

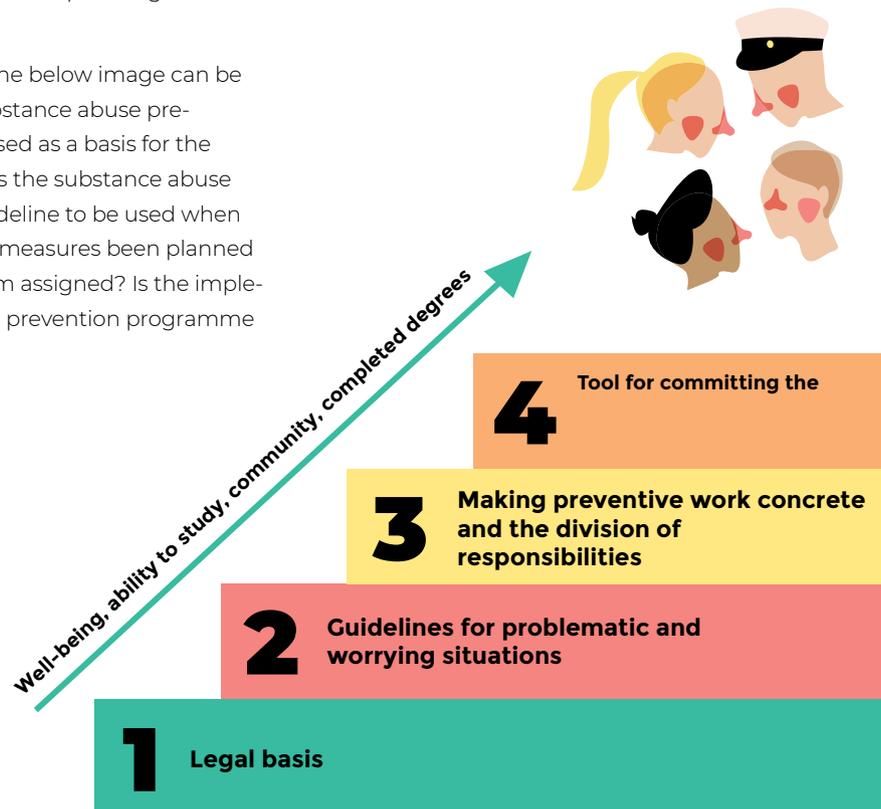
**Recommendations for
university communities for
developing and
implementing student
substance abuse prevention
programmes**



This document looks at the development of a student substance abuse prevention programme from a preventive point of view. Substance abuse prevention aims to prevent harm caused by substance use. Matters presented in a student substance abuse prevention programme can also be included in the university's rules and regulations, a well-being programme or another document. In addition to the recommendations presented here, more information, tools and trainings can be found at eyt.fi/kupla

What is a student substance abuse prevention programme?

- A programme of measures to prevent students' substance abuse and to offer support for intervening in problems.
- Is based on the Universities Act and the Universities of Applied Sciences Act and enables universities to act in different problematic and worrying situations.
- Is recommended to be used as basis for planning and implementing preventive work.
- The stepped model presented in the below image can be used to consider the goals of a substance abuse prevention programme and can be used as a basis for the development of the programme: Is the substance abuse prevention programme only a guideline to be used when problems arise or have preventive measures been planned and responsibilities regarding them assigned? Is the implementation of the substance abuse prevention programme being assessed and monitored?



Goals for the student substance abuse prevention programme

Adapted from the HUUGO program by EHYT Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention, also see The Centre for Occupational Safety

(2018) Päihdeohjelma lisää työhyvinvointia (in Finnish), https://ttk.fi/files/6491/infograafi_A4_pa_ihdeohjelma_3.9.18.pdf

Legal basis

Related to so-called SORA regulations and specifically drug testing. If a drug test certificate is required from a student, the university must have written guidelines, drawn up in cooperation with student welfare actors, for preventing student substance abuse and intervening in substance abuse issues. Otherwise, the student cannot be required to provide a drug test certificate. (See Universities of Applied Sciences Act section 36 and Universities Act section 43 d.).

Guidelines for problematic and worrying situations

Refers to a substance abuse prevention programme focused on situations where there is already worry regarding a student or where problems have already arisen. Measures for preventing harm caused by substance use have not been defined.

Making preventive work concrete and the division of responsibilities

In addition to the above, the substance abuse prevention programme also includes an organisation chart (guidance system) of the parties responsible for offering guidance to students. This way, a student knows early on where they can get help and guidance regarding studies, maintaining the ability to study as well as for substance abuse and mental health issues. The programme includes a practical description of how the university prevents harm caused by substance use and who is responsible, for example, for early support and broaching the subject. The responsibilities have been divided between the personnel, student organisations, student tutors,

student union and students. The programme revolves around well-being and early caring. The university offers training for how to broach worries regarding substance abuse.

Tool for committing the university community, monitoring and assessment

The student substance abuse prevention programme is monitored and assessed regularly, it is a part of the orientation of new employees and students and everyone understands their role in the implementation of the programme. The personnel, student tutors, and student organisations are given training or, at the very least, reminded of the programme annually. This ensures that the substance abuse prevention programme is also implemented in practice.



Where to start if the university has no student substance abuse prevention programme?

- Universities can use the model drawn up in 2014 in cooperation between the Universities Finland UNIFI, the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS). The model was updated in 2019 by the OHA forum, UNIFI, FSHS and SYL, and can be found here (in Finnish): <https://www.unifi.fi/toiminta/julkaisut/>. When drawing up the substance abuse prevention programme it is important to adapt it to the university's structures and operating models.
- Both the students' union and the local student health service/FSHS must be involved from the very beginning in drawing up and developing the programme.
- The programme should include the following parts:
 - Substances (which substances the programme concerns) and the attitudes towards them during studies
 - A description of the steering system at the level of an organisational chart (which parties guide the student and in which issues)
 - Measures for preventing harm caused by substance use and the responsibility of implementing them
 - Broaching worries
 - Guidelines for situations that require the student to be referred onwards
 - Seeking help and studying after treatment
 - Drug tests, right to study and suitability to work in the field
 - Contact information of support services external to the university (self-help sites, helplines, information services, online discussion forums, peer groups etc.)



