



# Fitzwilliam College: Policy on Alcohol

Alcohol is a drug, albeit a legal one; indeed, it is the UK's favourite drug. And its misuse is a growing social problem nationwide, one which is of particular concern among younger age groups. You should think about the effects that drinking has on your body and your mental state. Some students choose not to drink alcohol at all; many others drink safely without any problems or impact on their studies – but not all. This policy is designed to advise of the potential dangers of the abuse of alcohol, to establish some guidelines for its proper use, and to encourage a culture of self-regulation and a respect and care for others and oneself.

## Health and Safety issues

Official guidelines recommend no more than 2 units a day for both men and women. As a general rule 2 units is a pint of beer, lager or cider, one glass (175ml) of wine, or two 25ml measure of spirit. So safe drinking means 14 units for per week – that is, spread over the week. Binge-drinking all 14 units at once is bad for your health and potentially very dangerous. Some useful resources, including information on the amount of alcohol in commercial drinks, can be found at the Drinkaware web site ([www.drinkaware.co.uk/](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/)) along with wider advice from the Portman Group ([www.portmangroup.org.uk/](http://www.portmangroup.org.uk/)).

A unit tracker can be found at [www.drinkaware.co.uk/understand-your-drinking/unit-calculator](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/understand-your-drinking/unit-calculator)

It takes your body about an hour to process one unit of alcohol, so you need to pace your drinking so that your body can cope. Also, metabolisms vary, and you need to know how much you can safely drink and remain in control of yourself and the social situation. The effects can start within ten minutes and depending on the individual can last for many hours. Slurred speech, vomiting, loss of balance, distorted vision are just some of the more immediate effects of drinking on the body, if you consume too much at once; so is unconsciousness. Very high amounts consumed rapidly can lead to alcohol poisoning, which can be fatal, as can the combination of unconsciousness and vomiting. Excessive consumption can lead to anti-social conduct, aggression, intimidation or violence. Long-term use is linked to liver damage, heart disease, brain damage, some cancers and several disorders of the reproductive system and sexual organs. Remember that it is possible to remain under the influence of alcohol the morning after a heavy dinking bout. Take 48 hours without alcohol to allow your system to recover.

You should not drink alcohol if:

- You might be in the early stages of pregnancy
- You will be operating machinery, or equipment in a practical class
- You may be driving a car. CUSU has a policy that no-one should drive on official CUSU business within 48 hours of drinking.

National statistics indicate that the prevalence of hazardous drinking in the 16-24 age group is over 50% for men and 30% for women – the highest prevalence for any age group. In common with many University towns the local NHS has expressed concern about the level of alcohol-related admissions to Addenbrookes.

Alcohol is an addictive drug and there is strong evidence that abuse of alcohol and alcohol dependency may stem from drinking in order to relieve stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts – all of which are not uncommon among a student population, and for all of which help is available. Alcohol is a depressant and can exacerbate pre-existing depressive conditions as well as precipitate them. If your drinking habits are affecting your life and studying and you need help with underlying issues, or if you know somebody in this situation, you are strongly encouraged to discuss those issues in confidence with your tutor. The following organisations can also offer help:

University Counselling Service      2-3 Bene't Place, Lensfield Road (01223 332865;  
<http://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/alcohol.html>)

Cambridge Drug and Alcohol Service      Brookfields Hospital, 351 Mill Road (01223  
723020)

Drinksense      185 East Road (01223 302850;  
<http://www.drinksense.org/>)

### **Personal safety**

An estimated 23,000 alcohol-related incidents take place in Britain each week. Being on the streets under the influence of drink puts you at greater risk of physical or sexual assault. So for safety, stay with friends, look out for your friends, don't walk back to your College alone at night, and take extra care on night-time roads. You should also be alert to the risk of drink spiking.

Antisocial behaviour is often associated with excessive drinking. Although alcohol is a depressant it can exaggerate whatever mood you are in when you start drinking. When drunk, you may unwittingly seem more threatening to others, influencing how they react to you. Avoiding violence when not fully in control of yourself can be difficult; your perceptions will be dulled, it will take you longer to react and think things through, and your judgement may be impaired. Aim to talk your way out a situation, avoiding aggressive language, and using open body language. But always bear in mind that when you have been drinking, you will be more vulnerable to difficulties and danger than when sober.

