

Student Pregnancy, Maternity and Adoption and Partner Policy

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1. Introduction and Purpose

The University values the diversity of its student population and is strongly committed to creating and sustaining an outstanding university experience for all. The Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthened the legal protections for students during periods of pregnancy and maternity. In particular students and applicants are protected in relation to:

- Admissions
- The provision of education and assessment
- Access to any benefit, facility, or service
- Disciplinary proceedings.

The University is also committed to supporting students who choose to become primary adopters.

2. Scope and Definitions

This document provides both students and staff with information about the University's approach to supporting a student with:

- Pregnancy
- Adoption
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Abortion
- Support for partners

This policy applies to the university-based element of apprenticeships undertaken at the University or partnership institution. Apprentices should refer to their employer for information related to their workplace.

3. General Principles

The University is committed to the following principles in its treatment of pregnancy, maternity, and adoption as it relates to students:

- Students will be supported throughout the period of pregnancy and maternity or adoption and, wherever practicable, will not be unreasonably prevented from applying for, registering upon, or successfully completing a programme of study.
- 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 shown is likely to vary between programmes of study because of their differing requirements.
- The health and wellbeing of students will be always considered of paramount importance.

4. Policy

4.1 Notification of pregnancy

There is no legal requirement for applicants or students to inform the University if they are pregnant or become pregnant whilst registered on a programme of study, including whilst on placement. We ask applicants and students to let us know of pregnancy at the earliest opportunity (and preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due) so the University can put in place appropriate support measures (known as “Reasonable Adjustments”). Early notification is especially relevant for students following programmes that may involve potentially high risks to the student and /or the child. For late notifications we will endeavour to do everything we can to make sure the student has the right support.

We encourage all students to inform a Student Support Adviser of their pregnancy and where possible give an early indication of any period of leave from study (if applicable and known). The Student Support Adviser will liaise with the school regarding the implications for the student’s programme of study. 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, e.g., a GP, Midwife, or see Appendix 1 for External Support.

The following factors will be considered when planning the appropriate response.

4.2 Health and Safety

Upon notification of a student pregnancy, the Programme Leader will make a judgement on whether it will be necessary to undertake a review or update of the health and safety risk assessment for the activity or programme that the student is involved in (including of placements, fieldwork, or study abroad, if applicable). The Programme Leader will identify any issues from the risk assessment and implement the agreed reasonable adjustments. It is important to note that, in the case of students with a potential exposure to hazardous radiation or chemicals, the greatest risk to the health of an embryo or foetus arises within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.

4.3 International Students

International students with student visas who become pregnant during their studies are advised that they must seek up-to-date immigration advice promptly from a UWE Bristol Immigration Adviser. Students cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity, and the maximum period of approved authorised absence will be considered on an individual basis in line with UK Visa and Immigration Authority (UKVI) regulations. In all cases, the University’s legal responsibilities in relation to the sponsorship of international students under the points-based immigration system will have to take precedence.

4.4 Apprentices

As employed students, apprentices are advised to seek up-to-date guidance from their employer regarding rights and policies within the workplace.

Where the apprentice's absence is planned to be longer than 28 days, the School will liaise with the Apprenticeships Hub to ensure that the requirements of the funding regulator for Apprenticeships are met.

4.5 Programmes Leading to Professional Registration

Students on professional programmes must demonstrate certain knowledge, skills and competencies required by professional, statutory, or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) that cannot be negotiated. The Student Support Plan (section 4.7) will take these into account when agreeing reasonable adjustments, including any associated period of suspension (period of leave from study).

4.6 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 Support Plan will detail these and the actions the student should take if applicable.

4.7 Student Support Plan

The Student Support Adviser 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. The Student Support Adviser will liaise with the School, the student, and other professional services as necessary, to ensure that agreed Reasonable Adjustments are made. The arrangements will be documented in a Student Support Plan, which will normally cover the following key points as applicable:

- Arrangements for related appointments
- Examinations and assessments
- Health and safety
- Placements / fieldwork / study abroad
- Visa implications and reporting (international students only)
- Student finances
- Absence
- Arrangements for resting, breast / chest feeding.

Further information about the support plan is available in Appendix 1.

