

# **Aberystwyth University - Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policy**

## **Introduction**

Aberystwyth University believes that being or becoming pregnant, terminating a pregnancy or having a very young child (including through adoption) should not, in itself, be a barrier to a student starting, succeeding in, or completing a programme of study at the University. The University is committed to being as flexible as possible, whilst, at the same time, making sure that any accommodations made for the student do not compromise academic standards. The special arrangements which can and should be made for a student in these circumstances will vary from Department to Department, however, the general approach to be taken in these circumstances should be consistent across the University.

Pregnancy and maternity have been protected characteristics since the introduction of the Equality Act, 2010. Since then, a student who is pregnant, or has given birth within the last 26 weeks, is explicitly protected from less favourable treatment. Additionally, a student who is breastfeeding is now explicitly protected from less favourable treatment in the areas of education and provision of services.

The University is committed to ensuring that all students and applicants are treated fairly. The University is respectful of the diversity of its student community, and responsibilities relating to pregnancy and familial relationships may manifest in a number of different ways. This policy seeks to be fully inclusive of any family relationships that students may have, and to ensure that all students affected by the birth of a child, the introduction of a child into their family, or the loss of child, have access to the same level of support and flexibility.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to all registered Aberystwyth University students and to applicants who will require support under the provisions of this policy at the time of joining the University.

To ensure that this policy is fully inclusive, the provisions within it apply to students who fall into the following categories:

1. Students and applicants who are pregnant, have given birth within the last 26 weeks, have had a termination or experienced miscarriage, still-birth, or neonatal death within the last year, become a parent through surrogacy, or are fostering or adopting a child (or applicants who will fall within this definition at the point of joining the University).

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.
3. Students and applicants who have a partner who is pregnant, has given birth within the last 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.

The personal circumstances of students or applicants who fall within the remit of this policy should be treated with confidentiality. Students and applicants should feel assured that personal information will not be shared without their consent and that, where consent is given, sharing will be for the purposes of ensuring their safety and supporting them. All data will be managed in accordance with the University's Data Protection arrangements.

Staff pregnancy, maternity, paternity, and parental leave is excluded from this policy. Policies relating to staff are available from the [Human Resources Department](#) . However, where a member of staff is also a student at the University, this policy will apply to any support provided to the individual in relation to their studies.

## **Summary of Key Responsibilities:**

### **The University will ensure that:**

- The policy is widely publicised and available to staff and students
- Any student who becomes pregnant before or during a period of study at the University is accommodated as far as practicable to allow them to complete their programme of study, providing academic standards are upheld
- Relevant staff are made aware of the terms of this policy and their responsibilities arising under it
- Support and guidance are available for staff undertaking risk assessments on elements of the programme of study that are likely to result in a risk to the health and safety of the student or unborn child
- Staff in the Student Accessibility team are available to discuss with staff the best way to support the continuing study of a pregnant student to ensure they are able to complete their programme of study
- Appropriate support is available to students through various support services
- The policy is kept under review and updated as necessary

## **Academic Departments will ensure that:**

- The policy is widely publicised and available to staff and students
- Students are made aware of the policy and encouraged to disclose a pregnancy in confidence at an early stage, particularly where elements of their programme of study might result in a risk to the health and safety of the student or unborn child
- Staff are aware of the policy so that they can respond appropriately when a student discloses their pregnancy and seeks support to continue their programme of study
- Following a student sharing that they are pregnant contact should be made as soon as is reasonably possible with Student Services to enable a risk assessment and support plan to be produced. This is necessary to ensure that there are no elements of the programme of study that present a risk to the health and safety of the student or the unborn child. Where there are obvious concerns about health and safety the Department reserves the right to suspend particular activities until a risk assessment and support plan is undertaken.
- Wherever practicable, accommodation is made to ensure that a pregnant student, or student with a very young child, is able to complete their programme of study
- If requested, an appropriate member of staff is identified with whom a pregnant student can discuss their support needs. In most cases this may be a female member of staff
- The student is given information on other sources of advice/support (particularly immigration advice for international students, available from the International Student Adviser in Student Services).
- A Pregnancy Risk Assessment is undertaken and specific support arrangements are agreed for students and applicants who are pregnant. This will normally be carried out by the Personal Tutor, or Research Supervisor of the student or applicant, in conjunction with a member of staff from Student Services and the student themselves. However, 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 aspects of the programme), this may be carried out by another relevant member of academic staff in conjunction with a member of Student Services. Support will be available from the Health, Safety and Environment Team as required.
- A Student Support Plan is agreed for students and applicants, providing flexibility to the individual situation. This will normally be carried out by a member of Student Services, and the Personal Tutor, or Research Supervisor, of the student or applicant. There may be 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 aspects of the programme), where the input and support from the Academic Department comes from another relevant member of academic staff.

