



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



Pregnancy and Maternity Policy (Students)



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Related Forms

Form 1: Student Risk Assessment Form – New and Expectant Mothers

Form 2: Individual Plan Form

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the University Secretariat.

Introduction

- 1 This policy is designed to be read in conjunction with the detailed guidance notes on the support available for pregnant students and students with very young children.¹
- 2 Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) believes that being or becoming pregnant, terminating a pregnancy or having a very young child should not prevent a student from starting, succeeding in or completing a programme of study. Whilst we have to ensure that academic standards are not compromised, we are committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to facilitate students' success.
- 3 This policy and the accompanying guidance notes are designed to ensure we provide clear guidance on the implications of pregnancy on a student's period of study and we will seek to make, with the overall student experience in mind, appropriate reasonable adjustments for the continued safety and learning of a pregnant student or parent of a very young child.

Legislation

- 4 The Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthens legal protection for students (including applicants to higher education) during pregnancy and maternity. Under the Act pregnancy and maternity are protected characteristics and discrimination on these grounds is prohibited. Discrimination can occur against a student because of her pregnancy or because she has given birth if:
 - the student is treated unfavourably because of her pregnancy
 - within 26 weeks of the day of giving birth the student is treated unfavourably because she has given birth – this also applies in cases of miscarriage, still birth and neonatal death provided more than 24 weeks of the pregnancy has elapsed
 - the student is treated unfavourably because she is breastfeeding and the child is less than 26 weeks old – if the child is more than 26 weeks old, unfavourable treatment because of breastfeeding is likely to constitute sex discrimination.

Scope of the policy

- 5 This policy covers:
 - any student who becomes pregnant during her studies
 - students who are about to become fathers
 - any student who is the partner (including same sex partner) of someone who is pregnant and expects to be responsible for the child

¹ Reference to very young children relates to children under the age of 6 months and, with particular regard to health and safety considerations, those beyond 6 month who are still being breastfed.

- any person becoming a parent (e.g. through adoption) of a child.
- 5 This policy should be read in conjunction with any programme specific regulations, for example in nursing or social work to ensure that a full understanding of any additional professional, work-based or work related issues are addressed.

Advice

- 6 The provision of advice on the implications of pregnancy, adoption and responsibility for a child on continuation of studies will of course be dependent on many factors including:
- on the programme of study
 - the timing during the academic year
- 7 The student must be given the appropriate advice in a sensitive non-judgemental manner.

Student and applicants' responsibilities

- 8 Students and applicants need to disclose their pregnancy to a trusted member of staff within their School, Faculty and/or sponsor at an early stage of their pregnancy, with a view to discussing any necessary support arrangements or adjustments – particularly where elements of their programme of study might present a health and safety hazard to the student or unborn child (see Form 1)
- 9 Students and applicants need to ensure the safe supervision of any baby they may bring onto campus and ensure that the appropriate risk assessments are completed.
- 10 Students and applicants covered by this policy are advised to discuss any concerns they have relating to their pregnancy with their own GP and, if required, staff in one or more of the following services which may be able to give support and signposting to other services:
- Bucks Students' Union Advice Centre
 - Counselling Centre
 - Health and Safety
 - Accommodation Services
 - Multi-faith Chaplaincy
- 11 International students studying on Tier 4 visa should contact the Student Centre and if there are likely to be visa and / or finance implications, they should be referred to the Compliance team in Marketing and Student Recruitment.

Staff responsibilities

- 12 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.
- 13 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 (see Appendix 1 and Forms 1 and 2).
- 14 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.
- 15 Individual staff members to whom a pregnancy is disclosed are responsible for:
 - Reading this document and, in particular, becoming familiar with the procedure for supporting pregnant students
 - Treating any disclosure of pregnancy seriously and making students aware if 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 who need to know.
 - Ensuring accurate information is given to prospective students regarding the availability of support for students who are pregnant or have very young children.
 - Seeking advice from Faculty/School staff or other central services if they are unsure of how best to support the continued study of a pregnant student.

Appendix 1: Help and advice for students who are pregnant or who have a very young family

Scope

- 1 The purpose of this document is to ensure that if you become pregnant while you are a student at BNU you know where to seek advice about your own health, the health of your child and the management of your course of study.

Early action

- 2 It is important to obtain sound advice as soon as you know you are pregnant. If you believe you are pregnant because of missed periods or because you have used an 'over the counter' pregnancy test, you should have your pregnancy confirmed, or otherwise, by a doctor as soon as possible. Delay can cause problems later on, whether you are considering a termination or a continuation of the pregnancy.
- 3 If your pregnancy is to continue while you are a student, your doctor will arrange for you to receive appropriate ante-natal care. It is very important that you let an appropriate member of your course team know that you are pregnant as soon as possible; they should in turn inform the Senior School Registrar. The reasons for doing this are to make the best plans for your course of study and examinations and also to ensure any special measures needed for your safety and the safety of your child. Depending on your course of study there may also be additional conditions placed upon you by the relevant professional body. **Also, the University can only make provision for you if you let us know your circumstances.** Remember, the greatest risk to an unborn child from exposure to chemicals and radiation occurs in the first 13 weeks of the pregnancy.
- 4 If you make the decision to terminate your pregnancy, or you miscarry there is no need for this to 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 specify the exact reason. You may also want to seek support to help you cope with this, from University services or other specialist services.

