



Student Maternity and Paternity Guidelines

January 2017

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**HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY
STUDENT MATERNITY and PATERNITY GUIDELINES**

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1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines have been produced to provide advice and guidance to students and staff; ensuring that students who become pregnant during their studies know where to seek advice and support and that staff are also aware of how to respond to the needs of pregnant students and students returning to study following a period of maternity leave. These guidelines also provide advice for requests for shared leave or paternity leave.

These guidelines have not been produced to be prescriptive and each situation will be different. The University is mindful of the need to be flexible in responding to the needs of individuals.

These guidelines have been produced in conjunction with current practice across the University, best practice from other HEIs and the Equality Challenge Unit publication "Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions". You can find a copy of that document at <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/student-pregnancy-and-maternity/>

2. UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

The University is committed to providing appropriate support to students who become pregnant, or students or parents who require time off following the birth or adoption of a child. The University is also committed ensuring a safe environment for pregnant students and students returning to study following a period of maternity or paternity leave. We take pride in our efforts to create a working, educational and social environment which is inclusive. We want to ensure that all of our students have an experience that enables them to reach their full potential, excelling in their studies and throughout their interactions across the University Community.

3. SCOPE OF GUIDELINES

Any student enrolled at Heriot-Watt University is covered by these guidelines. These guidelines replace the separate guidelines that were outlined in the Code of Practice for PGR students and are designed to cover both students who are pregnant and students who need to take time off following the birth or adoption of a child.

4. ENROLLED STUDENTS

4.1 *What do you do if you think you may be pregnant?*

We want to make sure we give you the best possible advice and support so please let us know about your pregnancy as soon as possible. Whatever campus you are studying on, you can speak to your Personal Tutor, Student

Advisor or the HWUSA Advice Hub at Edinburgh Campus or to a Student Advisor at Dubai, Scottish Borders or Malaysia Campuses. Your Medical Doctor or G.P. will be able to provide confidential help and advice.

There may be a range of issues that you would like to discuss to ensure that informed decisions are made. You can contact any of the support services available and you may also wish to seek advice and information external to the University.

If your pregnancy continues the advice and information in these guidelines should help you and the University to respond to your needs. Should your pregnancy not progress it may be appropriate for consideration to be given to a temporary suspension of studies. Please seek advice and support from the service listed below.

4.2 *Where can you find support?*

The University has a range of Support and Advice Services at our Campuses. See the contact details below or look at www.hw.ac.uk/students.

The Heriot-Watt Student Association also provides advice and information via The Advice Hub. Information can be found at www.hwunion.com.

4.3 *What break in study can the University offer?*

If you are pregnant, your Medical Doctor or GP will make sure that you receive appropriate ante-natal care. Once you have notified the University we will begin to make the best possible plans to support you undertaking your course of study. You should provide medical documentary evidence of your pregnancy. The most important task is ensuring your safety and the safety of your child; the earlier we are aware of your pregnancy the sooner we are able to make appropriate arrangements and carry out a risk assessment.

It is recommended that a support plan be established between you and the University. To do this, you should contact a Student Advisor who will organise a meeting with you and consult with the relevant Medical Practitioner, relevant academic staff and the Director of Student Wellbeing if necessary. The focus of this meeting will be to discuss the impact of your pregnancy on your course of study.

If you are becoming a parent either through adoption or because your partner is expecting a child your needs will also be considered at a meeting with a relevant staff member. The focus of this meeting will be to discuss the impact of any period of leave on your course of study.

The University has existing processes that enable students to make amendments to their enrolment at the University which can be found [here](#).

Your enrolment status will be considered at the meeting.

Your personal circumstances and the structure and content of your course will help to determine how long a break in study you may require. We will agree a suitable return-to-study date, based on your circumstances and the recommendations of your medical practitioner.

Employment related entitlement to maternity leave does not extend to students, unless a student is also an employee. Students who are also employees should consult the University Maternity Policy for staff.

Students who are not employees should be allowed to take maternity-related absence following the birth of their child. In line with ECU guidance the University recommends that, at a minimum, students are required to take two weeks compulsory maternity-related absence immediately following an uncomplicated birth, or four weeks if they are on placement in a factory or up to 6 weeks for a more complicated birth e.g. Caesarean Section.

