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| **Document Title:** | **POLICY FOR PREGNANT STUDENTS AND STUDENTS WHO BECOME PARENTS** |
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| V1.0 | 2015 | GOVRN |  |
| V1.1 | 2018 | DOSPG |  |
| V2.0 | 2020 | University Secretary’s Office | Streamlined guidance. Removed out of context interruption of study information and instead directed to existing IoS policies. Signposted to relevant departments with existing guidance. Removed or moderated gendered language where possible. |
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**1 Policy Statement**

* 1. This policy sets out Cardiff University’s commitment to ensuring the protection afforded to students under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) during pregnancy and maternity. The Act considers pregnancy and maternity to be a protected characteristic and prohibits discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation on these grounds. This policy also sets out the University’s commitment to any student who becomes or is due to become a parent, whether through being the partner of a pregnant person, adoption or surrogacy.
	2. Cardiff University believes that becoming pregnant, adopting or caring for a child should not in itself be a barrier to applying for, starting or succeeding in a programme of study. The University is committed to being as flexible as possible to meet students’ and applicants’ needs, ensuring that students and applicants are not disadvantaged but also ensuring that academic standards are upheld.
	3. The degree of flexibility that can be offered to pregnant students or students who become parents may vary between Schools or programmes of study, which may be subject to external requirements or specific risks. However, all Schools should follow the general approach set out in this document. Students must be aware that whilst the University seeks to be as supportive as possible it may not be able to agree to all requests.
1. **Scope of Policy**
	1. This policy applies to:
* any student who becomes pregnant during their studies and wishes to continue with their pregnancy, who wishes to end their pregnancy or who experience the loss of a pregnancy
* pregnant applicants
* any student becoming a parent of a child\*
* any student becoming a parent through adoption or surrogacy\*
* students who are about to become co-parents, including same-sex partners expecting to be responsible for the child\*

\*regardless of whether their partner is a Cardiff University Student or not.

The policy also includes support in place for breastfeeding / chestfeeding individuals. Please see section 6.1 for more information.

* 1. Although this policy focuses on pregnancy and maternity as it is defined under the Equality Act 2010, many of the points raised will also apply to those who are adopting or becoming a parent via surrogacy. Legal protection under the Act may apply differently in relation to discrimination by association as pregnant and breastfeeding people have specific rights under legislation.
	2. While the University will provide as much support as possible to all students covered by this policy, specific requirements may be in place for students subject to visa requirements, students undertaking funded research or students in receipt of scholarship, particularly with regard to interruption of study. Please see section 4 for sources which will be able to provide advice specific to the programme of study being undertaken.
	3. If a student who becomes pregnant or who becomes a parent also holds a contract of employment with Cardiff University whilst also enrolled as student of the University, they should seek advice from Human Resources at the earliest opportunity.
	4. If a student who becomes pregnant or who becomes a parent is on an apprenticeship either within the University or with an external employer, they should discuss which policies will apply to them with the apprenticeship organiser at the earliest opportunity.

**3 Disclosure**

**Who to tell**

3.1 Students who become pregnant or who are due to become parents are encouraged to contact Student Support and Wellbeing for confidential support and signposting to relevant services.

Student Support and Wellbeing can offer advice and assistance whether the student intends to continue with their pregnancy, intends to terminate their pregnancy or has experienced the loss of a pregnancy. When there are still decisions to be made around the continuation of the pregnancy, staff will provide signposting to qualified individuals who are able to help.

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| **Student Support and Wellbeing** |
| Email | studentconnect@cardiff.ac.uk |
| Phone | +44 (0)29 2251 8888 |
| Intranet | <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/on-campus/university-staff-and-teams/view/51107-student-support-and-wellbeing> |

 Colleagues in Student Support and Wellbeing will be able to direct students to the following specialist teams:

 Advice and Money Team

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/on-campus/university-staff-and-teams/view/53044-advice-and-money>

 International Student Support

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/on-campus/university-staff-and-teams/view/66250-international-student-support>

 Further pregnancy-related guidance can be found on the Student Intranet at the link below:

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/your-physical-health-and-wellbeing/if-you-become-pregnant>

Student Support and Wellbeing will be able to provide support and advice on a range of matters, for example if a student needs support in making decisions about their pregnancy, for support in understanding visa requirements and implications for the student’s study, or for advice about leave entitlements.

