

## SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT STUDENTS AND NEW PARENTS POLICY

### Purpose and Context

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.

### Principles

The University is committed to supporting pregnant students (including those who become pregnant, who terminate a pregnancy, or who experience miscarriage or have a very young child whilst at university) Arrangements will be as flexible as possible, providing academic standards are upheld, and will follow the following principles:

- **Avoiding less favourable treatment.** The University and its staff must not treat a student (or applicant) less favourably than other students or applicants on the grounds that she is pregnant, has experienced a miscarriage or has 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 calendar 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 will work with the student to determine the best course of action, empowering the student to reach an appropriate decision, which is consistent with the student's own values. 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.

### Scope

#### 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 Academic Tutor) within their School at an early stage of their pregnancy, with a view to discussing any necessary support arrangements or adjustments. Students should always promptly disclose their pregnancy to staff where elements of their programme of study might present a health and safety hazard to the student or unborn child and

this may be particularly relevant for students whose programmes include laboratory or practical work.

- Ensuring the safe supervision of any child they may bring onto campus.
- Notifying the School by the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 healthcare professional and, if required, staff in one or more of the following services: Wellbeing Services, Office of Health and Safety, their School.

**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.
- Students are made aware of the policy and encouraged to disclose a pregnancy or adoption 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.
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## SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT STUDENTS AND NEW PARENTS GUIDANCE

### 1 Notifying your School

- 1.1 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 may be 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.
- 1.2 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 (as outlined in appendix 1) 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, and exercise any discretion, 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 15<sup>th</sup> week before her due date. If the time is not taken as maternity leave it will be deemed to be an unauthorised absence.
- 1.3 **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.

## 2 Supporting pregnant students and new parents to study

- 2.1 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 healthcare professional 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 Academic 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

- 2.2 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 up to 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. However, students will be expected to take a minimum of two calendar weeks 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***).

- 2.3 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 calendar 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 Academic 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. This will involve completing the risk assessment for the individual student, as contained in appendix 1.

- 2.4 For all students it is important that the health and safety implications of their pregnancy are given serious consideration, and where the risk assessment highlights health and safety issues, staff should seek advice as soon as possible from the School Health and Safety Coordinator and also the University Office of Health and Safety.
- 2.5 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. In this situation, the School should take advice from Registry and Student Services, and should notify their Director of Teaching and Learning (or equivalent) that reasonable adjustments were not feasible.

**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 Academic 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 Academic Tutor or (or other chosen/designated staff member).

- 2.6 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 Academic 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 Academic 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.

### 3 Miscarriage and Still Births

Miscarriage is a common occurrence, and one in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage. Miscarriage is most likely to occur in the first three months of pregnancy. If a student miscarries, she is likely to need time off study for tests and to recover.

The University recognises that each individual will be affected differently by a miscarriage and encourages staff to treat each circumstance on an individual basis, with sensitivity and respect.

Where a student discloses a miscarriage, the University will support them to explore their options in relation to assessments and teaching, in line with the extenuating circumstances and extensions processes.

Still births occur when a baby dies in the womb or is born dead after 24 weeks of pregnancy. Neonatal deaths occur shortly following birth. According to the still birth and neonatal death charity SANDS, up to 17 babies are stillborn or die shortly after birth every day in the UK.

When a still birth occurs, or the baby dies shortly after birth, the student should be entitled to the same length of maternity related absence and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn.

## **4 What is an appropriate degree of flexibility?**

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.



## **5 Work Placement/ Study Abroad**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Tutors, in conjunction with the student should involve the School Placement Co-ordinator at the earliest opportunity.

## **6 Support for new parents**

- 6.1 Whilst the procedure proposed above relates to a student during pregnancy, this also provides a helpful model for considering flexibility for a student who has recently become a parent by other means (e.g. 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.
- 6.2 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.

## **7 Support for partners**

- 7.1 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 to support the adoption.
- 7.2 However, sometimes a student 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.
- 7.3 Partners may be encouraged to use the Extenuating Circumstances route if requiring mitigation for any unforeseen need.
- 7.4 Partners are entitled to 2 calendar weeks leave (Partner's Leave Entitlement) which, in the absence of approved Extenuating Circumstances, must be taken within 4 weeks of the birth/adoption.

## **8 Children on campus**

- 8.1 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 by students 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, or laboratories. They will need to make arrangements for the care of their child whilst they are in these locations.

8.2 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 (e.g. laboratories or workshops).

## **9 Breastfeeding**

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

9.2 We do not have a room specifically for the purpose of breastfeeding/expression of milk. Students are welcome to ask at iPoint 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.

