

# Student Pregnancy Policy

## UPR SA19 version 1.0

### Policies superseded by this document

This is the first version of this document.

### Summary of significant changes to the previous version

This policy is a new policy relating to student pregnancy at the University of Hertfordshire.

### Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Hertfordshire is committed to advancing equality of opportunity, embracing and celebrating the diversity of our community, and fostering a cohesive and inclusive culture. We believe that the inclusion of different voices and unique perspectives is what makes our community thrive. It enhances our research, enriches our teaching and strengthens our ability to provide an exceptional education to all.
- 1.2 The University is therefore committed to supporting all students who are or become pregnant, terminate a pregnancy, experience miscarriage, still birth or neo-natal death, or welcome new children to their families to access, succeed in, progress in and study at the University.
- 1.3 Pregnancy and Maternity is covered as one of the nine protected characteristics by the Equality Act 2010. This means students and applicants who are currently pregnant or have given birth within the last 26 weeks are protected against any form of discrimination covered by the Act. Furthermore, students who are breastfeeding are explicitly protected from discriminatory treatment in education and service provision.
- 1.4 The University is committed to ensuring that all students and applicants are treated fairly. The University is respectful of the diversity of its community and recognises that the responsibilities relating to pregnancy may manifest in several ways.
- 1.5 This policy has been drawn up in line with the Equality Act 2010 and guidance set out by AdvancedHE on '[Student Pregnancy and Maternity](#)' and by reviewing similar policies at other Higher Education Institutions.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all registered students at the University of Hertfordshire, and applicants who will require support under the provisions of the policy at the time of joining the University.
- 2.2 To ensure inclusivity, the provisions of this policy will apply to all students who fall into the following categories:
  - 2.2.1 Students and applicants (who fall within this definition at the point of joining the University) who become pregnant, have given birth within the last year, have had a termination or experienced miscarriage, still-birth, neonatal death within the last year, become a parent through surrogacy, or are fostering or adopting a child.
  - 2.2.2 Students and applicants who are co-parents of a child born (including through surrogacy), fostered, or adopted, or who have been affected by termination or miscarriage, still-birth or neonatal death within the last year, whether or not they are in a relationship with the parent involved.

- 2.2.3 Students and applicants who have a partner who is pregnant, has given birth within the past year, has had a termination or experienced miscarriage, still-birth or neonatal death within the last year, has become a parent through surrogacy, or is fostering or adopting a child, whether or not the student is considered a parent of the child.
- 2.3 The provisions within this policy will also apply to applicants who will fall within the categories set out in the above section at the time of joining the University.
- 2.4 The personal circumstances of students who fall within the remit of this policy should be treated with confidentiality. The University will comply with UK data protection legislation including the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. Such legislation is based on specific principles, rights and responsibilities which govern the management and processing of personal data by organisations. The University's Data Protection Policy sets out what the University does in practice to meet and comply with those principles.
- 2.5 Staff pregnancy, maternity, paternity and parental leave is excluded from this policy. Policies relating to staff can be found under Family Friendly policies on Hertshub: <https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/Leave-and-working-hours/SitePages/family-friendly-policies.aspx>. However, where a member of staff is also a student at the University, this policy will apply in respect to their student activities.

## **3 Responsibilities**

### **3.1 Students and Applicants**

- 3.1.1 Students and applicants are responsible for:
- a disclosing a pregnancy: Following a consultation with a General Practitioner (GP) and/or other appropriate services, students and applicants are encouraged to notify the University about their pregnancy through their Personal Tutor, Programme Leader, or to the Admissions Officer dealing with their application. If a student is unsure about discussing their pregnancy with the University they can seek advice from the Dean of Students Office, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team or the University of Hertfordshire Students' Union Advice and Support Centre. It is important that the University is notified about a pregnancy if there are elements of the programme that may present a risk to the health and safety of the student and/or the child;
  - b if the student is on placement at the time of pregnancy or is due to start a placement during the pregnancy, the student should also inform the placement provider of the pregnancy;
  - c students and applicants with a partner who is pregnant, has had a termination, has experienced miscarriage, still birth, or neonatal death, or is adopting or fostering a child, are also advised to notify a trusted member of staff as early as possible. This will enable the University to provide support to the student or applicant;