### **Student Services will ensure that:**

- Coordinate, in partnership with the Academic Department, a Support meeting, ensuring that a risk assessment and student support plan is completed in partnership with the student.
- Liaison with relevant academic staff occurs, where a student or applicant has disclosed their circumstances to a member of Student Services staff (this also applies to admissions/outreach staff). In usual circumstances, Pregnancy Risk Assessments and support arrangements will be Coordinated by Student Services in partnership with a relevant member of the Academic Department who has 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 Risk Assessment and Student Support Plan may be undertaken by a relevant member of Student Services.
- Advice and support is provided to academic staff in relation to the operation of this policy.
- Advice and support is provided to students and applicants in relation to the operation of this policy.

### **Students and applicants will ensure that:**

- They disclose their circumstances to a trusted member of staff (this may be their Personal Tutor, Research Supervisor, a member of Student Services staff, or a member of admissions or outreach staff), to enable discussion of support arrangements and adjustments. Where a student is pregnant (or where an applicant will be pregnant at the point of joining the University), early disclosure is encouraged so that a Pregnancy Risk Assessment and Student Support plan is undertaken to ensure that the student's studies do not pose risk to them or their unborn child. In particular, it is important that the University is notified about a pregnancy as early as possible if there are elements of the programme that may present a risk to the health and safety of the student and/or the child. This may be particularly relevant for students whose programmes include laboratory or practical work, including field work.
- If the student is on a placement at the time the pregnancy is confirmed or is due to start a placement during the pregnancy, the student should also inform the placement provider of the pregnancy. If a student is on an outbound exchange programme at the time the pregnancy is confirmed or is due to start an outbound exchange programme during the pregnancy, the student should also inform the outbound exchange institution. The outbound exchange institution/placement employer will be responsible for completing their own risk assessment and ensuring support in line with their own policies and procedures.

- 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, or who has 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 of their situation. This will enable the University to provide support to the student or applicant.
- Where a student or applicant chooses not to disclose circumstances, to the University, the University will be unable to undertake to put in place support arrangements including appropriate risk assessments, mitigations or to protect the rights associated with these protected characteristics. Seeking support under this policy is entirely voluntary for students. Where a student has not sought support, and there are concerns that pregnancy-related health issues are impacting on their Fitness to Study, this should be managed under the Fitness to Study Policy. Students should not be assumed to be pregnant unless they have informed the University that they are.

## **Does a student need to notify their Academic Department of their pregnancy?**

Please note that it is particularly important that a student informs their Academic Department or Student Services at an early stage of a pregnancy where there is a potential risk to the health and safety of the student and/or their child (see below). At this point Student Services will coordinate a meeting in which a risk assessment and student support plan can be agreed with the student as soon as possible to minimise any potential risk.

Students are not under any obligation to inform their Academic Department if they become pregnant, have a child, or decide to terminate a pregnancy whilst they are a student at Aberystwyth. However, it is important to note that a Department will not be able to undertake appropriate risk assessments, protect the rights associated with these protected characteristics, take a flexible approach to their studies and broader student experience, or provide specific support to the student, unless it knows about the situation.

If requested, the Academic Department will identify an appropriate member of staff to discuss such support needs, in most cases this may be a female member of staff.

Whilst deciding on whether to inform their Academic Department, students are encouraged to consider the following:

- There may be elements of a programme of study that could present a health and safety risk to a pregnant student and/or their child.

