

Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Partner Leave Policy and Procedures

1. Introduction

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. In particular students and applicants are protected in relation to:

- Admissions
- The provision of education
- 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

This document provides both students and staff with information about the University's approach to supporting a student who is pregnant (sections 4 to 7). Section 8 details the arrangements for students who choose to become a primary adopter, and Section 9 details the arrangements for partners of pregnant people and those that choose to adopt.

References to very young children relate to those under the age of six months and, with particular regard to health and safety considerations, those older than six months who are still being breastfed.

3. Statement of Principles

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

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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 as a result of their differing requirements.
- (c) The University will endeavour to enable student choice in a fair and non-judgmental way, and will not attempt to influence decisions.
- (d) The health and wellbeing of students will be considered of paramount importance at all times.

4. 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. 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"). Early notification is especially relevant for students following programmes that may involve potentially high risks to the student and/or the child.¹

Students should inform a Student Support Adviser or the Graduate School (postgraduate research students only) of their pregnancy and give an early indication of any period of suspension they may be anticipating (if applicable and known). They will liaise with the academic department 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 the Wellbeing Service (see Annex B).

Students are also actively encouraged to inform their Programme Leader and/or their Academic Personal Tutor (APT) or Director of Studies as well as a Student Support Adviser.

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

4.1 Health and Safety

Upon notification of a student pregnancy, the academic department 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 Health and Safety Standard, Risk Assessment (HSS14) details the University's requirements with respect to risk assessment and further advice is available in the form of the Safety Guidance for New and Expectant Mothers. Both documents are available from the Health and Safety website (or email safety@uwe.ac.uk).

Any pertinent issues arising from the risk assessment, including any practical implications, will be reported to the Student Support Adviser / Graduate School and will be taken into account when making decisions around how the pregnancy might be accommodated and what adjustments may need to be made (see section 5).

4.2 International Students

International students on tier 4 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

¹ 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.

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.

4.3 Students on Programmes 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 confirming the Pregnancy Support Plan (section 5), these will be taken into account when agreeing what reasonable adjustments will be made, including any associated period of suspension.

4.4 Student Finances

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

5. The Student Pregnancy 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 academic department, the student, the Graduate School (in relation to postgraduate research students) and other professional services 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 as applicable:

(a) Arrangements for ante-natal appointments

Where known, the dates of ante natal appointments will be put into the Plan and the arrangements made to enable the student to catch up if any of the appointments coincide with teaching or research commitments, if possible.

(b) Examinations and assessments

A view will be taken on whether the student's pregnancy will affect their ability to meet study deadlines and/or sit examinations. Any adjustments required in order to ensure that the student meets the requirements of the programme, including any special examination arrangements to be made, will be outlined.

(c) Health and safety

Any adjustments required arising from the health and safety risk assessment will be detailed.

(d) Placements / fieldwork / study abroad

If the student is required, or has opted, to do a placement, fieldwork or period of study abroad, an assessment will be made on whether the pregnancy will affect their ability to complete it. If so, the measures to be taken to ensure that the student fulfils these requirements will be outlined (e.g. doing the placement, fieldwork or

study abroad at an earlier stage of pregnancy or upon return from a period of suspension).

(e) Visa implications and reporting (international students only)

For pregnant students subject to tier 4 student visa regulations, a statement will be provided on the implications of the plan upon the student's visa status.

(f) Student finances

Where the student's plans have implications for their financial arrangements, these will be included in the Plan with advice on what should be done.

(g) Absence²

The student may choose to take a suspension of studies, or they may wish to return as soon as possible after giving birth. The Plan will detail when the student is likely to commence any period of absence and the expected date of return. A date will also be given by which the student will need to confirm the date of return and whether there is an intention to breastfeed (so that appropriate facilities can be identified).

(h) Communication with the student during any period of absence

A statement will be provided on the key information that it is expected will need to be communicated to the student during any period of absence, the person responsible for the communication, and the agreed method of communication.

(i) Arrangements for resting/breastfeeding

The University is committed to providing resting facilities for pregnant students and facilities for breastfeeding people, in accordance with the Health and Safety Guidance G040 *Room to Rest or Recover*. Their locations will be detailed in the plan.

6. Extenuating Circumstances

If the student becomes unwell during her pregnancy, or something unplanned or unexpected occurs (such as early labour, a miscarriage or a still birth/neo natal birth), the student is likely to need additional support beyond that outlined in the Pregnancy Support Plan. In such circumstances, the student should contact the Student Support Adviser to ascertain whether further Reasonable Adjustments may be made (e.g. moving an assessment deadline by a week or two). In more serious cases, the Extenuating Circumstances procedure should be used

(<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/assessments/extenuatingcircumstances.aspx>) and the necessary medical certification provided for students undertaking taught programmes. Research students should seek advice from the Graduate School. The University will give sensitive consideration to the impact of such circumstances on the student's ability to undertake their studies, including assessments and examinations.

