

**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

**‘A journey to harm reduction’ with
Manchester Metropolitan
University and Students’ Union -
Reflections on the 23/24 Audit**

Mishal Saeed & Hannah Snape



Overview

- Key achievements from the Audit
- The Start of the Journey
- The approach taken
- What was the data telling us?
- KPI setting



- Milestones
- Challenges and Opportunities
- The Audit days
- Top Tips to tackle the accreditation work

Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester Metropolitan Students' Union achieve Drug and Alcohol Impact accreditation!



“I am so proud of the work we have done this year, working with our students to talk more openly about the impact of drug and alcohol use, and driving initiatives like our new ‘public living room’ which is designed specifically to be an alcohol-free space for student socialising.”

(Leila Enoki, Students’ Union President)

Key achievements from the audit

Score: 304/375

Collaboration, Commitment, and Intent - 61/68

Highlighted our harm reduction commitment, the work of the **Substance Use Policy Group**, and progress on our **action plan** and self-set **KPIs**.

Policy and Operations - 39/44

Recognized the strength of our **policies** and **support pathways** for students, both within the University and the Students' Union.

Self-Defined Criteria

Showcased the innovative work of MANDRAKE, academic-led activities, student-led research and work placements focussed on substance use. Achieved 20/20 for the two case studies which were recognised as a unique strength of Manchester Met's work in this space.

How we work

An overall thematic strength in our approach, with professionals, academics, students, and external partners working together in partnership on harm reduction.



Key achievements from the audit

Engaging Students in Drug and Alcohol Education

Over 600 students participated in the Drink Rethink programme; 200 society and sports committee members trained and a significant increase in participation in the Student Drugs and Alcohol Survey this year.

Partnership with SU & Active Student Involvement

Students played an active role in shaping drug and alcohol policies—participating in research, placements, and hands-on work with the Drug and Alcohol Impact programme.

Strengthening Community Partnerships

Strong partnerships across Greater Manchester have created a foundation for future initiatives to improve student safety citywide. CGL drop-in sessions offer specialist support for students.

Collaborating with the Academic Community

Effective collaboration with academic projects like MANDRAKE and GM Trends provides students with expert insights and current strategies to tackle drug-related harms.



The Start of the Journey: A Commitment to Harm Reduction

Manchester Metropolitan became an early adopter of harm reduction, starting its journey in 2021.

