

Student Maternity, Maternity Support and Adoption Policy

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Approved by	Date	Review Date	Responsible Department
Senate	4/6/09		Equality and Diversity Unit/Senate Office

1. Introduction

This Policy provides advice and guidance to:

- Students who become pregnant during their studies, to their partners, and to those who have recently become parents (e.g. through adoption) 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. Scope of the Policy

The policy covers any student who becomes pregnant during her studies, and students who are about to become fathers. It also covers any student who is the partner (including same sex partner) of someone who is pregnant and expects to be responsible for the child, and any person becoming a parent (e.g. through adoption) of a child.

3. Policy Statement

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 possible to facilitate students' success, making sure no student is disadvantaged whilst ensuring academic standards are not compromised. The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary between Faculties, but all Faculties will follow the general approach set out in this document.

The health and safety of a pregnant student will be of paramount importance at all times, and Faculties/Departments will deal with all students covered by this policy 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.

The policy focuses primarily on study-related matters, but sources of help and advice on related issues can be found at the end of the document.

4. Rights and Responsibilities

This section covers rights and responsibilities for students, staff and the University.

4.1 For students who become pregnant during their studies

4.1.1. Confirming the Pregnancy

A student who suspects she is pregnant should see her GP to have the pregnancy confirmed as soon as she can. If she decides to terminate the pregnancy, or miscarries, this need not be disclosed to the University. Absence from the University required as a result should be classed as 'sick leave' but there is no need to give the specific reason. Details of the University's Absence Policy can be found at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/students/study/absence/>.

4.1.2. Contacting the Department/Faculty

If the student plans to continue with her pregnancy, she should let her Department or Faculty know as soon as possible. The University can only make provision for the student if she lets them know she is pregnant. Whilst the Adviser of Studies would normally be the first point of contact, the student can initially choose to speak to another member of staff with whom she feels more comfortable. However, students should note that the Adviser of Studies will require to be informed. This is in the student's best interest as, in the event of an examination or other compulsory component being missed and the student being unable/unwilling to provide evidence (e.g. because it is of a confidential nature), the Adviser of Studies can confirm in Websurf that s/he has seen evidence to cover the absence.

4.1.3. Implications for Study

The Department/Faculty will meet with the student to discuss how the pregnancy is likely to impact on her study. There may need to be an interruption of studies depending on when the baby is due, and the student together with her Adviser will decide (1) whether an interruption is needed and (2) if so, the time period this needs to cover. This decision also needs to take into account the academic requirements of the student's programme. A student with a baby due near 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.

A plan should be devised (in writing) by the Adviser of Studies or other nominated staff member, 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 member(s) of staff requiring this information (including, where required, Conveners of Boards of Examiners or Progress Committees). The student's permission should be established before passing on information.

If the student continues to study during her pregnancy, she should meet regularly with her Adviser of Studies, or other designated member of staff, to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements put in place. Where necessary, further adjustments can be made.

4.1.4 Field work

Where the student plans to take part in field work as part of their studies, pregnancy should be risk assessed by the Department responsible for organising the field work. There may be particular risks associated with the field work and the student should discuss this fully with the appropriate member of staff. Students will not be permitted to take part in field work after the 7th month of pregnancy.

4.1.5 Study abroad/ placement

If the student becomes pregnant whilst on a study year abroad or a placement, she must contact the Department to make appropriate plans to ensure that health is safeguarded and academic progress is properly managed.

4.1.6 Resuming studies

Inform your Department when you are ready to return and plan with your Tutor or Adviser of Studies an appropriate timetable for your re-integration into your programme

of study, including the examination schedule. You must also notify Registry to ensure that your University record is updated to indicate that you are back on your programme of study.

4.1.7. Health and Safety

There may be health and safety measures needing to be put in place in order to protect the student and her unborn baby, and this will be particularly relevant in certain Faculties (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 Department or Faculty know of her pregnancy, a Risk Assessment will be completed by the Department. 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.

The greatest risk to an unborn baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy and so it is important that the student informs the University as early as possible.

Any student who has given birth must not return to University within two weeks of giving birth for health and safety reasons.

4.1.8. Financial Considerations

Undergraduate students should note that funding will usually stop when the suspension of study begins. Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) funded students must inform SAAS of their situation. SAAS will be able to advise on possible future eligibility. Non-Scottish UK students should seek advice from their funding body.

The University refund policy covers refunds of tuition fees for self-funded or privately sponsored students who suspend study. Students in this situation should approach Registry for further information.

Postgraduate and Research students receiving funding from external bodies should follow the guidance for their particular scheme, or contact their funding body or sponsor for further advice.

International students with financial sponsors must contact their sponsors and agree a plan of action (such as deferring study/ when to resume study etc). Those international students who are not entitled to any maternity benefits in the UK may prefer to return home for the duration of their pregnancy. It should be remembered that most airlines will not carry passengers who are 7 months pregnant or more, and this should be taken into account when planning.

The benefit rules are different for EU students and international students, and further advice should be sought from the International Office, SRC Advice Centre or Department for Work and Pensions.

