

Bangor University

Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy

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1. Introduction

This Policy provides advice and guidance to:

- Students who become pregnant during their studies, to their partners, and to those who have recently become parents (e.g. through adoption) on issues related to their study
- University staff members who may have a role in advising students coming to them with these issues.

2. Scope of the Policy

The policy covers any student who becomes pregnant during her studies, and students who are about to become fathers. It also covers any student who is the partner (including same sex partner) of someone who is pregnant and expects to be responsible for the child, and any student becoming a parent (e.g. through adoption) of a child.

3. Policy Statement

The University believes that becoming pregnant or caring for a child should not, in itself, prevent any student from succeeding in their studies. The University is committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to facilitate a student's success, making sure no student is disadvantaged as a result, whilst maintaining academic standards. The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary between programmes of study, but all Schools will follow the general approach set out in this document.

The University's position will reflect the guiding principles as highlighted in the Equality Challenge Unit document 'Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for institutions of higher education' of ;

- avoiding less favourable treatment
- taking a flexible approach
- demonstrating a non-judgemental and sensitive approach
- enabling informed choices

The health and safety of a pregnant student will be of paramount importance at all times, and all students covered by this policy should be dealt with in a sensitive, non - judgemental and confidential manner. Only members of staff who need to be informed for valid reasons will be informed of a student's circumstances and this will be done only with the student's prior consent.

The policy focuses primarily on study-related matters, but sources of help and advice on related issues can be found at the end of the document.

4. Rights and responsibilities

This section covers rights and responsibilities for students, staff and the University

4.1 For students who are pregnant during their studies

4.1.1 Confirming the pregnancy

If a student discloses her pregnancy, the University does not need to ask for proof. If the University needs to consider the impact of the pregnancy on the student's attendance or academic attainment, it can ask for evidence in the form of appointments and letters from the student's midwife or GP.

Not all students will continue with their pregnancy to full term. Therefore information concerning a student's pregnancy should be treated sensitively and only passed on with the student's consent. If a student decides to terminate the pregnancy, or miscarries, this information need not be disclosed to the University. Any absence from the University required as a result should be classed as 'sick leave' but there is no need to give the specific reason.

4.1.2 Contacting the academic School

If the student plans to continue with her pregnancy, it is advised that she let someone in her School know as soon as possible. Whilst the personal tutor would normally be the first point of contact, the student may choose initially to speak with another member of staff with whom she feels more comfortable. However students should note that the personal tutor will need to be informed as soon as possible so that appropriate support can be put in place.

The University can only make provision for the student if she lets a member of staff know that she is pregnant.

4.1.3 Implications for study

A member of School staff will meet with the student to discuss how the pregnancy is likely to impact on her study and may carry out a risk assessment (see 4.1.7). There may need to be an interruption of studies depending on when the baby is due, and the student will decide, with appropriate advice, (1) whether an interruption (suspension) of studies is needed and (2) if so, the time period this needs to cover. This decision needs to take into account the academic requirements of the student's course. The student should then be directed to the Head of Student Support in Student Services for further advice and to complete the interruption of studies. <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/regulations/BUProc07-v201501.pdf>

A plan (see appendix 1 for the template suggested by the Equality Challenge Unit) should be devised (in writing) by the personal tutor or other nominated member of staff detailing any special arrangements required during the student's pregnancy: when the student is likely to start her maternity-related absence; what information will need to be communicated, her

preferred method of communication during her absence and the agreed timescale for her return to study.

The student should receive a copy of this, as should other appropriate member(s) of staff requiring this information (including, where required, Conveners of Examination Boards Chairs of Mitigating Circumstances Committees). The student's permission should be established before passing on information.

For international students from outside the EU, please refer to paragraph 4.1.10

If the student continues to study during her pregnancy, she should meet regularly with her Personal Tutor or other designated member of staff, to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements put in place. Where necessary, further adjustments can be made.

4.1.4 Assessments and Examinations

If a student is due to give birth near to or during assessment deadlines or the examination period and wishes to complete her work or sit her examinations, she should not be prevented from doing so. At all times the student's health, safety and well-being should be paramount.

