

STUDENT PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

- 1 The University is committed to providing high quality education and services to all students. This policy applies to all students (and prospective students who have accepted an offer to study) who are pregnant, who have given birth within the last 26 weeks (including still birth, miscarriage or termination), or who are breastfeeding.
- 2 The Policy is written to meet the requirements of the [Equality Act 2010](#) which is to legally protect students from discrimination during pregnancy and maternity. It extends the protection that already for exists for women in employment, to those in Higher Education.
- 3 This Policy takes account of the guidance for supporting students through pregnancy and maternity as outlined by the Equality Challenge Unit in its document [Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions.](#)

The University's commitment in supporting students during pregnancy and maternity

- 4 The purpose of the policy is to communicate the University's commitment to supporting the continued engagement of students during periods of pregnancy and maternity. In doing so, the University expects staff and students to be guided by the following principles:
 - avoid less favourable treatment of students who are pregnant or within the protected maternity period
 - think flexibly about supporting the continued engagement of students in teaching, learning, research and assessment during pregnancy and maternity
 - be supportive and sensitive to the needs of students who are trying to balance the different needs of pregnancy and study
 - support informed decision-making by students taking an open-minded and non-judgmental approach
 - maintain student confidentiality in accordance with the [Student Privacy Notice.](#)

Notification of pregnancy

- 5 In considering when to notify the University, students are advised to think about the health and safety implications of disclosing the pregnancy and the learning, teaching and assessment considerations associated with their programme of study (or prospective study).
- 6 In order for the University to support students in pregnancy and maternity, the University needs to be aware of the pregnancy. There is no legal obligation placed on students in terms of when to disclose a pregnancy. However, the student's choice should be an informed one, based upon the student's individual circumstances. The University considers a notification period of at least 15 weeks prior to when the baby is due, to be a reasonable time. This will allow for a Pregnancy and Maternity Student Support Plan (PMSSP) to be discussed with the student at the point of disclosure, and developed in accordance with the timescales stipulated in the Plan.

- 7 However, when the programme of study or research includes activities that may pose heightened risk to the health and safety of a pregnant student and her unborn child (such as exposure to radiation, hazardous substances, risk of physical injury), then she is strongly advised to inform the University of her pregnancy as early as possible to ensure that appropriate support can be put in place.
- 8 When the student, on a taught course, has taken the decision to disclose their pregnancy to the University, they should book an appointment with a Student Support Adviser (SSA). During this meeting, a PMSSP will be agreed, and the Pregnant Student Guidance will be discussed, to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the pregnant student. A research degree student should disclose to their Director of Studies who acts as the Project Safety Supervisor and has oversight of the health, safety and wellbeing of their research student. Any concerns raised by students will be referred by a senior SSA or Director of Studies to the Health and Safety Team for further guidance.
- 9 Due to the sensitive nature of the information, communication of the student's pregnancy will only be shared with student support staff. It will not be shared with any other party without the explicit consent of the student.
- 10 Where a student is on a paid or other vocational placement for all or part of her pregnancy and maternity period, the employer is principally responsible for undertaking the health and safety risk assessment for the student for the duration of their placement period. The student will need to ensure that the maternity policy and procedures of the employer are observed and applied.
- 11 The University will ensure that if a student chooses to undertake an academic assessment whilst pregnant or in the maternity period, that they are able to do so, as long as the activity poses no heightened risk to the health and safety of the student or their unborn child. If students on taught courses choose to undertake assessment and are then affected by sudden and unexpected personal issues, either related or unrelated to their pregnancy, then the student can apply to request to repeat an assessment attempt under the [Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure](#) or to follow the [Self-certification](#) procedure to evidence absence from an examination or other time-constrained assessment activity. Research students must speak with their Director of Studies if a formal assessment is due to take place, such as at Confirmation of Doctorate or final examination, and they wish to negotiate moving the date.

Procedure for Planning and Managing Maternity-related absence

- 12 The University's [Break in Study Policy and Procedure](#) (for Taught Students) or the Break in Study Policy and Procedure for Research Students, available from the Research Degrees Blackboard site, should be used for students wishing to take time out from their studies due to pregnancy and maternity. Students sponsored by UKVI on Tier 4 visas need to consider the implications of this as noted in those policies and contact the International Experience Team with any visa queries. Where students on Tier 4/ Student visas wish to remain enrolled on their

course at the university and remain in the UK, they must complete an Authorised Absence form which will allow them 60 days of approved leave from their studies for maternity related reasons. Students wishing to take longer than 60 days must opt out of their studies, return to their home country, request a new CAS and apply for a new visa before returning to study.

