

Support for pregnant students and new parents

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Summary of responsibilities

**The University will ensure that:**

* Any student who becomes pregnant before or during a period of study at the University is accommodated as far as practicable to allow her to complete her programme of study, providing academic standards are upheld.
* Relevant staff are made aware of the terms of this policy and their responsibilities arising under it.
* Support and guidance is available for staff undertaking risk assessments on elements of the programme of study that are likely to result in a risk to the health and safety of the student or unborn child.
* Staff in Wellbeing Services and the Office of Health and Safety are available to discuss with staff the best way to support the continuing study of a pregnant student to ensure she is able to complete her programme of study.
* Appropriate support is available to students through various support services.
* The policy is kept under review and updated as necessary.

**Schools must ensure that:**

* The policy is widely publicised and available to staff and students.
* Female students are made aware of the policy and encouraged to disclose a pregnancy in confidence at an early stage, ***particularly where elements of their programme of study might result in a risk to the health and safety of the student or unborn child.***
* Staff are aware of the policy so that they can respond appropriately when a student discloses her pregnancy and seeks support to continue her programme of study.
* As soon as a student discloses that she is pregnant, a risk assessment, or series of risk assessments, are undertaken to ensure that there are no elements of the programme of study that present a risk to the health and safety of the student or the unborn child.
* Wherever practicable, accommodation is made to ensure that a pregnant student, or student with a very young child, is able to complete her programme of study.
* If requested, a female member of staff is identified with whom a pregnant student can discuss her support needs.
* The student is given information on other sources of ***advice/support***.

**Individual staff members**

All individual staff members are ***advised to***:

* Familiarise themselves with this document and the University’s responsibilities towards students who are pregnant or have very young children.

Individual staff members to whom a pregnancy is disclosed are ***responsible for***:

* Reading the Policy and in particular, becoming familiar with the procedure for supporting pregnant students.
* Treating any disclosure of a pregnancy seriously and making students aware of appropriate sources of support.
* Respecting a student’s right to confidentiality and verifying that a student has no objections to their pregnancy being discussed with others – particularly when information needs to be passed onto other staff members to arrange any agreed accommodations to the programme of study or adjustments to fees.
* Ensuring accurate information is given to prospective students regarding the availability of support for students who are pregnant or have very young children.
* Seeking advice from colleagues or support services within the University if they are unsure of how best to support the continued study of a pregnant student.

**Students (and applicants)**

Students and applicants covered by this policy are ***responsible for***:

* Disclosing their pregnancy to a trusted member of staff (preferably their Personal Tutor) within their School at an early stage of their pregnancy, with a view to discussing any necessary support arrangements or adjustments – particularly where elements of their programme of study might present a health and safety hazard to the student or unborn child.
* Ensuring the safe supervision of any child they may bring onto campus.
* Notify the School by the 15th week before their expected due date if they will need to be absent during teaching weeks, assessments or examinations and in all cases for research students so that appropriate maternity leave can be arranged.

Students and applicants covered by this policy are ***advised to***:

* Read the policy and associated guidance notes in order to understand the University’s approach to supporting pregnant students and students with very young children.
* Ensure that they have a clear idea of what will be expected of them on their course of study in order to understand the potential impact of pregnancy related absence.
* Discuss any concerns they have relating to their pregnancy with their own GP and, if required, staff in one or more of the following services: Wellbeing Services, Office of Health and Safety, the School.

Introduction

The University of Huddersfield believes that being or becoming pregnant, terminating a pregnancy, experiencing miscarriage or having a very young child should not, in itself, be a barrier to applying for, starting, succeeding in, or completing a programme of study at the University. This policy covers all students at the University or students studying for a University of Huddersfield qualification through collaborative provision. Arrangements can be made for a student in these circumstances but will vary according to the demands of each particular course and the circumstances of each student.

The University is committed to being as flexible as possible providing academic standards are upheld.