In examinations, pregnant students may require rest breaks and may need more frequent visits to the lavatory. They may also require a more comfortable and supportive chair, or other adjustments depending on the nature of the examination.

The University's Examination's Officer is responsible for agreeing any standard adjustments that can be made for pregnant students taking examinations.

If a student is concerned about sitting examinations or meeting assessed work deadlines, or if she has a pregnancy-related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, she should be advised to seek advice from her midwife or GP. If the advice is that she should not sit an exam or try to meet a deadline, an alternative method of assessment should be explored, in accordance with the University's Assessment Regulations. If she is unable to undertake an alternative method of assessment, the student should submit a Mitigating Circumstances form together with supporting evidence from her GP or midwife; the appropriate Committee can then decide whether to agree an extension or defer an exam.

4.1.5 Field work

Where the student plans to take part in field work as part of her studies, this should be included in the risk assessment carried out by the School as there may be particular risks associated with the field work; the student should discuss this fully with an appropriate member of staff.

From the start of the 7th month of pregnancy, students will only be permitted to take part in field work after a risk assessment is undertaken, taking into account the nature of the field work involved and the health of the student. Students will not be permitted to take part in field work after 35 weeks of pregnancy.

4.1.6 Study abroad/ placement

If a student becomes pregnant whilst on a study year abroad or a placement, she must contact the School to make appropriate plans to ensure that her health (and that of her baby) is safeguarded and academic progress is properly managed.

If a student is required to undertake a placement during her pregnancy, the School must liaise with the Placement Provider to ensure that a Health & Safety Risk Assessment is carried out. Students should also take note of the University's procedures for placement learning.

4.1.7 Resuming studies

The student (if she is an undergraduate student) will be contacted by the Head of Student Support to confirm her return in advance of the agreed return date. Once confirmed the student should contact her School to discuss her re-integration into her studies, and should be provided with information such as her timetable and any appropriate dates for which childcare may be needed. Eg field trips, examination dates.

The same will apply to postgraduate students but the student will need to confirm her return with the Academic Registry who will in turn notify the academic School.

4.1.8 Health and Safety

Health and safety measures may need to be put in place in order to protect the student and her unborn baby, and this will be particularly relevant in certain Schools.

Once the student has let her School know of her pregnancy, a person-specific Risk Assessment will be carried out by the School for undergraduate students or by Occupational Health and Safety Services for postgraduates. This will identify any risks that may be present which could harm the student or her baby, and detail steps that need to be put in place to alleviate or minimise these risks. It should also detail any risks that may arise from any placement period or fieldwork due to be undertaken (see 4.1.4/5).

If it is not practical to make the adjustments required by the Risk Assessment or if the identified risks are unavoidable, the student may need to take time out from her studies although every effort should be made by the School, where possible, to manage the Health & Safety risks and find alternative ways of allowing the student to continue her course if deferment does not accord with her wishes.

The greatest risk to an unborn baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy and so it is important that the student informs the University as early as possible.

Any student who has given birth must not return to University within two weeks of giving birth; this is in line with Employment Law.

NHS Student Bursaries recommends a minimum of 12 weeks maternity absence but allows students to return earlier with the approval of a healthcare professional.

4.1.9 Financial Considerations

Undergraduate students should seek advice from their own funding body e.g. Student Finance Wales or Student Finance England to establish what financial support they will be entitled to both during the pregnancy and afterwards, as a package of support is available to students who are parents. For individual advice and support, a student can contact the Money Support Unit in Student Services or the International Student Welfare Support Team.

Postgraduate and Research students who receive funding from external bodies should follow the guidance for their particular scheme, or contact their funding body or sponsor for further advice.

4.1.10 International students from countries outside the EU

The Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy is applicable to all students studying at Bangor University; however, additional points relating to international students from outside the EU and their immigration obligations must also be considered.

Due to complex immigration and visa regulations for international students, any decisions about interruptions to study, extensions to programme length and plans to return to study should be made in consultation with the International Education Centre's Welfare Team. This applies to both maternity and paternity leave.

International students with financial sponsors must contact their sponsors at the earliest opportunity to agree a plan of action (such as deferring study/resumption of 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. It should be remembered that most airlines will not carry passengers who are 7 months or more pregnant and this should be taken into account when planning.

