Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Alcohol Policy Guiding Framework

Harm Reduction Guidance, Sample Policy Language, and Implementation Considerations

A common, evidence-informed approach to reducing alcohol-related harm and supporting safer, healthier campus communities.



Prepared by: The Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Alcohol Policy Working Group co-chaired by Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Nova Scotia; and Elizabeth Yeo, Vice-President, Students, St. Francis Xavier University. The Guiding Framework was endorsed by the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP), September 9, 2026.

Introduction from the Co-Chairs

Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions share a commitment to student wellbeing, belonging and safer campus communities. Reducing alcohol-related harm contributes to that commitment and requires evidence-informed approaches that recognize the different environments in which students live, learn and socialize.

Endorsed by the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) on September 9, 2026, the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Alcohol Policy Guiding Framework represents an important collaborative achievement across institutions with different campus contexts, governance arrangements and operations. It establishes a shared direction for reducing alcohol-related harm while respecting those differences.

The Framework brings together research, public-health expertise, institutional experience and student-association input. As a voluntary, evidence-informed resource, it supports institutional policy review, local adaptation and sector-level progress. Its practical approach recognizes feasibility and campus flexibility while preserving the evidence-informed recommendations that underpin meaningful harm reduction.

Student-association contributions informed substantive revisions and brought important perspectives on governance, student-led spaces and practical implementation. Continued dialogue will be essential as institutions and student associations work within their respective responsibilities to advance student health, safety and belonging.

We thank the members of the Nova Scotia Alcohol/Substance Harm Reduction Working Group, Dr. Kara Thompson and the SHEA Lab team, senior student-affairs leaders, student representatives and institutional partners who contributed their expertise and experience.

We look forward to continued partnership as institutions and students use this resource to strengthen practice and learn from experience.

Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Nova Scotia — Co-Chair

Elizabeth Yeo, Vice-President, Students, St. Francis Xavier University — Co-Chair

Co-Chair Perspectives

"Vibrant campus communities, strong social connections and a sense of belonging are important to student wellbeing. So is reducing alcohol-related harm. We should not have to choose between vibrant campus social life and safer student communities. This Framework brings Nova Scotia's universities together around an evidence-informed approach to examining alcohol use and the norms and practices that shape it. It recognizes student associations and unions as active partners in strengthening policies and practices while preserving the social experiences that enrich university life."

— Elizabeth Yeo, Vice-President, Students, St. Francis Xavier University; Co-Chair

"Reducing alcohol-related harm requires more than individual awareness. The environments in which students live and socialize also have a significant impact. This Framework gives universities practical, evidence-informed guidance to review and strengthen policies and practices that reduce the risks associated with the use of alcohol, with flexibility to adapt implementation to their individual campus circumstances."

— Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Nova Scotia; Co-Chair

Contents

Context Statement *2*

Executive Summary *2*

How to Use This Guiding Framework *3*

Guiding Principles *4*

Evidence-Informed Alcohol Policy Guidance *6*

Sample Policy Language for Institutional Review and Adaptation *7*

1. Responsibility and Implementation 7
2. Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm on Campus 8
3. Training and Education 9
4. Advertising 10
5. Sponsorship 11
6. Licensed Establishments and Events 12
7. Policy Compliance and Violations 15
8. Examples of Recommended Harm Reduction Programming and Initiatives 16

Appendix A: Implementation Guidance for Institutional Application *17*

Appendix B: Supplementary Planning and Implementation Resources *19*

Appendix C: Evaluation Considerations *21*

Appendix D: Framework Implementation Workbook *22*

Appendix E: Definitions *23*

Appendix F: Acknowledgements and Membership Nova Scotia Alcohol Harms Working Group *25*

Context Statement

This Campus Alcohol Policy Guiding Framework has been developed as part of a broader provincial initiative to promote healthier, safer, and more inclusive campus environments across Nova Scotia's postsecondary institutions.

In partnership with the **Chief Medical Officer of Health**, the **Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP)** has reestablished the **Committee on Post-Secondary Student Health & Wellness**. A key initiative of this committee is the formation of the **Nova Scotia Alcohol/Substance Harm Reduction Working Group**, which aims to foster collaboration and innovation among institutions in addressing alcohol and substance-related harms.

This Framework draws directly from the findings of the *Creating a Culture of Alcohol Awareness and Prevention Report* and builds upon the work of the **SHEA Lab's Campus Alcohol Policy Project**, led by Dr. Kara Thompson. Together, this work provides a Canadian and Atlantic Canadian evidence base for providing guidance on alcohol policy in postsecondary settings.

The Guiding Framework reflects a harm reduction and public health lens and translates evidence into practical policy language for institutional review, adaptation, and implementation over time. Institutions may also draw on complementary postsecondary research and planning resources to support local implementation, prioritization, evaluation, and alignment with broader student wellbeing and culture-change goals.

Executive Summary

The Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Alcohol Policy Guiding Framework provides common evidence-informed guidance for strengthening campus alcohol policy across Nova Scotia's post-secondary sector. It is grounded in harm reduction, public health, student wellbeing, and the evidence base developed through the SHEA Lab's Campus Alcohol Policy Project. It is not a uniform provincial alcohol policy; institutions may adopt, adapt, phase, or sequence implementation in ways that reflect local context while maintaining alignment with the Framework's harm-reduction objectives. Meaningful system-level change does not require identical implementation across campuses. If every institution makes meaningful progress across the major domains of the Framework, even with variation in local approach, this would represent a significant shift in the conditions, norms, and practices that shape student alcohol use.

