

University of Manchester

**DRAFT Procedures for Supporting New Student Parents**

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**1. Introduction and Scope**

This document sets out the University's Procedures for supporting new student parents, including student pregnancy, maternity, adoption and paternity (or secondary carer/partner) arrangements, and applies to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students across the University. It covers any registered taught students who become pregnant during their studies; students who have given birth within the previous 26 weeks; registered taught students whose partner become pregnant; and any registered student becoming a parent through adoption of a child. It should be read in conjunction with the *Policy for Supporting New Student Parents*.

This document aims to support the guidelines set out in the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)'s document [Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions](#).

**2. Procedures for Supporting New Student Parents**

**2.1 Notification of Pregnancy**

Registered students (or applicants) are not legally obliged to inform the University if they are pregnant or become pregnant during their period of studies. However, students and applicants are strongly encouraged to make the University aware of a pregnancy at the earliest available opportunity; this will facilitate the University being able to start putting in place appropriate support and arrangements. Students undertaking programmes with potential high risks to the pregnant students and/or their child (e.g. working with hazardous chemicals, etc.) are particularly encouraged to disclose their pregnancy as soon as possible. (Please also see section 2.2 regarding health and safety issues for consideration).

Pregnant students are advised to speak to their Academic Advisor or Student Support Officer (or other relevant staff member, according to the programme or School) and give an indication of the expected amount of time away from study which they anticipate taking. The staff member should seek the student's permission to share the information with other relevant members of staff on a need-to-know basis. If appropriate, the student should be ~~made aware~~referred to additional areas of advice or support, either within the University or externally, e.g. the student's GP/doctor, a midwife, Student Services Centre or the [Student Support Adviser](#) or the [Students' Union Advice Service](#).

## 2.2 Considerations

A number of factors should be considered by staff members when making initial plans in response to a student's notification of their pregnancy. These include the following:

### Health and safety issues

When a student has disclosed their pregnancy to a member of staff, the programme team should make a judgement regarding whether it will be necessary to carry out a health and safety risk assessment for the student's programme. This should include any placements, industrial experience, fieldwork or study abroad which is linked to the programme. If a risk assessment reveals any relevant issues which may affect the student and/or their unborn baby (including, for example, where the student may be exposed to hazardous substances or radiation, or is expected to lift heavy objects involved with some form of manual handling), this should be taken into account by the Academic Advisor/Student Support Officer/Programme Team in their consideration of how the student's pregnancy can be accommodated and in agreeing any relevant adjustments which may need to be made. (See section 2.3, the New Student Parent Support Form). Further information on health and safety considerations regarding new and expectant mothers can also be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>.

### Students on professional programmes

Programmes which are subject to professional/statutory body accreditation or requirements have to meet specific requirements in order to enable students to demonstrate particular areas of knowledge, skills and competencies. These requirements should be considered when planning for any relevant adjustments which may need to be put into place to support a pregnant student, including arrangements during their studies on campus, as well as their maternity-related absence period and their subsequent return to studies.

### International students

Students on Tier 4 visas are subject to different requirements than home (UK/EU) students and it is vital that Tier 4 students who become pregnant during their studies seek immigration advice as soon as possible. Visas cannot be extended due to pregnancy or maternity, and the maximum period of authorised maternity leave/absence has to be considered in accordance with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regulations. Staff and students are therefore advised to contact the Student Immigration Team in the Student Services Centre (email: [visa@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:visa@manchester.ac.uk)).

## 2.3 New Student Parent Support Form

The [New Student Parent Support Form](#) [updated version to be linked in] has been produced as a guide to discussion between a pregnant student and their Academic Advisor/Student Support Officer (or equivalent) when making arrangements and adjustments during a student's pregnancy and/or maternity. It contains prompts and fields for recording relevant information such as key dates, communication with the student, informing other staff or students, health and safety, pregnancy-related absence, assessments, maternity absence, financial support and return to study.

