
1. Purpose

- 1 The University of Bedfordshire does not discriminate against any student or applicant on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity, and believes that being pregnant, adopting, or having a very young child should not normally be a barri

In this respect a pregnant student should consider the following:

- The requirements and nature of a particular programme of study may present greater risks, such as physical activity, the use of chemicals, or exposure to radiation.
- If their absence - which could be for routine antenatal appointments or due to associated sickness – is likely to significantly impact on their studies, for example if they are on a placement, working on a group project or in a research team.
- If any absence is going to affect their ability to meet the attendance requirements

3.5 Applying for mitigating circumstances

Whilst being pregnant is not considered an illness, it is recognised that a student may experience difficulties related to their pregnancy (such as a health condition) which impacts on their ability to complete an assessment on time or attempt an exam.

In these circumstances a student must follow the University's mitigation process and contact the Student Engagement & Mitigation Team (SEAM) to apply for support. This needs to be on or before the assessment deadline, providing the team with evidence. This would normally be a letter from a GP or midwife relating specifically to the assessment period.

Students who have recently given birth can provide a copy of the birth certificate or hospital discharge documents. Mitigation applications on the grounds of childbirth will be considered for assessments due in the three months following the birth. After this point additional evidence will be required and the student may be referred for an appointment with a Student Engagement Advisor to discuss their options and the support available. It may be recommended for the student to take an interruption of studies at this stage.

3.6 International students

International students should take further action in addition to point 3.5 of this policy, as they have specific responsibilities associated with their visa status. They must contact the International Office about their pregnancy as early as possible to discuss their course attendance and any impact on their visa status. If a student has a financial sponsor they will also need to be informed.

3.7 Maternity-related absence and adoption leave

Students who give birth during their studies should ensure they take the time needed to recuperate and that they are fully fit before returning to their course. They must take a minimum of two weeks leave as maternity-related absence (NHS student bursaries recommend a minimum of 12 weeks). Students who experience complications, such as a caesarean section, or are breast feeding, should seek guidance from their health care provider about their return to study.

Students who are adopting should also be granted a reasonable leave of absence to coincide with the adoption placement.

3.8 Paternity-related or parental absence

If a student's partner is expecting a child (or is the primary adopter) it is recommended that they notify their Personal Academic tutor, Course Co-ordinator, Supervisor or other trusted staff member as early as possible if there is likely to be an impact on their study. International students should be aware of point 3.6 of this policy.

Where possible, students will be given flexibility to attend medical appointments with their partner both prior to and following the birth. If they should wish to take paternity-related or parental absence at the time of the birth they will need to discuss this with their academic department and may be given approval for up to two weeks leave. They will need to apply for mitigating circumstances if any assessments are affected by their absence.

3.9 Placements and fieldwork

Students who are or become pregnant whilst on a placement abroad should contact their Personal Academic tutor, Course Co-ordinator, Supervisor or other trusted staff member to make appropriate plans and ensure their health is safeguarded. This is likely to require the University to liaise with the overseas institution or placement provider, with student's consent.

If a student plans to take part in fieldwork whilst pregnant, this will need to be addressed in the risk assessment as there may be specific risks associated with the fieldwork. Generally students will not be permitted to take part in fieldwork after 35 weeks of pregnancy, but this will vary depending on the nature of the activity being undertaken.

Resuming studies

3.10 Keeping in touch during maternity or adoption leave

Students must keep their Personal Academic tutor, Course Co-ordinator, Supervisor or other trusted staff member (and the International Office, if applicable) informed of the anticipated period of maternity or adoption leave (particularly if this changes). The University may make reasonable contact with the student (and vice-versa) while they are on maternity or adoption leave to discuss a range of issues, e.g. any

Resources

3.14 University of Bedfordshire Support services

Student Engagement & Mitigation (SEAM) team

Students should contact the Student Engagement & Mitigation (SEAM) team if they:

- have any difficulty understanding the processes outlined in this document;
- are struggling to manage their studies whilst pregnant or immediately after the birth;
- need to apply for mitigating circumstances for any assessment;
- have any health issues that are affecting their studies;
- are considering taking a year out or withdrawing from their course

The Student Engagement & Mitigation (SEAM) team are able to provide confidential, informed advice and guidance about the options and support available. Further information can be found on the website www.beds.ac.uk/studentsupport

Student Money Advice team

Students who require advice about the possible implications of their pregnancy or becoming a parent on their funding, bursary and scholarship can contact the Student Money Advice team, who can also provide information about any additional financial support or hardship funds.

provides impartial advice on pregnancy, abortion and adoption, as well as a list of useful organisations.

National Union of Students (NUS)

The NUS website www.nus.org.uk provides information and advice for student parents about student finance, rights and welfare.

Adoption UK

Adoption UK (www.adoptionuk.org.uk) is a national charity run by and for adopters providing self-help information, advice, support and



Appendix 1

Student Pregnancy, Maternity

Pregnancy or adoption-related absence	
Will the dates/ times of antenatal or pre-adoption appointments affect the student's attendance in classes? If yes, does the student know where to find the information to catch up?	
Have you discussed any pregnancy-related illness that has affected the student's ability to undertake their course? Has an interruption of studies been considered, if appropriate?	
Assessments & Mitigating Circumstances	
Has the student been informed about the University's Mitigating Circumstances process in the event that their pregnancy, maternity or adoption affects examinations and assessments?	
Maternity or adoption-related absence (student should provide in writing at least 15 weeks before their due date)	
How much maternity or adoption-related absence does the student intend to take?	
When does the student intend to start maternity or adoption-related absence?	
When does the student intend to return from maternity or adoption-related absence?	
Will the dates of maternity or adoption-related absence affect the student's ability to complete any course module requirements? If so, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module?	

What information will the student require during maternity or adoption-related absence to keep up to date?

Who will be responsible for pr

Has the student contacted the placement provider?	
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Return to study
What support will be provided to the student on their return to study?
Further information
Any other information or comments:

Signatures	
Agreed by student	Agreed by staff member
Signature	Signature
Date	Date

(This form is developed from ECU 2010 Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for HEI's)