The Guiding Framework focuses on major policy domains associated with alcohol-related harm, including alcohol availability, pricing, promotion, sponsorship, safer service, event

review, residence and campus life, education, harm-reduction programming, and coordinated oversight.

Institutions are encouraged to apply the Framework in ways that reflect local context, governance, licensing obligations, risk environment, and implementation capacity. The sample policy language is intended as adaptable guidance rather than a mandatory template.

How to Use This Guiding Framework

This Framework supports institutions in reviewing and strengthening evidence-informed campus alcohol policy using a harm reduction and public health lens. The evidence base for the policy domains and sample policy language is summarized in the SHEA Lab report, *Strengthening Alcohol Policies on Atlantic Canadian Campuses*, which should be used alongside this Framework during local policy review and implementation.

The sample policy language is intentionally specific and, in some areas, prescriptive because research identifies policy approaches associated with reduced alcohol-related harms, especially in relation to pricing, availability, promotion, and safer service practices. It is provided as guidance, not as a uniform requirement to be adopted verbatim by every institution. Institutions may determine how best to implement the Framework based on local context, governance, licensing obligations, operational capacity, student needs, risk environment, and implementation readiness. Where a measure is adapted, phased, or determined not to apply, institutions are encouraged to document the rationale to support policy governance, transparency, institutional learning, and future review. The optional Framework Implementation Workbook can support this process.

The Framework is intended to support progressive alignment over time. Some institutions may already operate in lower-risk environments with limited alcohol availability or fewer alcohol-related concerns in campus-operated settings. In these cases, existing approaches may remain suitable where they reflect the harm reduction intent of this Framework.

Nothing in this Guiding Framework alters the legal independence or governance structures of student associations or student association-operated licensed establishments, nor does it override the arrangements currently in place at each institution. At the same time, where alcohol-related activities occur on institutional property, in campus venues, under or alongside institutional liquor licence arrangements, or through institutional approval, venue, safety, or risk-management processes, institutions may apply expectations necessary to meet legal, licensing, property, insurance, safety, and harm-reduction responsibilities. The Framework encourages collaborative alignment among institutions,

student associations, licensed venue operators, and campus partners to support shared harm-reduction goals and consistent expectations across campus environments. Before adopting a measure that would materially affect a student association or licensed venue operator, institutions should assess the local context and work collaboratively with the affected parties to determine an appropriate implementation approach consistent with the Framework's harm-reduction objectives.

Appendices and optional tools may support prioritization, phased implementation, review, and continuous improvement.

Guiding Principles

The Guiding Framework is grounded primarily in public health and harm reduction evidence. At the same time, campus alcohol policy is implemented within a broader Student Services and Student Affairs context that requires attention to student wellbeing, belonging, safety, development, campus culture, governance, operational realities, and unintended consequences. The following principles should guide institutional interpretation and application of the Guiding Framework, including decisions about prioritization, sequencing, local adaptation, and collaboration with campus partners:

Harm Reduction and Research-Informed Guidance
Alcohol policy should address structural drivers of high-risk consumption and support safer decision-making.

Student Wellbeing, Belonging, and Inclusion
Alcohol policy should support inclusive campus environments, social connection, and student wellbeing.

Regulated Campus Environments as Protective Settings
Licensed and other regulated campus settings can support safer social interaction, supervision, responsible service, and early intervention.

Shared Stewardship and Student Partnership
Institutions, student associations, and campus partners share responsibility for shaping healthier campus alcohol environments through coordinated policy, programming, and student engagement. Where a proposed measure may materially affect a student association's governance, licensed operations, programming, sponsorship arrangements, revenue, or existing agreements, the affected parties should be **engaged early and meaningfully enough to inform the design, sequencing, implementation, and review of the local approach**. This engagement does not limit the legal, licensing, property, safety, or risk-management responsibilities of any party.

Context-Sensitive and Phased Implementation
Institutions are encouraged to move toward stronger alignment over time in ways that reflect local context, governance, capacity, and operational realities.

Attention to Unintended Consequences and Institutional Learning
Institutions should consider whether campus alcohol restrictions could unintentionally shift drinking to less regulated settings, such as private residences or off-campus gatherings. The goal should be to reduce alcohol-related harm overall, not simply move risk from one setting to another.

Preamble

Campus cultures and student experiences vary across institutions.

Alcohol policy is one component of a broader institutional approach to student wellbeing, belonging, inclusion, and safer campus environments. Regulated campus settings, including licensed campus spaces, can support safer social interaction, responsible service, supervision, and early intervention.

Reducing alcohol-related harm requires policy, programming, residence life, campus and broader community life, and attention to the conditions that shape student experience and community norms. Institutions may also support peer leadership, student-led initiatives, and community-building approaches that promote connection, informed decision-making, and lower-risk social engagement.

As developmental institutions, universities play a role in supporting informed and lower-risk approaches to alcohol use that may contribute to student wellbeing during university and healthier behaviours beyond university.

