

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. Demographic changes mean that more students are likely to become pregnant or have a child during their studies, and, in addition, the Equality Act 2010 has significantly strengthened the legal protections for students during periods of pregnancy and maternity. Both students and applicants are now protected in relation to:

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

2. Scope

This document provides both students and staff with information about the University's approach to supporting a student who is pregnant or has decided to terminate a pregnancy. *The arrangements and procedures detailed in this Policy in relation to pregnancy and maternity also apply in circumstances where a student is a primary adopter (where appropriate).*

References to very young children relate to children 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 and maternity of students:

- (a) Students will be supported throughout pregnancy and maternity and, wherever practicable, will not be unreasonably prevented from applying for, registering upon, or successfully completing a programme of study.
- (b) All practical steps will be taken to avoid less favourable treatment of pregnant students and students in a period of maternity. 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 in cases where the pregnancy is unwanted or unplanned.
- (d) The health and wellbeing of pregnant students will be considered of paramount importance at all times.
- (e) All students covered by this Policy will be dealt with in a sensitive manner. Unless there are serious and valid concerns for the health and wellbeing of the pregnant student, only members of staff who need to know will be informed of her circumstances, and this will be only with the student's prior consent.

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. 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 pregnant students following programmes that may involve potentially high risks to the student and/or her child.¹

¹ It is important to point out 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.

Students should inform Disability Services² of their pregnancy and give an early indication of the period of time-out they are anticipating (if known). Upon notification, Disability Services 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 expressly sought from the student. The student should be referred as appropriate for further sources of advice and support, eg her GP, a midwife or the Wellbeing Service. Sources of support and advice can be found in the annexes to this document.

Students are also actively encouraged to inform their Programme Manager / Director of Studies, and/or their Academic Personal Tutor of their pregnancy as well as Disability Services.

The following factors will be considered when planning the appropriate response to a student pregnancy:

4.1 Health and safety

Upon notification of a student pregnancy, the academic department (usually the Programme Manager, Director of Studies, or his/her nominee) 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 e-mail safety@uwe.ac.uk).

Any pertinent issues arising from the risk assessment, including any practical implications, will be reported to Disability Services 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. 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 Border Agency regulations. In all cases, the University's legal responsibilities in relation to the sponsorship of international students under the points-based immigration system will take precedence.

4.3 Students on professional programmes

Students on professional programmes have to meet specific requirements related to the need to demonstrate certain knowledge, skills and competencies required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies that cannot be compromised. In confirming the Pregnancy Support Plan (section 5), these will be taken into account when agreeing what adjustments will be made to accommodate the pregnancy and maternity, including an associated period of maternity-leave.

4.4 Student support

There will be implications on a student's financial arrangements of the pregnancy and any agreed period of time out, both in terms of fees payable and student support available. The Pregnancy Support Plan will detail these implications and the actions the student should take.

5. The Student Pregnancy Support Plan

Disability Services will co-ordinate the arrangements to ensure that students' educational support needs are met during pregnancy, following the birth, and on the student's return to her programme of study. They will liaise with the academic department, the student, the Graduate School (in relation to postgraduate research students) and other professional services as necessary, taking into account issues of confidentiality, in order to ensure that the necessary Reasonable Adjustments are made. The support arrangements will be documented in a Student Pregnancy Support Plan, which will cover the following:

(a) Communication about the student's pregnancy

Which members of staff will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy, when other staff members and fellow students will be informed, and by whom.

² The University does not intend to equate pregnancy with disability. The intention is that the University's Disability Service will be re-named in order to more accurately reflect the nature of the work it now undertakes.