4.4 *What about finance and accommodation issues?*

If you have any concerns about your financial circumstances and/or your living accommodation speak to a Student Advisor who will be able to support and advise you regarding your options.

Studentships and postgraduate studies should not normally be held in abeyance for 12 months.

All students in receipt of a studentship/Sponsorship from an external funding body (e.g. Research Councils, Charities and Government/Embassies) should refer to the terms and conditions of their funding for details of what periods of leave and funding support you may be entitled to.

When you return you may be entitled to help with child care costs. Please see check [here](#) for further details.

4.5 *I'm studying on a student visa , are there any issues I should be aware of?*

If you are an international student studying on a Tier 4 or another visa there will be implications for you continuing your studies as the University must ensure it complies with UK or other relevant visa sponsor duties. It is therefore imperative that you get advice in relation to your specific circumstances as soon as possible as this will affect any support plan the University can put in place.

Scottish Campuses – Global Student Office

- +44 (0)131 451 3028

- isao@hw.ac.uk

Malaysia - International Student Advisors Office

- +603 8881 0918
- hwumisso@hw.ac.uk

Dubai Student Services

- dubaistudentservices@hw.ac.uk

More information can be found [here](#)

4.6. What about adoption leave?

If you have been matched with a child for adoption, either jointly or individually, you are entitled to take adoption leave. If you have a child placed with you under a local authority "fostering for adoption" or "concurrent planning" arrangement, or are entering into a surrogacy arrangement under which you will be applying for a parental order, you may also be entitled to adoption.

Please note that you will not qualify for adoption leave if you:

- arrange a private adoption
- become a special guardian
- adopt a stepchild

If you are adopting a child from overseas then different rules apply. If this is the case, then you should discuss this with a Student Advisor.

4.7 My partner is pregnant. Can I take paternity leave?

Who is eligible?

If you are the biological father of the child or the Mother's Partner, you will be entitled to take leave. A partner is someone who lives with the mother of the baby in an enduring family relationship but is not an immediate relative. This also includes a same sex partner.

To qualify for leave, you must have, or expect to have, responsibility for the upbringing of the child and be making the request to help care for the child or to support the other parent who may be returning to work.

What time off can I expect?

Usually a single block of one or two weeks within eight weeks of the birth or adoption of the child. Paternity leave cannot commence prior to the birth.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students should note the requirements of the Attendance Policy and should seek approval from their Academic mentor.

For PGR students this will be additional leave to the normal annual leave entitlement and should be approved by your supervisor and reported to the relevant Research Administrator. If you need to take leave of more than 4 weeks you must notify your supervisor and are likely to be required to take a Temporary Suspension of Studies.

You will need to provide medical documentary evidence of your partner's pregnancy or a copy of your child's birth certificate.

For students in receipt of a studentship award receiving a maintenance stipend, paid through a studentship awarded by the University, this extended period of paternity leave will be unpaid and your studentship will be held in abeyance during this period. Studentships and postgraduate studies should not normally be held in abeyance for more than 12 months.

All students in receipt of a studentship/Sponsorship from an external funding body (e.g. Research Councils, Wellcome Trust, Charities and Government/Embassies) should refer to the terms and conditions of their funding for details of what periods of leave and funding support you may be entitled to.

4.8 What support is there for me when I return for maternity or paternity leave?

Returning from a prolonged break can be difficult. You can seek advice from your Academic Mentor or contact Student Services for support on personal, emotional and practical matters. If you are breastfeeding when you return the University can make arrangements for you a quiet private space with facilities such as sterilizer, microwave and fridge. Please contact Student Services to get more details for the relevant campus.

5. STAFF

5.1 *What to do if a student discloses to you they are pregnant?*

When a student discloses pregnancy it is important to take steps not only to make necessary arrangements to ensure the safety of both the student and the child but to establish an open and supportive dialogue. The student may wish the information to be kept confidential but in order to ensure that any potential risks are addressed, the Head of School should be informed and arrangements made for a risk assessment to be undertaken. In addition, Support staff should be contacted to arrange a meeting. For Scottish Campuses the Student Transition and Wellbeing Advisor should be contacted for advice. For Dubai Campus contact the Student Advisor. For Malaysia Campus contact the Assistant Manager (Counselling and Support).