3.2 In order to initiate discussion of any implications for their programme of study, where a student has become pregnant and intends to continue with the pregnancy it is extremely important to disclose their pregnancy to their School, via their Personal Tutor or Supervisor. These may include any likely absences, implications for assessment or submission of work.

3.3 It is imperative that the pregnant student informs their School as soon as possible so that a full risk assessment can be carried out[[1]](#footnote-1). **If a disclosure is made to Student Support and Wellbeing, this will not necessarily be fed back to the School without the student’s consent. Students must therefore ensure they inform the School as well.**

A member of staff can request a Pregnancy Risk Assessment appointment for a pregnant student with the Student Occupational Health (OH). Appointments are accessed via the Management Referral documentation which can be found by contacting the Student OH Service or at the link below.  Advice regarding a pregnancy risk assessment is available from the Student OH Service if it is not clear as to whether a referral is necessary.

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/your-physical-health-and-wellbeing/occupational-health/occupational-health>

3.4 If the pregnancy does not continue, there may be no need for any staff or students at the University to know (unless the student wishes them to know). However, there may still be circumstances where it is important to inform the University in the interests of the health and safety of the pregnant student for the time in which they remain pregnant. Pregnant students and their partners, if applicable, are still encouraged to access Student Support and Wellbeing whether the pregnancy continues or not.

3.5 Where a student is not pregnant but is due to become a parent, they are also encouraged to discuss this with their Personal Tutor or Supervisor in order to discuss any likely periods of absence or any implications for assessment or submission of work.

3.6 Any student who is pregnant or is due to become a parent should ensure their School has up to date contact details and those of an emergency contact person via the Student Information Management System (SIMS).

3.7 If a student wishes or needs to discuss their pregnancy with a member of staff, they should be allowed, wherever possible in the circumstances, to choose the gender of the member of staff they speak to.

**Confidentiality**

3.8Information on a student’s pregnancy needs to be treated confidentially and with sensitivity within the agreed parameters of the policy (i.e. being passed on with only the student’s consent or in accordance with Data Protection legislation) with the understanding that in certain circumstances this information will be shared with others who need to be aware of the situation. Guidance about Data Protection can be found in the University’s Data Protection policy[[2]](#footnote-2) and further advice about sharing information can be sought from Compliance and Risk at complianceandrisk@cardiff.ac.uk

3.9 Advance HE guidance states that existing law does not prevent Universities from directly approaching students who they believe to be pregnant[[3]](#footnote-3). However, this is not advised unless the University is confident that the student is pregnant and there are genuine concerns about their health and safety.

**Admissions**

3.10 Students who are pregnant at the start of their course can contact the Admissions Tutor to discuss any implications for their programme of study. Each case will need to be considered individually as course requirements vary greatly.

 **Placements**

3.11 If a student finds out that they are pregnant whilst on a placement connected with their studies it is their responsibility to inform both their host organisation and the University, as the host organisation will need to carry out a risk assessment to ensure the student’s safety. There will not normally be any reason why a student cannot complete their placement unless an unavoidable risk is identified.

3.12 If a pregnant student is due to undertake a work placement or exchange programme during their pregnancy, this should be discussed with the help of the placement organiser with the host organisation to ensure that any risks can be identified and managed.

3.13 Pregnant students on placement abroad should discuss the situation with their key contact at their host institution/organisation and also their contact at the University. It will be important to discuss the insurance implications if the student were to need to be hospitalised or repatriated due to pregnancy or birth-related health treatment and whether the insurance extends to a baby delivered prematurely while abroad.

3.14 Pregnant students studying abroad should note that airlines have restrictions relating to the number of weeks’ gestation up to which they will allow a pregnant person to fly. Additionally, pregnant students will need to check any insurance policies in place to establish whether there is cover in place for issues relating to the pregnancy or any pregnancy related health issues which may arise.

3.15 Students who are not pregnant but who identify a need for any type of leave associated with becoming a parent should also inform their host institution / organisation and their University contact as soon as possible so that arrangements can be discussed.