* **Avoiding less favourable treatment.** The University and its staff should avoid treating a student (or applicant) less favourably than other students or applicants on the grounds that she is pregnant, has experienced a miscarriage orhas terminated a pregnancy. Whilst particular arrangements may need to be made for an individual student (for example, a student **must not** return to University for two weeks after giving birth for health and safety reasons), the University will seek to make sure that such arrangements do not place the student at a particular disadvantage compared to other students.
* **Taking a flexible approach.** The University recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and its staff will take a flexible approach to facilitating the continued learning of the student.
* **Demonstrating a non-judgmental and sensitive approach.** When supporting and working with a student on these matters, staff should take an open-minded and non-judgmental approach. Information provided by the student should be treated sensitively and only passed onto others on a need-to-know basis
* **Enabling informed choices.** Members of staff should not attempt to direct or unduly influence a student’s decisions. Their role is to provide context and advice to the student, and to explore, in consultation with the student and others, flexibility that can be applied to the student’s programme or period of study to provide appropriate support.

Notifying your School

Students are not under any obligation to inform their School if they become pregnant, have a child, experience a miscarriage or decide to terminate a pregnancy whilst they are a student here unless they are studying on a course or embarking on a placement for which there are Health and Safety concerns for either the woman or the unborn child/ breastfeeding child. However, it is important to note that the University will not be able to take a flexible approach to her programme of study, or provide specific support to the student, unless it knows about the situation.

Whilst making a decision on whether or not to inform their School, students are encouraged to consider the following:

* There may be elements of a programme of study that could present a health and safety risk to a pregnant student and/or her child. A student’s School will not be able to arrange appropriate risk assessments unless it is aware of her pregnancy.
* If a student’s pregnancy-related absence (for example, for antenatal appointments) impacts significantly on the student’s studies, the School will only be able to take proper account of the reasons for absence if they are notified of these.
* In some cases, a student’s pregnancy-related absence from University might be something that needs to be discussed with other organisations who are a stakeholder in her course of study.
* If a student is planning to take maternity leave from their studies during a period when she would be expected to be in attendance she must notify the university by the 15th week before her due date. If the time is not taken as maternity leave it will be deemed to be an unauthorised absence.

***Note for International Students:*** If an international student requires a Visa to remain in the UK during her period of study and her pregnancy is likely to result in the need to remain in the UK longer than planned, or if an international student is considering temporary withdrawal from her course of study, then immigration advice should be sought from the International Office Immigration Team. If an international student on a Tier 4 visa is absent without permission the University may be obliged to notify the Home Office. It is therefore crucial that the University is informed of any maternity leave required.

Deciding whether to continue with or end a pregnancy

Whilst only the woman herself can make the decision as to whether or not to continue with her pregnancy, a range of services across the University and students’ union can assist by providing confidential support and information about the options available, and, in some cases, other practical assistance. These services include, for example:

* Wellbeing Services, Student Central
* The Student Union
* The Faith Centre

Students also have access to external organisations for information, advice or support. These include the student’s own GP, Brook Advisory Centres ([www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)), the Marie Stopes International Leeds Centre (<http://www.mariestopes.org.uk/>) and the Family Planning Association ([www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk))

Supporting pregnant students and new parents to study

This section outlines a series of steps for students and staff to follow in order to discuss and respond to the requirements of an individual student who is pregnant.

**Step 1:** A student is strongly advised to consult her GP to discuss medical issues relating to her pregnancy prior to approaching her School. It is particularly important to take advice at an early stage.

**Step 2a: Taught Students**A pregnant student has the right to request a meeting with her Personal Tutor or other trusted staff member. If requested, the School will identify a female member of staff to discuss the implications for the continuation of her study.

The student and the relevant staff member must meet to discuss and agree a plan for her continuation of study. Whenever possible, the member of staff should contact the student within 5 working days of the request being received from the student and meet her as soon as possible thereafter.

**Step 2b: Postgraduate Research Students**

In the case of a research degree candidate who becomes pregnant, the appropriate individual to contact will normally be her supervisor(s). The Supervisor(s) and Tutor will work together with the student to consider the impact of the pregnancy and any resulting suspension of study. This will include a risk assessment as described in step 3.

At the meeting, it is essential that urgent consideration is given to undertaking a risk assessment. In addition, careful consideration must be given to the variety of ways in which the student can be enabled to continue her studies during her pregnancy or after the birth. For example, these might include:

* Agreeing periods of absence and making arrangements for the student to catch-up on lectures/tutorials missed for pregnancy/birth related reasons to ensure that she is not at an academic disadvantage
* Adjusting timescales/deadlines for assessed coursework or exam submission deadlines.
* Seeking approval for alternative means of assessment for the student if appropriate.
* Allowing the student first attempt re-sits at future examination periods.
* The student taking some time out from her studies which would involve the student completing a suspension form, normally for a pre-determined amount of time
* The time permissible for maternity absence is 4 teaching weeks for undergraduate or Post graduate taught students and 6 weeks for research students, anything above this time will need to be a suspension of study. Students will be expected to take a minimum of 10 working days as maternity absence for health and safety reasons.
* Consideration of a transfer to part-time study (***this will not be an option for those students whose residence in the UK is based on their student visa***).