A Note on Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health (2023):

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health recommends that people consider reducing alcohol use. Current guidance identifies:

1–2 drinks per week as low risk;

3–6 drinks per week as moderate risk; and

7 or more drinks per week as increasingly high risk.

This guidance represents an important public health shift that will take time to integrate into campus norms. Institutions can support students by providing clear information while promoting informed, lower-risk choices within a developmental and community-based context.

Evidence-Informed Alcohol Policy Guidance

Alcohol harm reduction is supported through a combination of education, policy and enforcement, environmental strategies, and safer service practices. Research summarized in this Guiding Framework identifies the following factors as most strongly associated with increased alcohol consumption and related harm, along with policy approaches associated with reduced risk:

- **Pricing structures influence consumption**, with lower prices and volume-based **discounts associated with increased alcohol use and related harm.**
- **Availability and access shape drinking patterns**, including hours of service, frequency of availability, and density of alcohol outlets.
- **Promotional practices can drive high-risk consumption**, particularly those that incentivize rapid or high-volume drinking.
- **Consumption is influenced by the broader drinking environment**, including norms, expectations, and the conditions under which alcohol is served.
- **Safer service practices reduce harm**, including limits on quantity per transaction, refusal of service to intoxicated individuals, and the availability of food and non-alcoholic options.
- **Lower-risk alternatives can influence consumption patterns**, including the availability and visibility of non-alcoholic and lower-strength beverages.

The sample policy language below translates this evidence into adaptable guidance for institutional review. Key terms are defined in the Appendix E: Definitions.

Guidance on Policy Scope and Purpose

This policy framework is intended to:

- Apply to all members of the institutional community: faculty, staff, students, employees of any companies working on institutional property, visitors, and guests.
- Support accountability for institution organizations, teams, clubs, and individuals for their actions both on campus and when representing the institution off campus.
- Complement and reinforce applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws regarding the use of alcohol.
- Support awareness and understanding of provincial and federal regulations related to alcohol.
- Support the safe sale, service, and consumption of alcohol in ways that do not harm or disrupt the teaching, learning, employment, and living environment of members of the institutional community or its operations.
- Advance harm reduction while supporting student experience, belonging, safety, and community relations.

Institutions may consider supporting the following approaches:

- Promote informed and responsible attitudes and choices regarding alcohol use, including awareness and knowledge of associated risks and harms.
- Ensure that social and community life activities are not solely defined by alcohol.
- Recognize the importance of student-led efforts in fostering a safe, supportive, and informed campus environment.
- Provide evidence-based prevention programming.
- Provide referral to support services for students that are struggling with substance use.
- Work collaboratively with local health services, police services of jurisdiction, and community partners to support safety, alcohol-related emergency response, and preparation for high-risk events. Make active bystander training available to students to support peer care and intervention. Respect the needs of those who abstain from alcohol use or are underage and promote acceptance and availability of alternate options.
- Gather and share data on student substance use and related harms, where appropriate. Support the development of campus environments that promote connection, inclusion, and safer social engagement.

Sample Policy Language for Institutional Review and Adaptation

The following sample language may be adopted or adapted through each institution's usual policy approval and legal review processes. Where adopted, it is intended to function as enforceable institutional policy.

1. Responsibility and Implementation

University Alcohol Advisory Committee:

Student Affairs, Residence Manager, Conference/Event Operations Manager, Faculty, Human Rights and Equity Services, Security Services, License Holder, Student Association President, a representative from the local Health Authority, Health and Counselling Representative, Athletics Representative [Recommended committee representatives].

The responsible coordinating body, committee, or designated lead should support the initial development and regular review of the policy in accordance with institutional policy review processes, while ensuring the policy remains accessible and understandable (recommended Flesch reading score of 6 or lower). Institutions may choose to review the policy on a regular cycle, such as every three to five years, or in accordance with existing institutional policy renewal processes.

2. Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm on Campus

Sample Policy Language:

a. Alcohol on Campus:
- As per Nova Scotia alcohol laws, the consumption of alcoholic beverages in unlicensed public spaces on campus is not permitted.
- Delivery of alcohol to campus residence buildings is not permitted.
- The sale and consumption of alcohol at campus sporting facilities is permitted under the following conditions:
  - Limit of two drinks per person at one time.
  - Sales are not permitted in the final period of play (i.e. 3rd period, 4th quarter, overtime).
  - Designate sections of the facility as alcohol-free.
  - Those serving alcohol must have responsible beverage training.
  - All patrons must show government- issued ID.
  - Security must be present to monitor crowd behaviour.
  - Alcohol harm reduction signage must be visible throughout the facility.
- The sale and consumption of alcohol at on-campus student recruitment events is not permitted.
- Pub crawls and drinking games are prohibited on campus.