Risk assessments

- 5 Once you have informed the School of your pregnancy they will complete a Risk Assessment (Form 1) with you to identify any relevant risks associated with your study programme and to manage these risks for your protection. The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents. The Health and Safety Officer, or other appropriate university staff member or occupational health may be consulted when completing the Risk Assessment. Health and Safety advice can also be found at www.hse.gov.uk/mothers

Implications for study

- 6 You will also need to agree a written plan concerning the impact of your pregnancy on your course of study (see Form 2). You are entitled to interrupt your course of study because of pregnancy and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of your study programme and your needs as a pregnant student. You will need to plan according to your individual circumstances, financial implications and the timing of the academic year. You will need to meet with an appointed member of staff who will be aware of potential issues in such cases, including issues specific to their particular discipline area, so as to be able to comment on the likely impact of the pregnancy on the immediate continuation of your studies.

Possible adjustments include:

- Interruption of studies
- consideration of Mitigating Circumstances claims
- consideration of claims for extensions to coursework assessments
- amendments to programme schedule where feasible
- alternative means of assessment where feasible.

Example: For a baby due in December the best option may be to interrupt studies for a full calendar year after the baby is born (December to December) if that is compatible with your course of study, or alternatively for the whole academic year.

- 7 If you do not wish to interrupt your course of studies, the University will try to make adjustments to your programme in the light of the risk assessment (including any recommendations regarding any adjustments to be taken in these circumstances). Such adjustments might involve modifications to the syllabus or teaching programme or location of teaching etc. However, there will be some situations where it will not be possible for the University to provide reasonable, practicable alternatives to a student's designated programme of study and in such cases a student will be required to suspend her studies.
- 8 Mandatory suspension might arise where a module or modules were a required part of a programme and were considered to constitute a high level risk to the student's health and safety or the health and safety of her child. *For example:* modules that involve the use of chemicals contra-indicated for pregnant women, where the learning outcomes of the module could not be achieved without exposure to that risk.
- 9 It is important that you meet regularly with an agreed member of staff to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements which have been put in place.
- 10 If you do not interrupt your studies, you should arrange with your course team any absences needed for attendance at ante-natal clinics. Where any absences are substantial you may wish to seek advice about interrupting your studies.
- 11 If your baby is due near to or during an examination period you should seek advice from your GP, as the university may need confirmation that you are able to sit the exams. If you are unwell

or have complications during your pregnancy you should seek advice from your Senior School Registrar regarding mitigating circumstances.

International students (Student Route Sponsored Visa holders)

- 12 As the University is bound by Home Office, UK Visas and Immigration rules and regulations, the guidance in this section may be liable to change at short notice.
- 13 Travel – unless advised not to do so by their doctor or midwife, students should be able to travel during pregnancy. However, airlines have different policies and may not allow travel beyond 36 weeks or, in the event that the pregnancy is complicated or multiple, beyond 32 weeks. Students will need to check individual airline policies before travelling, and be aware that airlines will ask for proof that it is safe for them to travel.
- 14 If an international student becomes pregnant during their studies, they may not be able to complete the course as planned within the visa duration. In this case the student will be expected to defer their studies. The University will notify the Home Office and the student's Student Route Sponsored student visa will be curtailed. The student will be expected to leave the UK unless they are medically not able to do so. They can resume studies when they are ready to do so at a later date but will have to meet the requirements to apply for another Student Route Sponsored student visa. All visas allow for a short period of stay in the UK in addition to the time spent on a course. At the time of writing this guidance, the period allowed was as follows, but students are advised to check with Compliance for the most up to date advise:
 - students on courses lasting 12 months or longer can remain in the UK for the length of their course plus four months after the end of the course.
 - students on courses lasting more than six months but less than 12 months can remain in the UK for the length of their course plus two months after the end of the course.
 - students on courses lasting six months or less can remain in the UK for the length of the course plus seven days unless the course is a pre-sessional course, in which case students will have an additional one month after the end of the course.
- 15 The additional time allowed may not be sufficient for some students to take maternity-related absence. Consequently, staff responsible for supporting international students should provide any international student who becomes pregnant while studying in the UK with the latest information on the visa implications of:
 - taking maternity-related absence
 - returning home to have the baby
 - having a dependent to support in the UK.
- 16 Given visa restrictions, in exceptional circumstances and in consideration of health and safety, HEIs may need to be flexible when requesting that international students take a minimum of two weeks" maternity-related absence.
- 17 Further information on student visas can be found on the Home Office website:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/student-visas>

