
Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity & Adoption Policy



1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University values the diversity of its student population and is strongly committed to creating and sustaining a first-rate and positive learning experience for all. The Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthened the legal protections for students during periods of pregnancy and maternity. The University is also committed to supporting students who choose to become primary adopters.
- 1.2. These guidelines provide advice and guidance to registered students or prospective students who are pregnant or become parents at the commencement of or during their studies.
- 1.3. Although they are focused on study related issues they aim to give information on other sources of advice. The document is also intended to be used as a point of reference by staff who have a role in advising students and whose advice and guidance may be sought on these issues.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. The University aims to provide an environment where students are supported fairly and with dignity and respect, including during maternity, paternity, the process of adoption and whilst breastfeeding.
- 2.2. The University believes that becoming pregnant or caring for a very young child should not prevent a student from succeeding in their studies. It will therefore apply its academic regulations as flexibly as possible, seeking to ensure that students are not disadvantaged whilst ensuring that academic standards are maintained. All reasonable steps will be taken to avoid less favourable treatment of pregnant students and students in a period of maternity or adoption. The degree of flexibility which can be applied will vary according to the student's course or programme of study.
- 2.3. Staff will demonstrate a supportive approach when discussing issues with students and will advise them of other available services if they are unable to provide appropriate advice themselves. Any information provided by a student will be handled confidentially and will only be shared with others with the student's consent.
- 2.4. The health and wellbeing of students will be considered of paramount importance at all times.

3. Notification of Pregnancy

- 3.1. There is no legal requirement for applicants or students to inform the University if they are pregnant or become pregnant whilst registered on a course or programme of study, including whilst on placement. However, applicants and students are strongly encouraged to disclose a pregnancy at the earliest opportunity (and preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due) as this will enable the University to put in place appropriate support measures known as “reasonable adjustments”, and this will be documented through a Student Pregnancy Support Plan (see section 4). Early notification is especially relevant for students following programmes that may involve potentially high risks to the student and/or the unborn child.
- 3.2. Students should inform the Student Services Department, through the Student Services Helpzone Service; Helpzone staff will then offer immediate advice, and then liaise with both the Head of Student Wellbeing and the student’s academic department (normally through the student’s Personal Tutor or their Academic Supervisor). Permission to share the information on a need-to-know basis will be sought from the student. The student will also be signposted as appropriate for further sources of advice and support.
- 3.3. The following factors will be considered when planning the appropriate support for students who disclose that they are pregnant:
 - Health & Safety: The Course Leader will conduct [a risk assessment](#) related to the risks to the student and the unborn child, and to modify any procedures/activity which relate to the student if appropriate. Any pertinent issues arising from the risk assessment, including any practical implications, will be reported to the Head of Student Wellbeing and will be taken into account to influence the Student Pregnancy Support Plan.
 - Courses Leading to Professional Registration: Students on professional programmes have to demonstrate certain knowledge, skills and competencies required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) that cannot be compromised. In developing the Student Pregnancy Support Plan, these will be taken into account when agreeing what reasonable adjustments will be made, including any associated period of suspension
 - Student Finance: There may be implications for the student’s financial arrangements, including for any agreed period of suspension, both in terms of fees payable and the financial support available. The Student Pregnancy Support Plan will detail these and any actions the student should take if applicable.

4. The Student Pregnancy Support Plan

4.1. The Head of Student Wellbeing will co-ordinate the arrangements to ensure that students' educational support needs are met during pregnancy, during any period of leave, and on the student's return to study, and will liaise with the academic department, the student, and other professional service departments as necessary, in order to ensure that the necessary reasonable adjustments are made. The agreed arrangements will be documented in a Student Pregnancy Support Plan, which will normally cover the following key points:

- a) Agreed communication channels with the student
- b) Arrangements for pregnancy-related absence
- c) Health & Safety
- d) Access to rest facilities
- e) Exams & Assessments
- f) Placements, field trips and study abroad
- g) Student Finance
- h) Visa status (if applicable)
- i) Accommodation
- j) Maternity-related absence
- k) Return to study

4.2 The template form for the Student Pregnancy Support Plan can be found in Appendix 1

5. Maternity Absence & Return to Study

5.1. When the tutor (ie personal tutor or academic supervisor) is made aware, the staff member will discuss with the student how the pregnancy is likely to impact on their studies and the outcomes of this discussion should be captured as part of the Student Pregnancy Support Plan. All students will be permitted to suspend their studies following the birth of a child. The period of this absence will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of their course or programme. There is no legal minimum period of suspension, but the University strongly recommends that there is a minimum absence of two weeks in order to ensure the health and safety of both the child and the student. In cases where the University is concerned about a student's health in relation to the proposed return to study date, documentary medical evidence of fitness to return to study may be requested.