- (b) **Communication with the student during her pregnancy**
The key information that will need to be communicated to the student during her pregnancy, the person responsible for the communication, and the agreed method of communication.
- (c) **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 her to catch up if any of the appointments coincide with teaching.
- (d) **Examinations and assessments**
A view will be taken on whether the student's pregnancy and maternity will affect her ability to meet study deadlines and/or sit examinations. Any adjustments required in order to ensure that the student meets the requirements of her programme, including any special examination arrangements to be made, will be outlined.
- (e) **Health and safety**
Any adjustments required arising from the health and safety risk assessment.
- (f) **Placements / fieldwork / study abroad**
If the student is required, or has opted, to do a placement, fieldwork or period of study abroad as part of her programme, an assessment will be made on whether her pregnancy will affect her ability to complete it. If so, the measures to be taken to ensure that she fulfils these requirements will be outlined (eg doing the placement, fieldwork or study abroad at an earlier stage of pregnancy or on her return from maternity-related absence).
- (g) **Visa implications and reporting (if applicable)**
- (h) **Student finances**
- (i) **Maternity-related absence (time-out)³**
The student may wish to take a lengthy period of time out from her studies, or she may wish to return as soon as possible after giving birth. The plan will detail when the student is likely to commence her period of absence and when she is expected to return. It will also detail the arrangements for communication with the student during this period. A date will also be given by which the student will need to confirm the date of return to her studies and whether she intends to breastfeed (so that appropriate facilities can be identified).
- (j) **Arrangements for resting/breastfeeding**
The University is committed to providing resting facilities for pregnant students and facilities for breastfeeding mothers, in accordance with the Health and Safety Standard HSS02 *Rooms to Rest or Recover*. Where these exist, they will be detailed in the plan.
- (k) **Arrangements for review of the plan** (which will be subject to change)
The plan will need to be reviewed periodically as the student's pregnancy progresses. The dates for this review will be included. Generally, it will be helpful to review at 20 weeks, 30 weeks and prior to the student's return to study.

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 her Pregnancy Support Plan. In such circumstances, Disability Services should be contacted to ascertain whether Reasonable Adjustments may be made (eg 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.

³ The arrangements for maternity-related absence apply equally to live births and still births after 24 weeks of gestation.

7. Maternity-Related Absence and Return to Study

All students will be permitted to take a period of time out from their studies following the birth of their child. The period of this absence will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of her programme of study. There is no legal minimum period of time-out, but the University strongly recommends that a minimum of two weeks is taken in order to ensure the health and safety of the child and mother. In cases where the University is concerned about a student's health in relation to her proposed return to study date, she may be required to provide confirmation from their GP or health worker of her fitness to return to study.

Where a student is following a programme where there is concern about her knowledge of the field being affected by the period of time-out she takes, the Pregnancy Support Plan will detail the steps that will be taken by the department to ensure that she is kept up-to-date, eg through the provision of reading lists, research articles, transcripts of lectures, etc.

Where there are concerns about the student meeting the requirements of the programme (eg coursework assessments or examinations), arrangements may be made for alternative methods to be used, or for her to complete the requirements prior to the commencement of the maternity-related absence or during it. Reasonable Adjustments such as these will be detailed in the Pregnancy Support Plan.

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

8. Partner Leave / Second Parent Leave

A student whose partner is pregnant will be permitted reasonable time off study in order to enable him/her to attend antenatal appointments prescribed by a doctor, midwife or health visitor with his/her partner. The student should provide evidence of these appointments and the department will take steps to ensure that he/she is able to catch up with any teaching missed.

If a student wishes to take a period of time out, either because their partner is due to have a baby or he/she is a primary adopter, the request should be made via Disability Services and normally 15 weeks before the baby is due. The period of the absence agreed will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of his/her programme of study, including any requirements of the professional body (if appropriate). An absence totalling two weeks is usually considered the norm. However, this may differ in certain situations, eg when the partner is taking primary caring responsibility.

The University will ensure that students taking partner / second parent leave are provided with materials from teaching missed.