> ***Campus Implementation Considerations: Coordinated Oversight and Collaboration***
>
> Institutions should support a coordinated approach to alcohol policy development, review, and implementation involving relevant campus and community stakeholders, including student affairs, student associations, residence life, campus safety, event services, communications, licensed venue operators, and other campus partners.
>
> Oversight may be provided through a formal committee, existing coordinating body, or designated institutional lead. This body or lead may also support use of the Guiding Framework Implementation Workbook by reviewing current practices, identifying local priorities, documenting rationale, and engaging stakeholders where policy changes affect licensed venues or student programming.

b. Alcohol in Residence:
- Students have the option of living in a substance-free residence or on a substance-free floor.
- Students are expected to comply with alcohol policies outlined in the residence code of conduct [insert link].
- Institution-led residence programming is substance-free. This applies to programming organized or delivered by the institution, including Residence Life

activities, and does not prohibit lawful student behaviour in accordance with residence policies. Students who are of legal age may consume alcohol where permitted under institutional and residence rules.

c. All institution-led orientation programming and residence transition programming during the first two weeks of term will be alcohol and substance-free. This applies to activities organized or delivered by the institution and is intended to support safe transition, inclusion, and early community-building. It does not alter residence rules governing lawful alcohol use by students who are of legal age. Student association programming involving students of legal drinking age during this period remains subject to applicable law, liquor licence requirements, institutional rules, venue agreements, risk-management expectations, and local approval processes where those apply. Institutions and student associations should work collaboratively to ensure that such programming is consistent with the harm-reduction intent of this recommendation.

d. Good Samaritan/Amnesty Policy**:** Students who call for help during an alcohol-related emergency are not subject to disciplinary actions, provided the intention is to safeguard the well-being of themselves or others.

3. Training and Education

Sample Policy Language:

a. Incoming students are required to complete substance use harm reduction education.
b. Alcohol harm reduction messages are required to be displayed on campus including licensed establishments, residence, and at any event where alcohol is served.
c. All institutional managers, staff, and volunteers who are serving alcohol must:
    i. Complete provincial safe service program [xxxxxxx] within thirty (30) days of commencing employment. Prior to certification, new staff must be supervised by certified staff.
    ii. Renew training every [xx] years.
    iii. Complete first aid training.
    iv. Complete bystander training.
    v. [Other training].

d. Residence Staff must complete:
    i. Complete bystander training.
    ii. Complete first aid training.
    iii. Complete mental health first aid.
    iv. Alcohol incident response protocols.
    v. [Other training].

4. Advertising

For the purposes of this policy, advertising refers to intentional promotional efforts by alcohol businesses, brands and companies.

Sample Policy Language:

a. Advertising Regulations

- Regulations related to advertising and marketing of alcohol apply to:
  - All forms of alcohol advertising, which include print media, email promotion, digital platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), broadcasting media, and promotional items.
  - Licensed establishments and all licensed events and activities on or off campus or hosted or affiliated with [institution name]; and organizations, groups, or individuals using [institution name] facilities.
- Advertisements from alcohol producers or distributors and licensed establishments not owned or operated by the institution or a student association are prohibited.
- The institution reserves the right to remove any promotions or advertising that contravenes any other policy of the institution and/or is deemed disruptive to the institution's operations, teaching, learning, employment and living environment.
- No organization or individual (student, staff or faculty) may distribute clothing, posters, or other promotional items with an alcoholic beverage trademark or logo.

Campus Implementation Considerations: Promoting Events Without Centering Alcohol

Campus-facing promotion may focus on the purpose or experience of an event, including themes, entertainment, food, atmosphere, inclusive participation, and non-alcoholic options, without making alcohol the main reason to attend. This does not prohibit promotion of approved events at licensed campus venues, provided promotion complies with institutional rules and applicable law. Where these recommendations would affect student association programming, sponsorship arrangements or licensed operations, the institution and affected student association should discuss the local implications and implementation approach before decisions are finalized.

b. Advertising Content Regulation

- All advertising of alcohol must adhere to the regulations and rules set out by the [Respective Provincial Alcohol and Gaming Commission], the [Respective Provincial Liquor License Act], and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Regulations.
- Advertising must not promote substance use as the focus of the event. Advertising must not promote or depict high-risk alcohol consumption behaviours. The following advertising content is prohibited:

        - Contests, giveaways, or promotional incentives that are contingent upon alcohol purchase, alcohol consumption, or participation in alcohol-related activities.
        - Use of the terms synonymous with binge or high-risk drinking (e.g., “all you can drink,” “drink till you drop”).
        - Promotion of drinking games, keg parties or any other type of promotion or inducement of binge drinking is prohibited.
        - Images of people consuming alcohol consistent with federal regulations.
        - Images that are deemed to be discriminatory, or sexist, or targeted toward specific groups.
    - All forms of advertising must include the text “19 yrs. and older” unless it is a wet/dry event.
    - No alcohol ads are permitted in residence, on institutionally affiliated social media channels, or in classrooms.

c. Monitoring Compliance
    - [Insert Personnel] are responsible for ensuring these advertising regulations are complied with.
    - Random monthly spot-checks of social media sites of on-campus and institutional bulletin boards or digital screens will be conducted to ensure compliance with the policies outlined above by [insert personnel].

5. Sponsorship

Sample Policy Language:

Sponsorship is defined as the provision of support, including, but not limited to, financial or in-kind support, hosting services and provision of free products or merchandise, for an event or activity, but does not include the funding of academic or research programs or projects.

Sponsorship portfolios may include a variety of properties, including naming rights, uniforms, venue signage, endorsement of individual players, teams or sports. Sponsorship includes, but is not limited to, an event, activity, physical or online space or property.