- If a student's pregnancy-related absence (for example, for antenatal appointments) impacts significantly on the student's studies, the Department will only be able to take proper account of the reasons for absence if they are notified of these. Significant absence may have an impact on successful completion of a course (e.g. if a certain number of days on placement is a requirement). A student's Academic Department will not be able to arrange appropriate risk assessments and a student support plan unless it is aware of their pregnancy.
- In some cases, a student's pregnancy-related absence from University might be something that needs to be discussed with other organisations. For example, if a postgraduate research student is in receipt of a University or Departmental Scholarship or funding from UKRI or other external body, they should refer to the terms and conditions relating to their award and discuss the situation with their doctoral training partnership or Centre for Doctoral Training. Maternity leave funding may be available from UKRI for their studentship holders. The student will generally be required to notify their research supervisor and in some cases a relevant Maternity Leave Request form will have to be completed, supported by a MATB1 certificate or doctor's letter. This could make it more important for the student to notify the Department of the situation.
- Sometimes, the absence of a student from University can adversely affect the work of other students they are working alongside (for example, on a group project or in a research team), which might make it more important to notify the Department, in order that plans can be made to deal with any such issues arising from the absence.

**Note for International Students:** If an international student requires a Tier 4 General Student visa to remain in the UK during their period of study, UK Visas and Immigration regulations must be taken into consideration. An international student wishing to suspend their studies for more than two months will need to leave the UK. Both the Academic Department and the student should seek advice from the International Student Adviser in Student Services as early as possible during the pregnancy. This will enable colleagues to ensure that any arrangements agreed with the student comply with UKVI requirements. Early discussions are also important because a late or unexpected decision to fly home could be affected by health considerations.

It is important to point out that, in the case of students with a potential exposure to hazardous radiation or chemicals, the greatest risk to the health of an embryo or fetus arises within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. Students in these circumstances are strongly advised to inform their Department of their pregnancy in order to allow a risk assessment and student support plan to be undertaken. Further guidance on such risks can be found in the annex to this policy.

In the case of pre-arranged antenatal appointments, the Academic Department would normally need to be notified of these in advance in order to take these into account.

## **What support is available to assist a student in deciding whether or not to continue with a pregnancy?**

Whilst only students themselves can make the decision as to whether or not to continue with their pregnancy, a range of services across the University and Students' Union can assist by providing confidential support and information about the options available, and, in some cases, other practical assistance.

These services include, for example:

- Aber SU Advice Service ([www.abersu.co.uk/advice/](http://www.abersu.co.uk/advice/))
- Advice and Money Service
- Student Wellbeing [www.aber.ac.uk/studentwellbeing](http://www.aber.ac.uk/studentwellbeing)

Students also have access to external organisations for information, advice or support. These include their GP, Brook Advisory Centres ([www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)), the Family Planning Association ([www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)).

## **What process should be followed for a student and their Department/Faculty to discuss the impact that the student's pregnancy or childcare responsibilities may have on their studies?**

This section outlines a series of steps for students and staff to follow in order to discuss and respond to the requirements of an individual student who is pregnant. This section should be read in conjunction with the key steps flowchart that accompanies this policy.

**Step 1:** Student are advised to consult their GP to discuss medical issues relating to their pregnancy prior to approaching their Academic Department. It is particularly important to take advice at an early stage if there is any possible health and safety risk.

Since the focus of process is on considering the implications of pregnancy on the student's programme of study and academic work, students are also reminded that they can, at any stage, contact other sources of advice and support (including Student Services, the Aber SU Advice Service, Aberystwyth Chaplaincy etc).

### **Step 2a: Taught Students**

Students have the right to request a meeting with their personal tutor or other trusted staff member.

The student and the relevant staff member should meet to discuss and agree a plan for their continuation of study. Whenever possible, the member of staff should contact the student within 5 working days of the request being received from the student and meet them as soon as possible thereafter. Where the agreed accommodations fall under special circumstances, the relevant form should be completed and submitted as normal.

At the meeting, it is important to undertake a risk assessment. In addition, careful consideration must be given to the variety of ways in which the student can be enabled to continue their studies during their pregnancy or after the birth which will inform the completion of a Student Support plan. For example, according to the requirements of the programme, these might include:

- Agreeing periods of absence and making arrangements for the student to catch-up on lectures/tutorials missed for pregnancy/birth related reasons to ensure that they are not at an academic disadvantage.
- Adjusting timescales/deadlines for assessed coursework to be submitted or examinations to be taken if the pregnancy or birth prevents the student from undertaking assessments at the scheduled times.
- Seeking approval, as appropriate, for alternative means of assessment for the student (for example, a written assessment instead of a physical performance) if the pregnancy or birth prevents the normal methods of assessment. Any adjustments would need to be conducive to the scheme learning outcomes / core competencies and requirements of PSRBs.
- Allowing the student first attempt re-sits at future examination periods, for example in a situation in which the pregnancy or birth prevents the student from taking an examination at the normal time for their programme of study.
- The student taking some time out from their studies which would involve the student making a Temporary Withdrawal application normally for a predetermined amount of time. The period of temporary leave may be extended if the time required to complete the programme of study will still fall within the maximum time limit allowed for the programme either by the University (and/or, where applicable, professional bodies).