Developing the Partnership & Preparing for the Audit

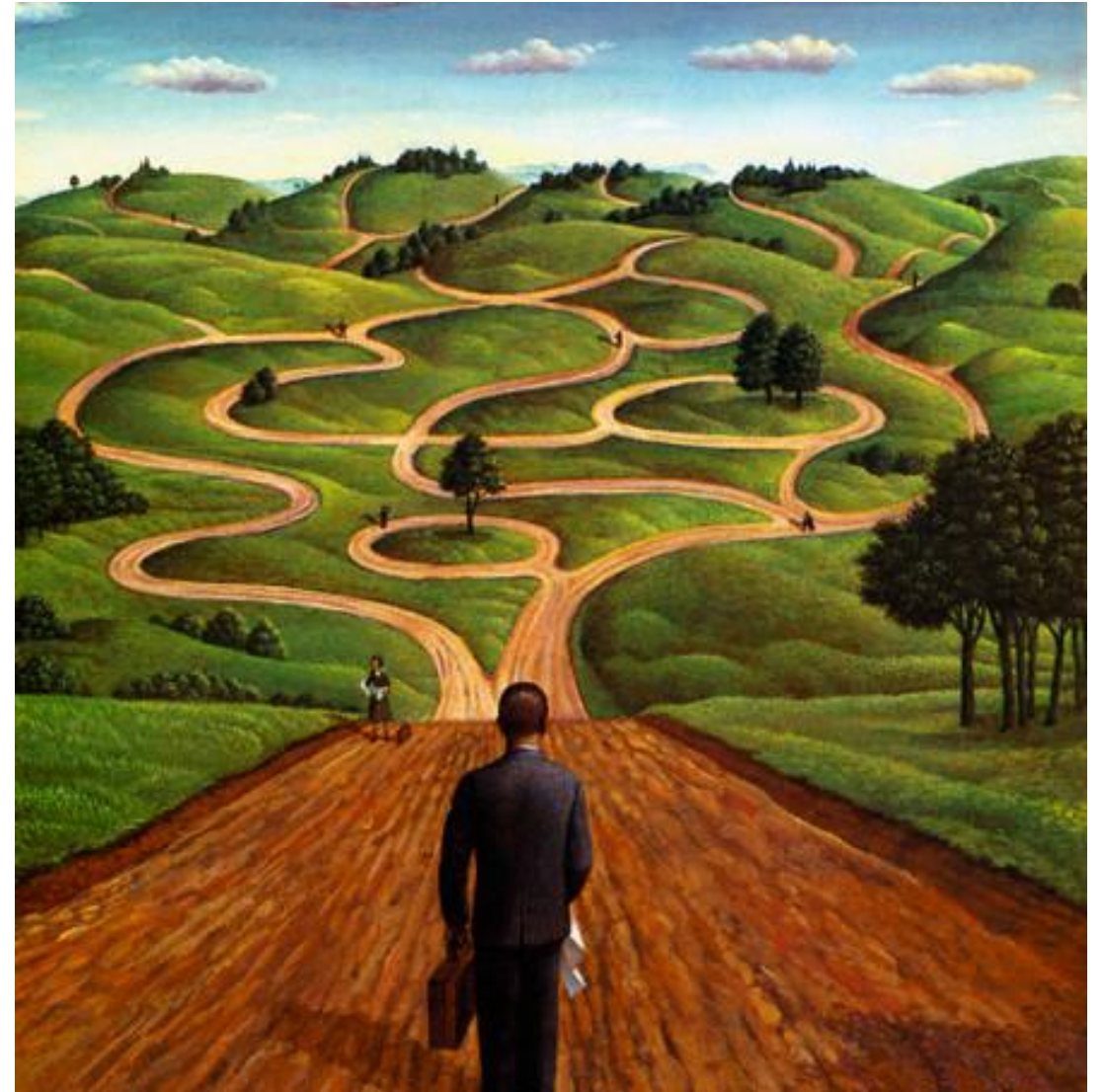
- The journey begins with opening the workbook and identifying key individuals—senior staff buy-in was crucial.
- Established a Steering Group with clear governance, responsibilities (Terms of Reference, Ops Plan, Annual Report), and a core project team.

Planning the work for the Accreditation

- Followed a step-by-step process, breaking down criteria to identify areas of progress.
- Prioritized and allocated leads for each criterion.
- Set milestones and deadlines to guide the work over two years.