- d if a student or applicant decides not to notify the University about their pregnancy it will not be possible to put special arrangements in place for health-related absences, examinations, leave of absence, risk assessments, reasonable adjustments, return to study or reasonable adjustments for placements;
- e students or applicants who become pregnant, have given birth within the last year, have had a termination or experienced miscarriage, still-birth, neonatal death within the last year, become a parent through surrogacy, or are fostering or adopting a child and are also in the United Kingdom on a Student Visa must take UKVI regulations into consideration. Students should contact the Student Immigration Advisors for advice about visa regulations at their earliest convenience.

## **3.2 Academic Staff**

### **3.2.1 Academic staff are responsible for:**

undertaking a Pregnancy Support Plan and risk assessment, where necessary, to agree to specific support arrangements for students and applicants who are or become pregnant. This will normally be carried out by the student's Personal Tutor or the Programme Leader of the student or applicant. In some circumstances (such as an applicant who has not yet been assigned a Personal tutor, or where another member of staff has more in-depth knowledge of relevant parts of the programme), this may be carried out by another relevant member of academic staff, or, where required, a member of support services. Support is available from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion office and the Office of the Dean of Students as required.

## **3.3 Professional Staff**

### **3.3.1 Staff including the Dean of Students Office and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office, are responsible for:**

- a liaising with relevant academic staff, where a student or applicant has disclosed their circumstances to a professional member of staff (this also applies to admissions staff). In usual circumstances, Pregnancy Support Plans will be led by academic staff who have detailed knowledge of the programme of study to inform arrangements. However, where the student or applicant specifically requests it, or where a student or applicant has complex support needs, the Pregnancy Support Plan would be written jointly by professional member of staff and an academic member of staff;
- b providing advice and support to academic staff in relation to this policy;
- c providing advice and support to students and applicants in relation to this policy.

## 4 Policy and procedure

The University will support any student or applicant who is pregnant, has given birth within the last year, has had a termination, has experienced miscarriage, still-birth or neonatal death, is adopting or fostering a child, or who has a partner who is pregnant, has given birth within the last year, has had a termination, has experienced miscarriage, still-birth or neo-natal death, or is adopting or fostering a child. Support will be tailored to the individual needs of the student or applicant.

### 4.1 Pregnancy

4.1.1 Where a student or applicant has disclosed that they are pregnant, the following steps should be undertaken:

- a a Support Plan should be undertaken in order to put in place support arrangements for the period of pregnancy, such as support for missed teaching due to attending medical appointments, or health related absences. The Support Plan can be found here;
- b a Risk Assessment should be undertaken, where necessary, to identify any risk to the student or applicant, and to the unborn child, so that academic staff can modify any activities relating to the student or applicant and to set out reasonable adjustments required to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the student or applicant and the unborn child;
- c a discussion should be held with the student or applicant with relation to their plans for leave and/or study following the birth of a child. An initial plan for this may be developed in line with the section on Family Leave. However, the student or applicant can and may wish to change their plans following the birth of a child. The University should respond flexibly in this situation where possible;
- d students' or applicants who are not giving birth but fall within the remit of this policy may require periods of leave or flexibility in advance of the birth, fostering or adoption of a child. The University should respond positively to requests of this nature. A Support Plan should be undertaken to ensure support arrangements are in place during the relevant period. For example, this may cover time off to attend medical appointments, legal hearings or time to make arrangements to welcome a child into the home. Guidance and the Support Plan can be found here;
- e Where students do not disclose pregnancies, staff should not make assumptions that they are, and should not ask if a student is pregnant. Where a student has disclosed pregnancy but declines a Pregnancy Support Plan under this policy, concerns about the students fitness to study should be managed under the [Student Fitness to Practice Policy](#) or the [Support to Study Policy](#).

