



## **PROCEDURES REGARDING STUDENT PREGNANCY, MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND INFANT CARE**

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# **UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON**

## **PROCEDURES REGARDING STUDENT PREGNANCY, MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND INFANT CARE**

### **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

The University of Roehampton is committed to creating a working and learning environment that is inclusive, where people understand, appreciate and value the diversity of each individual and where practices make people feel valued and able to participate and achieve their full potential. Legal protection for students during pregnancy and maternity has been significantly strengthened in England, Scotland and Wales with the commencement of the Equality Act 2010 (the Act). The Act lists pregnancy and maternity as one of nine protected characteristics and prohibits discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity.

### **2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

Roehampton University is mindful of its responsibilities to all students and will support students who become pregnant or have young infants throughout the period of study.

This policy statement has the intention of enabling students at Roehampton during pregnancy and maternity to continue with their studies and to ensure that pregnant students and students who have recently given birth are aware of the University's approach to pregnant student support, their entitlements and receive appropriate information.

In addition, students who are partners of new parents are able to take paternity related absence and receive advice and support.

## GUIDANCE

When a student discloses that she is pregnant it is important that she receives consistent support and advice.

### 3.1 Disclosure

It is important for pregnant students to be aware of the support available to them at the university with respect to their personal circumstances and with respect to their studies.

While it is not compulsory, it is therefore recommended that students disclose the fact that they are pregnant to an appropriate person at the University. The most appropriate person to inform at first instance is either the student's Academic Guidance Tutor (AGT) or Student Wellbeing Officer (SWO). The university should know of her circumstances in order to ensure that she is aware of the support available and to co-ordinate arrangements.

Students who need information about the implications of their pregnancy for studies should seek such information from their AGT or SWO. The Academic Guidance Tutor should provide information about the implications for course or programme completion including arrangements that could be made for assessments, catching up on missed seminars and lectures, course placements, time to attend appointments, maternity related absence and deferment.

An SWO will be able to advise on where to find information about the financial implications of their pregnancy including availability of student loans, maternity benefits and maternity pay, if any and local childcare facilities.

### Informed choice

Members of staff should not attempt to influence a student's decision about the continuation of the pregnancy nor make any assumptions about whether the pregnancy was planned. Some students will be delighted to discover they are pregnant while others may find this news an unwelcome shock.

If a student seeks advice from a member of staff regarding her decision to continue her pregnancy, the staff member should refer the student to the Student Medical Centre, to their own GP or to the Family Planning Association. A **booklet** can be downloaded for more information.

### 3.2 Health and safety

There are health and safety considerations that arise during pregnancy and breastfeeding and any risks that pregnant students could be exposed to during their studies will need to be assessed.

The highest risk of damage occurring to the foetus is during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy. Students should be encouraged to notify the University as early as possible of their pregnancy (see above). Where a student is unsure as to whether they will proceed with their pregnancy, it may still be appropriate to conduct a risk assessment.

The level of risk that a student is exposed to will depend on the requirements and nature of their programme. For many courses or areas of study the risks will be low but others that involve the following are more likely to present greater risks:

- physical activity, including lifting and carrying
- laboratory, field or other practical work particularly in relation to the use of chemicals or infectious disease
- field work

If a student is required to undertake a placement, for example a teaching placement, as part of their course, the Academic Guidance Tutor will need to liaise with the placement provider to ensure that a health and safety assessment is conducted. If practical work is a requirement of the course or area of study, this will need to be considered within a health and safety assessment. Consideration should also be given to the risks that may arise during examinations. For further information on considerations in examinations see below.

Further information on health and safety considerations during pregnancy and breastfeeding is provided in '[New and expectant mothers at work: a guide for employers](#)'

### **3.3 Student support plan**

For students who proceed with their pregnancy, a student pregnancy support plan will help coordinate support and ensure that their needs are met during pregnancy, following birth and when the student returns to her studies. Support plans should be developed by the SWO and agreed with the student and cover important areas such as communication about student's pregnancy, health and safety, examinations and assessments, maternity related absences (Appendix 1).

