

Substance Use Policy on Campus

Regulating use and marketing of substances

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Campus policy is one of several useful tools for promoting the health of the campus community. In particular, policy can help shape healthy relationships with alcohol and other drugs. This is the fourth in a series of discussion papers on the topic. The **first paper** set out a framework (see *image, page 2*) grounded in the humanistic tradition of higher education and a holistic health promotion approach.

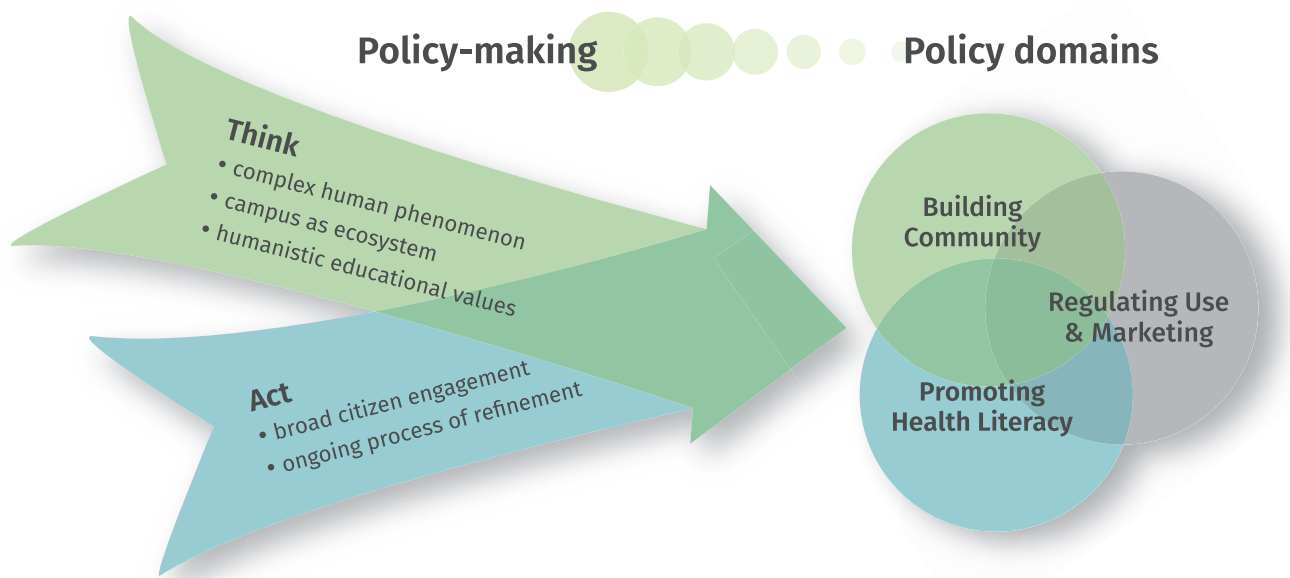
Readers are encouraged to carefully consider and discuss the broad theoretical perspective of the frame, and then reflect with colleagues on how that frame might be applied to policies within their own campus community. This paper takes up one domain within the framework: regulating both use and marketing of substances.

Regulation within health promotion

Regulating alcohol and other drug use can help shape a post-secondary institution's culture around drugs, but should not be viewed as the sole or even primary policy means of doing so. Various policies which make no reference to substance use can have a significant impact on attitudes, patterns of use and related outcomes. Indeed, when a campus establishes a sound environment in terms of strong community and robust health literacy, direct formal regulative measures may be less needed. A healthy institutional culture promotes individual autonomy within a shared sense of social responsibility. Such a culture would tend to apply and uphold principles and guidelines rather than enumerate and enforce an extensive set of rules.

“Various policies which make no reference to substance use can have a significant impact.”

The goals of health promotion include caring, capable citizens and inclusive communities. From a health promotion standpoint, regulations will not stigmatize use or seek to eliminate it, but will aim to reduce the occurrence of use that leads to adverse outcomes.