Review and Approval Process: [insert department/person] is responsible for reviewing all sponsorship requests involving companies that produce or distribute alcohol. Requests must be submitted in writing (via email) to [insert department/person email].

a. Sponsorship requests will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
    - The sponsorship is incompatible with the nature of the sponsored program, event, asset, or target audience (e.g., a beer company sponsoring an academic event).
    - A significant percentage of participants in the event or activity are likely to be under the legal drinking age.

- There is a likelihood of binge drinking (defined as five or more drinks in a single sitting).
- The event or activity is being held in a public space, resulting in high visibility.
- The event is likely to attract significant media attention.
- The sponsorship contradicts or undermines institution messaging, such as that included in social norming campaigns.
- The request involves a time, space, or location identified as "alcohol-free."
- The sponsorship involves large-scale products for advertising purposes, such as inflatables or logoed vehicles displaying alcohol brands.
- The sponsorship has been declined in previous years (institution will maintain a record of all requests).

b. Sponsorship arrangements involving alcohol producers or distributors should be reviewed through the governance and approval processes applicable to the event, venue, organization, and campus context. Where a student association is the contracting party, its separate governance role should be respected. Where activities occur on institutional property, in campus venues, under institutional licence arrangements, or in ways that may affect institutional messaging, safety, reputation, or community impact, the institution may apply transparent and proportionate review processes or reasonable conditions consistent with applicable agreements, policies, and harm-reduction expectations.

6. Licensed Establishments and Events

a. Licensed Campus Environments: Shared Stewardship and Harm Reduction

Licensed campus establishments operate within academic and residential environments and carry institutional accountability. As regulated settings, these venues can contribute to harm reduction through safer service, supervision, and clear expectations. When operated within these conditions, they may also support student engagement, campus community, and viable social programming. The intent is not to diminish student association-operated venues as important student social spaces, but to support their viability through programming, food, entertainment, lower-risk options, and safer service practices rather than high-risk alcohol incentives.

The standards that follow are intended to reduce high-risk consumption while supporting vibrant, student-centred campus social environments. Implementation should occur in collaboration with licensed venue operators and student organizations.

Sample Policy Language:

b. Licensed Establishments

- The maximum number of licensed liquor establishments on campus for [institution name] will not exceed 1 establishment per 10,000 students excluding faculty clubs.
- Licensed establishments on campus may not serve alcohol before 4:00 pm or after 1:00 am.

- Licensed establishments on campus will serve alcohol no more than 5 days a week.
- Exceptions to the above may include:
  - Campus events held in accordance with the Institution's Special Facility License.
  - [Other exceptions].

> ***Implementation Considerations: Hours and days of alcohol service***
>
> These measures reflect evidence that hours and days of alcohol service contribute to alcohol-related risk. Institutions may adapt them for different licensed service models, such as food-service operations, while maintaining the harm-reduction objectives.

c. Safe Service Standards

All licensed establishments and events are expected to follow the service practices prescribed for venues licensed in [insert respective province], as set out in the [insert provincial Liquor license/control act]. All licensed facilities on institution property will serve alcohol in compliance with this legislation. Rules for licensed establishments must be posted at the entrance to and inside each establishment so that the rules for admission and service are readily and highly visible, even in dim light.

Sample Policy Language:

Licensed establishments and institutional events on and off campus must:

- Ensure all patrons consuming alcohol are appropriately age-verified in accordance with provincial legislation. Institutions may determine how ID verification is operationalized in mixed-use environments (e.g., venues offering food service), provided compliance with legislation is maintained.
- Establish minimum pricing structures for alcoholic beverages that align with or exceed provincial guidance, with the goal of reducing consumption associated with low-cost alcohol. In 2025, the suggested unit price is $3.75 per standard alcoholic drink/serving.
- Limit the number of alcoholic drinks that can be purchased by any person at one time to two drinks.
- Provide visible low-strength and non-alcoholic beverage options, including lower-priced alternatives to support inclusive and lower-risk participation.
- Provide and make visible food (if available) and non-alcoholic beverages, where alcohol is served.
- Refuse entry and/or remove patrons who are too intoxicated.
- Provide or facilitate access to safe transportation and safe return options, particularly during high-risk events or peak periods, in collaboration with institutional and community partners where feasible.
- Display visible alcohol-related- harm reduction messaging.

- Institutions should structure pricing and promotional practices in ways that do not incentivize high-volume or rapid consumption. For clarity, pricing structures should avoid:
    - Reducing per-unit cost as quantity increases.
    - Using steep, time-compressed discounts that encourage accelerated consumption.
    - Trying pricing to drinking milestones or volume-based incentives.
    - Undercutting institutional or provincial minimum pricing standards.