As well as covering the student’s longer-term plans relating to her studies, the continuation of study plan should also:

* Accommodate the student’s antenatal care
* Include a break from attending University of at least two weeks after giving birth for health and safety reasons
* Include provision for re-integrating the student to the programme of study on return from any prolonged absence.

**Step 3:** The Personal Tutor (or other chosen/designated staff member) overseeing the support arrangements for the student should ensure that appropriate steps are taken in relation to health and safety issues. In most cases, this will involve a risk assessment for the individual student.

For some students it will be more important that the health and safety implications of pregnancy are given serious consideration. In these situations, staff should seek advice as soon as possible from the School Heath and Safety Coordinator and also the University Office of Health and Safety as a full risk assessment should be completed

*If it is not practicable to alter the study conditions to respond to the risk(s) highlighted by this assessment, or if such an alteration would not avoid any identified risk(s), the student may need to take time out from her study to ensure she avoids them – although a concerted effort should be made by the School to manage the health and safety risks and find alternative ways of allowing a student to continue her course in any situation where a temporary withdrawal is not in line with her wishes.*

**Step 4:** The student should explore with the Finance Team within the Central Services Building any potential impact that the flexibility proposed may have in terms of payment of her tuition fees. She should also enquire about the continued payment of any loans, bursaries and scholarships etc with the appropriate funding body.

**Step 5:** The Personal Tutor (or other chosen/designated staff member) should contact the student to arrange a meeting(s) to produce a study plan. Once discussed and agreed, a written plan for the student’s continuation of study (detailing any specific flexibility agreed to allow the student to continue her studies) should be sent by the School to the student.Where possible, written agreement to this plan should be sought from the student. The plan will also need to be signed off by the Personal Tutor or (or other chosen/designated staff member).

Where a student is dissatisfied with the degree of flexibility offered, she may ask her School for information about the local complaints procedures or make a formal complaint, if appropriate – in line with the Student Complaints Procedure.

**Step 6:** The Personal Tutor (or other chosen/designated staff member) overseeing the support arrangements should communicate the agreed continuation plan to other relevant teaching staff and/or examination boards, as appropriate. Information should be passed on sensitively.

**Step 7:** The student and her Personal Tutor (or other chosen/designated staff member) should monitor the situation on an ongoing basis, particularly to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements that have been agreed to facilitate the student’s continued study. The student can request further meetings with her School, particularly if she is experiencing any difficulties.

What is an appropriate degree of flexibility?

It is not possible to provide a definitive list of special arrangements that might be considered reasonable in every possible situation because the decisions about which arrangements are appropriate in each particular case will vary according to a wide range of factors. These factors include the student’s individual circumstances, the time of year, the structure and content of the particular programme of study, restrictions imposed by professional bodies and any related health and safety matters.

Staff members are advised to take into account the following when considering what might be appropriate in a given case:

* A student’s own views on her options are important and should be taken account of wherever reasonably possible, however Schools do not have to agree to all or any requests made by the student, particularly where such requests are impossible or unreasonable to fulfil.
* The reasons for declining any request must be presented to the student in writing as part of her support plan.
* In cases where suspending her studies would lead to a student taking longer to complete a degree programme than would normally be permissible, the School may decline a request for further time out from studies. However, in these circumstances the School should still strive to demonstrate a flexible approach where practicable.
* In some cases, it might be appropriate for a School to show flexibility in relation to which modules count towards a particular qualification to accommodate a pregnant student, providing academic standards are upheld and that core or compulsory modules are not affected.
* Occasionally, a situation may arise in which a School is already making allowances for an individual student for reasons not related to pregnancy. This does not mean that it is unreasonable for her to benefit from separate/additional flexibility relating to her pregnancy.
* It must also be pointed out to the student that any adjustment which has been sanctioned by the School but which the student has not utilised cannot later be claimed for using the Extenuating Circumstances route.
* Employers who are funding part time students may also have made specific agreements with the student and these should be taken into account when looking to create the support plan.