## 2.4 Time off for Medical or Other Appointments

A pregnant student is entitled to reasonable time off to attend antenatal appointments. Similarly, a student in the process of adopting is entitled to reasonable time off to attend pre-adoption appointments. Students may be expected to provide evidence in advance of such appointments and, wherever possible, they should try to arrange appointments outside of normal scheduled teaching times or at the start or end of a placement working day. Time off for partners is considered in sections 2.10 and 2.11.

Students registered on programmes accredited by professional or statutory bodies should discuss with their Programme Team any implications of missed time in practice.

## 2.5 Unplanned/unexpected events

Unexpected complications (such as but not exclusively, miscarriages, still birth, neonatal death and significant pregnancy-related illness) should be dealt with under the University's [Policy on Mitigating Circumstances](#). In such cases, the student is likely to need additional support and the University will consider sensitively the impact of such circumstances on the student's ability to undertake their studies, including assessment and examinations.

## 2.6 Maternity-related Absence

Very few Undergraduate or Postgraduate students are entitled to statutory maternity leave and pay as these entitlements only exist under employment law (but please see section 2.78 on Finances). However, students are entitled to maternity-related absence. In following the guidelines of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), the University recommends that students take a minimum of two weeks' maternity-related absence or four weeks if the student is located in a factory or other strenuous high-risk work placement – this is essentially the compulsory period of time but more than two weeks ~~can~~ would normally be requested by the student. NHS Student Bursaries recommends a minimum of 12 weeks' maternity absence, but allows students to return earlier if they have approval from their GP or health worker.

The length of time a student takes as maternity-related absence will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of their programme of study. This should be discussed with the student and recorded on the *New Student Parent Support Form*. Programme Teams or Schools should not automatically require a student to interrupt for a year, but should work with the student to establish a suitable date for returning to study. If a student does need to interrupt their studies then the *Policy on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study* will be applied.

Where there are concerns about a student's knowledge of the field of study being affected by the length of time that the student takes as maternity-related absence, the School/Programme Team should take steps to ensure that the student is kept up to date with developments. ~~For example, she could be sent lists of key reading and new research, and dates and transcripts of relevant programme lectures and has access to relevant course materials on their return (e.g. in the Virtual Learning Environment/Blackboard).~~ Specific contact points can be agreed with the students outside of the two week compulsory leave period.

In exceptional circumstances, students may need to request an extension of the period of maternity-related absence beyond the agreed period, for example, in cases of postnatal depression, serious illness or loss of a baby, or where there is no available childcare.

When a student is close to their due date and unable to continue with their studies as planned, the School may, in consultation with the student, start their maternity-related absence earlier than planned or, if appropriate, explore alternative methods by which the student can meet the programme requirements.

## 2.7 Resuming Studies

The expected date for return from maternity-related absence should be discussed and agreed between a student and the Programme Team or School, prior to commencing the period of absence. Students are not permitted to return to study during the first two weeks from the date of childbirth although students will normally have requested more than a two week absence. The expected return date should also be recorded on the *New Student Parent Support Form*. However, the agreed date may change during the period of absence, in which case, students are expected to notify their Programme Team or School as soon as possible regarding any change to their expected return date. In these cases, the *New Student Parent Support Form* should be reviewed and a new return date should be agreed with the student in writing.

In cases where the University is concerned about a student's health in relation to their proposed return to study date, the student may be required to provide confirmation from their GP or other health professional regarding their fitness to return to study.

A student who has been studying full-time but who indicates that they wish to return to study on a part-time basis following maternity-related absence, and have no visa restrictions, should receive sympathetic consideration of their request, and will be accommodated wherever possible. However, it should be noted that some programmes are not practically able to offer a part-time route of study.

Prior to a student's return, consideration should be given to their requirements on return, for example, provision of any reading material in preparation for their return; any health and safety issues which need to be taken account of, such as the working environment or heavy duties, or the need for the student to take breaks to feed their baby or express milk, if appropriate. Young children will not normally be expected on the campus but in instances where bringing children onto campus is required/unavoidable, students should be aware of the need for close supervision of their children at all times. There are a number of places around the campus, for example the Jean McFarlane Building has some rooms on the ground floor that can be used for breast feeding. Students should ask at the Reception Desk if they wish to use a breastfeeding room. There is a fridge in the room behind Reception that can be used for storing milk.