5.2 *What can the School do to support pregnant students or students who need*

time off due to the birth or adoption of a child?

Pregnancy and maternity are a protected characteristic under the Equality Act and therefore the University and its Schools are legally obliged to consider the particular needs of students who are pregnant or affected by pregnancy and take steps to support the student. There may be differing circumstances for students undertaking UG, PGT and PGR studies and it may be that support arrangements for students need to take into account the differing requirements of these courses.

Establishing an open dialogue with the student and putting together a support plan through a meeting or case conference will assist in ensuring that both the needs of the student and the course/study requirements are met and that the University fulfills its legal obligations.

5.3 *What is a 'risk assessment'?*

A risk assessment is required to ensure that any pregnant student is continuing their studies in a safe environment for both her and the unborn child. A risk assessment should be carried out by the School with support from the University's Health and Safety service. The results of the risk assessment will enable alternations to be made to a pregnant student's course of study where necessary.

School/Institutes should remember that the risk assessment process should also take into account any placement, residential or off-site related activities to ensure that the student is in a safe environment. For further information contact healthandsafety@hw.ac.uk.

Any adjustments required should be highlighted within the recommended support plan.

5.4 *Are there any issues we need to think about for students studying on student visas?*

If an international student becomes pregnant during their studies, and is studying on a student visa it is essential that the student is directed for advice about their individual circumstances. Please refer them to the relevant contact for their campus.

Scottish Campuses - Global Student Office

- +44 (0)131 451 3028
- isao@hw.ac.uk

Malaysia - International Student Advisors Office

- +603 8881 0918
- hwumisso@hw.ac.uk

Dubai Student Services

- dubaistudentservices@hw.ac.uk

More information can be found [here](#).

5.5 *What do we need to do to support a returning student?*

The date of return to studies and any on-going support needs following return will be considered at the case conference and reviewed with the student. Other sources of support can be signposted and students should be provided with any other relevant information e.g. facilities for breastfeeding and rest.

6. SOURCES OF ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Students Website:

www.hw.ac.uk/students

Equality and Diversity Advisor

Sharan Virdee
0131 451 3980
S.Virdee@hw.ac.uk

Scottish Campuses

Emma Smail
Student Transition and Wellbeing Advisor
E.Smail@hw.ac.uk

Malaysia Campus

Ming Fai Yap (Assistant Manager, Counselling and Support)
m.yap@hw.ac.uk

Dubai Campus

Student Advisor
Student.advisor@hw.ac.uk

Annexe A: Sample support form

This form aims to guide discussions with students during pregnancy and maternity. It should be completed and agreed with the student. It is not intended that the form should be completed at a first meeting as initially a student will be unable – and should not be expected – to respond to all the issues raised.

The form should be reviewed at key stages (eg 16 weeks pregnant, 24 weeks pregnant, and prior to return to study); or at key points of the academic year (e.g. prior to examinations and field trips). If the student’s circumstances change, the plan will also need to be reviewed.

| Contact details | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Student’s details |
| | Name |
| | Address |
| | Telephone |
| | Email address |
| | Student number |
| 2 | Emergency contact’s details |
| | Relationship to student |
| | Telephone |
| 3 | Course details |
| | Course title |
| | Department |
| | Departmental contact |
| | Year of course |
| 4 | Details of the student’s first point of contact within the HEI |
| | Name |
| | Title |
| | Location |

| | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| | Telephone | |
| | Email | |
| Key dates (to be reviewed and added to over the course of pregnancy and maternity) | | |
| 5 | What is the student's due date? | |
| 6 | How many weeks pregnant was the student when she notified HEI of pregnancy? | |
| Communication with the student | | |
| 7 | What is the student's preferred method of communication: | |
| | during pregnancy? | |
| | during maternity-related absence? | |
| | on return to study? | |
| Informing other staff and students | | |
| 8 | Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed? | |
| | Name and title | Date |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Health and safety assessment (attach copy to this form) | | |
| 9 | Has an assessment been conducted that covers (where relevant): | |
| | the student's course? | |
| | course placements or study abroad? | |
| | examinations or other assessments? | |
| | field trips? | |
| | return from maternity-related absence? | |
| | breastfeeding? | |