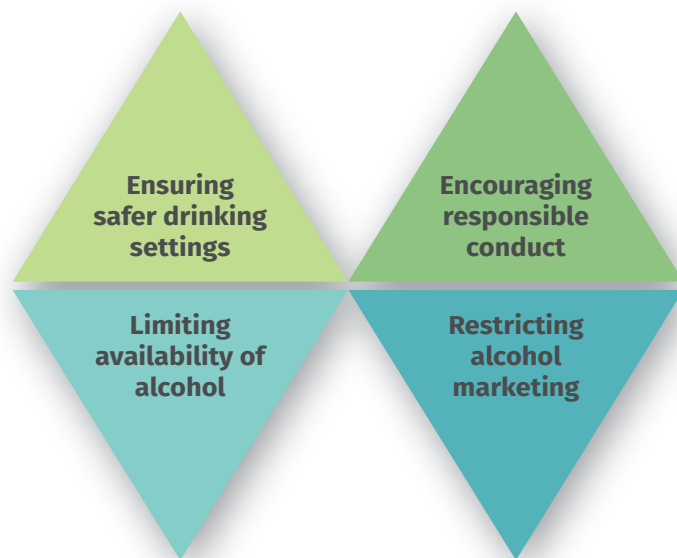
Limitations that make substances less available, or restrict their use, need to show a plausible legitimacy in terms of health and social benefit for the measures imposed. The discussion below attends to particular issues around various substances such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, other illicit drugs and the non-medical use of pharmaceuticals.

Regulation in regard to particular substances

Alcohol

Alcohol often helps people socialize, celebrate or relax. Drinking also carries risk for short-term and long-term harm. Significant impairment poses a serious threat to consumers and others. Campuses tend to use four means to prevent harm while maintaining the opportunity for positive enjoyment of alcohol.

- 1. Limiting availability** in terms of the locations and occasions in which alcohol is consumed might be justified on grounds such as:
 - the capacity of alcohol to interfere with, be disruptive to, or be counterproductive for particular activities



- the high potential for harm in certain contexts and situations
- the desire to respect diversity and the needs of all campus members

Limiting alcohol use during orientation, limiting places on campus where alcohol can be served or consumed, cutting off service to intoxicated individuals or designating some campus living facilities as alcohol-free are all examples related to the above grounds. Such measures, however, will need more than evident monitoring and enforcement to garner strong adherence. It will be important to articulate carefully to the community the reasons for the regulations in order to secure support for them. This can be done in a way that does not suggest areas in which alcohol is allowed will have a lower standard of social decorum.

- 2. Ensuring safer settings** can go beyond making sure campus pubs and other retail outlets abide by provincial regulations incumbent on licensees. Institutional policy can apply further restriction related to hours of service, pricing, server training and advertising.

For formal functions in which groups wish to have alcohol served, institutional policy can go beyond the legal requirements under the Liquor Control and Licensing Act to promote a positive culture at such events by ensuring adequate supervision and careful planning of the physical space.

For locations where informal, private use is allowed (not least in a campus residence hall), policies might include the need for registration of party events, where and when they may be held, conditions of advertising such festivities, limitations on group size, event duration, quantity and type of alcohol permitted. Stipulations may specify provision of other beverage options and food and prohibition of drinking games and use by minors.

Allowance of personal use within a student's residence room or elsewhere on the campus can accent responsibility and treat as unacceptable those drinking activities in which the goal or result is excessive intake, hazardous to health and safety.

- 3. Encouraging responsible conduct** might include prominent and repeated reference to positive cultural values and expectations or regulations. This can also be reinforced through constructive processes of relating to violations.

Breach of stipulations around alcohol-related behaviour (e.g., use in non-permitted contexts, being intoxicated in the campus environment or in conjunction with school-connected events) is best addressed within the overall codes of respectful and responsible conduct. Such infractions are

“Infractions are most aptly handled within protocols that promote learning and the restoration of relationships.”

most aptly handled within protocols that promote learning and the restoration of relationships rather than punishment that might compromise an offender's well-being while not really serving community safety.

4. Restricting marketing and promotion might help curb myths about immoderate use and the implied necessity of alcohol for socializing on campus. Policy need not ban all campus-based advertising but should encourage only culturally appropriate messaging that

- positions alcohol as optional and not essential to social engagement or status,
- respects gender issues and cultural diversity, and
- promotes social responsibility.