3.16 If a student becomes pregnant whilst living in University accommodation they should let their Residences Managers know. It is likely that accommodation will not be suitable for a student and their child as the majority is designed for single occupancy. In some circumstances, Cardiff University may be able to offer accommodation for families.

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/living-here/accommodation/university-residences/facilities-and-services/residences-welfare>

**4. Absences and alternative arrangements for pregnant students and students who become parents.**

4.1 Where possible flexibility should be exercised whilst ensuring that academic standards are maintained. Cases will be dealt with on an individual basis as circumstances and course requirements will vary. It may not be possible for the University to agree to every request but it is important to ensure they are not treated unfavourably or disadvantaged due to pregnancy. Further advice and support can be provided by the Advice and Money Team in the Student Support Centre.

4.2 A pregnant student may decide to apply for an ‘Interruption of Study’. This is an agreed break from studies for more than a minimum period of 14 days for taught students and 28 days for research students, up to a maximum of one year. Whether to continue studies during or after pregnancy or becoming a parent will be a very personal decision and will likely depend on a range of personal, education and financial circumstances. Further advice and support about how this may impact on eligibility for loans and stipends can be provided by the Advice and Money Team in the Student Support Centre.

4.3 Taught programmes (Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate) have a separate interruption of study procedure than Research programmes, due to the specific requirements of these courses. The policies can be found in full on the Student Intranet.

**Taught programmes**

4.4 On Taught programmes, students may apply for an interruption of study on the grounds of maternity, paternity, adoption, surrogacy and shared parental leave. This means a student may be eligible for a period of agreed leave whether they are pregnant or are due to become a parent in another way.

4.5 Detailed advice on whether they qualify for an interruption of study, how to apply and any considerations they need to make can be found on the Student Intranet at the link below. Students are strongly advised to discuss this with their School and the Advice and Money Team any implications and interruption of study might have on the submission of work or receipt of student finance at the earliest opportunity:

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/study/changes-to-your-studies/absence-and-interruption-of-study>

4.6 For Undergraduate students and Taught Postgraduate students, a request to return to study on a part-time basis may be agreed. This will depend on the programme of study and agreement of the School. A request from postgraduate students will need to be discussed with the Supervisor. Students may also wish to consult the Advice and Money Team in the Student Support Services on implications for finances if they are to change to part-time study.

**Research programmes**

4.7 Students on Research programmes are entitled to the same types of leave as those defined by the UK Government. Therefore, in most circumstances[[4]](#footnote-4), a pregnant student can apply for an interruption of study for maternity leave of up to one year (52 weeks). Students becoming parents via adoption or surrogacy are also entitled to this period of leave where they are the primary adopter. Research students may also enter into arrangements for shared parental leave.

4.8 Where a Research student is not the primary adopter or wishes to take ‘paternity leave’, this is not covered under the interruption of study arrangements for Research students, in line with allowances for paternity leave offered by the UK Government. However, in this situation, students are able to apply for an interruption of study on compassionate grounds.

4.9 Research students in particular are reminded of the importance of discussing with their supervisor about any funding or sponsorship arrangements and how these may be impacted by a period of leave at the earliest opportunity.

4.10 Advice on eligibility, considerations for funding and application details for an interruption of study for Research students can be found on the student intranet at the links below:

 Interruption of Study and Extension to Time Limit Policy and Procedure:

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1453561/Interruption-of-Study-and-Extension-to-Time-Limit-Research-Students.pdf>

 Specific guidance for Research students regarding how Interruption of Study and extension of time limits apply to pregnant students or students who become parents:

[https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0010/1554535/Maternity,-Adoption,-Paternity,-Partner,-Shared-Parental-Leave.pdf](https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1554535/Maternity%2C-Adoption%2C-Paternity%2C-Partner%2C-Shared-Parental-Leave.pdf)

 **International students**

4.11 International students will need to check the implications of their pregnancy and/or parental status for their visa. Some initial considerations are outlined below and in the following document:

[https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0010/1554535/Maternity,-Adoption,-Paternity,-Partner,-Shared-Parental-Leave.pdf](https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1554535/Maternity%2C-Adoption%2C-Paternity%2C-Partner%2C-Shared-Parental-Leave.pdf)

4.12 At present students who require a visa to study in the UK cannot extend their visa in the UK for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity. If a student wishes to take a short break after the birth of their baby they may be able to do so with the approval of their Academic School and with due consideration and agreement provided by any funding bodies or visa requirements. However the student must still be able to complete their studies within the period of their existing visa.