7. Maternity Absence and Return to Study

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 the 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 the child and the student. In cases where the University is concerned about a student's health in relation to the proposed

² The arrangements for maternity-related absence apply equally to live births and still births after 24 weeks of gestation.

return to study date, documentary medical evidence of fitness to return to study may be requested.

Where a student is following a programme where there is concern about knowledge of the field being affected by the period of suspension taken, the 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.

Where there are concerns about the student meeting the requirements of the 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 Support Plan.

In certain exceptional cases, and following the review of the 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.

8. Adoption

The University is committed to supporting students who choose to become primary adopters as outlined in the statement of principles at section 3. Students who are planning to adopt should contact a Student Support Adviser as early as possible. The Student Support Adviser will liaise with the academic department, the Graduate School (in relation to postgraduate research students), 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 suspension of studies, and upon return to study. The Reasonable Adjustments agreed will be documented in a Student Adoption 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.

9. Partner Leave/Second Parent Leave

A student whose partner is pregnant, or who is planning to adopt, will be permitted reasonable time off study in order to enable them to accompany their partner to any appointments prescribed by a doctor, midwife, health visitor or social worker. The academic department will take reasonable steps to ensure that the student is able to catch up with any sessions missed should the teaching materials not be available on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

If a student undertaking a taught programme wishes to request an extension to a deadline or an alternative form of assessment as a result of being affected by a partner's pregnancy, maternity or adoption, reasonable adjustments must be requested in advance by contacting a Student Support Adviser.

If a student wishes to seek a suspension of studies as they intend to take on primary caring responsibilities following a partner's birth or adoption, they should seek the advice of a Student Support Adviser.

If a student undertaking a taught programme is unable to submit coursework or sit an examination because he/she feels seriously affected by something unplanned associated

with his/her partner's pregnancy (e.g. labour occurs unexpectedly or the ill health of a newborn) or adoption, the student should use the University's Extenuating Circumstances arrangements. Research students should seek the advice of the Graduate School.

10. Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years unless organisational or legislative change necessitates earlier review.

Approved by LTSEC, 21 June 2017

Annex A

Further Information

Student Support Advisers

For advice regarding the establishment of a Student Pregnancy Support Plan:
<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/studentssupportadvisers.aspx>

University Health Centre

For the referral of students for health and medical advice:
<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/healthandwellbeing/universityhealthcentre>

University Wellbeing Service

For a range of mental health and other support services for students:
<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/healthandwellbeing/wellbeingsservice.aspx>

University Health and Safety Unit

For advice on risk assessments and health and safety hazards for pregnant women and new mothers
<https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/people-groups/service/health-and-safety>

Students' Union Advice Centre

Offers advice on a range of matters for students:
<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/representation/advice-centre/>

Halley Nursery

Offers childcare for students and staff of the University:
<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/whyuwe/fantasticfacilities/halleynursery.aspx>

Equality Act 2010

For further information on the Equality Act and how it applies to pregnancy and maternity, please see the guidance provided by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU):
<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/student-pregnancy-and-maternity/>

Annex B

Advice and Support for Pregnant Students

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that if you become pregnant 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 any benefits and services available to you.

Act Swiftly

It is important to obtain sound advice as soon as you know you are pregnant. Delay may cause problems later. If you believe you are pregnant because of missed periods and/or because you have used an 'over the counter' test, you should have your pregnancy confirmed by a doctor as soon as possible.

If you are uncertain about whether to proceed with your pregnancy, you can seek support from the University's Wellbeing Service and/or obtain confidential advice from the University Health Centre on Frenchay campus, or you can consult your own GP. There are also a number of external agencies that you can visit, including the Marie Stopes Foundation (<http://mariestopes.org.uk/>), which provides unplanned pregnancy counselling and information and advice about abortion.

Your Future Plans

If you decide that your pregnancy is to be terminated, there is no need for any staff or students at UWE Bristol to know unless you want them to. However if you are on a programme that requires all absences, however short, to be reported, you should inform your academic department that you will be absent for "medical reasons". However, if you consider that your termination has affected your ability to complete an assessment on time and you need a short extension, you should speak to a Student Support Adviser.

