Alcohol & Drugs  (Original source for the comments below: http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs.php)

Alcohol
The legal drinking age in Ireland is 18 years old. It is illegal for those under the age of 18 years old to purchase alcohol, try to purchase it for youth, or to drink alcohol out in a public place. Minors that are in a residence can drink alcohol with the permission of an adult guardian within a residence. It is not legal to buy alcohol for anyone that is below the age of 18 years old unless their parents give permission.

If you are 18 years of age or older and choose to drink, drink responsibly. Some general guidelines are as follow:
- Know that some alcoholic beverages may be stronger than what you are used to in the United States.
- Never accept drinks from a stranger.
- Never leave a drink unattended as the number of drink spiking incidents is on the rise.
- Do not leave your group of friends in order to accompany someone you may have just met.
- If you see a friend having too much to drink, be a good friend. Take care of them and, if necessary, take them home.

Accidents and Injuries
Accidents and injuries are common among those who consume too much alcohol. Alcohol impairs judgment, coordination, perception, and concentration. Impairment of these skills can result in a range of accidents, including falling down a flight of stairs or tripping on the sidewalk. The injuries resulting from such accidents can be minor or they can be severe. Within the past few years, a number of college students have died in accidents while intoxicated. These accidental deaths include several students who have fallen from balconies or bedroom windows, drowned in lakes or ponds on the way home from a party, or tripped on the sidewalk.

Unprotected Sex and Sexual Assault
Alcohol and drug use can result in unplanned negative consequences, including unprotected sex and sexual assault. Many sexual assaults involve the use of alcohol or drugs on the part of the perpetrator or the victim. Substance abuse can result in impaired judgment, which can put you at risk for either committing a sexual assault or becoming the victim of assault.

Alcohol Poisoning
Alcohol, when used in excess, can cause alcohol poisoning. The effects of alcohol poisoning can range from vomiting to falling into a coma and subsequent death. Too much alcohol can cause vital organs, such as the heart and lungs, to slow down and even stop, which results in death. Very often someone who dies from alcohol poisoning passes out and is allowed to “sleep it off.”

Warning signs of alcohol poisoning include:

Warning signs of alcohol poisoning include:
Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin
Slow rate of respiration (eight breaths per minute or less)
Irregular rate of respiration (ten seconds or more between breaths)
Vomiting while "sleeping" or passed out without waking up
Disoriented to time and place (doesn't know where they are)
Unconsciousness and inability to be awakened.

Drugs
Drug use is not tolerated at UNCW and will not be tolerated abroad. Drug use can alter your behavior, negatively affect your health and safety, and possibly result in severe legal consequences. More information on the legal issues of drug use is provided below in the section below Warning on Drugs Abroad. You will notice that the comments below do not only pertain to Ireland. These are general guidelines because we know that you may be doing some independent travel to other countries.

Warning on Drugs Abroad

Each year, approximately 2,500 Americans are arrested abroad. One-third of the arrests are on drug-related charges. Many of those arrested assumed that they could not be arrested because they were U.S. citizens. From Asia to Africa, Europe to South America, U.S. citizens are finding out the hard way that drug possession or trafficking equals jail time in foreign countries.

There is very little that anyone can do to help you if you are caught with drugs.

It is your responsibility to know what the drug laws are in a foreign country before you go. "I didn’t know it was illegal" will not get you out of jail.

A number of the Americans arrested abroad on drug charges possessed marijuana. Many of these possessed one ounce or less of the substance. The risk of being put in jail for just one marijuana cigarette is not worth it.

If you are purchasing prescription medications in quantities larger than that considered necessary for personal use, you could be arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking.

Once you’re arrested, the American consular officer CANNOT get you out!

You may say "it couldn’t happen to me," but the fact is that it could happen to you if you find yourself saying one of the following:

... "I’m an American citizen and no foreign government can put me in their jail."

... "If I only buy or carry a small amount, it won’t be a problem."

If you are arrested on a drug charge, it is important that you know what your government CAN and CANNOT do for you.
The U.S. consular officer CAN
- Visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest.
- Give you a list of local attorneys (The U.S. Government cannot assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of these individuals or recommend a particular attorney...)
- Notify your family and/or friends and relay requests for money or other aid - but only with your authorization.
- Intercede with local authorities to make sure that your rights under local law are fully observed and that you are treated humanely, according to internationally accepted standards.
- Protest mistreatment or abuse to the appropriate authorities.

The U.S. Consular Officer CANNOT
- Demand your immediate release or get you out of jail or the country.
- Represent you at trial or give legal counsel.
- Pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. government funds.

IF YOU ARE CAUGHT BUYING, SELLING, CARRYING OR USING DRUGS OF ANY KIND, IT COULD MEAN:

**Interrogation and Delays Before Trial** - including mistreatment and solitary confinement for up to one year under very primitive conditions

**Lengthy Trials** - conducted in a foreign language with delays and postponements

**Weeks, Months or Life in Prison** - some places include hard labor, heavy fines and/or lashings if found guilty

**The Death Penalty** - in a growing number of countries (e.g. Malaysia and Pakistan)

Although drug laws vary from country to country, it is important to realize before you make the mistake of getting involved with drugs that foreign countries do not react lightly to drug offenders. In some countries, anyone who is caught with even a very small quantity for personal use may be tried and receive the same sentence as the large-scale trafficker. Don’t let your trip become a nightmare!

**Be Aware**
- A number of countries, including the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico and the Philippines, have enacted more stringent drug laws that impose mandatory jail sentences for individuals convicted of possessing even small amounts of marijuana or cocaine for personal use.
- Once you leave the United States, you are not covered by U.S. laws and constitutional rights.
- Bail is not granted in many countries when drugs are involved.
- The burden of proof in many countries is on the accused to prove his/her innocence.
• In some countries, evidence obtained illegally by local authorities may be admissible in court.
• Few countries offer drug offenders jury trials or even require the prisoner’s presence at his/her trial.
• Many countries have mandatory prison sentences of seven years or life without the possibility of parole for drug violations.
• If someone offers you a free trip and some quick and easy money just for bringing back a suitcase.... **SAY NO!**
• Don’t carry a package for anyone, no matter how small it might seem.
• The police and customs officials have a right to search your luggage for drugs. If they find drugs in your suitcase, you will suffer the consequences.
• You could go to jail for years and years with no possibility of parole, early release or transfer back to the U.S.
• Don’t make a jail sentence part of your trip abroad.

The Department of State’s Bureau of Consular Affairs’ Office of Overseas Citizens Services provides emergency services pertaining to the protection of Americans arrested or detained abroad, the search for U.S. citizens abroad, the transmission of emergency messages to those citizens or their next of kin in the United States, and other emergency and non-emergency services. Contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services from Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 8 p.m. at (202) 647-5225. For an emergency after hours or on weekends and holidays, ask for the Overseas Citizens Services' duty officer at (202) 647-4000. Internet home page:

http://travel.state.gov