<http://ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/Immigration-/Protecting-your-Tier-4-status/Your-sponsors-duties-to-the-Home-Office/>

Field work, placements and work experience

- 18 If your course contains a plan to take part in a study trip, placement or obtain work experience whilst you are pregnant or planning to breastfeed, this must be specifically addressed when the Risk Assessment is completed as there may be special risks associated non-campus based, practical study. You may not be permitted to take part in a study trip or a placement where this constitutes a risk to you or your child.
- 19 In some professional/ vocational or practical based programmes may mean that you are prohibited from continuing your studies whilst pregnant and therefore you may have to temporarily interrupt your studies. You may also have to interrupt studies if the field work or placement is a compulsory part of your degree and the programme cannot be modified to accommodate your inability to participate in this part of the programme. The period of interruption will be dependent on the nature, duration and cycle of the programme. For example, this could apply in nursing, social work or police studies where specific arrangements apply, and you are advised to check with your Senior School Registrar to see if there are any restrictions in your programme of study.

Interruption and suspension, and returning to study

- 20 Pregnant students or those with young children who decide to interrupt their studies or who are suspended by the University should follow the guidance provided in the “Interruption of Studies, Withdrawal or Transfer Procedure”.

Financial considerations

- 21 Undergraduate students should note that funding will usually stop when the interruption of study begins. Funding will not stop immediately; students taking the tuition fee loan will be liable for the term in which they leave (interrupt, suspend or withdraw). Student Finance England will be able to advise on possible future eligibility. Students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should seek advice from their funding body.
- 22 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.
- 23 Students who believe they may be entitled to a refund should approach the Student Centre or Finance for further information. All students are advised to check the information in the [Payment and debt procedures](#) document. It should be noted, however, that as we want to

ensure that students do not face discrimination or feel they cannot continue their studies because of pregnancy and maternity, that most cases are dealt with on an individual basis with the aim of supporting the students to continue their studies and financial penalties have been waived. Therefore, if you interrupt your course of studies, or leave before the completion of your course, there might be financial implications so it is most important to seek advice from the Senior School Registrar and the Student Centre who will be able to take into account your personal circumstances.

- 24 International students (Tier 4 visa holders) 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. Students should be aware that airline policy on carrying passengers who are 7-months pregnant or more can vary and this needs to be taken into account when planning.
- 25 The benefit rules are different for EU students and International students (Tier 4 visa holders), and further advice should be sought from the Student Centre, BSU Advice Centre or Department for Work and Pensions.

Accommodation

- 26 The University does not have accommodation that is suitable for families. Students are therefore advised to consider their accommodation requirements in the early stages of pregnancy, as they will not be able to stay in University accommodation with a child.
- 27 Any student who provides medical evidence of pregnancy will be released from their accommodation contract, if they so wish, subject to the usual conditions.
- 28 It is essential that you inform the Accommodation Service as soon as you become aware that you are pregnant, as it will be necessary to discuss the implications in terms of accommodation and it may be necessary to conduct a risk assessment.

Babies / children on campus / breastfeeding

- 29 In exceptional circumstances and provided babies are supervised at all times and any health and safety risks identified can be resolved, babies can be allowed onto university premises for short periods provided their presence does not disrupt other students' learning.
- 30 For students who are breastfeeding or who recently have given birth we will try to be flexible subject to health and safety considerations, to ensure that they are not prevented from attending their course or accessing university facilities.
- 31 The High Wycombe breastfeeding/rest room is located in Timberlake building (T2.16) and is a private room to be used only for these purposes (any issues relating to the room and facilities should be reported via the Badger system). The room can be accessed by the BNU ID Card and can be manually locked from the inside. Toilets are located nearby. At Uxbridge campus the breastfeeding/rest room is located on the lower ground floor.

- 32 Students must ensure they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they are expected to be at University.
- 33 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.

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

- 34 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 the Senior School Registrar at least 15 weeks before the baby is due, to discuss this. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this will necessarily be more limited in some programmes than others. Students should also be aware that there could be some funding implications.
- 35 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.
- 36 Students are entitled to paternity-related absence in line with entitlements that exist in employment law for paternity leave. This is currently a maximum of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of the child being born. Employed fathers or partners of new mothers are entitled to take up to six months' additional statutory paternity leave in the second six months of their child's life as long as the mother has returned to work. This is in addition to the two weeks' statutory leave to which they are currently entitled following the birth of their child. Students may also have expectations surrounding these entitlements and may wish to interrupt their study when their partner returns to study or work.
- 37 Students on paternity-related absence will need to be provided with materials from seminars and lectures missed. If students do want to take extended paternity-related absence in line with the new entitlements for employees, consideration will need to be given to the support provided to the student, and it may be appropriate to develop a support plan in line with the plan recommended in Form 2.

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

- 38 Students about to become parents (e.g. through adoption) should inform an appropriate member of the course team and the Senior School Registrar 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



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