As well as covering the student's longer-term plans relating to their studies, the continuation of study plan should also:

- Accommodate the student's antenatal care.
- Include a break from attending University of at least two weeks after giving birth (or 4 weeks in the event of a work placement in a factory environment) for health reasons,
- Include provision for re-integrating the student to the programme of study on return from any prolonged absence.

The staff member overseeing the support arrangements should refer to the guidance below when considering what flexibility might be appropriate in any given situation.

### **Step 2b: Postgraduate Research Degree Students**

If a research degree student becomes pregnant, the appropriate individual to contact in the first instance will normally be their Research supervisor(s) within the Academic Department. The Research Supervisor(s) and other appropriate staff such as the departmental postgraduate coordinator will work together with the student to consider the impact of the pregnancy and any resulting suspension of study. Postgraduate students who are employed by the University and whose employment status qualifies them for the University's Maternity Leave regulations will be treated in accordance with these regulations.

The student is responsible for checking the implications of a suspension of study with their scholarship awarding body or provider at an early stage. For students funded by UKRI, there will normally be a partnership hub office that will need to be informed. Maternity leave payments may be available. The Graduate School and Student Administration Team in Academic Registry may also be able to advise.

**Step 3:** The staff member overseeing the support arrangements for the student (e.g. the personal tutor, research supervisor or other designated person) should ensure that appropriate steps are taken in relation to health and safety issues. In most cases, this will involve a risk assessment for the individual student. Advice can be sought from the Academic Department or the University Health, Safety and Environment Service.

For some students – for example, those participating in field trips, studying a laboratory-based subject, working with equipment which poses a danger to the health of a pregnant person or unborn child (e.g. equipment producing radiation) or taking a programme of study which involves high levels of physical activity – it will be even more important that the health and safety implications of pregnancy are given serious consideration. In these situations, staff should seek advice as soon as possible from the Academic Department and Health, Safety and Environment Manager and a full risk assessment should be completed.

If it is not practicable to alter the study conditions to respond to the risk(s) highlighted by this assessment, or if such an alteration would not avoid any identified risk(s), the student may need to take time out from their study to ensure the risks are avoided – although a concerted effort should be made by the Academic Department to manage the health and safety risks and find alternative ways of allowing a student to continue their course in any situation where a temporary withdrawal is not in line with their choices.

**Step 4:** A student who is considering suspending studies or changing the mode of study from full time to part-time should explore this at an early stage with their Department and the Student Finance team to identify any potential impact that the flexibility proposed may have in terms of payment of tuition fees and receipt of maintenance allowances. Please note that international students in the UK with a Tier 4 Student Visa are not permitted to change to part-time study and remain in the UK.

**Please note that, if the student is in receipt of a bursary or scholarship, they must also discuss the implications of any absence with the funding body.**

**Step 5:** The student and staff member should meet to discuss and agree a written plan for the student's continuation of study (detailing any specific flexibility agreed to allow the student to continue their studies) and a copy held by the student and the Academic Department. Where the agreed accommodations fall under special circumstances, the relevant form should be completed and submitted as normal.

Where a student is dissatisfied with the degree of flexibility offered, they may ask their Personal Tutor or Research Supervisor for information about the local complaints procedures or make a formal complaint, if appropriate – in line with the Student Complaints Procedure. Aber SU Advice Service is available to advise on submitting an appeal or complaint.

**Step 6:** The staff member overseeing the support arrangements should communicate the agreed continuation plan to the Personal Tutor/Research Supervisor and other relevant teaching staff and/or examination boards, as appropriate. Information should be passed on sensitively and in compliance with GDPR guidance.

