

## STUDENT PREGNANCY, MATERNITY AND PATERNITY GUIDELINES

### **Introduction**

1. These Guidelines provide advice and guidance to:
  - Students of the University who become pregnant during their studies or whose partner becomes pregnant and to those who have recently become parents on issues related to study, health and safety, and finance.
  - University staff who may have a role in advising students coming to them with these issues.
2. The guidance relates to any student who becomes pregnant during her studies and students whose partner is pregnant and who expects to be responsible for the child, and any student becoming a parent (e.g. through adoption) of a child.

### **Statement**

3. The University believes that becoming pregnant or caring for a child should not, in itself, prevent any student from succeeding in their studies. The University is committed to showing as much flexibility as reasonably possible to facilitate a student's success and making sure no student is disadvantaged whilst ensuring academic standards are not compromised. The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary between programmes of study, but all Schools and Colleges should seek to follow the guidelines set out in this document.
4. The health and safety of a pregnant student will be of paramount importance at all times, and such students should be dealt with in a sensitive, non-judgemental and confidential manner. Only members of staff who need to be informed for valid reasons will be informed of a student's circumstances and this will be done only with the student's prior consent.
5. This guidance focuses primarily on study-related matters, but sources of help and advice on related issues can be found at the end of the document.

### **Study Arrangements**

6. The tutor or supervisor should meet with the student to discuss how the pregnancy is likely to impact on her studies. There may need to be an interruption of studies depending on when the baby is due. The student should inform an appropriate member of academic staff such as Personal Academic Tutor or Wellbeing Officer of their intentions regarding leave of absence. The student together with the member of academic staff should consider the implications for this in terms of the academic requirements of the student's programme.

A student with a baby due near to the examination period might require confirmation from her doctor that she is fit to sit exams. Time off might also be needed for medical appointments.

7. If a student experiences complications as a result of her pregnancy and needs additional time off from her study, she should inform the School as with any other absence on health grounds. If the time off impacts on her studies and assessments, then she should submit an extenuating circumstances form prior to the meeting of the School Board of Examiners. Further details on extenuating circumstances can be found at: [Extenuating Circumstances procedures](#).

8. A plan should be devised (in writing) by the member of academic staff, detailing any special arrangements required during the student's pregnancy, and the agreed timescale for her return to study. The student should receive a copy of this, as should other appropriate members of staff on a need to know basis (including, where required, Boards of Examiners or Progress Boards).

If the student continues to study during her pregnancy, she should discuss regularly with her tutor or supervisor, or other appropriate member of staff, the effectiveness of any special arrangements put in place. Where necessary, the arrangements will be reviewed in a way that supports the student's circumstances.

9. Information about a student's pregnancy should be treated as sensitive personal data and kept confidential and processed in accordance with Data Protection Legislation. Where appropriate, the student's consent should be sought to share such information with relevant colleagues on a need to know basis, to enable the University to provide the student with support advice and guidance.

### **Health and Safety**

10. Certain health and safety measures may need to be put in place in order to protect the student and her unborn baby, and this will be particularly relevant in certain Schools (e.g. where the student might be exposed to harmful chemicals or radiation, or be expected to lift heavy objects or undertake other strenuous activity). Therefore, once the student has let her School know of her pregnancy, a Risk Assessment must be completed by the School. This will identify any risks that may be present which could harm the student or her baby, and detail steps that need to be put in place to alleviate or minimise these risks. It should also detail any risks that may arise from any placement period or fieldwork due to be undertaken. Students will not be permitted to take part in field work after 35 weeks of pregnancy. Further information may be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>

#### **Pregnant Workers and New Mothers**

The Risk Assessment will be conducted and a template found here:

[Pregnant Workers and New Mothers](#)

### **Arrangements for Taking Maternity Leave**

11. The student should normally complete an Application for a Leave of Absence form for up to 52 weeks' absence ([Leave of absence](#)) and send this to the School for approval. The form should be completed and approved by the end of the 15th week before the estimated week of childbirth (EWC).

Students are required to take a minimum of two weeks' leave immediately following child birth and four weeks if on a placement.

12. Taught UG and PG students: Once the School has approved the Leave of Absence, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the form is passed to a member of the Student Records team. Student Records will then process the Leave of Absence and notify Housing Services (for students in University accommodation only), the Finance Office and the student's Local Authority, if applicable. The student will receive email confirmation from Student Records when their Leave of Absence has been processed.

13. Research Students: The Leave of Absence form should be submitted to the student's supervisor. This will then be reviewed by the student's School and submitted to the Research Student Administration (RSA) team. The RSA will notify the student (either by email or letter) of the School's decision. This notification will include information on the implications of the Leave of Absence on the student's fees.
14. There will be no distinction between live and still births (past the 24th week of pregnancy) in the granting of leave. Students requiring further support can contact Student Services:  
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/student-services/counselling/index.aspx>
15. In addition to speaking to their tutor or supervisor, international students should contact the International Student Team (IST) before submitting a Leave of Absence request to determine if there are implications for their immigration status. The University is required to report any students holding a Student Visa (previously Tier 4 visa) who takes a Leave of Absence to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Such students may be required to leave the UK during their Leave of Absence.

### **Resuming Studies**

16. The student should inform either their School (Taught UG & PG students) or the RSA team (research students) when they are ready to return and plan with their tutor or supervisor an appropriate timetable for their re-integration into the programme of study, including the examination schedule.
17. Students on taught programmes should complete the Return from Leave of Absence form and arrange for this to be signed by their tutor/ supervisor, who will then forward it to Student Records. Research students should email the RSA team to inform the University when they are ready to return.