5.2. Where a student is following a course or programme where there is concern about the student's knowledge being affected by the period of suspension taken, the Student Pregnancy Support Plan will detail the steps that will be taken to ensure that the student is kept up-to-date, e.g. through the provision of reading lists, research articles, etc.

5.3. Where there are concerns about the student meeting the requirements of the course or programme (e.g. coursework assessments or examinations), arrangements may be made for alternative assessment methods to be used, or completion of the requirements prior to the commencement of the period of suspension or during it. Reasonable adjustments such as these will be detailed in the Student Pregnancy Support Plan.

- 5.4. In certain exceptional cases, and following the review of the Student Pregnancy Support Plan prior to the student's return to study, an extension to the usual period of suspension may be agreed, e.g. in cases of post-natal depression, serious illness or loss of a baby or where there is no suitable childcare.

6. Students with UKVI Tier 4 Visas

- 6.1. All international students that hold a Tier 4 visa should seek additional advice from the Compliance Team in order to determine if there are implications to their visa status in the event of absence due to maternity or parental leave. Such student may be required to leave the UK during their absence, depending on the duration. The university is required to report any Tier 4 registered student who suspends their study to UKVI.
- 6.2. For students who wish to return to their home country for the duration of the leave, it should be noted that airlines may not carry passengers who are 7 months pregnant or more, and this should be taken into account when planning (please consult airline policies).

7. Adoption

- 7.1. The University is committed to supporting students who choose to become primary adopters. Students who are planning to adopt should inform the Student Services Department, through the Student Services Helpzone Service; Helpzone staff will then offer immediate advice, and then liaise with both the Head of Student Wellbeing and the student's academic department (normally through the student's Personal Tutor or their Academic Supervisor). Permission to share the information on a need-to-know basis will be sought from the student. The student will also be signposted as appropriate for further sources of advice and support.
- 7.2. Reasonable adjustments agreed will be documented in a Support Plan, which will normally cover the following key points as applicable: arrangements for pre-adoption meetings, examinations and assessments, student finances, suspension of studies and communications during that time.

8. Students Whose Partner is Pregnant or Adopting

- 8.1. Courses are usually flexible enough to allow students to take time off from their studies to accompany their partner to ante-natal and post-natal appointments. Students should consult their personal tutor or supervisor to agree arrangements for taking leave and catching up on work missed.
- 8.2. A student whose partner is pregnant or who is adopting a child may apply to take two weeks paternity/maternity support leave, in consultation with their department and in accordance with the University's authorised absence policy. This is usually unpaid unless a student is also in employment or, if their funding body allows a period of paid paternity leave.

9. Babies & Children on Campus

- 9.1. Babies and children are allowed on public areas of campus but must be supervised at all times. Babies and children will not be allowed in any areas where there is a health and safety

risk, for example laboratories, under any circumstances. Babies and children will not normally be allowed at a teaching session or assessment event. However, students who are breastfeeding or have a baby under 26 weeks are protected under the Equality Act 2010 so should contact their personal tutor or supervisor to discuss what appropriate arrangements can be made.

- 9.2. *There is a room available to students and staff members on each campus for breast feeding/expressing milk which has appropriate storage facilities; details of the location of these rooms are available from the Student Services Helpzones**

** (please note these facilities are under development)*

10. Useful Links

The following resources may provide additional guidance:

National Union of Students:

Can I claim government benefits as a student?