4.8 Personal Circumstances

If the student becomes unwell during the pregnancy, or something unplanned or unexpected occurs (such as early labour, miscarriage, still or neo natal birth), additional support beyond that outlined in the Support Plan will be reviewed. In such circumstances, the student should contact the Student Support Adviser to ascertain whether further reasonable adjustments may be made.

4.9 Absence and Return to Study

All students will be permitted to take a period of leave from study if required. The start and end date of this absence will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of the programme. There is no legal minimum period of leave from study, but the University strongly recommends that there is a minimum absence of two weeks to ensure the health and safety of the child and the student.

Where there are concerns about the student meeting the requirements of the programme (e.g., coursework assessments, placements, 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 leave from study or during it. Reasonable Adjustments such as these will be detailed in the Support Plan.

4.10 Adoption

The University is committed to supporting students who choose to become primary adopters. Students who are planning to adopt should contact a Student Support Adviser as early as possible. The Student Support Adviser will liaise with the Programme Leader, and other professional services to co-ordinate the arrangements to ensure that the student's educational support needs are met during the period of adoption, any associated period of suspension of studies, and upon return to study. The Reasonable Adjustments agreed will be documented in a Student Support Plan (see section 4.7).

4.11 Partner / second parent leave

A student whose partner is pregnant, or who is planning to adopt, will be permitted reasonable time off study to enable them to accompany their partner to any appointments prescribed by a doctor, midwife, health visitor or social worker. We ask applicants and students to let us know of the pregnancy at the earliest opportunity (and preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due) so the University can put in place appropriate support measures. The School will take reasonable steps to ensure that the student is able to catch up with any sessions missed.

If a student wishes to seek a period of leave from study as they intend following a partner's birth or adoption, they should seek the advice of a Student Support Adviser.

5. Ownership and oversight

Document name:	UWE Bristol Policy Governance Framework
Version number:	V1.0
Equality Analysis:	Not required
Approved by (committee and date):	LTSEC
Effective from:	November 2023
Next review date:	November 2025
Senior Policy Owner:	Head of Student Administration and Advice
Policy Author:	Student Advice Team Manager
Overseeing committee:	LTSEC
Compliance measures:	Monitor timeliness of policy reviews
Related policies, procedures, and codes of practice:	Health and Safety Policy
Related legislative and/or regulatory requirements	n/a

6. Version history

Version	Date	Summary of changes	Author
V1.0	Nov 2023	Updated terminology	Student Advice Team Manager

Appendix 1. Student information

The purpose of this information and the Student Support Plan is to ensure that if the Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption, and Partner Policy applies to you while you are a student at UWE Bristol you know where to seek advice about your own health, the health of your baby, the impact on your programme of study, and the support available.

Student Support Plan

You can arrange to meet a [Student Support Adviser](#) who will discuss the following to ensure your education support needs are met. The reason for doing this is they are responsible for the production and co-ordination of your Student Support Plan with you.

Arrangements for related appointments

Where known, the dates of ante-natal, post-natal or adoption meeting appointments will be put into the Student Support Plan and arrangements made to enable you to catch up if any of the appointments coincide with teaching or research commitments, if possible.

Examinations and assessments

A view will be taken on whether your pregnancy will affect meeting study deadlines and/or sitting examinations. Any adjustments required to ensure you can meet the requirements of the programme, including any special examination arrangements to be made, will be outlined.

Health and safety

Your Programme Leader will be asked to complete a health and safety risk assessment if needed for your learning activities. If you are on placement, the placement provider will be responsible for updating the risk assessment.

The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation, and biological agents. Your Programme Leader may consult the Health and Safety Unit in this regard, depending on the nature of your programme of study.

Placements / fieldwork / study abroad

If you are required, or have opted, to do a placement, fieldwork, or period of study abroad, an assessment will be made on whether your pregnancy will affect your ability to complete this. If so, the measures to be taken by the academic team to ensure you fulfil these requirements will be outlined (e.g., doing the placement, fieldwork, or study abroad at an earlier stage of pregnancy or upon return from the period of leave from study).

Visa implications and reporting (international students only)

If you are an International Student who is pregnant and in the UK on a visa you must seek immigration advice very promptly from the Student Visa Support Service:

<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/courses/international-study/visas/student-visa-support-service>

Student finances and advice

Where your plans have implications on your financial arrangements, these will be included in the Plan with advice on what should be done.

