



LIVERPOOL  
HOPE  
UNIVERSITY

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# **Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy**

## Document Control

Responsibility for Policy:	Head of Student Welfare and Well-being
Approved by and date:	University Senior Executive Team – 22/1/21
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Related Policies:	See links within document
Minor Revisions	February 2023 V2.0 revisions include: - Providing written confirmation of pregnancy / proposed adoption - Accessing on-campus facilities/services with baby / associated risk assessment
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## Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Liverpool Hope University values the diversity of its student population and is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for its students. The University believes that becoming a parent should not in itself prevent any student from succeeding in their studies and recognises its legal and moral obligations to students who are new and expectant mothers and fathers, and those who are adopting.
- 1.2 The Equality Act 2010 places a legal responsibility on the University to protect students from pregnancy and maternity related discrimination and the University will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no student is disadvantaged due to pregnancy and maternity.

### 2. Scope

- 2.1 This document provides information for both students and staff regarding the University's approach to supporting a student who:
- is pregnant
  - has recently given birth
  - has recently experienced stillbirth or miscarriage
  - has terminated a pregnancy

This document also provides details of the arrangements for students who choose to adopt and details the arrangements for partners of pregnant people.

### 3. Guiding principles

- 3.1 The University is committed to the following principles in its treatment of pregnancy, maternity and adoption as it relates to students:
- Students will be provided with reasonable academic support throughout the period of pregnancy and maternity or adoption and, wherever practicable, will not be unreasonably prevented from applying for, registering upon, or successfully completing a course.
  - All reasonable steps will be taken to avoid less favourable treatment of pregnant students and students in a period of maternity or adoption. The degree of flexibility possible is likely to vary between courses and the level of risk involved balanced against the University's other obligations (e.g. duty of care, health and safety, ensuring academic standards are not compromised and other students' ability to learn is not impeded).
  - The University will endeavor to enable student choice in a fair and non-judgmental manner and will not attempt to direct or unduly influence a student's decisions (in cases where there is deemed a significant risk to the student and/or her unborn child, the University may be legally obliged to make decisions based on health and safety concerns).
  - The University is committed to promoting equality and supporting students where reasonably possible. Each case will be reviewed on the basis of the individual circumstances and the health and well-being of the student and child will be considered of paramount importance throughout.

#### **4. Notification of Pregnancy**

- 4.1 There is no legal requirement for applicants or students to inform the University if they are pregnant or become pregnant whilst registered on a course, including whilst on placement. However, prospective and current students are strongly encouraged to disclose a pregnancy at the earliest opportunity (preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due) as this will enable the University to carry out the necessary health and safety assessment. It will also allow the University to identify and put in place any appropriate support measures.
- 4.2 Early notification of pregnancy is especially important for students following courses that may involve potentially high risks to the student and/or the unborn child (e.g. high levels of physical activity/exertion, exposure to toxic substances/chemicals/radiation, infectious diseases etc.). It is important to note that in the case of students with a potential exposure to hazardous chemicals or radiation, the greatest risk to the health of an embryo or foetus arises within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.
- 4.3 Upon request, the student will provide written confirmation of the pregnancy from a doctor or midwife.
- 4.4 Students should inform a member of their academic team of their pregnancy (e.g. Personal Tutor, Course Leader, Research Supervisor, etc.) and give an early indication of any period of interruption of studies they may be anticipating (if applicable and known). Where a student is studying a dual award, they should inform an appropriate member of staff from both their subjects. At this point, the person(s) who is initially informed of the pregnancy, should obtain consent from the student to share details with the Head(s) of School/Department and the Student Development and Well-being team (and others on a need to know basis).

The student should be signposted as appropriate for further sources of advice and support (see Appendix 1).

#### **5. Health and Safety**

- 5.1 Upon notification of a student pregnancy, the Head(s) of School/Department (or nominee) will take responsibility for reviewing the health and safety risks to the student and her unborn child by completing a Maternity Risk Assessment Form. The risk assessment should be carried out with the student at the earliest possible opportunity and cover all aspects of the student's course. In cases where the student is studying a dual award, it is necessary for the Head of School/Department (or nominee) from each subject to carry out a risk assessment. The Maternity Risk Assessment Form can be accessed online via the Staff Gateway, within the Student Support and Well-being section.
- 5.2 Any pertinent issues arising from the risk assessment, including any practical implications, will be taken into account when making decisions around how the pregnancy might be accommodated and what adjustments and mitigations may need to be made. Where necessary, advice regarding conducting the Maternity Risk Assessment can be sought from the University's Health and Safety Adviser.