If a student undertaking a taught programme is unable to submit coursework or sit an examination (or whose performance is affected in an examination) because he/she feels seriously affected by a partner's termination of a pregnancy, or something unplanned associated with his/her partner's pregnancy or labour occurs, he/she should use the University's Extenuating Circumstances arrangements. Research students should seek the advice of the Graduate School.

9. Policy Review

The Director of Student Services will ensure that this Policy is reviewed after one year of operation and every three years thereafter.

**Approved by Academic Board
26 June 2013**



Annex A - Further Information

Equality Act 2010

For further information on the Equality Act and how it applies to pregnancy, maternity and maternity, please see the guidance provided by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU):

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/student-pregnancy-and-maternity-implications-for-heis.pdf>

Disability Services

For advice regarding the establishment of a Student Pregnancy Support Plan:

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/studysupport/disabilityservices>

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/wellbeingservice.aspx>

Students' Union Advice Centre

Offers advice on a range of matters for students:

<http://www.uwesu.org/support/advice-centre/>

Halley Nursery

Offers childcare for students and staff of the University:

<http://www.uwesu.org/support/nursery/>



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 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 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 Disability Services to ascertain whether this may be granted under the Reasonable Adjustments procedure. For instances where you feel that your academic performance has been affected and/or additional time is required, you will need to use the Extenuating Circumstances procedure (<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/assessments/extenuatingcircumstances.aspx>) and provide the necessary medical certification if you are on a taught programme. If you are undertaking a postgraduate research programme, you should seek advice from the Graduate School (graduateschool@uwe.ac.uk). All information received will be treated with confidentiality and sensitivity.

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 Disability Services 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, an agreed period of time-out, and any adjustments to be made for examinations and assessment (e.g. such as re-scheduling or an examination room alone for heavily pregnant women). 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 Manager / Director of Studies and/or Personal Tutor know about your pregnancy.

Your Pregnancy Support Plan will take into account the academic requirements of your programme of study and your needs as a pregnant woman, including any special considerations such as placements or fieldwork. You are permitted to be absent from teaching events for ante-natal appointments and for a period of time out from your studies following the birth of your child. The agreed period of absence will be determined by your 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, 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 apply for a period of time-out to cover the birth of their partner's child and also to make any arrangements for attendance at ante-natal clinics with their partner. The arrangements made will depend on the personal circumstances of the student and the nature of his/her programme of study. However, we would normally expect these arrangements to mirror those granted to staff (ie two weeks leave of absence).

If a student's partner is unable to submit coursework or sit an examination (or whose performance is affected in an examination) because he/she feels seriously affected by a termination of a pregnancy, or something unplanned associated with his/her partner's pregnancy or labour, he/she 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 Student Advice and Welfare Service (SAWS) 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. SAWS 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 SAWS. Detailed benefits advice is also available from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (<http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england.htm>)

Students in receipt of NHS Bursaries or other awards should contact SAWS in the first instance and, if necessary, contact their sponsor and make arrangements for the suspension of the award during the agreed period of time-out at the University.

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. General visa advice is available at <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/comingtouw/internationalstudents/internationalstudyatuwe/visasandcomingtotheuk.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

Your Pregnancy Support Plan will detail the arrangements for your return and re-integration into your programme of study. Disability Services will contact you prior to your planned date of return to review the plan and ascertain if it is still appropriate. If you are breastfeeding, and require facilities, these will be detailed in your Pregnancy Support Plan and/or Disability Services will be able to advise. Baby-changing facilities are available as follows:

Frenchay Campus

1R019
2S810
2B019A
2EC013
2F011

Bower Ashton Campus

0A001A

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. UWE Students' Union runs Halley Nursery (<http://www.uwesu.org/support/nursery/>), which has 62 places for staff, students and the local community. Places are therefore limited. 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/Pages/Article%20Pages/Children%20Young%20People/Childcare/Looking-for-childcare.aspx>).

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, you should use the Extenuating Circumstances procedure if you are on a taught programme.

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 mothers), which you may find helpful:

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

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