### **3.4 Assessments and examinations**

If a student is due to give birth near to or during assessment deadlines or the examinations period and wishes to complete their assessed work or sit their examinations, they should be allowed to do so.

In examinations, pregnant students may require rest breaks and they may need to visit the toilet more frequently than a student who is not pregnant. They may also require a more comfortable and supportive chair. Consequently, the student may need to sit the examination in a separate location to other students.

If students are concerned about sitting examinations or meeting assessed work deadlines or if they have a pregnancy related health condition, they should be advised to seek advice from their midwife or doctor. If the students' midwife or doctor advises against the student sitting an examination or trying to meet the assessed work deadline, the student should contact the Department in order to explore options such as extensions to submission deadlines, deferrals and alternative forms of assessment.

### **3.5 Length of maternity related absence**

All students should be allowed to take maternity related absence following the birth of their child. How long the student will want to take and can take will be determined by their personal circumstances and the structure and content of their course. Tutors should not automatically

require students to interrupt for a year but should work with the student to establish a suitable return to study date.

Where course structure or content prevent a student from returning to study sooner than they would like to, the reason given will need to be justified in writing to the student.

If the Tutor has concerns about the health of the student in relation to the student's proposed return date and course requirements, these concerns should be expressed in writing and the student should be recommended to return to their GP, health visitor or an occupational therapist for clearance before recommencing their course.

As a minimum, students are required to take two weeks compulsory maternity related absence. The maximum period that students may take off at any one time for maternity related absence is normally 12 months, although this may be extended in very exceptional circumstances. The student's Department should take steps to ensure the student is kept up to speed with developments in the field.

Students should be enabled, as far as is possible, to complete the requirements of their course or module before they take maternity related absence. In some cases, the student may want sit examinations or submit alternative forms of assessment during their maternity related absence. Where a student is unable to complete their course or module before taking maternity related absence, they should, if possible, be allowed to complete the course or module on return.

Students need to decide when they start their maternity related absence in agreement with their Tutor. Where a student is close to their due date and unable to study as planned, the University may, in consultation with the student, start their maternity related absence earlier or, if appropriate, explore alternative methods through which the student can meet their course requirements.

### **Returning from maternity related absence**

The date that a student intends on returning from maternity related absence should be agreed with the student prior to their starting maternity related absence (see above). However, this date may change during the course of the student's maternity related absence and students should be encouraged to notify their Tutor as soon as possible of any change in their expected return date.

Before a student returns from a period of maternity related absence consideration should be given to their needs on their return. Options should be discussed with the student in the development of their support plan and can be confirmed with the student prior to their return from maternity related absence. For example:

- **Varying the rate of study:** students should be made aware of any options that exist to resume their programme on a part-time basis. If no current options are available and a student requests to study on a part-time rather than a full-time basis, the request should not be declined unless it can be justified. If requests are declined, justification should be provided in writing.
- **Ensuring a smooth return:** Formal welcome back meetings with key staff for example, their Academic Guidance Tutor or Director of Studies and SWO will help to ensure a smooth return.

## 4. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

### 4.1 Student Scholarships

Students in receipt of a scholarship will be entitled to the scholarship for the months within a year that they are registered for study on a pro rata basis.

### 4.2 Research council training grants

On 01 April 2010 the UK research councils introduced harmonised maternity leave and pay entitlements for students in receipt of training grants. Students in receipt of a training grant should refer to the current terms and conditions of their grant provider as early as possible

#### Sources of financial support for students during pregnancy and maternity

This section focuses on sources of support for UK home students. EU and international students should be advised to contact their home government and sponsor for information on pregnancy and maternity entitlements.