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

9.4 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 Academic Tutor or other designated staff member during the process of establishing a study plan as outlined within section 4 of this policy. Consideration will be given to such reasonable alternatives as may be available

## **10 Deciding whether to continue with or end a pregnancy**

10.1 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 Students' Union
- The Faith Centre

Students also have access to external organisations for information, advice or support. These include the student's own healthcare professional, 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))

## 11 Further Information

- 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>
- Students Union - <http://www.huddersfieldstudent.com/>
- Talkthru - 01484 515137 <http://www.talkthru.org.uk/>
- Brook - 0808 802 1234 <http://www.brook.org.uk/>
- Marie Stopes International - 0845 300 80 90 <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>
- NHS Choices - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/>
- Bliss - <https://www.bliss.org.uk/>
- Tommy's - <https://www.tommys.org/>

## Appendix 1

### Pregnancy Risk Assessment

**(To be completed by Personal Academic Tutor in conjunction with student and School Support and Guidance Officers)**

This risk assessment has been designed as a prompt for consideration of different areas of students' programmes of study. When completing the form, you should consider the relevance of each statement to all of the teaching, studying, practical, and placement activities which the student may undertake.

If you answer **yes** to any of the questions below, you must take advice from the School Health and Safety Officer, or the University's Office for Health and Safety, to plan the necessary adjustments to mitigate any risks.

**Name** ..... **Student Number**.....

**Course** ..... **Stage** .....

**Expected Due Date** ..... **Date of Assessment** .....

#### Pregnancy health and safety check sheet

	YES	NO
<b>1 – Physical demands</b>		
Does the programme involve lifting or pushing heavy objects?		
Does the programme involve standing or squatting for long periods?		
Does the programme involve a lot of walking?		
Does the programme involve working at heights or climbing steep steps?		
Does your programme involve prolonged physical activity e.g. dance		
Does your programme involve accessing areas with limited space?		
Will any tasks become more hazardous as the student changes size and shape?		
<b>2 – Mental demands</b>		
Does the programme involve meeting challenging deadlines?		

Does the programme involve rapidly changing priorities and demands?		
Does the programme require a high degree of concentration?		
<b>3 – Working conditions – general</b>		
Does the programme involve lone working or working in remote locations?		
Are there any issues with accessibility to toilet facilities?		
Are there any limitations to taking toilet breaks?		
Are there any restrictions on when a student can take a rest break when required?		
Are there any risks of violence at University or on placements?		
Are there any obstacles in corridors or offices that could cause problems for pregnant women e.g. in the event of a fire evacuation?		
Are there any issues with the temperature in her working environment?		
<b>4 – Biochemical Hazards</b>		
Does any part of the programme require participation in any workshops, laboratories, or clinical skills to be exposing the student to any of the following?		
Ionising Radiation		
Electromagnetic fields and waves		
Extremes of heat		
Lead and lead derivatives		
Any biological / chemical agents		
Smoke or fumes		
Other biochemical hazards		
<b>4 – Equipment Hazards</b>		
Does any part of the programme require participation in any workshops, laboratories, or clinical skills to be exposing the student to of the following?		
Vibration		
Noise		
Heavy Machinery		
Other		

<b>5. Other</b>		
Does the employee need to wear personal protective clothing?		
If so, will this present a problem as the pregnancy develops?		
Does any part of the programme involve dealing with members of the public?		
Contact with young children or sick people?		
Unpredictable working hours?		
Dealing with emergencies?		
Distressed or disturbed people?		
Does any part of the programme involve off campus activities e.g. fieldtrips or work based learning?		
Are there any other issues not identified above (please note in the comment box below)		

**Any further comments made by student e.g. aches/pains health problems being experienced.**

**List agreed adjustments and control measures.**

**Review date** .....

**This checklist has been completed to the best of my knowledge**

Student signature ..... Date .....

Tutor signature ..... Date .....

<b>POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS</b>	
<b>Document name:</b>	SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT STUDENTS AND NEW PARENTS POLICY
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<b>Compliance Checks:</b>	Compliance checks as part of annual review in line with legislative changes
<b>Related Policies/Procedures:</b>	Student Handbook of Regulations Extenuating Circumstances Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy <a href="#">Equality in Teaching &amp; Learning Scheme (January 2016)</a>

<b>REVISION HISTORY</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Revision description/Summary of changes</b>	<b>Author</b>
1.0	20 Feb 2018	Scheduled review (first major redraft under the new Policy Framework: Typographical, phrasing and presentational changes, addition of risk assessment form, and guidance on miscarriages and still births	Wellbeing Manager