## 4.2 Family Leave (Including Maternity and Paternity leave)

- 4.2.1 The University recommends, in line with guidance set out by AdvancedHE on [‘Student Pregnancy and Maternity’](#), that all students take a minimum of two weeks leave after giving birth, subject to medical advice. In addition to this provision, family leave is available to all students who: have given birth (or had a child through surrogacy), fostered or adopted a child; are the co-parent of a child born (including through surrogacy), fostered or adopted a child or; have a partner who has given birth (or had a child through surrogacy), fostered or adopted a child.
- 4.2.2 Home students may choose to take a period of family leave following the birth, fostering or adoption of a child. Students will not be required to suspend their studies for a period of leave for two weeks, and longer periods of absence without requirement for the suspension of studies may be agreed on an individual basis between the student and their Personal Tutor or Programme Lead where this is practical in line with their Programme of Study. International Students must seek advice from the Student Immigration Team ([SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk](mailto:SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk)) when considering a longer period of absence without suspension of their studies as to comply with UKVI regulations.
- 4.2.3 Students can suspend their studies if they choose to. Approval will be given for the suspension of a student’s studies for up to one academic year. Requests for suspended studies of more than 12 months will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Dean of School. Students must consider the affects long periods of suspension may have such as tuition fee payments and access to University services such as access to Student Wellbeing Services. More information can be found [here](#).
- 4.2.4 Where students do not wish to take a longer period of suspension, the University will seek to show flexibility in accommodating the student’s needs. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and set out in the Support Plan, considering both the needs of the student and the programme of study. This may involve choosing to spread modules over a longer period. Students will need to submit a claim of Exceptional Circumstances in relation to deferred assessments.
- 4.2.5 Students that return from a period of Family Leave will be offered a meeting with their Personal Tutor or their Programme Lead to support their return to study.
- 4.2.6 Students are advised to seek advice from the Student Funding and Financial Support team ([funding@herts.ac.uk](mailto:funding@herts.ac.uk)) on the financial implications of suspending their studies.
- 4.2.7 Students studying on a Student Visa should be advised to seek advice about pregnancy and maternity and the implications it could have on their visa by speaking with the Student Immigration Advice team [SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk](mailto:SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk).

### **4.3 Miscarriage, Still Births and Neo-natal Death**

- 4.3.1 The University will support any students who experiences miscarriage, still birth or neo-natal death. Support is available through [Student Wellbeing Services](#) whereby students can access mental health support and/or counselling. The [Chaplaincy](#) also offers space and support for prayer and reflection or a listening ear.
- 4.3.2 Where requested, students may take leave from the University. Leave will be granted in line with the provisions for Family Leave. Students will not be required to suspend their studies for a period of leave for two weeks, and longer periods of absence without requirement for the suspension of studies may be agreed on an individual basis between the student and their Personal Tutor or Programme Lead where this is practical in line with their Programme of Study. International Students must seek advice from the Student Immigration Team ([SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk](mailto:SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk)) when considering a longer period of absence without suspension of their studies as to comply with UKVI regulations.
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- 4.3.4 Where students do not wish to take a longer period of suspension, the University will seek to show flexibility in accommodating the student's needs. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and set out in the Support Plan, considering both the needs of the student and the programme of study. This may involve choosing to spread modules over a longer period. Students will need to submit a claim of Exceptional Circumstances in relation to deferred assessments.
- 4.3.5 Students that return from a period of Family Leave will be offered a meeting with their Personal Tutor or their Programme Lead to support their return to study.
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- 4.3.7 Students studying on a Student Visa should be advised to seek advice about pregnancy and maternity and the implications it could have on their visa by speaking with the Student Immigration Advice team [SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk](mailto:SITAdvice@herts.ac.uk).

## **5 International and Overseas Students**

- 5.1 If a student is studying on a Student visa and is pregnant, they must seek advice from the [Student Immigration team](#) as soon as possible in relation to their pregnancy and the possible implications this may have on their student visa particularly if a break in studies is needed, as this could impact the University's ability to continue to sponsor the students visa.

- 5.2 Students studying at the University whilst on a visa, are required to be in full time attendance, on campus and therefore attendance is monitored. Any non-attendance will result in a student's being withdrawn from their studies or their visa sponsorship being stopped.
- 5.3 If a student is pregnant whilst on a visa, they have two options:
- a deferral of studies: This will result in the withdrawal of student visa sponsorship and the Home Office cancelling your visa. Once international students have deferred their studies, they must make plans to leave the UK. If a student wishes to return to the University, they must apply for a new visa from overseas as their current visa would be invalid; or
  - b requesting a short period of absence from studies: Students can, in some cases, request a short period of absence from their studies. Any period of absence, regardless of the reason, must not affect a student's ability to complete their studies by their visa end date. If a student takes unauthorised absence which affects their ability to complete their studies on time, their visa sponsorship will be stopped, and they will need to leave the UK. Short periods of absence can be requested [here](#).