Regulations on undergraduate student financial support in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland contain provisions for discretion when determining if all or part of a student's **grant or loan** due is payable when a student is absent from their course for reasons other than illness. When deciding whether it would be appropriate to pay all or part of the grant or loan support consideration is given to:

- the reasons for the student's absence
- the length of the absence; and
- the financial hardship caused by not paying all or part of the support

Students are likely to require support if they want to continue receiving their grant or loan when they take maternity related absence and further information should be sought on the process for continuing loan or grant payments from the grant or loan administrator.

Any student can apply for the University **Access to Learning Fund (ALF)** if they are absent from their course for reasons other than illness and would be unable to return due to hardship. However, there is no guarantee that funding will be granted as resources are limited.

Pregnant students may be entitled to **government welfare benefits and grants** and these should be explored in the first instance as, unlike student loans, they do not need to be repaid. SWOs will be able to provide information on the benefits and grants available and information is also provided by ante natal clinics and on the government's website [www.direct.gov.co.uk](http://www.direct.gov.co.uk).

### 4.3 Breastfeeding and resting facilities

The University provides rest and breastfeeding facilities for students' use on campus. Contact your Student Wellbeing Officer to find out more information about locations.

Some students may want to breastfeed in public. It is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010) to ask students not to breastfeed in public places. Tensions may arise if other people feel uncomfortable when women breastfeed in public. Where the protected rights of others conflict with the rights of the mother to breastfeed, the needs of the woman who is breastfeeding should take precedence.

## **5. Access to university facilities**

Students who are breastfeeding will not be denied access to university facilities or service on the grounds that they are breastfeeding. As long as babies are supervised at all times by the student parent and the student is considerate of the needs of others, babies should be allowed onto university premises, excluding lectures and seminars unless under exceptional circumstances and if the lecturer is informed in advance. Children of the student parent are also allowed onto university premises, excluding lectures and seminars unless under exceptional circumstances and if the lecturer is informed in advance.

## **6. Paternity**

If a student is unable to meet a coursework deadline or other requirement of their programme because of their partner's pregnancy and is not given an extension, this could constitute sex discrimination. If male students who become fathers can take paternity leave but a female student in a same sex relationship whose partner is expecting a child cannot take paternity leave, this could constitute discrimination because of sexual orientation

Flexibility will be shown to students want to attend their partner's antenatal appointments. In addition, students may need to take time off if their partner has complications with their pregnancy or a serious pregnancy-related illness.

If students want to take paternity related absence, they should inform their Programme Convenor, Academic Guidance Tutor or a member of the Student Support Services team of their partner's pregnancy as soon as possible and preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. Early notification should be encouraged as partners may need to attend antenatal appointments. Tutors of students who are on paternity related absence should provide materials from seminars and lectures missed.

If a student chooses to sit an exam while their partner is in labour or during their paternity related absence, they should be made aware of the University mitigating circumstances policy. If a student is unable to sit an exam or submit coursework on time because of their partner's pregnancy or labour the student should contact the Department in order to explore options such as extensions to submission deadlines, deferrals and resits. Such arrangements may also be appropriate if the student's partner has a serious pregnancy related illness.

In other compulsory elements of courses such as field trips or work placements, the University will consider the feasibility of students undertaking them at an alternative time.

## **7. Adoption**

Students who have been matched for adoption should inform their Academic Guidance Tutor or SWO. If the student is the primary adopter, a plan should be in line with the guidance relating to when a student informs the University that they are pregnant. If the student's partner is the primary adopter the student should be allowed time off study in line with advice provided on paternity leave upon the formal adoption of the child.

## **8. Miscarriage, still births and neo-natal death**

If a student miscarries, has a still birth or their baby dies shortly after he or she is born, tutors and SWOs should meet with the student to determine what support they are receiving and to identify what further support the University can to provide.

If a student miscarries they are likely to need time off study for tests and to recover. If they become pregnant again they are likely to require more tests and monitoring than women who have not previously miscarried.