If you decide that your pregnancy is to continue, your doctor will arrange for you to be registered for ante-natal care. If you feel that you may need additional support during your pregnancy and you feel that you may benefit from talking to someone in a counselling capacity, do contact the University Wellbeing Service. It is also important that you also let a Student Support Adviser know about your pregnancy as soon as possible. The reason for doing this is that they are responsible for the production and co-ordination of Student Pregnancy Support Plans through the use of the Reasonable Adjustments procedure. These plans are developed with you and your academic department in order to support you through your programme of study during the period of pregnancy and maternity, including the completion of a risk assessment, any agreed suspension of studies, and any adjustments to be made for examinations and assessment (e.g. such as re-scheduling or an examination room alone for heavily pregnant people). The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents. Your academic department may consult the Health and Safety Unit in this regard, depending on the nature of your programme of study. You are also advised to directly inform your Programme Leader and/or Academic Personal Tutor know about your pregnancy. You Student Support Adviser will need to communicate with your academic department in order to put in place any reasonable adjustments to support your pregnancy and maternity.

Your Pregnancy Support Plan will take into account the academic requirements of your programme of study and your needs during pregnancy, including any special considerations such as placements or fieldwork. You are permitted to be absent from teaching events for ante-natal appointments and to take a suspension of studies following the birth of your child should you wish. 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 time-out, 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 use the Extenuating Circumstances procedure (<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/assessments/extenuatingcircumstances.aspx>) and provide the necessary medical certification.

Partners

Students whose partners are pregnant may also take a period of absence to cover the birth of their partner's child and also to make any arrangements for attendance at ante-natal clinics with their partner. They 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 the personal circumstances of the student and the nature of their programme of study and must be discussed in advance with a Student Support Adviser.

If a student's partner is affected by something serious and unplanned associated with the pregnancy or labour which prevents them from submitting or attending an assessment, they should use the University's Extenuating Circumstances arrangements if on a taught programme, or seek advice from the Graduate School if undertaking a postgraduate research degree (graduateschool@uwe.ac.uk).

Finance

You are strongly advised to seek financial advice from the Money Advice and Funds Service (MAFS) early in your pregnancy. It is your responsibility to seek the most up-to-date guidance on financial support available to you.

For home undergraduates, your student loan can continue for up to 60 days from the beginning of any interruption of study. You will need to inform the Student Loan Company (SLC) of your circumstances. Student Finance England will not provide repeat funding as a result of pregnancy and maternity, but this may change if there are complications. MAFS can advise you about this. They can also provide support if the SLC require confirmation of your plans. All home students (undergraduate and postgraduate) may also be entitled to apply for maternity state benefits. Information about this can be obtained through your ante-natal carers or via MAFS. Detailed benefits advice is also available from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (<http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england.htm>)

Postgraduate research students in receipt of a Research Council or University bursary may be entitled to receive up to six months maternity pay. Advice should be sought from the Graduate School (graduateschool@uwe.ac.uk).

International students are unlikely to be entitled to maternity state benefits. International students who have financial sponsors should inform the sponsors of their circumstances and agree an appropriate plan of action.

Tier 4 Visa Holders

International Students who are pregnant and in the UK on a tier 4 visa must seek immigration advice very promptly from the Student Visa Support Service:
<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/study/internationalstudents/visasandimmigration/studentvisasupportservice.aspx>

If you plan to stay in the UK to have your baby, birthing costs are in the region of £2,000 per birth. You would be liable to pay for this if the University ceases its sponsorship of you under the points-based immigration rules.

International students who return home for the birth of their child should note that most airlines will not carry pregnant passengers after seven months of pregnancy have elapsed. If you are an international student returning home, you should arrange for continuing ante-natal care in your home country and take with you details of any care you have received in the UK.

Accommodation

If you are in University managed accommodation, you will need to provide Accommodation Services with a copy of your MATB1 form (which you receive from your midwife at around 20 weeks into your pregnancy). You will be permitted to be released from your accommodation contract one month prior to your expected birth date if you decide to continue with your studies. If you decide to withdraw from the University, your release date from your accommodation contract will be subject to the standard terms and conditions. Further advice and information is available from Accommodation Services.

Returning to UWE Bristol

Your Pregnancy Support Plan will detail the arrangements for your return and re-integration into your programme of study. You will need to contact your Student Support Adviser prior to your planned date of return. If you are breastfeeding, and require facilities, these will be detailed in your Pregnancy 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. The Students' Union runs Halley Nursery (<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/community/nursery/>), which has 62 places for staff, students and the local community. Places are therefore limited and are allocated on the basis of date of application so early expression of interest is advisable. Advice on childcare

available in Bristol is available from Bristol City Council (<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/children-and-young-people/early-education-and-childcare>) and in South Gloucestershire from South Gloucestershire Council (<http://www.southglos.gov.uk/education-and-learning/childcare/>).

After the birth of your baby, it is likely that there will be occasions when you will have difficulties arising as a result 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

Both Mumsnet and the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) provide a wealth of useful information on all aspects of pregnancy, childbirth, child development and parenting (including details of local support groups and "meet-ups for pregnant and new parents), which you may find helpful:

<http://www.mumsnet.com/>

<http://www.nct.org.uk/>