<https://www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/money-and-funding/can-i-claim-government-benefits-as-a-student/>

Office for Students:

What does the law say? Equality and diversity:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/what-does-the-law-say/>

Advance Higher Education:

Student pregnancy and maternity:

https://www.ecu.ac.uk/search/?form_type=simple&keywords=breastfeeding&type=&from=&to=&submit=Search

Appendix 1 Student Pregnancy Support Plan

Contact details	
1	Student's details
	Name
	Address
	Telephone
	Email address
	Student number
2	Emergency contact's details
	Relationship to student
	Telephone
3	Course details
	Course title
	Department
	Departmental contact
	Year of course
4	Details of the student's first point of contact within the HEI
	Name
	Title
	Location
	Telephone
	Email

Key dates (to be reviewed and added to over the course of pregnancy and maternity)

5	What is the student's due date?	
6	How many weeks pregnant was the student when she notified HEI of pregnancy?	

Communication with the student

7	What is the student's preferred method of communication:	
	during pregnancy?	
	during maternity-related absence?	
	on return to study?	

Informing other staff and students

8	Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed?	
	Name and title	Date

Health and safety assessment (attach copy to this form)

9	Has an assessment been conducted that covers (where relevant):	
	the student's course?	
	course placements or study abroad?	
	examinations or other assessments?	
	field trips?	
	return from maternity-related absence?	
	breastfeeding?	
	safety of baby if attending seminars and lectures with a parent?	

10	Where changes are required to alleviate or minimise risks, who is responsible for ensuring they are implemented?	
Rest facilities		
11	Has the student been informed about rest facilities on campus for use by pregnant students?	
Pregnancy-related absence		
12	Will the dates or times of antenatal appointments affect the student's study?	
13	Have you discussed any pregnancy-related illness that has affected the student's ability to undertake their course?	
14	If yes to either of the above questions, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to catch up?	
Assessments		
15	Is the student unable to complete any assessments due to her pregnancy or maternity?	
16	If so, provide details:	
17	What alternative arrangements have been made for any outstanding or incomplete assessments?	
Maternity-related absence (students should provide information in writing at least 15 weeks before their due date)		
18	How much maternity-related absence does the student intend to take?	
19	When does the student intend to start maternity-related absence?	
20	When does the student intend to return from maternity-related absence?	
21	Will the dates of maternity-related absence affect the student's ability to complete any course module requirements?	
22	If so, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module?	

23	What information will the student require during maternity-related absence to keep up to date on course developments?	
24	Who will be responsible for providing the information to the student?	
Financial support		
25	Has the student been informed about sources of financial support or been referred to an external organisation that can do so?	
26	Is the (UK) student aware of how any benefits they receive will affect their student support entitlements, and vice versa?	
27	Specify any follow-up required:	
Baby feeding		
28	Does the student intend to feed their baby on university facilities on their return to study?	
29	Does the student intend to breastfeed? If so, see health and safety section above.	
30	Has the student been informed about the facilities available?	
Childcare		
31	Has the student been informed about childcare facilities on campus or in the local community?	
32	Is the (UK) student aware that their mode of study will affect their childcare funding entitlements?	
International students/those on placement abroad		
33	Have international students or students on placement abroad been informed about:	
	possible airline restrictions?	

	the need to check visa implications of returning home or extending their stay due to pregnancy and maternity?	
Students on placement		
34	Has the placement provider been notified of the student's pregnancy?	
35	Has the placement provider conducted a health and safety assessment?	
36	Is the placement provider aware of the HEI's policy on supporting students during pregnancy and maternity?	
37	Will the student be able to complete her placement?	
38	If not, what alternative arrangements will be made?	
39	Who is responsible for liaising with the placement provider?	
Extenuating circumstances		
40	Have students been informed about the HEI's extenuating circumstances policy in the event that their pregnancy or maternity affects examinations and assessments?	
Accommodation		
41	Does the student intend to move to alternative accommodation?	
42	Has the student received advice on alternative accommodation and terminating existing accommodation contracts?	
43	At what point does the student want to move to alternative accommodation?	
44	Will the student require university accommodation?	
Return to study		
45	What support will be provided to the student on their return to study? (eg meetings with key staff, put in contact with other student parents, etc)	

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Further information

46	Any other information or comments	
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Signatures

Plan to be reviewed on	
Agreed by staff member	
Name	
Title	
Signature	
Date	
Agreed by student	
Name	
Signature	
Date	