

## Statement of Policy on The Use of Illegal Drugs by Junior Members

*adopted by the Governing Body on 24 November 2004*

**Illegal psychoactive drugs** are a chemically very diverse class of substances, which vary enormously in their pharmacological properties and effects. They also vary considerably in the type and severity of risk that they pose to the users. Some illegal drugs, like opiates and crack cocaine, are highly addictive, while others only rarely lead to drug dependencies. Some "psychedelic" drugs can induce temporary but sometimes severe states of hallucinatory delusion and over-excitation. During such states, the user's distorted perceptions can provoke serious accidents and injury. In contrast, high doses of "downers", like barbiturates, ketamine or opiates can "calm" the user to the point of respiratory depression and asphyxia. Stimulants, like cocaine and amphetamine, increase the risk of heart attacks, and, when used over prolonged periods, may provoke or accentuate various psychological imbalances like depression, anxiety attacks or paranoia. Different drugs are therefore dangerous in different ways, and some drugs are more dangerous than others. At the same time, many genetic, physiological and psychological factors can influence the way individuals react to a particular drug, so that the same drug may appear to cause few ill effects when taken by some individuals under some circumstances while posing a serious threat to health when taken by other individuals or under different circumstances.

Given this complexity and the potentially serious dangers, the use of many psychoactive drugs is illegal in the UK. Yet despite the prohibition and the health risks, drug use remains relatively widespread in the UK. The reasons why some individuals are tempted by illegal drugs are also very diverse. Peer pressure, bravado, thrill-seeking, a curiosity about drug effects or about the widespread myth that drugs may be a source of creative inspiration, a belief that warnings about the dangers of drugs by the authorities are exaggerated, or a desire to rebel against authority are all possible motivators.

### *College Response*

In order to respond appropriately to cases of illegal drug use, it can be very important to understand the motivation behind the drug use as well as the properties of the particular drugs involved. For example, it is claimed that Cannabis alleviates some of the symptoms of glaucoma or multiple sclerosis. Individuals who suffer from these serious chronic diseases and acquire Cannabis out of a desire to "self medicate" still engage in an illegal activity, but one would clearly not consider their behaviour to be as serious or morally reprehensible as it would be to acquire heroine or crack cocaine with the intention of reselling them at a profit to vulnerable individuals. Illegal drugs can therefore bring a highly complex range of problems, and the College policy with respect to illegal drugs must accordingly be flexible, so that individual circumstances can be taken into account.

In the context of drugs, the College has a number of occasionally conflicting pastoral, legal and disciplinary duties. College members should bear the following in mind:

- 1) The College wishes to offer the highest quality of pastoral care to its junior members. Offering guidance and advice to junior members who have drugs related concerns should be part of this care. College officers will treat confidentially any information volunteered by students who seek such confidential advice, unless strong legal or healthcare concerns make it imperative that outside authorities are informed. Students should note that the College Chaplain, the College Nurse, and the College Doctors are governed by a professional code of conduct which enables, indeed requires, them to observe strict confidentiality. (The College's Statement on Confidentiality is available at [www.spc.ox.ac.uk/general/Confidentiality.html](http://www.spc.ox.ac.uk/general/Confidentiality.html)).
- 2) While we wish to encourage an atmosphere of openness and understanding at St. Peter's, students must appreciate that the College *cannot* condone illegal activities on its premises. The College is required by law to inform the authorities if it becomes apparent that illegal drugs are stored, sold or consumed on College premises.

Junior members should be aware that the pastoral and disciplinary frameworks for action set out below apply to activities conducted by Junior Members whether they take place on College premises or not and whether they occur in Oxford or not.

## *The Pastoral Framework*

1. **Counselling and Peer-Group support** is available at both the College and University level. Within the College, the JCR operates a system of peer-group support. The names of the current peer-group supporters are displayed on the College Notice Board. The Tutor for Welfare, the Chaplain and the Nurse may also be approached for advice and whenever possible (see above) such consultations will be treated in confidence. In addition there are a number of independent, community based organisations, like Narcotics Anonymous or Libra, which may be able to offer valuable guidance (see appendix for contact details).

2. **Medical Help and confidential advice** may also be obtained from the College Doctors (at the Jericho Health Centre).

## *The Disciplinary Framework*

The University and its constituent colleges must operate within the framework of national legislation. This is reflected in the University Statutes (which are binding on all Junior Members). Statute XI, section 2 (1)(k) makes it a disciplinary offence for members of the University intentionally or recklessly to use, offer, sell, or give to any person drugs the possession or use of which is illegal.

Independently of any criminal prosecutions that may or may not arise from drug related offences, the College will decide on a case-by-case basis whether it is necessary or appropriate to impose its own disciplinary procedures or sanctions on any Junior Member found to use, possess or deal in illegal drugs. Such sanctions may range from a simple warning in the case of a very minor first time offence to, in a severe case, the student being sent down. To judge the severity of a case the College will consider:

- a) to what extent the drugs related offence posed a risk to the health and safety of the individual, to other College members, or other members of the public. The College will therefore take a stern view of individuals found supplying illegal drugs to others or who facilitate, encourage or promote illegal drug use, especially if the drugs involved are considered to be particularly dangerous or addictive. Similarly, administering psychoactive substances to other individuals without their knowledge or consent would be considered a very serious offence. Junior members found guilty of such offences are very likely to be sent down.
- b) to what extent the drug problem interferes, or is likely to interfere, with the individual's academic progress and duties, or with the academic life of the institution as a whole. The College will expect Junior Members who have developed an addiction, psychological dependence or other drug-related problem to take steps to deal with it. Such steps might include attending regular counselling, drug therapy or detoxification programmes, as appropriate. The College cannot force drugs offenders to seek treatment, but a willingness to engage in appropriate therapy and to provide evidence of this will be taken into account in favour of an offender when possible sanctions are considered. Junior Members who have drug dependency problems, and who fail to tackle these problems effectively, or who, despite such attempts do not make proper progress in their studies may face rustication or be sent down.

## *Appendix:*

### **Contact numbers**

Tutor for Welfare                      01865 (2)78892

College Nurse                            01865 (2)78887

Jericho Health Centre                  01865 311234

Narcotics Anonymous                  020 7730 0009  
0845 373 3366

Talk to Frank: National Drugs Helpline 0800 77 66 00

Oxford University Counselling  
Service, 11 Wellington Square 01865 (2)70300