## 6 Student Accommodation

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Any student who provides medical evidence of pregnancy will be released from their accommodation contract, subject to the usual conditions. This is in line with points 11.5 and 11.6 in the Halls of Residence License agreement.
- 6.3 It is essential that you inform the [Residence Life](#) team 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.

## 7 Returning to Study

- 7.1 The student should notify their School when they are prepared to resume their studies and collaborate with their Programme Leader or the staff member who completed their Pregnancy Support Plan to establish a suitable timetable for reintegration into the program. This includes considering the examination schedule. It is recommended that the student informs the School of their return date as early as possible.



- 7.2 In the event of a change in circumstances, the student should contact their Programme Lead or the staff member who completed their Pregnancy Support Plan. This includes situations such as:
- 7.2.1 Changes that affect the student's ability to attend or study.
  - 7.2.2 Going beyond the expected due date and wishing to continue attending the University. In such cases, additional medical evidence confirming the student's ability to attend may be required.
  - 7.2.3 Making decisions that impact the planned return to study.
- 7.3 If the student requires additional support due to a stillbirth or neonatal death, (they may choose to directly schedule an appointment with the Student Wellbeing Team at [studentwellbeing@herts.ac.uk](mailto:studentwellbeing@herts.ac.uk)) they must inform the School so they are aware of the student's circumstances. If the student encounters any attendance difficulties related to maternity, paternity, or adoption, it is advised to discuss these promptly with the Programme Leader.

## 8 Breastfeeding and Resting Facilities

- 8.1 Across both of our campuses, we provide students who are breastfeeding or need to express access to private and hygienic facilities. We also have First Aid Rooms which may be used, all of which contain fridges. Locations can be found through the [Herts Mobile app](#).
- **College Lane Campus** has the following First Aid Rooms: LRC - room J150, The Forum – room B525, Art and Design Building – room AA196, Science Building – room J014.
  - **De Havilland Campus** has the following First Aid Rooms: de Havilland Main Reception, MacLaurin 1st Floor – room Z120, Hertfordshire Sports Village.

## 9 Complaints

- 9.1 Students and applicants who are not satisfied with their treatment under this policy may complain using the [Student and Applicants Complaints](#) Procedure.
- 9.2 For registered students, complaints should be raised in the first instance, with their Personal Tutor or Programme Leader. For Applicants, complaints should be raised with their Admissions Tutor.

## 10 Related Policies

- 10.1 Safeguarding Policy – UPR HS10 version 01.0  
Security and Public Access – UPR HS05 version 08.1

## 11 Additional support available

- 11.1 This policy has been drawn up in line with the Equality Act 2010 and guidance set out by AdvancedHE on '[Student Pregnancy and Maternity](#)' and by reviewing similar policies at other Higher Education Institutions. For further support please contact us:

### For students

Office for Dean of Students	<a href="mailto:deanofstudents@herts.ac.uk">deanofstudents@herts.ac.uk</a>
Student Wellbeing	<a href="mailto:studentwellbeing@herts.ac.uk">studentwellbeing@herts.ac.uk</a>
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team	<a href="mailto:edi@herts.ac.uk">edi@herts.ac.uk</a>
Dignity and Respect Advisors	
Herts Student Union	<a href="mailto:advice@hertssu.com">advice@hertssu.com</a>

### For staff

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team	<a href="mailto:edi@herts.ac.uk">edi@herts.ac.uk</a>
Office for Dean of Students	<a href="mailto:deanofstudents@herts.ac.uk">deanofstudents@herts.ac.uk</a>

Sharon Harrison-Barker  
Secretary and Registrar  
Signed: **1 December 2023**

### **Alternative format**

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at [governanceservices@herts.ac.uk](mailto:governanceservices@herts.ac.uk) or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.