#### **6. International Students**

- 6.1 International students on tier 4 student visas who become pregnant during their studies are advised that they must seek up-to-date immigration advice promptly from the University's International Student Compliance Officer. Students cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity, and the maximum period of approved authorised absence will be considered on an individual basis in line with UK Visa and Immigration Authority (UKVI) regulations. In all cases, the University's legal responsibilities imposed by Government through the immigration system will take precedence.

## **7. Students on Programmes Leading to Professional Registration**

- 7.1 Students on professional programmes (e.g. initial teacher training, social work, sport rehabilitation) have to demonstrate certain knowledge, skills and competencies required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) that cannot be compromised. When completing the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan, these will be taken into account when agreeing what reasonable adjustments will be made, including any associated period of suspension of studies.

## **8. The Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan**

- 8.1 A Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan should begin to be prepared with the student as soon as possible, once the student has notified the University of the pregnancy. The Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan template can be accessed online via the Staff Gateway, within the Student Support and Well-being section. The Head of School/Department (or nominee) from all subject areas will arrange an initial meeting with the student in order to start completing the plan and this will be developed jointly by the student and nominated person(s).
- 8.2 It is not intended that the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan will be fully completed at a first meeting, as initially, it is likely that the student will be unable – and should not be expected – to respond to all the issues raised.
- 8.3 The student should meet with the Head(s) of School/Department (or nominee) periodically during the pregnancy to ensure that any special arrangements/adjustments that have been put in place are working effectively, making any further adjustments where necessary.
- 8.4 The Plan will be reviewed at key stages (e.g. 16 weeks pregnant, 24 weeks pregnant, and prior to return to study); and at any key points of the academic year (e.g. prior to examinations and field trips/placement, etc.).
- 8.5 The Plan should also be reviewed where the student's situation changes due to unforeseen circumstances. Where pregnancy-related illness/health issues arise that may require the identification of further reasonable adjustments, alternative assessments or other support arrangements, the student should be referred to the Senior Learning Support Adviser at the earliest opportunity for further assistance, noting the referral in the Maternity Support Plan.
- 8.6 Any additional arrangements that may be necessary to facilitate the return to studies following childbirth should be noted in the plan. This may include the provision of a suitable facility to allow the student to express breast milk/breastfeed baby, or enabling access to facilities or services on site accompanied by baby for a temporary period. In such cases, a risk assessment will be completed (or original Maternity Risk Assessment updated), by the Head(s) of School/Department (or nominee) in liaison with the University's Health and Safety Adviser.
- 8.7 When completing the risk assessment, along with any potential health and safety risks involved, supervision of the child and the potential for disruption to other students' learning should be considered and included as part of the discussion with the student.

## **9. Extenuating Circumstances**

- 9.1 Where a student becomes unwell during her pregnancy, or something unplanned or unexpected occurs (such as pregnancy-related illness, early labour, etc.), the student is likely to need additional support beyond that outlined in the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan. In such circumstances, the student should liaise with the named contact within their School/Department(s) in the first instance to ascertain whether further reasonable adjustments can be identified (e.g. where appropriate, moving an assessment submission deadline by a week or two, or arranging an alternative form of assessment). The Senior

Learning Support Adviser can also be contacted to advise in such circumstances, where necessary.

- 9.2 In more serious cases (such as miscarriage or a still birth/neo natal birth), initiating the University's Mitigating Circumstances Procedure may be appropriate. The University will give sensitive consideration to the impact of such circumstances on the student's ability to undertake their studies, including assessments and examinations.

## **10. Maternity Absence and Return to Study**

- 10.1 All students will be permitted to interrupt their studies following the birth of a child, should they wish to do so. The period of absence will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of their course. There is no legal minimum period for the suspension of studies, but the University strongly recommends that there is a minimum absence of two weeks in order to ensure the health and safety of the student and their new born child. In cases where the University is concerned about a student's health in relation to the proposed return to study date, documentary medical evidence of fitness to return to study may be requested.
- 10.2 Where a student is following a course where there is concern about knowledge of the field being affected by the period of interruption taken, the Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan will detail the steps that will be taken to ensure that the student is kept up-to-date, (e.g. through the provision of reading lists, research articles, etc.)
- 10.3 Where there are concerns about the student meeting the requirements of the course (e.g. coursework assessments or examinations), reasonable arrangements wherever practicable may be made for alternative assessment methods to be used, or completion of the requirements prior to the commencement of the period of interruption or during it. Reasonable adjustments such as these will be detailed in the Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan.
- 10.4 In certain exceptional cases, and following the review of the Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan prior to the student's return to study, an extension to the usual period of interruption may be agreed, (e.g. in cases of post-natal depression, serious illness or loss of a baby, or where there is no suitable childcare.)
- 10.5 The University will make every effort to avoid and /or minimise the impact on a student's ability to continue and complete their studies. However, there are occasions when pregnancy, maternity or adoption may impact upon the continuation and completion of studies; the University will discuss and explain the implications with the student.