### **College**

Alcohol still plays a major part in the social life of most students. The College wants to encourage students who choose to use alcohol to do so responsibly.

A strong social emphasis on alcohol can be insensitive to those whose cultures do not endorse the use of alcohol and to those who choose not to use it. It is both foolish and dangerous to encourage others to drink more than they ought or wish by failing to offer non-alcoholic drinks, or worse still by forcing participation in competitive drinking games – including forms of ‘initiation’ to some student societies, which are strongly discouraged.

Organisers of events should always make sure that good quality alcohol-free drinks are available, that excessive quantities of alcohol are not available to guests and that only sensible drinking takes place. This holds for events organised by the JMA and the MCR and by College clubs and societies.

The College Bar Staff have a responsibility (see [Appendix 1 below](#)) to ensure that College members and their guests do not drink to excess; those who do will be refused further service and may be asked to leave the Bar. It is illegal for Bar staff to serve someone who is clearly inebriated, or who is under the age of 18. The JMA should consider carefully whether it is appropriate to encourage Bar promotions involving neat spirits or alcopops.

College Staff have a responsibility to ensure that Dinner in Hall is enjoyable and civilised for all present. Diners should exercise restraint and not drink to excess; hosts should look after their guests and friends look after one another. If a diner doesn’t exercise restraint, he or she will be asked to leave the Hall, as will any diners playing competitive drinking games who do not stop when asked. Diners whose drinking leads them to behave without consideration for the Staff may also be required to leave.

The College’s rules and recommendations relating to alcohol consumption and the responsibility for behaviour at College events can be found in [Appendix 2 of the College Regulations](#) (Parties, Dinners and Formal Halls (g) ‘Rules applicable to all parties in College’).

### **Disciplinary matters**

Drunkenness is not a defence; it cannot be regarded as a mitigating circumstance in any matter concerning a breach of discipline.

Anyone who causes damage to property not his or her own, or who harms another person, or whose behaviour is so affected by drinking as to make others feel threatened, or who disturbs the peace, or who requires the involvement of the emergency services because of alcohol consumption, will be considered to be in breach of discipline.

Anyone who encourages another to consume alcohol to the point of drunkenness or beyond will be considered to be in breach of discipline. The offence will be considered aggravated if there is an element of intimidation or bullying, that is, the person being encouraged to consume alcohol has indicated his or her reluctance to do so.

**Like many things in life, alcohol can be safe and enjoyable when consumed in moderation. Take care of your own consumption and be responsible in relation to that of others.**

*PAC - Updated 21.11.16*

With acknowledgements to St Catharine’s College, Cambridge and the University of Leeds.

## **Appendix 1**

### Serving of customers in the College Bar

The bar will only be opened when there is a member of staff present who holds a personal licence.

The bar staff must ensure that customers are in a fit state to be served (no visible signs of drunkenness).

It is illegal to serve alcohol to anyone under the age of 18.

Under no circumstances will any person who appears to be intoxicated be served alcoholic drinks, any customers trying to buy alcoholic drinks for them will be refused.

Customers who appear to be intoxicated will be requested to leave.

If unknown customers wish to purchase drinks and the duty bar staff have any concerns, they will be asked for identification and then asked to complete the visitors book before any drinks are served.

If customers refuse to leave or if there is unacceptable behaviour by a customer (which includes aggressive or threatening behaviour, indecent exposure, harassment, excessive noise, rowdiness, fighting or throwing of drink) and the bar staff cannot immediately resolve the situation the duty porter will be contacted.

If between the bar staff and the duty porter a situation cannot be resolved: -

- The shutters will be pulled down

- The Bar area will be emptied with the assistance of the duty porter, and then locked.

After any incident of unacceptable behaviour in the bar the duty bar person will complete a College incident report and this report will be passed over immediately to the duty porter for distribution to the appropriate people (student's Tutor, Dean).