Collaboration & Involvement

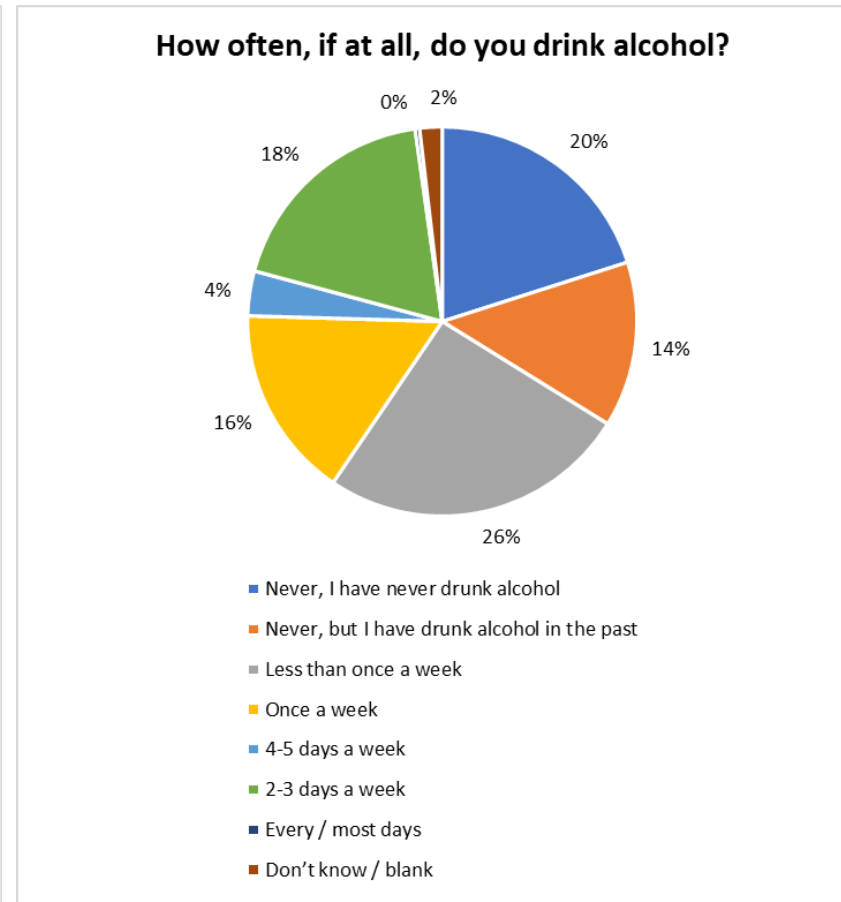
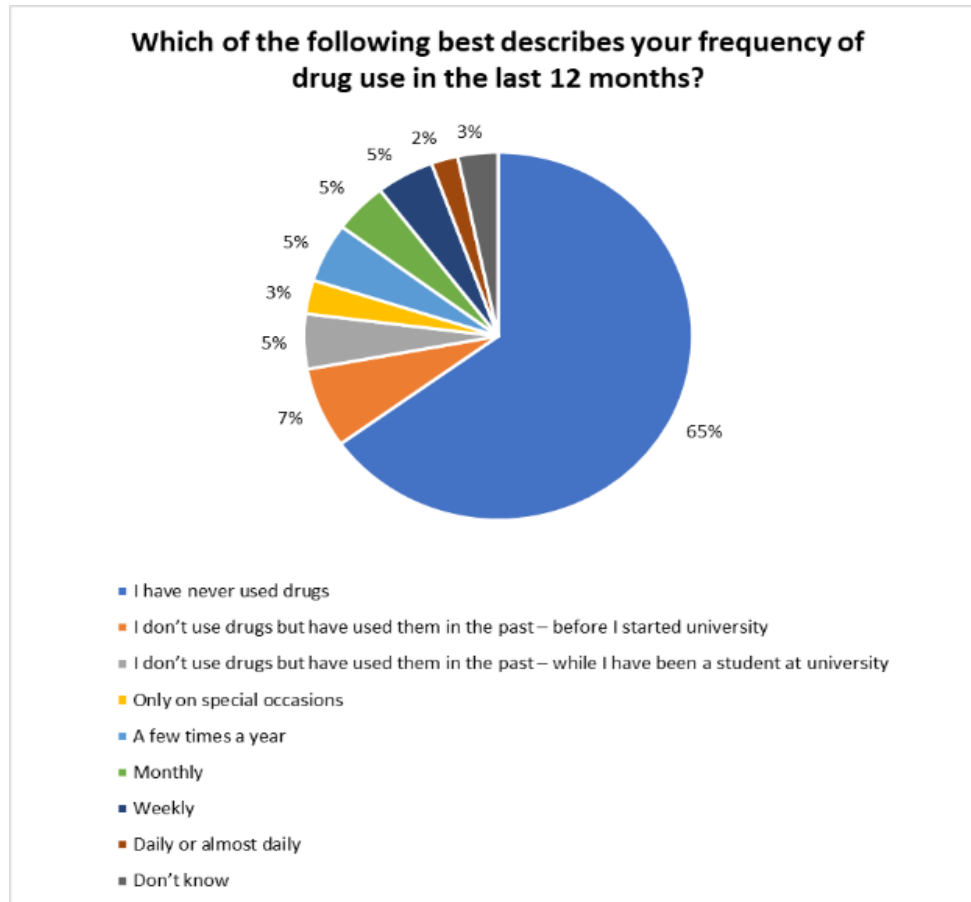
- Engaged the institution and Students' Union at every stage, ensuring alignment and ownership of the process.