The University is required to report any Tier 4 registered student who arranges an Interruption of Studies to the UK Border Agency. Such students may be required to leave the UK during their period of suspension.

4.1.11 Accommodation

Students who become pregnant whilst living in University accommodation may find that this is no longer suitable for health and safety reasons. In such circumstances students would be released from their contracts. Advice should be sought from the Halls Office. Unfortunately, the University does not have any family accommodation so the student will not be able to continue to live in Halls after the birth. Should students need assistance in finding alternative accommodation they may contact the Student Housing Office.

Students living in Private Halls should contact their Halls Manager for further advice and information.

For further sources of help and support, please see the 'Sources of Information and Help' section at the end of this document.

4.1.12 Babies/Children on Campus

For health and safety reasons particularly, as well as to avoid disruption to classes or study, students are not permitted to bring babies and children into teaching or learning areas. Students must ensure they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they are expected to be at University. A grant may be available to undergraduates to help with the costs of childcare so students are advised to contact their funding provider for information.

Students must not bring babies or children to University with the expectation that any staff member or fellow student will take responsibility for caring for the child whilst the student is in classes.

Students may of course bring babies and children into public areas of the University or into 1:1 tutorials or meetings with the tutor's permission, but the University cannot accept any liability for the child in these circumstances.

4.1.13 Breastfeeding

A designated breast feeding room is available in Neuadd Rathbone (Room 209, Ground floor), however this may not always be the most practical location for the student, in which case the student's School should seek to make suitable arrangements.

The Equality Act 2010 gives explicit protection to women who breastfeed in public places and it is unlawful to ask them not to, or to prevent them doing so. If other students are uncomfortable with this, for example for religious reasons, the needs of the breastfeeding student takes precedence.

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

4.2.1

Paternalty-related absence

Any student discovering he is to become a father, or any partner of a pregnant student (including same sex partners) who expects 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 their Personal Tutor or Course Director/Supervisor to discuss this. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this will necessarily be more limited in some programmes than others and students should be aware of the potential negative impact on their studies; students should also note that flexibility may be limited where there are external requirements.

If a student wants to take paternity-related absence, they should inform their Course Director or Personal Tutor at least 15 weeks before the baby is due in case they wish to attend ante-natal appointments. The University will allow fathers and partners paternity absence of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of the child being born; this is in line with Employment Law.

4.2.2 Assessments and placements

If a student chooses to sit an examination whilst their partner is in labour or during their paternity-related absence, they should be made aware of the University's Mitigation Circumstances procedure. If a student is unable to sit an examination or submit coursework because of their partner's pregnancy or labour, they should submit a Special Circumstances form, together with supporting evidence, in order that the appropriate Committee can decide on an appropriate way forward.

If a student is unable to complete other compulsory elements of the programme of study, such as field trips or work placements, the School should consider the feasibility of undertaking them at a later time or alternative assessment; if this is not feasible, the School should notify the student of the reasons in writing.

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

Students about to become parents (e.g. through adoption) should inform their School of their circumstances as soon as possible so that suitable arrangements can be made.

Only one member of a couple jointly adopting may take adoption leave. This applies regardless of whether one or both members of the couple are students. The other member of the couple may be entitled to take Paternity Leave.

5. Data collection and monitoring

Whilst there is no mandatory requirement to collect data on students who are pregnant or new parents, the University will collect data during the registration/enrolment process. The Head of Student Support will collect statistics on students in whose support they have been involved.

6. Complaints

Any student who feels that the University has failed to comply with the standards of this policy may submit a complaint under the University's student complaints procedure <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/regulations/BUCode01-v201101.pdf>

It is suggested that problems are resolved as informally as possible in the first instance.

7. Guidance for Staff

This section provides guidance on the support of students coming under the scope of this policy, for use by any member of staff with a role in advising or supporting students. At all times, staff must ensure those students are not treated less favourably than any other student on the basis of their circumstances. In line with the University's legal obligations, flexibility should be shown, where possible, to ensure continued learning is facilitated. Information given by students should be treated confidentially (being passed on where necessary only with the student's consent) and with sensitivity.