A student who has a still birth or whose baby dies shortly after birth should be entitled to the same length of maternity related absence and financial and wellbeing support as a student whose baby does not die.

## APPENDIX 1: MATERNITY SUPPORT PLAN

This form should be completed with the student and agreed with the student. It should also be reviewed at 24 weeks pregnant and prior to their return to study. In addition, should the student's circumstances change the plan will also need to be reviewed.

<b>Student details</b>	
Name of student	
Address	
Telephone number	
Email	
Student number	

<b>Programme details</b>	
Programme title	
Department	
Departmental contact	
Year of Programme	

<b>Named contact</b>	<b>Name, title and contact details:</b>		
<b>Key dates</b>	What is the student's due date?		
	How many weeks pregnant was the student when they notified RU of pregnancy?		
<b>Communication with the student</b>	What is the preferred method of communication:		
	During pregnancy?	Email/phone	
	During maternity related absence?	Email/phone	
<b>Informing other staff and students</b>	On return to study?	Email/phone	
	Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed?	<b>Name and title</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Health and Safety assessment</b>	Has an assessment been conducted that covers:	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	The student's Programme?		
	Programme placements or study abroad?		

	Examinations or other assessments?		
	Field trips, lab work, other practical work?		
	Return from maternity related absence?		
	Breastfeeding?		
	Safety of baby if attending seminars and lectures with a parent?		
	Where changes are required to mitigate risks who will be responsible for ensuring they are implemented?	<b>Name and title</b>	
<b>Rest facilities</b>	Has the student been informed about rest facilities on campus for use by pregnant students?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Pregnancy related absence</b>	Will the dates or times of antenatal appointments affect the student's study?		
	Have you discussed any pregnancy related illness that has affected the student's ability to undertake their programme?		
	If yes to either of the above questions what arrangements have been made to enable the student to catch up?		
<b>Assessments</b>	Is the student unable to complete any assessments due to their pregnancy or maternity?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	If so provide details:		
	What alternative arrangements have been made for any outstanding or incomplete assessments?		
<b>Maternity related absence</b>	How much maternity related absence does the student intend to take? Students should be required to provide this information 15 weeks before their due date.		
	When does the student intend to start maternity related absence?		
	When does the student intend to return from maternity related		

	absence?		
	Will the dates of maternity related absence affect the student's ability to complete any programme requirements?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	If so what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module or other programme requirements?		
	What information will the student require during maternity related absence to keep up to date on course developments?		
	Who will be responsible for providing the information to the student?	<b>Name and title:</b>	

## **Further information**

### **Adoption UK**

Adoption UK is a national charity run by and for adopters, providing self-help information, advice, support and training on all aspects of adoption and adoptive parenting.

[www.adoptionuk.org.uk](http://www.adoptionuk.org.uk)

### **Direct Gov**

Direct Gov is the UK government's website. It provides information on health, care and benefits during pregnancy; benefits for parents and; information on childcare providers in your local area which can be found at [www.childcarelink.gov.uk](http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk).

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

### **Family and Parenting Institute**

The Family and Parenting Institute provides support to parents in bringing up their children and has a range of resources for parents.

[www.familyandparenting.org](http://www.familyandparenting.org)

### **Family Planning Association**

The Family Planning Association's mission is to establish a society in which everyone can make informed choices about sex, relationships and reproduction. Its web site contains impartial advice on pregnancy, abortion and adoption and also contains a list of useful organisations.

[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

Helpline: 0845 122 8690

### **Miscarriage Association**

The Miscarriage Association offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy.

[www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

### **National Union of Students**

Many student unions provide impartial advice and free pregnancy testing kits for students.

[www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

### **SANDS**

The Still birth and neonatal death charity provides support to anyone affected by the loss of a baby and conducts research into the causes of still and neo-natal death.

[www.uk-sands.org/Home.html](http://www.uk-sands.org/Home.html)