Policy might involve prohibition of discounts and a requirement to provide low- and non-alcoholic beverages at more affordable prices. It might not permit local outside advertising aimed at the campus community. Policy could also prohibit alcohol industry sponsorship of venues, events, programs or projects on campus.

Questions to consider

- In what ways does and could our campus regulate alcohol use and marketing so as to promote moderate positive enjoyment of alcohol as an option for its members and discourage detrimental use among them?
- How does our campus involve its members in conversation and decision-making about appropriate policy?

Tobacco

People use tobacco for various benefits such as stress relief and relaxation, for help in socializing or in concentrating, or as an aid in weight control. Yet, it poses a substantial threat, particularly through exposure to smoke, to the long-term health of those who use and to others around. Cigarette butts also pose an environmental challenge. Campuses have responded by restricting both use and marketing. Government regulation banning smoking indoors in public facilities is readily applied with expectation of large-scale compliance. Various stances may be taken on use outdoors on campus.



1. Regulating or limiting use can happen at different levels of outdoor restriction as indicated in the figure on the previous page. The more restrictive the regulation, the weightier the onus would seem to be on explaining its purpose and showing its warrant. What accompanying efforts are made to encourage alternative, less risky behaviour that can deliver positive benefits received thus far from tobacco use?

- Permission of smoking outdoors can specify the exception of locations near entrances and in congested areas, respecting clear hazards posed by environmental smoke. Preservation of such buffer zones can count on wide public acceptance and appeal to mutual consideration rather than rely simply on signage indicators and formal enforcement efforts.
- Allowing smoking only in designated outdoor areas has been used to confine environmental smoke even more, and give less visibility and apparent normalcy to the behaviour of smoking. This option requires attention to ensure that these areas are reasonably accessible, safe and properly maintained. This option may be challenged as unnecessarily restricting smokers' rights and may be difficult to enforce efficiently. Regulatory rigor should be seen as accompanied by commitment to treat those who smoke with respect and to provide services that support them in pursuing healthier practices as they see fit.
- A more stringent approach, where smoking is taboo anywhere on campus, faces multiple credibility challenges. Objections may be raised over whether such policy
 - is necessary for adequate protection of non-smokers and the campus environment,
 - shows sufficient respect for smokers' rights and needs,
 - is off-loading unwelcome accompaniments (air, noise and litter pollution) to nearby community locations,
 - applies feasible and acceptable enforcement strategies,
 - is both effective and legitimate as a way of prompting lower use or cessation.

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Do the ends justify a means that penalizes those who smoke through displacement and exclusion, and in so doing, segregates, isolates and may alienate a minority of campus members from their peers?

Campuses are often inclined and encouraged to address vaping in a fashion similar to smoking – prohibiting use indoors and outdoors. What are the grounds for this when vaping avoids firsthand and second-hand exposure to the known toxins released through smoke? Exposure to vape in interior areas and exterior close proximity is sufficiently disagreeable to some to warrant prohibition. If the evidence indicates less harm from vaping, does this also weigh in favor of outdoor restrictions that do not confine together those who smoke and those who vape, and that instead may assign the latter a lesser distance from those who do not use?

- The most sweeping stance, forbidding tobacco use on campus, will often cite evidence that adverse health consequences can result from any type of use. This policy position, even as it claims to contribute to decreased use or cessation, bears the broadest obligation to provide a range of accessible services to facilitate that course of action. It also faces the counter contention that (i) it lacks strong evidence that all use is a significant threat to health, (ii) there are different levels of harm associated with different forms of ingestion (and, unlike smoking, in many instances little negative impact for those close by who do not indulge), and (iii) there are psychological and social benefits associated with tobacco use. This most protectionist policy is also the most difficult to enforce in a way that carries deep conviction, integrity, and practical validity.

2. Regulating marketing and promotion

Tobacco marketing regulation can consider banning sales, advertisement and promotion of tobacco on campus, and refusal to accept industry funding for academic programs, facilities, research projects, scholarships or other faculty, staff or student enterprises under the auspices of the institution. It may also involve divestment of the school's investment portfolio from tobacco company securities.

Questions to consider?

- To what extent does and should our campus restrict use of tobacco-related products rather than rely on regard for others' well-being as adequate to uphold health and respect choice?
- How are restrictive measures justified, credibly enforced, and complemented by initiatives to demonstrate respect and care for people who use tobacco – with a view to encouraging their inclusion and empowerment to improve their health?