Practices Associated with Increased Risk of Harmful Consumption

The following practices are identified in the evidence base as contributing to increased risk of high-volume or rapid alcohol consumption and associated harms. Institutions should avoid or carefully assess the use of these practices within licensed establishments and institutional events on and off campus:

- Offering alcoholic drink discounts, and/or price promotions that reduce per-unit cost.
- The sale of any bulk alcohol purchases, including but not limited to pitchers, beer-towers, and buckets.
- Selling shots.
- Last call announcements that incentivize rapid consumption prior to closing.
- Admitting new patrons after 12 am.
- The purchase of alcohol with an institution provided student card.
- Free, donated or gifted alcohol products.
- Events that promote or suggest excessive and/or irresponsible alcohol consumption.
- Bring-your-own-alcohol events.

d. Event Procedures

For the purposes of this policy, an "event" refers to a planned activity or gathering involving alcohol service outside of routine licensed operations such as regular pub or food-service operations. Events may include special events, high-risk programming, or new initiatives that introduce additional risk factors. High-risk events are defined in Appendix E.

Routine operations of licensed campus establishments—including regular hours of service and recurring programming such as themed nights—do not require individual event review where they operate within established licensing conditions and institutional policies.

Event review processes (e.g., Event Review Committee or equivalent) apply to:

- Events occurring outside of routine operations;
- Events involving elevated risk factors (e.g., large attendance, extended hours, special promotions, external guests, or atypical use of space);

- Events hosted by student groups, departments, or external partners that involve alcohol service.

Institutions should establish clear criteria to determine when event review is required.

For events involving alcohol service:

i. A risk assessment process will review all on-and off-campus event applications that involve the sale or service of alcohol.
ii. Individuals or groups wishing to host an event where alcohol is served must complete the event request form.
iii. Institutional security and/or campus medical response should be determined through a documented risk assessment process, with controls proportionate to event size, risk factors, and operating conditions. For off-campus events, this assessment should consider the institution's role in the event and the responsibilities of the venue or license holder.

Event review processes should be applied in a manner consistent with the governance distinctions described in the "How to Use This Guiding Framework" section. Implementation should occur in collaboration with student association-operated licensed establishments, licensed venue operators, and campus partners.

Implementation Considerations: Value of Regulated Campus Settings

The evidence informing this Guiding Framework indicates that increased alcohol availability, including extended service hours and more frequent days of service, is associated with increased consumption and alcohol-related harms. Limiting routine alcohol availability is therefore an important harm reduction strategy.

Institutions may also consider how regulated campus settings support supervision, student experience, and safety, including the risk that some changes may displace alcohol use to less regulated environments. Where exceptions or alternative approaches are approved, institutions should apply appropriate mitigation measures, such as food availability, responsible beverage service, safe transportation or return planning, security planning, and other supports suited to the event or campus context.

7. Policy Compliance and Violations

Sample Policy Language

a. **Reporting Violations:** Infractions of this Policy shall be reported to [Assigned Team member or department] via [mechanism for reporting].
b. **Sanctions:** The institution may terminate, suspend or modify the privileges of the individual or organization found to have violated the provisions of this Policy and/or

the Liquor License Act or any other applicable law. Where the Policy has been violated, the institution may impose sanctions or limitations under this policy or other policies. These sanctions can be found [insert link to code of conduct or other].

c. **In responding to violations, [the institution] will ensure that:**
   - Processes for reporting and reviewing violations are clearly communicated and accessible;
   - Responsibility for receiving and adjudicating reports is defined;
   - Similar cases are addressed in a consistent and proportionate manner;
   - Responses to violations are proportionate and, where appropriate, include educational or restorative approaches aligned with student development and wellbeing.
   - The institution may periodically review the application of this policy to support consistency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

8. Examples of Recommended Harm Reduction Programming and Initiatives

Sample Policy Language:

- The programming and offerings below may support institutional harm-reduction commitments. Substance-Free Programming and Events.
- Student Campus Medical Response Team: Provide immediate mental and physical medical assistance and support in emergency situations.
- Campus Recovery Community: A safe space for students in recovery, questioning substance use, or wanting to help.
- Campus Patrols: The safety and security team will conduct scheduled patrols to monitor student safety and increase patrols during high-risk times.
- Campus Community Coalition: A group that meets to review incidents and complaints involving alcohol and discuss and plan for upcoming events where risk of alcohol exists. Recommended committee representatives include an individual in a senior student services role, student conduct office, campus safety and security, police service of jurisdiction, town staff member, health services representative, student association representative.
- Provide and update accessible online substance use education (managed and updated by [department or person]) which provides alcohol education on the following topics:
  - Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health,
  - Acute intoxication risks such as injury, overdose, or death,
  - Moderate consumption,
  - Social norms regarding alcohol and postsecondary education,
  - Drinking and driving risks,
  - Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Appendix A: Implementation Guidance for Institutional Application

Appendix A provides optional implementation guidance to support local review, prioritization, and phased alignment with the Framework. Broader evaluation considerations are outlined in Appendix C.

Implementation Considerations: Pathways Toward Alignment

Institutions may use policy, programming, and environmental strategies to support alignment while maintaining student engagement in regulated campus settings. Initial approaches may focus on structural drivers of high-risk consumption, including:

- reducing or removing high-risk service formats, such as shots, pitchers, bulk purchases, and drinking games;
- reviewing pricing structures to avoid volume-based discounts or time-compressed promotions;
- reducing the visibility of high-risk promotional practices; and
- introducing and promoting appealing non-alcoholic and lower-risk options.