Developing a substance abuse prevention programme

– questions to consider

Style and tone of text

- Who is the text written for?
- What does the programme look like from the student's point of view? Is the student seen as the target of an action or an active participant and member of the university community?
- Does the programme refer to "youth" or "young adults"? Is it taken into account that university students are a heterogeneous group?
- Does the programme take into account the community aspect of substance use in addition to the possible health aspect?

Goal of the substance abuse prevention programme

- Does the goal defined in the beginning of the programme remain clear throughout? If furthering students' well-being and preventing harm caused by substance use are established as the goals in the beginning, the programme should offer more than just tools for problematic situations.
- What is the attitude towards substances? Is the goal of the programme defined simply as no substance use by students or is there a more detailed description of the attitude towards substance use in different situations related to studies? When and where is there a zero tolerance for substance use (e.g. campus premises in study situations, during working days of practical training periods, when conducting tasks included in the tutoring agreement?) Is it mentioned that substance use during leisure time can also impact studies and the ability to study (impact on

sleep, studying when hung over, what social negative effects can be related to substance use etc?)

Contents of the substance abuse prevention programme

- Which substances does the programme concern? Is there guidance related to tobacco and nicotine products in addition to alcohol and drugs?
- Does the programme take into consideration procedures of practical training periods? What kind of instructions are given to the training locations? How are the students informed about the training locations' substance abuse prevention programmes?
- Does the programme take into consideration practices during student exchanges?
- Has the programme been translated to all of university's teaching languages and has information about the programme been shared in all of these languages?
- Does the programme describe how the student is supported during and after treatment? What is done to facilitate returning to studies? How can studies be continued during treatment?
- Does the programme mention the contact information of substance abuse contact person/persons?
- Does the programme include information on student well-being and substance use in the specific university and on a national level (e.g. the university's own survey regarding the students' attitude towards substances and well-being and The Finnish Student Health Survey)?

How is the substance abuse prevention programme visible in everyday studies and guidance? – Tips for implementing the programme

Informing about the programme

- All groups of new students are introduced to the student substance abuse prevention programme. During orientation, the student must get to know the programme independently and answer an electronic questionnaire about its contents. A description of the programme and instructions on how to find it are available in the study guide/web-site/intranet.
- Information about the programme is also provided regularly to university personnel. For example annually.
- The university/faculty/program has prepared concise presentations on the substance abuse prevention programme for different target audiences (students, student tutors, personnel.)
- The student substance abuse prevention programme is easy to find for both the students and the personnel on the university's/unit's/faculty's website.

Orientation and training

- Train especially key actors (personnel, student tutors etc.) and explain what their role is in implementing the substance abuse prevention programme.
- Support members of the university community in broaching the subject and offer practical advice for everyone and training especially for personnel, student tutors and student organisations.

Areas of responsibility and responsible people

- There is at least one substance abuse contact person at the university who coordinates the practical implementation of the substance abuse prevention programme.
- Other areas of responsibility and cooperation between them is also defined as clearly as possible (e.g. the role of the work group on student well-being, personnel, tutors and student organisation in preventing harm caused by substance use).

Cooperation with the students' union and student organisations

- There are regular discussions with the student organisations and the students' union regarding the culture of substance use and its role in tutoring activities and student events. Encourage the students' union and student organisations to inform students locally and nationally on good practices for preventing harm caused by substance use.



Tips for the substance use contact person

As the substance use contact person, you can further the fulfilment of the programme in the following practical ways:

Informing about the programme

- Check that the programme is easy to find for both the personnel and the students, for example on the website.
- Make sure that the programme is introduced at new students' orientation events. You can prepare a concise PowerPoint presentation for this (a few slides summarizing the information that is most important for students and a link to where to programme can be found.)
- Make sure that the programme is also introduced at personnel and student tutor training events/orientation. You can also prepare a presentation for the trainer to use in these events.

Surveying training needs and coordinating training

- The guidance and teaching personnel of the university should have good basic skills for broaching their worries. Has the university/unit/faculty organised training for personnel on broaching the subject? Could training be organised? As the substance use contact person, you can survey training needs and possibilities.
- How are substances taken into consideration in the university's/faculty's student tutor training? Are there conversations regarding the role of substance use in tutoring activities and what the tutors can do if they become worried about the substance use of a new

student or a colleague? As the substance use contact person, you can ensure that these topics are covered in tutor training.

- The university can also offer training on broaching the subject to student organisation actors.

Coordinating monitoring, assessment and cooperation

- Monitoring the implementation of the substance abuse prevention programme can be, for example: Conducting a substance use attitude/well-being survey at regular intervals and analysing the results. Conducting introductions to the substance abuse prevention programme and compiling statistics about these. Conducting training on the contents of the substance abuse prevention programme and broaching substance use and compiling statistics about these.
- Making sure that the implementation of the substance abuse prevention programme is monitored and assessed regularly by, eg. the work group on student well-being. This also allows for assessing possible development needs (eg. the need for training personnel/student organisation actors.)
- When assessing the implementation of the substance abuse prevention programme, make sure that representatives of the student union or student/faculty organisations (as well as local student health service) are present.
- It is important for the substance abuse contact persons of different institutions to keep in touch nationally in order to facilitate the development of operational models, student substance abuse prevention programmes and to offer peer support.