Cannabis

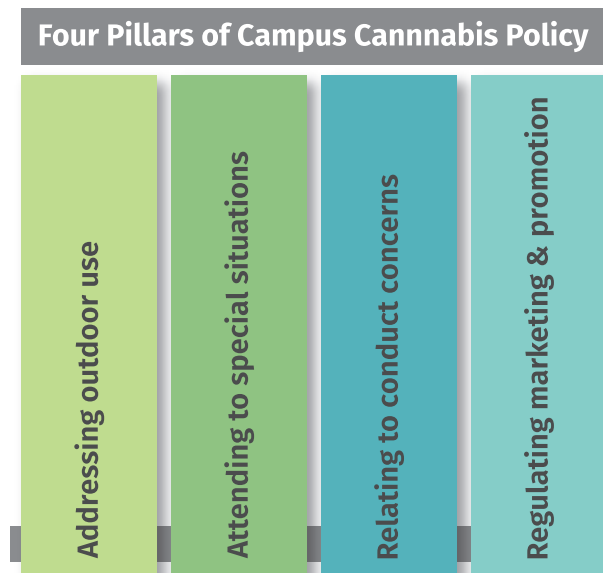
Cannabis can deliver various benefits to those who use it: e.g., mood enhancement, a way of bonding with friends, relaxation, and alleviation of pain. Certain use patterns carry risk for short- and long-term health concerns (for instance, acute anxiety, chronic respiratory difficulties). Legalization affords campuses the latitude to adopt an approach that allows cannabis users an opportunity to experience the benefits without fear of penalty.

Where a campus community works together to establish a culture of mutual respect, shared consideration, and joint accountability, the need for regulation particular to cannabis may be minimal. Concerns can be addressed within a shared aspiration to uphold mutually supportive conduct as the norm. Such a commitment will handle complaints and disciplinary action with an intention to honor rights and responsibilities, build individual capacity, and foster motivation to uphold those standards, as well as restore and strengthen relational connections.

Campus members can expect each other to refrain from cannabis use in contexts where it interferes with formal learning (e.g., classroom sessions and course work activities) and where it would contribute to difficulty for personnel in performance of their role in the community. Likewise where use exposes others to smoke or substantially unpleasant odor (i.e., interior locations, exterior spaces of regular traffic or congestion), or where use poses a problem for facility upkeep. Will occasional reminders of these general constraints be enough to protect health? What might be the best ways to communicate these reminders? Is there a need to further define restrictions? If so, how can this be done in a manner that consistently promotes well-being?

1. Addressing outdoor use

Where there is such a sense of need, three options are available to formally confine outdoor use, following approaches to tobacco. Moving from modest to extended restriction, smoking is (a) allowed except in designated areas, (b) only permitted in designated areas, or (c) not allowed on campus at all. Again, questions may be raised with each, attending to the degree of social control being exerted as well as the extent and nature of social responsibility expected from community members.



Designated non-smoking areas

Assignment of a non-smoking perimeter around buildings, particularly entryways, windows, and air intake (ventilation) ducts, can draw on the provincial standard for tobacco. Campuses may also designate non-roofed areas where there is congestion (such as stadiums) as non-smoking spaces. Thoughtfulness in signage design and other communications can promote inclusive commitment to clean air in these locations.

Designated smoking areas

Confinement of outdoor smoking to designated areas aims to better ensure protection of non-smokers against second-hand smoke. It also intends to localize smoking residue. Campuses can also consider making smoking areas as convenient and accommodating as possible (e.g., roomy, airy, protective from weather, safe, attractive, and comfortable). There may be additional ways of conveying appreciation for those who use the areas and their consideration of those who do not smoke.