## 2.8 Finances

Students should be aware that funding may stop when a period of absence taken under this policy starts. Students should seek advice from their funding body (for example, Student Finance England) or from the [Student Support Adviser](#), the [Student Money Adviser](#) or [UMSU Advice Service](#). International students must seek advice from the Student Immigration Team in the Student Services Centre (email: [visa@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:visa@manchester.ac.uk)).

A home (UK/EU) student may be eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) or Maternity Allowance if they are employed. Students should contact their employer and also check [Direct Gov](#) for further information, as the rules relating to eligibility for these payments are complicated. Advice can also be sought from the University advice services noted above. Students in receipt of NHS Student Bursaries should contact the [NHS Business Services Authority](#) in order to check on their entitlement to any funding during a period of maternity-related (or paternity/secondary carer) absence or childcare benefits.

Full time UK students may be eligible for a Childcare Grant and should check with their funder (e.g. see <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-grant/overview> for Student Finance England).

## 2.9 Accommodation

Students living in University managed accommodation should contact the [Accommodation Office](#) to discuss arrangements for withdrawing from, or continuing with, their accommodation contract during a period of maternity-related absence. There are a small number of accommodation units specifically for students with partners and families but there is no guarantee that suitable accommodation will be available at that time.

Support is available to students to help them find suitable privately rented housing. Some private accommodation will be unsuitable for children, or may, in some circumstances, be difficult for a student in the later stages of pregnancy to access. Students can seek advice on options for family accommodation via the Manchester Student Homes service. Where a student is in private accommodation, the University may be able to provide support and advice on terminating the contract through the Manchester Student Homes service.

## 2.10 Paternity/Partner/Secondary Carer Leave and Support

Students whose partners are pregnant will be permitted reasonable time off study to enable

them to accompany their partner to antenatal appointments prescribed by a doctor, midwife or other health professional.

If students wish to take a period of time out of their studies, because their partner is due to have a baby or the/she student is a primary adopter, they should submit a request to their Programme Team or School as soon as possible, normally at least 15 weeks before the baby is due or when the adoption plan has been confirmed. Shared parental leave has now been introduced by the government so if students wish to share a period of maternity/paternity-related absence, they should request this with their relevant Programme Team or School as soon as possible, again, normally at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. Shared parental leave should be recorded on the *New Student Parent Support Form*.

The length of absence will be agreed between the student and their Programme Team/School and will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure/content of their programme of study, including any relevant requirements of a professional or statutory body, if appropriate.

## 2.11 Adoption

Students who have been matched for adoption should inform their Academic Advisor or Student Support Officer (or other relevant staff member, according to the programme or study) as soon as possible. If the student is the primary adopter, their period of absence and resumption of studies should be discussed, agreed and managed in line with the guidance under sections 2.6 and 2.7 above. If the student's partner is the primary adopter, upon formal adoption of the child, the student should be allowed time off from studies in line with the guidance under section 2.109 above. It is noted that the placement of the child may start before the formal date of adoption and some allowance may also be required for this.

## 3. Supporting documents and sources of support

3.1 The following supporting documents are available:

- Policy for Supporting New Student Parents
- [New Student Parent Support Form](#)

3.2 Advice and support for pregnant students and student parents is available from the following areas of the University:

- [Student Support Adviser](#)
- [UMSU Advice Service](#)
- [School Support/Welfare Officers \(note: titles may differ between Schools\)](#)

3.3 A range of external sources of advice and support is listed in the [New Student Parent Support Form](#).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Policy on Mitigating Circumstances</a></li> </ul>
Related Procedures and Guidance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">New Student Parent Support Form</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Guidance for Staff on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programme of Study</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Guidance for Students on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study</a></li> </ul>
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