4.1.9. Accommodation

Students who become pregnant whilst living in University accommodation may find that this is no longer suitable for health and safety reasons. Contact should be made with the Accommodation Office for advice.

For further sources of help and support, please see the 'Sources of Information and Help' section at the end of this document.

4.1.10. Babies/Children on Campus

For health and safety reasons, as well as to avoid the disruption of classes or study, babies and children must not be brought into teaching or learning areas. Students must ensure they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they are expected to be at University. Students can apply to the University of Glasgow Nursery for a place, although these are limited.

Students must not bring babies or children to University with the expectation that any staff member will take responsibility for caring for the child whilst the student is in classes.

Students may of course bring babies and children into public areas of the University, but the University cannot accept any liability for the child in these circumstances.

4.1.11. Breastfeeding

Nursing mothers should be aware that there are no specific facilities for expressing milk on campus and that alternative arrangements should be made.

4.2 Support for fathers and partners (including same-sex partners) who have responsibility for bringing up the child

Any student discovering he is to become a father, or any partner of a pregnant student (including same sex partners) who expect to be responsible for raising the child with the mother, will be entitled to request time out of study. This is likely to include time off for medical appointments prior to, and after, the birth, as well as a period of maternity support leave immediately following the birth. A student in this situation should contact his/her Adviser of Studies, or other departmental or Faculty member, to discuss this. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this will necessarily be more limited in some programmes than others. It should be noted that the Adviser of Studies will require to be informed, even if discussions involve a different staff member.

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.

4.3 For students about to become parents (e.g. through adoption)

Students about to become parents (e.g. through adoption) should inform their Department or Faculty of their circumstances as soon as possible. Arrangements can be made to allow time out of study. This may vary depending on the age of the child, the programme of study being undertaken, and the point in the academic session at which the event takes place. Again, the Adviser of Studies will be informed if discussions involve a different staff member.

5. Complaints

Any student who feels that the University has failed to live up to the standards of this policy may raise a complaint under the University's Complaints Procedure (see <http://senate.gla.ac.uk/complaints/index.html>). It is suggested that problems are resolved as

informally as possible in the first instance. The SRC Advice Centre can provide impartial, confidential advice to students in this situation (contact details at the end of this document).

6. Guidance for Staff

This section provides guidance on the support of students coming under the scope of this policy, for use by any member of staff with a role in advising or supporting students. At all times, staff must ensure those students are not treated less favourably than any other student on the basis of their circumstances. In line with the University's legal obligations, 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) and with sensitivity. Staff should not attempt to influence any student's decision but should provide impartial advice.

When a student contacts a member of staff to discuss any circumstances covered by this policy, a response should be made within five working days and a meeting arranged as soon as possible thereafter. If the member of staff being contacted by the student is not the student's Adviser of Studies, the Adviser of Studies should nonetheless be kept informed. Staff must inform the student of this intention.

Whilst it is recognised that each request must be dealt with on an individual basis, there are a number of measures that can be used in order to enable the student's continuation of study. These 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

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

Whilst an appropriate degree of flexibility should be exercised, care must be taken to ensure that academic standards are not compromised. A balance must be achieved between ensuring the student is not disadvantaged, and giving undue special treatment. It is not necessary for the University to grant every request made, although efforts should be made to meet reasonable requests. 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 be provided in writing for the student.

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 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.

For staff requiring more detailed guidance, advice can be sought on any of the above from the Equality & Diversity Unit.

7. Sources of information and help

Reproductive Health and Pregnancy advice

The Sandyford Initiative www.sandyford.org
0141 211 8130

British Pregnancy Advisory Service www.bpas.org.uk
08457 304030

Childcare

University Nursery www.gla.ac.uk/services/nursery
0141 330 6441

Other childcare providers www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk

General information and advice

SRC Advice Centre www.glasgowstudent.net/advice
0141 339 8541

One Parent Families Scotland www.opfs.org.uk
0808 801 0323

Adoption UK www.adoptionuk.org.uk
0844 848 7900

Finances

Department of Work and Pensions www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/famchild

Child Benefit Office www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit/do-you-qualify.htm

SAAS www.saas.gov.uk

Students domiciled in England www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

Students domiciled in Northern Ireland www.studentfinanceni.co.uk

Students domiciled in Wales www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Health and Safety advice	www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/index.htm www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg373.pdf
Student Counselling	www.gla.ac.uk/services/counselling 0141 330 4528
University Accommodation	www.gla.ac.uk/services/residentialservices 0141 330 4743
Chaplaincy	www.gla.ac.uk/services/chaplaincy/index.html 0141 330 5419
International Student Support	www.gla.ac.uk/international/internationalstudentsupport
Equality and Diversity Unit	www.gla.ac.uk/services/equalitydiversity/ 0141 330 1887

<p>The list of useful contacts is correct at the time of printing – May 2009. Please check the web for up to date contact information. Please note the University of Glasgow does not endorse or take responsibility for the information provided by external organisations.</p>
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