| | | |
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| | safety of baby if attending seminars and lectures with a parent? | |
| 10 | Where changes are required to alleviate or minimise risks, who is responsible for ensuring they are implemented? | |
| Rest facilities | | |
| 11 | Has the student been informed about rest facilities on campus for use by pregnant students? | |
| Pregnancy-related absence | | |
| 12 | Will the dates or times of antenatal appointments affect the student's study? | |
| 13 | Have you discussed any pregnancy-related illness that has affected the student's ability to undertake their course? | |
| 14 | If yes to either of the above questions, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to catch up? | |
| Assessments | | |
| 15 | Is the student unable to complete any assessments due to her pregnancy or maternity? | |
| 16 | If so, provide details: | |
| 17 | What alternative arrangements have been made for any outstanding or incomplete assessments? | |
| Maternity-related absence (students should provide information in writing at least 15 weeks before their due date) | | |
| 18 | How much maternity-related absence does the student intend to take? | |
| 19 | When does the student intend to start maternity-related absence? | |
| 20 | When does the student intend to return from maternity-related absence? | |
| 21 | Will the dates of maternity-related absence affect the student's ability to complete any course module | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | requirements? | |
| 22 | If so, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module? | |
| 23 | What information will the student require during maternity-related absence to keep up to date on course developments? | |
| 24 | Who will be responsible for providing the information to the student? | |
| Financial support | | |
| 25 | Has the student been informed about sources of financial support or been referred to an external organisation that can do so? | |
| 26 | Is the (UK) student aware of how any benefits they receive will affect their student support entitlements, and vice versa? | |
| 27 | Specify any follow-up required: | |
| Baby feeding | | |
| 28 | Does the student intend to feed their baby on university facilities on their return to study? | |
| 29 | Does the student intend to breastfeed? If so, see health and safety section above. | |
| 30 | Has the student been informed about the facilities available? | |
| Childcare | | |
| 31 | Has the student been informed about childcare facilities on campus or in the local community? | |
| 32 | Is the (UK) student aware that their mode of study will affect their childcare funding entitlements? | |
| International students/those on placement abroad | | |
| 33 | Have international students or students on placement abroad been informed about: | |
| | possible airline restrictions? | |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| | the need to check Tier 4 Student or other visa implications for maternity | |
| Students on placement | | |
| 34 | Has the placement provider been notified of the student's pregnancy? | |
| 35 | Has the placement provider conducted a health and safety assessment? | |
| 36 | Is the placement provider aware of the HEI's policy on supporting students during pregnancy and maternity? | |
| 37 | Will the student be able to complete her placement? | |
| 38 | If not, what alternative arrangements will be made? | |
| 39 | Who is responsible for liaising with the placement provider? | |
| Extenuating circumstances | | |
| 40 | Have students been informed about the HEI's extenuating circumstances policy in the event that their pregnancy or maternity affects examinations and assessments? | |
| Accommodation | | |
| 41 | Does the student intend to move to alternative accommodation? | |
| 42 | Has the student received advice on alternative accommodation and terminating existing accommodation contracts? | |
| 43 | At what point does the student want to move to alternative accommodation? | |
| 44 | Will the student require university accommodation? | |
| Return to study | | |
| 45 | What support will be provided to the student on their return to study? (eg meetings with key staff, put in contact with other student parents, etc) | |

Further information

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 46 | Any other information or comments | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|--|

Signatures

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Plan to be reviewed on | |
|------------------------|--|

Agreed by staff member

| | |
|------|--|
| Name | |
|------|--|

| | |
|-------|--|
| Title | |
|-------|--|

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Signature | |
|-----------|--|

| | |
|------|--|
| Date | |
|------|--|

Agreed by student

| | |
|------|--|
| Name | |
|------|--|

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Signature | |
|-----------|--|

| | |
|------|--|
| Date | |
|------|--|