## **11. Adoption**

- 11.1 The University is committed to supporting students who choose to become primary adopters. Students who are planning to adopt should inform a member of their academic team (e.g. Personal Tutor, Course Leader, Research Supervisor, etc.) as early as possible. Where a student is studying a dual award, they should inform an appropriate member of staff from both their subjects.
- 11.2 The student will provide written confirmation of the proposed adoption, supplied by the Adoption Agency or Local Authority.
- 11.3 At this point, consent should be obtained from the student to share details of their intention to become a primary adopter with the Head(s) of School/Department (and others on a need to know basis). The Head(s) of Department (or nominees) will then liaise with the relevant academic staff and where necessary, other professional services to co-ordinate arrangements to ensure that the student's educational support needs are met during the relevant period of adoption, any associated suspension of studies, and upon return to study.

- 11.4 Any reasonable adjustments agreed will be documented in the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan (e.g. arrangements for pre-adoption meetings, examinations and assessments, student finances, suspension of studies and communications during the period of adoption, etc.).

## **12. Partner Leave/Second Parent Leave**

- 12.1 A student whose partner is pregnant will be permitted reasonable time off study in order to enable them to accompany their partner to any appointments prescribed by a doctor, midwife, health visitor or social worker. The academic department(s) will take reasonable steps to ensure that the student is able to catch up with any sessions missed should the teaching materials not be available on the University's virtual learning environment (Moodle).
- 12.2 Upon request, the student will provide written evidence confirming the appointment dates and times.
- 12.3 If a student undertaking a taught programme wishes to request an extension to a deadline as a result of being affected by a partner's pregnancy, maternity or adoption, they should follow the normal extension request process.
- 12.4 If a student wishes to seek an interruption of studies following a partner's birth or adoption as they intend to take on primary caring responsibilities, they should discuss this with a member of their School/Department(s) in the first instance.

**Sources of Help/Support and Further Information****Student Development and Well-being**

Providing a range of support services for students including mental health, counselling, well-being, disability and learning support. Also providing advice and assistance to university staff in the area of student health/mental health, well-being and disability/learning support.

**T:** 0151 291 3427 - **E:** [sdw@hope.ac.uk](mailto:sdw@hope.ac.uk)

**Liverpool Hope Students' Union Advice Service**

Providing advice and advocacy for students covering a range of issues.

**T:** 0151 291 3708 - **E:** [suadvice@hope.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@hope.ac.uk)

**International Student Support Manager**

Providing information, advice, signposting and assistance to all international students.

**T:** 0151 291 3247 - **E:** [CRAWFOC2@hope.ac.uk](mailto:CRAWFOC2@hope.ac.uk)

**Liverpool Hope Chaplaincy Service**

Providing a listening service, and faith-based and pastoral support.

**T:** 0151 291 3545 - **E:** [chaplaincy@hope.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@hope.ac.uk)

**Legal Services and Health and Safety Assistant**

Providing advice to university staff regarding health and safety matters

**T:** 0151 291 3835 - **E:** [fahye@hope.ac.uk](mailto:fahye@hope.ac.uk)

**Local GP Surgeries linked to Liverpool Hope****Rutherford Medical Centre**

1 Rutherford Road  
Liverpool  
L18 0HJ  
**T:** 0151 722 1803

**Valley Medical Centre**

75 Hartsbourne Avenue  
Liverpool  
L25 1RY  
**T:** 0151 722 2744

**Islington House Medical Centre**

45 Everton Road  
Liverpool  
L6 2EH  
**T:** 0151 317 8600

**External sources of advice and support (pregnancy and maternity)**

Both Mumsnet and the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) provide lots of useful information on all aspects of pregnancy, childbirth, child development and parenting (including details of local support groups and meet-ups for pregnant and new parents), which you may find helpful.

<http://www.mumsnet.com/>

<http://www.nct.org.uk/>

**Liverpool City Council early years and childcare information**

You can search for day nurseries, school nurseries and childminders on the Liverpool Early Help Directory as well as other services for children, young people and families. The Early Help Directory is an online directory of local and national organisations, services, events and activities that exist to support children, young people and families.

<https://liverpool.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/early-years-and-childcare/nursery-and-childcare-providers/>

**External sources of advice and support (adoption)**

Adoption advice <https://www.gov.uk/child-adoption>

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/fostering-adoption-kinshipcare/adoption-support/>

<https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/adoption-support/>