4.13 If a student wishes to take a break in excess of 14 days (taught programmes) or 28 days (research programmes) then they must apply for an Interruption of Study. If the Interruption of Study is longer than 60 days, a Tier 4 student will need to return home until they are ready to resume their studies. This will mean that the University will be required to report to UK Visas & Immigration that the student has suspended their studies and the UKVI will then curtail (cancel) their current visa. This will mean that the student will need to apply for a new Tier 4 visa in their home country before returning to resume their studies.

4.14 **Pregnant international students or international students who are due to become parents are strongly encouraged to discuss their situation with Student Support and Wellbeing at the earliest opportunity.**

 **All students**

4.15 There may also be some circumstances where the University will require a student to take an ‘Interruption of Study’, but the student will always be consulted on this decision. This may occur, for example, where a module which is a core requirement of the programme of study is considered a high level risk to the health and safety of the pregnant student and/or the foetus/unborn child.

4.16 Due to health and safety requirements, any student who has given birth (including all forms of birth, e.g. c-section) will be expected to take a minimum of two weeks’ leave immediately following the birth. This period of leave may be longer where there is a health and safety risk due to the nature of the programme or study or placement (e.g. heavy lifting, working with certain chemicals etc). Students should rest assured that the University will be supportive of them taking this time as an absolute minimum to care for themselves and their child. If the student cannot take this leave, for example due to short term study activities, placements, trips etc which may be cut short, advice can be sought from Compliance and Risk at complianceandrisk@cardiff.ac.uk.

4.17 Students on a course of professional training or are receiving a bursary from a professional body should check the minimum or recommended absence periods with the professional body concerned.

 **Extenuating circumstances**

4.18 Pregnancy and becoming a parent will not generally be considered under the extenuating circumstances regulations in isolation but will be considered where there are associated health issues or unforeseen circumstances. This might include, for example, where a pregnancy is unplanned and the student’s emotional and physical wellbeing is being affected. A student may also refer to the Absences and Interruption to Study Policy if pregnancy related illness prevents attendance.

4.19 If a student is unable to sit an examination or submit, or take part in, an assessment on time due to a partner’s labour or pregnancy related illness/complications, they should notify their Personal Tutor or Supervisor as soon as possible to seek further guidance. A student should report any circumstance that negatively impacts their academic performance in assessments to the School through the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure.

4.20 If a pregnant student needs adjustments in order to sit examinations (such as the need for a different chair or comfort breaks) then the University may be able to accommodate these with adequate notice. Students are advised to discuss these with Student Support and Wellbeing and with their School at the earliest opportunity. If a pregnant student is unable to attend assessments due to associated health issues or unforeseen circumstances related to pregnancy or birth, they should report extenuating circumstances.

**Absences for appointments**

4.21 A student who is pregnant will be able to take time off to attend any routine or emergency antenatal appointments. This can be agreed with the student’s School and will be managed through the usual absence procedures relevant to that student’s programme of study. Where a student is adopting, the primary adopter will also be granted time off to attend routine adoption or matching appointments.

4.22 Students whose partner (whether the same or a different gender) is pregnant or whose partner is the primary adopter of a child may wish to take time off for antenatal appointments (or matching appointments). If such appointments conflict unavoidably with lectures or with placement opportunities, they will need to discuss with their Personal Tutor/Supervisor or placement organiser. It is the student’s responsibility to make arrangements to catch up on any missed work, taking the relevant absences and interruption to study policies into consideration. If there is a conflict with assessments or examinations, students will need to seek advice from their Personal Tutor/Supervisor in the first instance at the earliest possible time.

**5 Staff**

5.1 Members of staff should also consider the guidance below when supporting a student who is pregnant or becoming a parent whilst studying at the University.