**Step 7:** The student and their Personal Tutor/supervisor (or other chosen/designated staff member) should monitor the situation on an ongoing basis, particularly to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements that have been agreed to facilitate the student's continued study.

The student can request further meetings with their Personal Tutor or Research Supervisor if they are experiencing any difficulties with their academic work as a result of these arrangements.

## **Pregnancy**

The University seeks to 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 neonatal death, or is adopting or fostering a child. Support will be tailored to the individual needs of the student or applicant.

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

A **Pregnancy Risk Assessment** should be undertaken to identify any risk to the student or applicant, and the unborn child, to modify any procedures or activities relating to the student or applicant, and to set out any reasonable adjustments required to minimise the risks associated with the safety, health and wellbeing of student or applicant and unborn child.

[Guidance](#) and a template for the [Pregnancy Risk Assessment](#) are available for staff.

A **Student Support Plan** should be undertaken to put in place support arrangements for the period of pregnancy. The student support plan is the mechanism by which the student's academic needs are documented and monitored on a regular basis. This important function will usually be completed by the Personal Tutor or Research Supervisor in conjunction with Student Services staff. They will work with the student throughout their pregnancy to monitor and review the support agreed. The student support form records support and ensures the student's academic needs are met during the pregnancy. This is a living document which needs regular review and updating. The form and flow chart are available as an appendix to this document and will indicate review times. The support form contains reference to:

Communicating with the student Information for other staff and students.

Discussions should be undertaken with the student or applicant in relation to their plans for leave and / or study following the birth of the child. An initial plan for this may be developed, in line with the section below on family leave. However, the student or applicant may wish to change their plans following the birth of a child, and the University should respond flexibly in this situation.

Students who are not giving birth personally but fall under 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 will respond favourably to requests of this nature. A Student Support Plan should be undertaken to put in place support arrangements during the relevant period. For example, this may cover time off to attend medical appointments, legal hearings or proceedings, time to make arrangements to welcome a child into a home, or adjusted assessment deadlines. Guidance and a template for the Student Support Plan are available at Appendix B.

Where a student has not disclosed pregnancy, staff should not make assumptions that they are, and should not ask students if they are pregnant. Where a student has disclosed pregnancy but declines a Pregnancy Risk Assessment or support under this process, any concerns about the student's fitness to study should be managed under the Fitness to Study Policy.

## **Stillbirth, Neonatal death, Termination or Miscarriage**

The University seeks to support any student who experiences miscarriage, still birth, or neo-natal death. Where a student discloses that they have experienced miscarriage, still birth or neo-natal death, support is available from the University's Student Wellbeing Services [studentwellbeing@aber.ac.uk](mailto:studentwellbeing@aber.ac.uk) and [Chaplaincy Services](#).

We appreciate that unfortunately there will be times when pregnancy does not go as planned, that continuing a pregnancy is not an option or that the student may have had a miscarriage or where death may occur shortly after birth (neonatal death). We will consider the impact of these events on the student's ability to attend classes, meet coursework submission deadlines, sit examinations or undertake any other course requirements. This includes if their partner has been affected and is also a student at Aberystwyth University.

Where requested, a student may take leave from the University. Students will not be required to suspend their studies for a period of leave of two weeks, and longer periods of absence without requirement for suspension of studies may be agreed on an individual basis between a student and their Personal Tutor or Research Supervisor where this is practical. Advice must be sought from the International Student Adviser and UKVI Compliance Team [immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk](mailto:immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk) when considering a longer period of absence without suspension for a student studying on a Student Visa.

Students will be able to suspend their studies if they choose to. This will usually be for a period of up to one year, in line with the University's Temporary Withdrawal process. However, the University will consider any requests for a longer period of suspension carefully, on a case-by-case basis, and will show flexibility where a student makes such a request and where continuity of study without disadvantage can be assured and that it is consistent with external accreditation requirements.

Where a student does not wish to take a longer period of suspension, the University will seek to show flexibility in accommodating the student's preferred pattern of engagement. This will be considered on a case by case basis, and set out in a Student Support Plan, taking into account the needs of the student and the programme of study, and may include part-time study; supporting a period of remote learning; adjusted assessment deadlines; adjusting patterns of research; A student will not need to request extensions or submit a claim for Special Circumstances in relation to deferred assessments where such arrangements are set out in a

Student Support Plan. Guidance and a template for the Student Support Plan are available at Appendix B

On return from any period of leave, students should be offered a meeting with their Personal Tutor or Research Supervisor to support their return to study.