Smoke-free campus policy

Prohibiting smoking on campus aims to protect others from second hand smoke and to deter smoking. It also contributes to reducing litter. Several questions can be posed about a smoke-free policy:

- For non-smokers, how strongly does general evidence and local landscape support this degree of distance to shield them from exposure to environmental smoke? Do emerging and more mature adults need to be protected from visual exposure to smoking to ensure they are not attracted to or complacent about smoking? Does this 'protection' make non-smokers more indifferent to groups who may need to be integrated into the community rather than isolated?
- For smokers, even if inconvenience prompts some to not smoke, would less disruptive separation show regard for their rights and the wellness of others? How consistent is denormalization with a health promotion perspective aimed at inclusivity, building connectedness, increasing capacity, developing resilience, encouraging collaboration, enhancing motivation, and empowering people to better manage their well-being?
- Given that littering is not confined to smoking, are there ways to promote appropriate residue disposal without a smoking ban? Can an ethos of mutual responsibility encourage members to care for the university environment?

The aspiration?

In the end, the field of public health needs to engage the public directly in building consensus on what we owe each other in creating a society in which all citizens feel supported in living decent lives characterized by dignity, integrity, and mutual responsibility.

– David R. Buchanan

The general question remains as to whether smoke-free policies do justice to the agency and autonomy of smokers and non-smokers. Adoption of such policies typically minimizes social responsibility, requiring compliance by smokers while obliging enforcement by non-smokers. How does this policy stance promote the informal social responsibility of all to pursue connectedness and support inclusion, or does it act against that by imposing demands that divide and exclude? How justifiable is it to formally place an onus of respect and a burden of removal on some in particular, instead of expecting all to be considerate in this area?

2. Attending to special situations

Campus Residences

As with tobacco, cannabis concerns in the residence context will largely revolve around harmful and unpleasant exposure to second-hand smoke (or vape) indoors, and the fallout of third-hand smoke (residual deposit on surfaces from indoor smoke).

Provincial rules dictate no smoking or vaping in common areas of multi-unit buildings. Campus residences may exercise their prerogative to prohibit smoking/vaping within private rooms where students live. Campuses may also choose to ban cultivation of cannabis plants within those dwelling places or in outside spaces attached to them.

Medical Use

Campus members who use cannabis for medical reasons may use in a campus setting if their treatment regimen requires they take cannabis while in that space. Campuses will need to make arrangements with these members that are adequate for their needs (e.g., accessibility, security) and attentive to the interests of others. The goal is to help all function in their roles without compromising the performance of any.

Retail Outlets on Campus

As with alcohol, campuses may choose to provide a licensed retail outlet for cannabis on their grounds. The process for considering, planning, promoting and monitoring such an outlet affords campuses an opportunity to collaborate with the store management on how best to serve the campus community while ensuring purchase and use is informed, thoughtful and responsible.

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3. Relating to conduct concerns

Campuses generally require that members avoid alcohol intoxication. If a member's drinking interferes with their ability to do their work or causes difficulties for fellow campus members, the member may be subject to a disciplinary process. Similarly, regulations may stipulate that cannabis use that poses problems due to impairment or leads to disruption will result in a similar disciplinary process. Those failing to meet cannabis-related conduct standards may expect an appropriate disciplinary response based on university human resources or general conduct policy.

4. Regulating marketing and promotion

Campuses may wish to limit or prohibit promotion through their own media of cannabis at events or places on and off campus. On-campus advertising may be limited to acceptable on-site publicity for an approved campus outlet. Policy may also prohibit cannabis industry sponsorship of venues, events, programs or projects on campus, or allow sponsorship that draws attention to potential benefits and harms of use.

Questions to consider

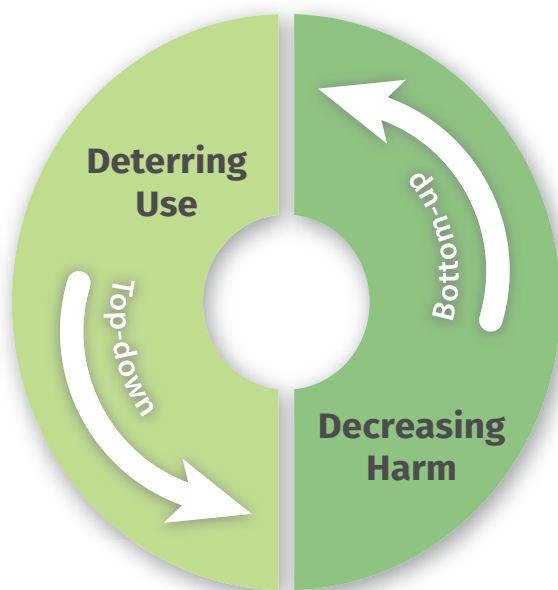
- In what ways does and could our campus show regard for people who use cannabis? How might this involve reducing stigma and promoting equity in access to all aspects of campus life to enhance their well-being, while ensuring their cannabis use does not compromise wellness for non-users?