Additional implementation approaches may include:

- modifying service practices to support pacing and shared consumption, such as table service, food pairing, or limits on service formats;
- shifting from alcohol-based incentives to programming-based engagement, including themed events, entertainment, and social experiences;
- pairing alcohol service with food availability where feasible, particularly during extended or late-night service;
- piloting changes during specific events or time periods to assess impact and build institutional experience;
- engaging student unions and campus operators in co-developing approaches that support harm reduction and student participation;
- monitoring for displacement to off-campus or unregulated settings and adjusting approaches to maintain safe, regulated campus options where possible; and
- investing in alternative programming and engagement strategies as higher-risk practices are reduced.

Institutions should be able to describe how their approach advances the goals of the Guiding Framework, including where alignment is being pursued over time.

Example Implementation Roadmap
(Optional)

Institutions may phase implementation based on local priorities, readiness, and capacity.

Early Actions - Foundation: Focus on establishing shared approaches and understanding current context.

Examples:

- Review existing alcohol policies for alignment with harm reduction principles;

- Identify areas of highest risk, such as orientation, high-risk events, and residence;
- Engage student associations and licensed venue partners;
- Confirm roles and responsibilities for policy oversight and implementation; and
- Establish baseline information, such as incidents, event approvals, and alcohol availability.

Mid-Term Actions- Policy Alignment: Strengthen policy and operational practices.

Examples:

- Update event procedures and risk assessment processes;
- Review pricing, promotions, and safer service expectations;
- Clarify alcohol use expectations in residence settings;
- Expand training, such as safer service, student leader, and event host training; and
- Improve coordination across student life, security, and licensed venues.

Longer-Term Actions- Sustained Implementation: Embed practices and monitor progress over time.

Examples:

- Integrate harm reduction expectations into annual planning;
- Monitor alcohol-related incidents and trends;
- Review policy alignment periodically;
- Continue student partnership and feedback mechanisms; and
- Adjust approaches based on local outcomes and emerging evidence.

Appendix B: Supplementary Planning and Implementation Resources

The following supplementary resources may support planning, prioritization, implementation, and evaluation. They should be interpreted in relation to Canadian law, institutional policy, and local campus context.

Primary Evidence Anchor

This Guiding Framework should be read alongside the SHEA Lab report, *Strengthening Alcohol Policies on Atlantic Canadian Campuses*, which provides the primary evidence anchor for the policy domains and sample policy guidance included here. The report includes research on alcohol availability, pricing, density, campus environments, and student behaviour, as well as applied initiatives such as the *Your Drink. Your Call.* campaign developed with the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction.

Thompson, K., & SHEA Lab. (2023). *Strengthening Alcohol Policies on Atlantic Canadian Campuses: Campus Alcohol Policy Project Final Report*. Substance Use and Health in Emerging Adulthood Lab, St. Francis Xavier University.

Supplementary Planning Tools

Campus Alcohol Policy Evaluation Tool: Campus Alcohol Policy Evaluation Tool: Developed through the Campus Alcohol Policy Project, this free online tool supports review of campus alcohol policies against evidence-informed domains and provides interactive feedback on policy strengths and areas for improvement. It may support local self-assessment, priority-setting, policy review, and progress tracking. Use of the tool is optional and should be understood as a planning and learning resource, not a compliance requirement or comparative ranking mechanism.

NIAAA CollegeAIM: The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) CollegeAIM tool compares individual-and environmental-level alcohol interventions based on effectiveness, cost, barriers, and research support. As a U.S.-based tool reflecting a legal drinking age of 21, it should be interpreted in relation to Canadian law and local context.

Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness (2012): *Reducing Alcohol Harms among University Students: A Summary of Best Practices.* Government of Nova Scotia.

Canadian Institute for Campus Mental Health: Canadian Institute for Campus Mental Health: The *Harm Reduction on Campus Toolkit* provides Canadian guidance on inclusive, student-centred harm reduction in postsecondary settings. **Alberta Health Services:** Alberta Health Services' Preventing Alcohol-Related Harms on Campus guide provides Canadian campus-oriented guidance for planning and implementing coordinated alcohol harm-reduction strategies.

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA): CCSA provides Canadian research and resources on postsecondary alcohol use, heavy episodic drinking, and student-informed harm reduction, and partners in initiatives such as *Your Drink. Your Call.*

Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems (2013): This report provides an additional environmental scan of college alcohol policy issues and interventions. As a U.S.-based resource, it should be interpreted in relation to Canadian law and local campus context. Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Appendix C: Evaluation Considerations

Evaluation should consider both policy alignment and local implementation conditions, including institutional context, student engagement, regulated campus environments, and implementation capacity. Institutions may also interpret progress alongside broader postsecondary frameworks, such as the National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students, CAS Standards, and whole-campus wellbeing approaches. These frameworks do not replace the harm-reduction lens of this Framework. They may help institutions understand how local context, implementation conditions, and student wellbeing influence alcohol harm reduction efforts.

Institutions may also document contextual factors that shape implementation, such as:

- campus size and geography;
- the presence or absence of licensed campus establishments;
- the surrounding community environment;
- student residential patterns;
- the availability of regulated social spaces;
- existing prevention and education programming; and
- partnerships with student associations and community stakeholders.