If, at any stage, a member of staff would like some assistance in thinking through the practical implications of an individual student’s pregnancy, they are welcome to request a meeting with Student Services, the Office of Health and Safety or Registry as appropriate.

Work Placement/ Study Abroad

For students who become pregnant before or during a period of study abroad or a work placement there may be circumstances where the University is limited in the support it can realistically offer to the student. Where this is judged to present a particular risk to the student or her unborn child, she may be strongly advised to take time out or transfer to a different programme of study.

Tutors, in conjunction with the student should involve the School Placement Co-ordinator at the earliest opportunity.

Support for new parents

Whilst the procedure proposed above relates to a student during pregnancy, this also provides a helpful model for considering flexibility for a student (female or male) who has recently become a parent by other means (eg adoption). As above, what constitutes a reasonable degree of flexibility to take account of a student’s caring/parental responsibilities will vary from School to School and from programme to programme.

New parents should be encouraged to use the Extenuating Circumstances route if requiring mitigation for any unforeseen need. This route cannot however be used if the student already has a plan in place which covers these circumstances.

Support for partners

In most cases, full-time and part-time programmes are likely to be flexible enough to enable a student whose partner is pregnant, or whose partner is about to adopt a child, to take occasional breaks – perhaps to attend antenatal appointments with their partner and/or take some time to be with their partner around the time of the birth or adoption.

However, sometimes a student – whether female or male – whose partner is pregnant or about to adopt may still wish to discuss this with their School. In these circumstances, staff members are encouraged to demonstrate a degree of flexibility in terms of responding to the student’s circumstances.

Partners may be encouraged to use the Extenuating Circumstances route if requiring mitigation for any unforeseen need.

Partners are entitled to 10 working days’ leave (Partner’s Leave Entitlement) which, in the absence of approved Extenuating Circumstances, must be taken within 4 weeks of the birth/adoption.

Children on campus

The University is not designed for, nor does it take specific account of, the needs of babies, toddlers and young children. Children brought onto campus are the responsibility of the parent/carer who brings them and must be closely supervised by that person at all times. Students should not bring their child with them into any ***public teaching areas*** – such as lecture theatres, seminar or teaching rooms. They will need to make arrangements for the care of their child whilst they are in these locations.

Students may be accompanied by children in ***general public areas*** such as catering venues, in one-to-one tutorials if the tutor permits and in the library (other than silent study areas), providing that their children are supervised at all times. It is particularly important that children are not brought into areas where there is the possibility of a risk to health and safety (eg. laboratories or workshops).

Breastfeeding

There are no restrictions on feeding (bottle feeding or breastfeeding) in ***general public areas*** at the University.

We do not have a room specifically for the purpose of breastfeeding/expression of milk. Students are welcome to ask at i-Point in Student Central to see if an advice room is available in Wellbeing and Disability Services for their use. Advice rooms are heavily used for student appointments, therefore we cannot guarantee that all such requests can be accommodated.

We are unable to offer any facility to store expressed milk.

Wherever possible students should endeavour to schedule feeds outside teaching or examination time. Where the student believes this is not possible this should be discussed with the Personal Tutor or other designated staff member during the process of establishing a study plan as outlined on pages 6 and 7 of this document. Consideration will be given to such reasonable alternatives as may be available

Further Information

Here are some sources of further information or support for students and staff members:

* **Fees and Financial Support 01484 472210 http://www.hud.ac.uk/students/finance/financeoffice-advice/**
* **Student Services (including counselling) 01484 472227** [**http://www.hud.ac.uk/wellbeing-disability-services/index.php/index.php**](http://www.hud.ac.uk/wellbeing-disability-services/index.php/index.php)
* **Students Union** [**http://www.huddersfieldstudent.com/**](http://www.huddersfieldstudent.com/%20%20)
* **Talkthru 01484 515137** [**http://www.talkthru.org.uk/**](http://www.talkthru.org.uk/)
* **Brook 0808 802 1234** [**http://www.brook.org.uk/**](http://www.brook.org.uk/)
* **Marie Stopes International 0845 300 80 90** [**http://www.mariestopes.org.uk**](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk)
* **The government has also produced a guide to childcare. This is available on the web at:** [**https://www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages**](https://www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages)

*First produced by Student Services April 2010; this revision January 2016*

*With thanks to University of Leeds for allowing extensive reproduction of their Policy*