Illicit drugs

People use drugs for benefits such as pleasure, help in socializing and as an aid in reducing stress and anxiety. Use also carries some risk of short- and long-term harm. Recognizing that public opinion has not shifted to the same degree, campus regulation of illegal substances may be relatively comparable to that for cannabis.

1. Deterring use

Policy of a more authoritarian nature that tells community members not to use drugs is often based on public expectations and campus precedents. Current Canadian legislation controls a range of psychoactive drugs via prohibition while



others (alcohol, tobacco and cannabis) are legal for adult use. Legal versus non-legal categories may not be related to contribution to harm. Thus, criminalization of these substances is open to critique from a broad health standpoint, taking into account the considerable toll taken with a prohibition approach (including, e.g., incarceration, criminal records, deaths from organized crime activity, huge fiscal costs of enforcement).

A “no-use-allowed” stance in the campus setting may have a stepped approach to dealing with infractions rather than automatically imposing severe penalties on first- or even second-time offenders. More forceful measures may be taken against those involved in major issues such as trafficking. Concern would be focused on large-scale suppliers, rather than those who provide substances for occasional use by a small circle of individuals.

2. Decreasing harm

Institutions may choose to focus on discouraging and reducing detrimental drug use rather than prohibiting illegal use. While a mandate may come from “the top,” implementation will generally be led by efforts from campus members below that upper administrative level. A concern over potential harms may point to how benefits can be obtained in other, safer ways. Providing alternative recreational activities and community service opportunities may be part of this approach. Regard for well-being can serve as a basis (a) for designation of campus contexts in which use will not be permitted and (b) for disciplinary action to be taken in the event that use is damaging and poses a threat to others nearby.

Without endorsing or facilitating illegal drug use, policy can acknowledge the reality of it and attempt to minimize its adverse consequences. This can include approval for various harm reduction initiatives such as supply and distribution of safer use equipment (e.g., naloxone kits, sharps containers), and formal amnesty provisions for those who seek assistance (and others who offer it) if they have issues while using (e.g. overdose).

Similar considerations can apply in relating to those who make illicit drugs available to others. For example, do the circumstances indicate that this was a response to a request or to prompt use on the part of another? Is there negligence, ignorance, or indifference in regard to the quality of the drug? Appropriate sanctions would focus on restoration and community protection.

Questions to consider

- In what ways does and could our campus show regard for people who use illegal drugs including those who sell drugs, while likewise ensuring their behaviour does not compromise wellness for fellow campus members?

Non-medical use of pharmaceuticals

Regulatory efforts can include encouraging campus and other local physicians to relate among themselves and with the campus community around issues of prescribing, monitoring use and attending to unauthorized exchange (diversion) of such drugs. A policy to prohibit non-prescription use of stimulants to facilitate studying may suffer from an institution's inability to enforce such a ban. Prohibitions on advertising by external suppliers may reduce availability of these drugs on campus.

Concluding reflections

Policies aim to ensure that certain values determine the direction of an institution and that particular norms of behaviour characterize its life. In that role, policies help shape the culture of campus communities. Whether by setting standards, defining restrictions, encouraging endeavours, providing opportunities or allowing for various alternatives, policy that seeks accountability for health will be conducive to more beneficial relationships among community members and with substances.

“Policies help shape the culture of campus communities.”

Such policy initiatives can promote health not only in terms of what stances are taken, but also through how those frameworks or positions are arrived at, communicated, and applied. Promising measures for cultivation of a healthy campus climate around substances can build the campus community by

- strengthening mutually supportive connectedness (and so positively integrate individuals into meaningful participation),
- enhancing shared and individual health literacy (and so increase joint capacity and individual competence in managing influencers of health), and
- providing regulatory permission for moderate use while at the same time promoting regard for and responsibility for the welfare of fellow members.

Processes that foster such initiatives in a way consistent with their objective will raise prospects for desirable outcomes.

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