7.1 Legal context

The Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthened legal protection for women during pregnancy and maternity which are now protected characteristics. Section 17 of the Act expands protection from discrimination to women outside the workplace and specifically mentions the higher education sector (including applicants to higher education).

Under the Act, it is unlawful for HEIs to discriminate against applicants and students in relation to admissions; the provision of education; access to any benefit, facility or service; and disciplinary proceedings.

7.2 Students' decisions

When a student informs the University that she is pregnant, it is important that she receives consistent unbiased support and advice to enable her to make informed choices; it is important that she is not judged negatively or asked inappropriate questions such as "Are you sure you're ready for this at your age?"

Staff should not attempt to influence any student's decision or assume that the pregnancy is unwanted or unplanned but should provide impartial advice.

Assumptions should not be made about whether the student intends to proceed with her pregnancy on the basis of her age, disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or stage of study or research.

7.3 Supporting the student

There are a number of measures that can be used in order to enable the student's continuation of study for as long a period as is safe and to support the student before and after a period of interruption of studies. These include:

- Allowing time out of study (for a pre-determined amount of time) for the birth and a period of time thereafter; for extended periods of absence an interruption of studies should be arranged (through Student Services for undergraduates and course Director or Supervisor for postgraduate students), but see the University's Policy for Approving Interruptions to Studies <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/regulations/BUProc07-v201501.pdf>

- Prior to and after the birth, giving permission for periods of absence for medical appointments, and making arrangements for the student to catch up on missed classes
- Extensions to deadlines can be authorised if the student's circumstances make it difficult for them to be met.
- Allowing resit examinations to be counted as first attempts where the pregnancy or birth prevents the student from taking them at the usual first attempt
- Consideration of any requests from undergraduate students to transfer to part-time study, where this is possible (although the student should bear in mind the financial implications of this course of action). Staff should refer the student to the Student Support Team for advice in these circumstances.

For International students, visa implications need to be considered before a change of mode of attendance can be agreed as their visa status may not permit part-time study, in such cases, students should be referred to the International Student Welfare Team.

- Offering support to help the student reintegrate to their studies after any period of prolonged absence

It is important to take the views and wishes of the student into account, rather than applying a standard set of arrangements. All decisions taken should be based on discussion with the student.

Whilst an appropriate degree of flexibility should be exercised, care must be taken to ensure that academic standards are not compromised. A balance must be achieved between ensuring the student is not disadvantaged and giving undue special treatment. It is not necessary for the University to grant every request made, although efforts should be made to meet reasonable requests. Requests should not be refused solely on the basis of being too costly to implement, although this will necessarily be considered when assessing the overall 'reasonableness' of a request. If any request is refused, the reasons for the refusal should be provided in writing to the student.

Where specific arrangements are required to be put in place for a student who is already granted additional arrangements (e.g. on the grounds of disability), these should be kept separate in order that it remains clear which arrangements relate to which particular circumstance. This ensures that these arrangements are in place for the required amount of time and also clarifies adherence to the different pieces of legislation.

For staff requiring more detailed guidance, advice can be sought on any of the above from the Head of Student Support and the Equality Challenge Unit's guidance can be found at: <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/student-pregnancy-and-maternity/>

8. Sources of information and help

Excellent websites for advice on all aspects of pregnancy, birth and postnatal care:

- <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/pregnancy-and-baby-care.aspx?tabname=Getting%20pregnant>
- www.nct.org
- www.tommys.org

Contact details of local family planning clinics /Sexual Health clinics:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/861/page/51457>

Supportive, impartial and non-judgemental advice for unplanned pregnancy and abortion treatment:

<http://www.bpas.org/bpaswoman>

Financial advice at Bangor University:

www.bangor.ac.uk/studentssupportservices/moneysupport

University Halls of Residence contact details:

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/accommodation/contact.php.en>

Private sector housing advice at Bangor University:

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/studentsservices/studenthousing/>

Online Citizens Advice Bureau:

www.adviceguide.org/benefitsforfamiliesandchildren

Information on benefits available and how to apply:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/maternity-paternity-leave-benefits.aspx>

Expert advice and support for single parents:

www.gingerbread.org.uk