SOS-UK survey data

In 2023, 269 students completed the SOS-UK Drug and Alcohol Awareness Survey, in 2024 this increased to 545 students. Increasing our understanding of student perceptions, beliefs and behaviours on these issues is fundamental to progressing our work.

- Most respondents (65%) have never used drugs, compared to 62% national average. All other responses are relatively evenly distributed.
- Most respondents (76%) drink alcohol once a week or less, compared to 41% national average.



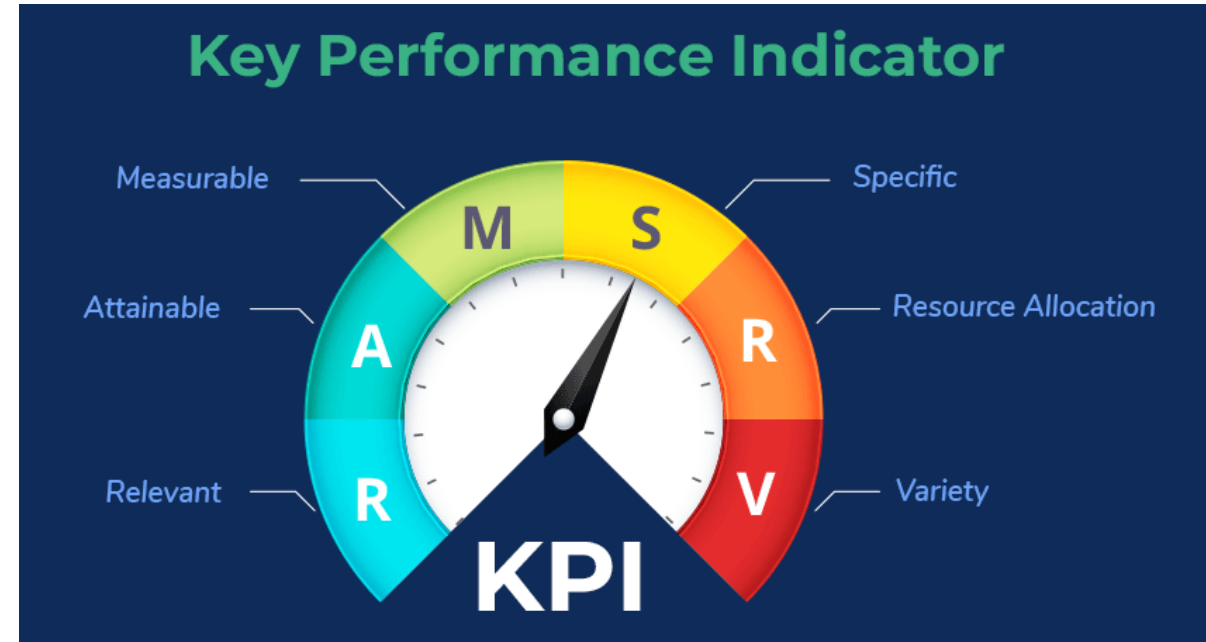
Key Milestones

- **Published harm reduction commitment statement** to guide all efforts.
- Partnered with **CGL** to provide **specialist, confidential drop-in support** for students.
- Implemented **policy changes** to integrate harm reduction across services, such as abolition of fines.
- Collaborated with the **Students' Union, academic reps,** and external partners like **CGL, MANDRAKE,** and **Manchester Student Homes.**
- Engaged **student associates** and **peer guides** in harm reduction initiatives.
- Made **harm reduction the default approach** for student drug use incidents, with signposting to support services (CMHW, accommodation, security, SU).
- Developed an **impact evaluation approach,** setting **KPIs** to track progress.
- Delivered **staff training** on managing disclosures.
- Supported **student-led research, scholarships,** and **job opportunities.**
- **Achieved SOS-UK accreditation** for our work.
- This success was a **team effort** involving the University, the Students' Union, and external partners.