5.2 Staff should avoid making assumptions about a student’s pregnancy or the process by which a student is becoming a parent. This includes assuming a student is pregnant, assuming the sex or presence of a partner, making assumptions as to how the pregnancy will progress. Staff should also avoid asking probing questions about a pregnancy except on a need to know basis (e.g. to determine the appropriate type and amount of leave).

5.3 Staff should be conscious to the best of their ability of the language they use when discussing a student’s pregnancy or the process of becoming a parent. Where a student discloses that they will not continue with their pregnancy, for example, staff should be sensitive to the use of terminology which may be upsetting or offensive to the pregnant student (e.g. ‘child’ or ‘baby’). Likewise, medical terminology such as ‘embryo’ or ‘foetus’ may be inappropriate where a student is heavily pregnant and planning for the arrival of their baby.

5.4 Where a student is faced with decisions about their pregnancy, staff should not convey personal views or attempt to influence the decision that is made.

5.5 Staff should be aware of their responsibility to arrange for necessary risk assessments to be carried out when a student discloses their pregnancy. The Student Occupational Health Service are available to discuss this further:

 <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/your-physical-health-and-wellbeing/occupational-health/occupational-health>

**6 Breastfeeding / Chestfeeding / Nursing**

6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, specific provision is given to “breastfeeding mothers”. The University however strives to be inclusive of all individuals who wish to nurse a child, regardless of their gender identity. The University therefore recognises that some trans and non-binary individuals may use different terminology to describe the act of nursing, including “chestfeeding”. In the interests of clarity with respect to the laws in place that offer protection to breastfeeding individuals, and to distinguish breastfeeding from other forms of feeding a child, the term breastfeeding is used throughout the document. The term ‘mother’ is not linked to this however, as the University recognises that not all individuals who breast/chestfeed a child will identify as a mother. However, the University fully supports individuals choosing to use the terminology which best describes their gender identity and/or experience of nursing their child and encourage students to use whichever terms are most appropriate when engaging with all areas of the University.

6.2 The University will support students who are breastfeeding. Whilst equality law does not stipulate that breastfeeding and rest facilities have to be provided to students, care should be taken to ensure that breastfeeding students’ needs are met, where possible, to avoid less favourable treatment. The University should also aim to provide a private, healthy and safe environment for breastfeeding students to express and store milk. It is not appropriate to expect students who are nursing a child to use a toilet for breastfeeding, or for expressing milk.

6.3 On campus, students should be reassured that breastfeeding is allowed in any public or communal area in line with the Equality Act 2010, which gives explicit protection for breastfeeding in public places. Due care and attention should be given to the area in which a student chooses to breastfeed. If there is a health and safety risk to any individuals present, this may override the right to breastfeed in that area.

6.4 If a pregnant or breastfeeding student requires specific arrangements, this should be discussed with their Personal Tutor or Supervisor or with the Student Support and Wellbeing in the first instance. It may be necessary to seek advice from the School Manager and Estates. Occupational Health may also need to be consulted. Further advice can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

**7 Childcare**

7.1 The University has a [Day-care Centre](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/creche/) based at 43-45 Park Place that provides day care facilities for students' children aged 10 weeks to 5 years. Further information and details of fees are available on request. Early application is advisable.

**8 Complaints**

8.1 If students do not feel that they have been treated in accordance with this policy they should raise their concerns in line with the student complaints processes outlined on the Student Intranet at the page below:

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/student-voice/make-a-complaint>

8.2 We aim to promote a working, learning and research environment and culture in which differences are welcomed and harassment and bullying are known to be unacceptable. If students believe they have been subject to discrimination, harassment or victimisation as a result of being pregnant or becoming a parent, they should refer in the first instance to the guidance outlined in the University’s Dignity at Work and Study Policy.

 <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/study/your-rights-and-responsibilities/dignity-at-work-and-study>

1. The first 13 weeks of pregnancy can be particularly high risk. Consequently, students are strongly encouraged to notify the University as early as possible of their pregnancy so that a health and safety assessment can be considered [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Equality Challenge Unit, Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions, 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Allowances may vary depending on external considerations such as funding or visa requirements and the period of study during which the student wishes to apply for an interruption of study. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)