Evaluation may also consider whether regulated campus environments reduce displacement to higher-risk settings. Institutions may monitor progress using local indicators and available Canadian postsecondary data sources, such as the Canadian Post-Secondary Education Alcohol and Drug Use Survey (CPADS), National College Health Assessment (NCHA), and the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS). These tools may help institutions assess student alcohol use, related harms, wellbeing indicators, local priorities, and implementation outcomes.

Optional Review and Monitoring Approach

Institutions may establish baseline information, identify local indicators, document current practices, and periodically reassess alignment and outcomes. Review timelines may align with policy review, strategic planning, or survey cycles.

Example Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators

Optional

Institutions may track progress over time using locally available data. Examples include:

- alcohol-related conduct incidents;
- medical transports related to alcohol;
- high-risk event approvals and associated mitigation measures;
- residence-related alcohol incidents;
- student survey data, including CPADS, National College Health Assessment (NCHA), or the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS); and
- participation in safer service or student leader training.

These indicators are illustrative only.

Appendix D: Framework Implementation Workbook

(*Optional Resource)*

A Guiding Framework Implementation Workbook has been developed to help institutions review alignment, identify priorities, document rationale, and support phased implementation planning. Institutions may use the Workbook alongside the Campus Alcohol Policy Evaluation Tool or other local planning processes.

Use of the Workbook is optional; however, it is recommended that institutions have some process for reviewing alignment, identifying priorities, documenting rationale, and supporting phased implementation. It is not an evaluation, compliance, or comparative scoring tool.

Institutions may use the Workbook through the governance or operational structure that best fits their context, such as a campus alcohol coordinating group, existing committee, designated lead, or cross-functional working group. Where appropriate, participation may include student affairs, student associations, licensed venue operators, residence life, security, health promotion, and other relevant stakeholders.

The Workbook may also support future policy review and sector-wide learning through high-level, non-identifying insights.

Appendix E: Definitions

The definitions below are provided to support interpretation and local policy development. Institutions may adapt these terms as needed to align with local context and requirements.

Alcohol: Any beverage that contains ethyl alcohol, which includes lower alcohol products.

Alcohol Policies: Rules and regulations that set out behavioural expectations of students and help prioritize alcohol policy initiatives on campus.

Alcohol-Related Incident Requiring Administrative Oversight: An alcohol-related incident requiring administrative oversight may include medical transport or hospitalization, alcohol poisoning, injury, property damage, repeated incidents at a venue or event, violation of licensing conditions, security intervention due to intoxication, police involvement, complaints from community members, or incidents involving underage drinking.

Drinking Game: An organized activity in which alcohol consumption is contingent upon participation in a game, competition, challenge, or performance task, or where participation encourages rapid or high-volume consumption.

Employee: Includes all university employees, volunteers, professional staff, officers, and administrators.

High-Risk Event: A high-risk event is an event where alcohol service occurs alongside factors associated with increased likelihood of harm. These may include:

- large attendance.
- extended hours of service.
- special pricing or promotional activity.
- external guests or non-campus participants.
- limited supervision or staffing.
- outdoor or non-traditional venues.
- concurrent high-profile campus events (e.g., orientation, homecoming).
- history of alcohol-related incidents at similar events.

Events may be considered high-risk when one or more of these factors are present.

Institution: The postsecondary institution adopting or adapting this policy guiding framework. For policy purposes, references to institutional property may include owned, leased, rented, or maintained buildings, grounds, and other spaces**.**

Licensed Event or Activity: Licensed events or activities include any gathering where alcohol is sold or served under a liquor license, special event permit, or institutional authorization, whether held in campus venues or other approved locations. Examples may include student society events, departmental receptions, orientation programming, athletics events, and externally hosted events using institutional space.

Organization: An institutional unit, residence, student group, student association, licensed establishment, or external partner, as applicable to the context. The term should be interpreted in relation to the relevant governance, licensing, venue-use, funding,

approval, or affiliation relationship and does not treat legally separate student associations as institutional departments.

Protective Settings: Protective settings refer to regulated campus environments where alcohol service occurs under established policies, responsible service practices, supervision, and safety supports. These settings may include licensed campus venues, approved events with risk assessment, and institutionally coordinated programming. Protective settings are contrasted with unregulated environments where oversight and harm reduction measures may be limited.

Student Association: The recognized student representative body at an institution, including a student association, student union, student government, or equivalent body, as applicable to the institution's governance structure.

Third-Party Licensed Establishment: Third-party licensed establishment means an independently owned or operated licensed venue that is not owned, operated, or controlled by the institution or a student association. Institutions do not control the routine operations of third-party licensed establishments, but may set expectations for institutional affiliation, approval, funding, promotion, transportation, or student group participation connected to those venues.

Appendix F: Acknowledgements and Membership Nova Scotia Alcohol Harms Working Group

Acknowledgements

This Guiding Framework was initiated under the leadership of Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and advanced through the Committee on Post-Secondary Student Health & Wellness, co-chaired by Dr. Strang and Elizabeth Yeo, Vice-President Students at St. Francis Xavier University, in collaboration with the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents.

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3) St. Francis Xavier University
4) Mount Saint Vincent University
5) University of Prince Edward Island
6) University of King's College
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8) Mount Allison University
9) Carleton University
10) Memorial University of Newfoundland

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