KPIs

- **Reduced drug/alcohol-related anti-social behavior incidents** by 5% per year.
- **Reduced ambulance/emergency service call-outs** related to drug/alcohol use by 5% per year.
- **Increased student participation in the SOS-UK national survey** by 10% per year.
- **Increased harm reduction conversations** in Halls of Residence by 5% per year.
- **Increased student use of harm reduction support services** by 5% per year.
- **Increased student engagement in non-alcoholic events** at the Student Union by 10% per year.
- **Enhanced staff confidence** in handling disclosures and interventions, with **70% self-reported confidence** improvement post-training.
- **Increased awareness** of the University's harm reduction activities, with a **10% boost in overall reach**.



Challenges and opportunities

Challenges

- **Communication:** Public stigma around drugs, especially from a corporate perspective.
- **Student Engagement:** Initial difficulty in getting students involved.
- **Evidence Gathering:** Encouraging consistent tracking and reporting was time-consuming; became known as the "serial evidence chaser."
- Key questions:
 - How to onboard the staff who were hesitant or not familiar with harm reduction?
 - How to ensure harm reduction stays a priority amidst competing agendas?

Solutions

- **Senior committee approval:** Worked with Accommodation, SU and internal comms rep; found common ground with the university comms strategy.
- **Boosted student engagement:** Worked in partnership with the SU and Peer Guides to improve student engagement with this agenda.
- **Project management tools:** Utilised evidence tracker; Ops Plan and focussed meetings to stay organised.
- **Training and Outreach:** Delivered training, outreach, and shared SOS-UK resources.
- **Governance integration:** Ensured harm reduction remains high on the agenda through University and SU governance channels, using the Annual Report at PSLT and Drug Testing Paper at SU Senior Committee.



The audit days

Audit Experience: Key Takeaways

- **Smooth Process** overall, with one minor issue (power sockets), as much of the groundwork was done in advance.
- **Set a date early** to plan for admin, logistics, and auditor recruitment—this helps spread out the workload.
- **Engage students early**—involve those already active in interventions and projects, and connect with academics to share and champion the audit opportunity. We had a competitive **application process** to recruit an engaged student audit team.
- **Clear communication** and **reminders** (SOS-UK templates helped).
- **Lunch, refreshments, and cake** were appreciated by students.
- The **audit report** is a valuable tool—use it strategically within the partnership.
- **Celebrate successes** and leverage the audit to raise awareness of ongoing and future efforts.



Top Tips to tackle the accreditation work

Interventions Criteria Process

- Conduct an annual mapping exercise to identify where current efforts meet criteria and where new initiatives are needed.
- Early planning on who, what, where, and how is key.

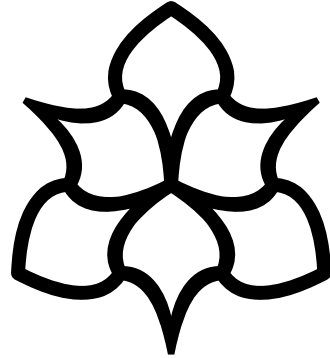
Tracking Evidence

- Set **mini deadlines** in the calendar and a **final deadline** for submission.
- Assign **multiple reviewers** to draft and approve.
- Regular **progress review meetings** to identify gaps and ensure alignment.

Making the Process Stress-Free

- **Stick to deadlines**—consistency reduces last-minute stress.
- Involve others in **writing, reviewing,** and providing **feedback**.
- Consult on unclear criteria—use **SOS-UK support** for monthly check-ins, pre-audit guidance, and on-campus support.
- **Review feedback** regularly to ensure you're on track with key points.





**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

Any questions?

