

# Policy on Support of Pregnant Students and Students with Infants

***Please note that Pregnant Student Support Plan is available online as a separate form under 'Corporate Documents' – 'Strategy & Policy Documents' and under 'Student Support' – 'Documents'***

## Introduction

This policy seeks to establish and develop principles and practice which will ensure that there is no discrimination against students who become pregnant and/or give birth whilst registered with the University.

This policy is congruent with the University's values of "understanding that [...] human dignity lies in [the] ability to freely choose what is right" and "our respect for all individuals". In addition, detailed attention has been given to the guidance published by the Equality Challenge Unit in its document: *Student Pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions*.

Pregnancy is entirely natural and likely (in statistical proportion). It is not ill-health although it may cause episodes of illness. As a medical condition, however, risk assessment of health and safety is a prime consideration. The University should be able to make reasonable adjustments in order to manage foreseeable consequences for attendance and study.

The University, through its academic and support staff, will seek to guide students in relation to their studies. It will, however, be guided at all times by the wishes of each student and will offer all guidance without presumption. Members of staff will be particularly sensitive to reflect back the language used by each student. It should be borne in mind that not all pregnancies are planned or desired. It should also be noted that the University has additional support through the Chaplaincy for those students who wish to use this

## Statement of Principles

The University will:

- strive to maintain the learning experience of the student;
- offer guidance without presumption or discrimination, ascertaining at all times the wishes of the student and reflecting back the student's choice of language;
- draw up, as appropriate, a student support plan, involving academic, support and specialist colleagues;
- as appropriate, make reasonable adjustments to learning experiences and assessments;
- seek to provide appropriate physical facilities.

## Praxis

### **Stage 1 Disclosure and initial guidance**

Students are not obliged to notify the University of a pregnancy. Moreover, it is not necessary to require proof of pregnancy at the outset and GPs do not normally supply such “evidence”. However, in the normal course of pregnancy, relevant documentation may provide such evidence as necessary, notably MAT forms.

A student might disclose pregnancy to any one of a range of staff, including academic or progress tutors or student support staff.

It is important to establish sensitively whether:

1. the student is seeking guidance about continuation of studies because continuing with the pregnancy or seeking help in deciding whether to continue the pregnancy;
2. the student has consulted a GP and, if not already done, to advise that this is strongly recommended, perhaps through the University Student Health service;
3. the student has obtained other support and advice, such as counselling;
4. the student wishes disclosure to be temporarily confidential and to advise that:

for a continuing pregnancy, the student’s progress tutor - or an alternate member of staff by agreement - and student support staff will need to be involved in formulating a pregnant student support plan

for a termination, a DFO may be advisable and further support would best be provided through Student Support services.

### **Stage 2 The Pregnant Student Support Plan**

In the event of a confirmed continuing pregnancy (hereafter, pregnancy) and readiness to proceed to a support plan, a meeting between the student, their progress tutor - or an alternate member of staff by agreement - and a member of student support staff, should be arranged within five working days.

There may be some discussion necessary about the best person(s) to draw up the Plan but at the heart of it are discussions and decisions about deadlines, alternative assessments, e-learning or other learning provision and risk assessments of different classroom activities. For this reason, it is best led by a member of academic staff, whether progress tutor or alternate by agreement or head of department, but there will naturally be input from Student Support staff.

*Note: The Pregnant Student Support Plan [PSSP] matches, to some extent, the established procedure for Learning Support Agreements in the Dyslexia and Disability Support Service. Primary Education already operate an action planning process. A PSSP template is attached as Appendix A.*

Copies of the agreed plan should be kept by the student and progress tutor and also lodged with Student Administration and Student Support. Any adjustments to

assessment arrangements will be inputted to SITs Alternative Assessment Module (AAM) by trained Student Support Administrators.

In formulating the PSSP, the Progress Tutor (or alternate) may need to consult:

- other academic staff,
- student support staff,
- EPO or EdPO staff with regard to placements,
- the health and safety officer,
- the international development officer.

The Progress Tutor (or alternate) will need to:

- establish significant dates, including ante-natal preparations as well as predicted date of birth;
- consult and advise with regard to studies and learning experience, including any health and safety implications on- or off-campus;
- consult and advise with regard to coursework deadlines and examinations;
- broker reasonable adjustments to studies and assessments as required, including supplementary provision by alternative means if possible;
- ensure that required information is supplied to identified Student Support staff for inputting to SITs;
- ensure that the Plan is reviewed with the student at regular intervals and with particular regard to placements or school-based training as they approach.

Health and safety considerations to be assessed include:

- Lifting and carrying
- Lengthy periods of sitting or standing, including workstations and posture
- Exposure to infectious diseases
- Exposure to lead and/or radioactive materials
- Long hours of work and work-related stress

Adjustments recorded in the plan might include:

- DFOs
- Leave arrangements, including financial arrangements for funded research students
- Temporary withdrawal and return
- Provision of materials electronically during leave or withdrawal
- Rescheduled deadlines and assessments
- Alternative forms of assessments
- Additional needs with regard to examination rooms (eg proximity and easy access to toilets, permission to walk around)
- Alternative arrangements for placement and SBT.

### **Infants: Campus and Facilities**

Infants are defined loosely for this purpose as children too young for nursery and probably being breast-fed. Infants remain the responsibility of the accompanying parent at all times; the University takes no responsibility and parents are recommended not to request fellow students to supervise infants for any period.

The Equality Act 2010 gives explicit protection to women breast-feeding in public and, accordingly, the University will permit breast-feeding in public or social spaces and will not permit objections from staff or students to this. However, the University will

seek, in addition, to provide appropriate private facilities for breast-feeding, expression of milk, nappy-changing and plain, simple rest.

The presence of infants and breast-feeding in classes are matters for discretion. Disturbance of other learners or tutors must be avoided and this should be made courteously clear to students. Students with troubled or hungry infants should almost certainly seek to be excused. In the event of regular disturbance to study, alternative methods of learning should be explored.

The University will support students in obtaining alternative residential accommodation as necessary.

### **Paternity or equivalent**

The University will treat sympathetically requests for paternity-related absence from student fathers and from same-sex student partners of mothers.

### **Adoption**

A student matched for adoption will be treated in an equivalent manner to that for pregnant students, as appropriate.

### **Termination of pregnancy**

The University is mindful that termination of pregnancy will almost certainly have adverse effects on attendance and study and will treat requests for support sympathetically.

### **Miscarriage, still birth and neo-natal death**

The University is mindful that miscarriage, still birth and neo-natal death will almost certainly have adverse effects on attendance and study. In all cases, the need for further medical tests and other needs will be treated sympathetically.

A student who has a still birth or whose baby dies shortly after birth will be entitled to at least the same length of maternity-related absence and to the same level of support as a student whose baby is not still-born.

Tim Leadbeater  
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*Approved by Senior Management Team*  
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