- 13 All students must discuss and agree the period of maternity absence with the University. The date of commencement and the date of intended return should be documented in writing in the PMSSP which is prepared by the student in consultation with the Student Support Adviser or Director of Studies. The actual return to study date will be subject to the University confirming whether the desired date will enable the student to return at an appropriate point in the programme. This may depend on the availability of particular programme elements that the student has missed such as placement start dates, delivery of teaching sessions or assessment points.
- 14 Normally the absence would be no longer than 52 weeks in duration, but this may be varied depending on the availability of assessments within the programme of study. The written details should be included within the PMSSP with any amendments and reviews being noted where there is a change in circumstances. Until a PMSSP is put in place, a letter of intent may be sufficient so that the University or a placement employer (where relevant) can start engaging with the student to prepare a support plan.
- 15 The University strongly advises students who are pregnant or who have recently given birth, to take a minimum of two weeks maternity related absence before returning to study. This is to secure the wellbeing of both the student and baby. However, the university endorses the recommended maternity related absence timescales as set by any student funding and/or sponsoring organisation. For example, students on NHS bursary funded courses must take the recommended amount of absence in accordance with published guidelines <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-bursary-students>.
- 16 It is the student's responsibility to contact their funding body to confirm their absence and funding entitlements whilst on a break in study for maternity reasons.

Returning to study after Maternity-related absence

- 17 The student will make an informed decision as to when she would like to return to her studies considering her health and the requirements of the programme of study. If the structure or academic timetable requires the student to return to her course of studies earlier or later than her desired return date, the rationale for the earlier or later return should be justified in writing by the University.
- 18 Where a student has pregnancy-related illness such as postnatal depression, serious illness, or loss of a baby, it will be necessary to agree a date of return to study that is appropriate for the student's condition and individual circumstances.

- 19 Towards the end of the maternity-related absence, the student is required to confirm her actual return date no later than three weeks prior to that date. At this point, the student's study options, and the continued support provided by the university will be discussed and confirmed prior to her return. It is expected that staff will clarify the following with the student:
- **Varying the mode of study** – students will be made aware of any options that exist to resume their course on a part-time or distance-learning basis. If a student requests to study part-time rather than full-time, the request should not be declined unless it can be justified, and the justification should be provided in writing.
 - **Ensure a smooth return** – formal welcome-back meetings will be organised with key staff, for example the Academic Adviser, placement staff, Student Support Adviser or research degree supervisor.
 - **Continued contact** – named student support staff will be given to the student to mitigate the impact of any difficulties on their return.

Breastfeeding and resting facilities

- 20 The right to breastfeed in public or in private is the choice of the breastfeeding mother and the University provides breastfeeding facilities for students at both City and Collegiate Campuses. Women can choose to breastfeed, bottle feed, or express in five respite locations across both University campuses. The respite rooms are for the use of students only. Relatives, friends or chaperones caring for the student's child should use the open spaces on campus e.g. a foyer area, or food court and not the respite rooms.
- 21 Students will not be denied the right to breastfeed in public spaces as this is considered to be directly discriminatory. A student should not be disadvantaged if she needs to leave a teaching session early or take time out of an assessment to breastfeed.
- 22 The University's policy about accompanied children on campus acknowledges that parents may need to bring their children with them when they are visiting the University. The public spaces of the university are open to parents and their children. However, laboratories, lecture theatres, teaching and exam rooms are not public spaces and therefore only to be used by staff and students.

Version:	1.2
Original version approved by and date:	Student Experience Committee Dec 2019
Date for Review:	July 2021
Owner:	Student Policy and Compliance, Student and Academic Services
Amendments since approval:	
January 2022	Section 8. Updated to reflect that a risk assessment will now be undertaken by the Student Experience Lead in the Academic Department for taught provision.

February/March 2023	Section 8. Updated to remove risk assessment undertaken by the Student Experience Lead, and replaced with SSA discussing Pregnant Student Guidance on Health and Safety Approved via Teaching and Learning Committee
August 2026	Update to point 20 regarding who can use respite rooms.