### **Maternity Pay**

18. Undergraduate students should note that funding will usually stop when a Leave of Absence begins and students should seek advice from their funding body. (See paragraph 21 below for government maternity funding advice).
19. Students receiving funding from external bodies should follow the guidance for their particular scheme, or contact their funding body or sponsor for further advice.
20. International students with financial sponsors must contact their sponsors and agree a plan of action (such as deferring study/ when to resume study etc.)
21. A home student may be eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) or Maternity Allowance (MA). The rules surrounding eligibility for these are complicated and are based on a student's employment record. If a student is not eligible for SMP or MA, they may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) on the grounds of pregnancy:  
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>  
<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/forumdisplay.php?f=910>

Students should also contact Student Finance England: [Student finance login - GOV.UK](#)

22. The benefit rules are different for EU Registered Students and international Registered Students, and further advice should be sought from IST or from Guild Advice.

### **Accommodation**

23. Students who become pregnant whilst living in University accommodation may find that this is no longer suitable for health and safety reasons. Advice should be sought from Hospitality and Accommodation Services.

### **Paternity /students whose partner is pregnant or adopting**

24. Any student whose partner is expecting a child or who expects to be involved in co-parenting a child will be entitled to request a Leave of Absence. This is likely to include time off for medical appointments prior to, and after the birth, as well as a period of parental support leave immediately following the birth. A student in this situation should contact their tutor or supervisor to discuss this.
25. For students receiving research funding, it may be possible for a period of maternity support leave to be allowed, and students should contact their sponsor or provider prior to arranging leave.

### **Adoption**

26. Students about to become parents through adoption should inform their School of their circumstances as soon as possible. Only one member of a couple jointly adopting may take adoption leave. This applies regardless of whether one or both members of the couple are students at the University. The other member of the couple may be entitled to take Statutory Maternity/Paternity Leave (as appropriate).

### **Guidance for staff**

27. This section provides guidance to members of staff seeking to provide support to students coming under the scope of this document.

At all times, staff must ensure that those students are not treated less favourably than any other student on the basis of their circumstances. Flexibility should be shown where possible to ensure continued learning is facilitated. Information given by students should be treated confidentially (being passed on where necessary only with the student's consent or in accordance with Data Protection Legislation) and with sensitivity (see paragraph 9 above).

28. When a student contacts a member of staff to discuss any circumstances covered by this document, a response should be made promptly and a meeting arranged as soon as possible. Whilst it is recognised that each request must be dealt with on an individual basis, there are a number of measures that can be considered in order to enable the student's continuation of study. These might include:

- Allowing time out of study (for a pre-determined amount of time) for the birth and a period of time thereafter;
- Prior to and after the birth,, giving permission for periods of absence for medical appointments, and making arrangements for the student to catch up on missed classes;

- Showing a degree of flexibility regarding assignment deadlines if the student's circumstances make it difficult for them to be met;
- Allowing resit examinations to be counted as first attempts where the pregnancy or birth prevents the student from taking them at the usual first attempt;
- Consideration of any requests to transfer to part-time study, where this is possible (although the student should bear in mind the financial implications of this course of action). Staff should refer the student to the useful contacts section;
- Offering support to help the student reintegrate to their studies after any period of prolonged absence.

29. It is important to take the views and wishes of the student into account; their wishes should form the basis of the arrangement, rather than applying a standard set of arrangements. All decisions taken should be based on discussion with the student.

30. Whilst an appropriate degree of flexibility should be exercised and efforts made to meet reasonable requests, staff should also seek to protect the academic integrity of the programme. Requests should not be refused solely on the basis of being too costly to implement, although this will necessarily be considered when assessing the overall 'reasonableness' of a request. If any request is refused, the reasons for the refusal should normally be provided in writing to the student.

31. Where specific arrangements are required to be put in place for a student who is already granted additional arrangements (e.g. on the grounds of disability), these should where possible be kept separate in order that it remains clear which arrangements relate to which particular circumstance. This ensures that these arrangements are in place for the required amount of time and also clarifies adherence to the different pieces of legislation.

32. For staff requiring more detailed guidance, advice can be sought on any of the above from the Equality & Diversity Unit ([equality@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:equality@contacts.bham.ac.uk)).

### **Sources of information and help**

#### **Reproductive Health and Pregnancy advice**

- British Pregnancy Advisory Service: [BPAS](#); Tel: 08712 00 22 23 / 08457 304030
- NHS Pregnancy Care Planner: [Pregnancy - NHS](#)

#### **Childcare**

- University Nursery: [Childcare facilities and nurseries - University of Birmingham](#)
- Other childcare providers: [Get childcare: step by step - GOV.UK](#)

#### **General information and advice**

- Student Counselling - [Mental Health and Wellbeing Service](#)
- The Guild of Students' Guild Advice:  
<https://www.guildofstudents.com/support/guildadvice/who-we-are-guild-advice/>

- Students with Children: [Student Carers](#) and <http://www.guildofstudents.com/studentgroups/societies/studentparents/>
- Adoption UK: [Adoption UK Charity](#); 0844 848 7900

## **Finances**

- Department of Work and Pensions: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/>
- Child Benefit Office: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit/index.htm>
- Student Funding Office: [Financial support](#)

## **Accommodation and Estates**

- [Living on campus and in Brum](#)

## **For International Students**

- Requiring a Leave of Absence might result in changes to a student's immigration status. Please consult IST before applying for a Leave of Absence - [International Student Team](#)