohol or substance use/misuse, it may be necessary to refer to one of the following policies:

- Sickness Absence Management Policy
- Capability Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy

Any of these procedures may be suspended for a reasonable period of time, pending investigation of whether the member of staff has a medical problem amenable to treatment and, if so, for that treatment to be undertaken.

Whether one of these procedures is suspended or not will depend on the following factors:

- The nature of the problem.
- The evidence that the member of staff has a health-related problem.
- The member of staff's acknowledgement of the problem and willingness to be treated.

4.2.1 Sickness Absence Management

Where employees have been identified by a medical practitioner as suffering from an illness as a result of their dependence on alcohol or substance misuse which is affecting their conduct or work performance, time off for recovery will normally be treated in line with absence for any other medical condition under the Sickness Absence Management Policy.

The College may also seek medical advice from Occupational Health.

4.2.2 Capability

Where the employee agrees to co-operate in a treatment programme the required improvement in work performance will be outlined in writing, following consultation with the Occupational Health Service.

In the event that an employee suffers a relapse after completion of, or during, treatment the case will be considered in light of its individual circumstances.

4.2.3 Disciplinary procedures

The disciplinary procedure will apply in cases where an individual whose conduct or work performance is adversely affected by excessive alcohol intake or substance misuse and they are shown not to be suffering from alcohol dependence or substance addiction.

Where an employee's alcohol dependence and/or substance addiction becomes evident in the course of disciplinary proceedings, consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate to continue with the disciplinary process.

In situations where members of staff are found to have been in possession of illegal substances at work or to have supplied them to others, disciplinary action will be taken.

5. Sources of support

Health Assured – The EAP service provides a complete support network that offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7, covering a wide range of issues. The service can be accessed the service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Free phone: 0800 0280199

General Practitioners - most referrals to specialist services are made via general practitioners or mainstream NHS facilities.

Self-help groups - providing self-help support to individuals attempting to stop or remain abstinent from alcohol or drug abuse (such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous).

Websites such as:

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-support-services/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/>

<https://www.talktofrank.com/get-help>

ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE OF MUSIC

POLICY APPROVAL/REVIEW PROCESS

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AMENDMENTS SINCE DRAFT

ISSUE No	PAGE	DETAILS	DATE	ISSUED BY
1		First draft	May 2026	Paul Hynes
2		Final – ready for publication	26 May 2026	Paul Hynes

Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name/Committee	Date	Version
Human Resources Committee	26 May 2026	2

Royal Northern College of Music

Protocol for the supervision of the sale and/or consumption of alcohol

The College Premises Licence is critical to the College's activities in terms of providing performance opportunities for students and enabling the College to generate income from commercial hires. Meeting the conditions of the licence is essential to safeguard the licence and the activities permitted under the licence.

The College is aware of its responsibilities as both a licence holder, an education provider and as an employer. The College requires staff to be aware of and follow the Smoking and Vaping Policy and the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy. Members of RNCM staff are expected to behave responsibly at all times and to safeguard their own health and safety and that of those around them. It is the responsibility of members of staff to ensure that alcohol consumption or substance misuse does not affect their performance at work. Staff working in high risk areas (e.g. kitchen, theatre, workshops, plant rooms) or driving in the course of their work should not consume alcohol in the course of the working day or shift and should ensure that their performance is not impaired by alcohol consumed prior to starting work.

1. Consumption of alcohol within a venue or space designated as a venue (Studios, Concourses, Café, CNRR, Concert Hall, Theatres, Conference and Lecture rooms).

Alcohol consumed within venues/spaces designated as venues must be purchased via the Conferencing and Catering Department. Conferencing and Catering will then supply glasses / staff and act as 'responsible persons' under delegated authority from the Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS).

2. Consumption of alcohol in other areas of the building

If staff wish to provide their own alcohol this is permitted for small scale social occasions on an irregular basis. However, staff must seek permission from the DPS at least 5 working days prior to the scheduled event. Staff will need to provide details of the time, date, location and number of people attending. If in the opinion of the DPS the event needs supervision a staffing charge will be made.

3. Private parties where externals are present/invited

Staff are not permitted to hold private social parties (e.g. birthday or other celebrations) in any part of the building unless they have formally hired a space through Conferencing and Catering where externals/friends etc are invited.

4. Time when alcohol may be served

Alcohol for formal College events or for informal small social gatherings (whether or not alcohol is supervised by Conferencing and Catering) should not be served before 5 pm. Exemptions for this may be made on application in writing to the Principal stating the details of the event and the reasons why an exemption should be granted.

Under the Premises Licence the DPS is: Joanne Dooley. Tel 0161 907 5248
Email: Joanne.Dooley@rncm.ac.uk