You are strongly advised to seek financial advice from the UWE Student Money Service (SMS) early in your pregnancy. SMS will be able to advise you on how and when you're funding from statutory funding bodies may change and possible funding available from UWE. SMS are not able to offer advice on welfare benefits. It may be that you become eligible for welfare benefits or your current welfare benefit entitlement changes. You are strongly advised to seek this advice from external agencies such as: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/england.htm>

Some student funding may affect your welfare benefit entitlement so please also seek advice from UWE SMS as per the above. If you are an international student, you are unlikely to be entitled to maternity state benefits. If you have a financial sponsor, you should inform the sponsor of your circumstances and agree an appropriate plan of action.

Absence

You might decide to take a period of leave from study, or to return as soon as possible after giving birth. The Plan will detail when you are likely to start any period of absence and your expected date of return. A date will also be given by which you will need to confirm the date of return.

The agreed period of absence will be determined by your personal circumstances and the structure and content of your programme. There is no legal minimum period of period of leave from study, but the University strongly recommends that you take a minimum of two weeks.

If you are on a taught programme and become unwell during your pregnancy, or something unexpected happens which prevents you from submitting or attending an assessment, you should contact the Student Support Advisers.

Arrangements for resting, breast feeding, chest feeding / expressing milk.

The University is committed to providing resting facilities for pregnant students and facilities for breast feeding / chest feeding people or to express milk Their locations will be detailed in the plan.

Other information

Apprentices

If you are an apprentice and your absence is planned to be longer than 28 days your school will liaise with the Apprenticeship Hub to ensure that regulatory requirements regarding your funding are managed appropriately.

These include:

- The formal break in learning and return from break in learning processes.
- Generation of new or amended training plans and Apprenticeship Agreements
- Suspension and resumption of payments on the employer's apprenticeship service account
- Assessment of impact on the apprenticeship end-point assessment

Student Support Advisers, Training Coordinators and other UWE staff will seek support from the Apprenticeships Hub, where in-depth knowledge of regulatory body requirements is needed.

Adoption

The Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Partner Policy acknowledges the impact of the Adoption process on your studies, you should seek advice from a Student Support Adviser to discuss support.

Miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion

The Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Partner Policy still applies to you and acknowledging the impact on your studies you should seek advice from a Student Support Adviser to discuss support.

Partners

If your partner becomes pregnant you may also take a period of absence to cover arrangements for attendance any related appointments and the birth of their child. You may also apply for reasonable adjustments to be applied to assessments and examinations should these coincide with the expected birth date. The arrangements made will depend on your personal circumstances and the nature of your programme of study and must be discussed in advance with a Student Support Adviser.

If you are affected by something serious and unplanned associated with the pregnancy or labour which prevents you from submitting or attending an assessment, you should contact the Student Support Advisers.

Accommodation

If you are in university managed accommodation, further advice and information is available from Accommodation Services.

Returning to UWE Bristol

You will need to contact your Student Support Adviser prior to your planned date of return. If you are breast feeding, chest feeding or expressing milk, and require facilities, these will be detailed in your Support Plan and / or your Student Support Adviser will be able to advise you. Baby-changing facilities are available at all campuses.

You will need to remember to inform the Student Loan Company, or other financial sponsor, of your plans for return so that the necessary financial arrangements are in place. Your childcare arrangements will require advance planning. It is advisable to make these arrangements early in your pregnancy.

After the birth of your baby, there may be occasions when you will have difficulties arising because of personal or family illness and/or unexpected problems with your childcare arrangements. In these circumstances, the University will try to be as supportive as possible. If such situations occur, and they inevitably impact upon your ability to attend, study and/or undertake assessments, please seek the advice of a Student Support Adviser.

External Sources of Support

<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/life/campus-and-facilities/halley-nursery>

Halley Nursery for information on the Frenchay campus nursery

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

A charity providing free confidential advice online, by phone and in person.

<https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/>

Provides NHS advice on all aspects of health and wellbeing.

<https://www.gov.uk/employee-rights-when-on-leave>

Provides government advice on rights of employees while on leave.