Students should be advised to seek advice on the financial implications of suspending their studies or extending their period of study from the University's Advice and Money Team [student-adviser@aber.ac.uk](mailto:student-adviser@aber.ac.uk) Students studying on a Student Visa should be advised to seek advice on any visa implications from the International Student Adviser and UKVI Compliance Team [immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk](mailto:immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk)

The Miscarriage Association can offer support (see [www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/)). SANDS publish a number of free booklets that can be accessed at [www.uk-sands.org/](http://www.uk-sands.org/)

## Termination of Pregnancy

A student may decide to terminate a pregnancy for many reasons, such as personal circumstances, because of risks to their health, or because there is a high probability that the baby will have a serious medical condition. Where a student discloses that they have had or are considering having a termination, or that their partner or co-parent, or a surrogate, is considering or has had a termination, support is available from the University's Counselling Service [studentwellbeing@aber.ac.uk](mailto:studentwellbeing@aber.ac.uk) and Chaplaincy Services [hello@Aberchaplains.uk](mailto:hello@Aberchaplains.uk)

Students may need to take time off from study for tests before, and to recover following a termination. Where a student discloses that they have had or are considering having a termination, or have been affected by one, a Student Support Plan should be drawn up to ensure that support and flexibility are provided in relation to time off from study, assessment deadlines etc. A student will not need to request extensions or submit a claim for Special Circumstances in relation to deferred assessments where such arrangements are set out in a Student Support Plan.

Every individual is different, and the impact of a termination will be felt differently by different individuals. Where requested, a student may take leave from the University to deal with the impact of a termination, whether they have had the termination personally, or where their partner or a co-parent or a surrogate has had a termination. Students will not be required to suspend their studies for a period of leave of two weeks, and longer periods of absence without requirement for suspension of studies may be agreed on an individual basis between a student and their Academic Department/Faculty where this is practical. Advice must be sought from the International Student Adviser and UKVI Compliance Team when considering a longer period of absence without suspension for a student studying on a Student Visa.

Students will be able to suspend their studies and take temporary withdrawal if they choose to. This will usually be for a period of up to one year, in line with the University's Policy on withdrawals. However, the University will consider any requests for a longer period of suspension carefully, on a case-by-case basis, and will show flexibility where a student makes such a request and where continuity of study without disadvantage can be assured.

Where a student does not wish to take a longer period of suspension, the University will seek to show flexibility in accommodating the student's preferred pattern of engagement. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and set out in a Student Support Plan, taking into account the academic needs of the student and the programme of study, and may include part-time study; supporting a period of online learning; adjusted assessment deadlines; adjusting patterns of research. A student will not need to request extensions or submit a claim for Special Circumstances in relation to deferred assessments where such arrangements are set out in a Student Support Plan. Guidance and a template for the Student Support Plan are available at Appendix B.

1. On return from any period of leave, students should be offered a meeting with a member of staff in their Academic Department/Faculty to support their return to study.
2. Students should be advised to seek advice on the financial implications of suspending their studies or extending their period of study from the Student Services Department ([student-adviser@aber.ac.uk](mailto:student-adviser@aber.ac.uk)). Students studying on a Student Visa should be advised to seek advice on any visa implications from the International Student Adviser ([immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk](mailto:immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk)).
3. The charity Antenatal Results and Choices (<http://www.arc-uk.org>) provides specific advice to students who are considering a termination for reasons relating to antenatal test results.

## **Absences due to Appointments**

Appointments due to antenatal care, adoption, fostering where possible should ideally be arranged so as not to clash with learning activities or employment requirements while on placement. Where this is not possible, students should seek appointments at times that will minimise impact.

Where a student is a parent or legal guardian, there may be times when they are required to take some time out to care for an ill child, breast feed, take maternity or paternity leave, take parental leave due to settling a child into the home after surrogate birth, adoption or whilst fostering etc. Any such circumstances should be discussed immediately with the Personal Tutor

or research supervisor to agree the best way forward and reduce the impact on the student's studies. Flexibility will be demonstrated where possible, however some professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements and or other course requirements may restrict how flexible the University can be.

## **Adoption and Fostering**

If you have been matched for adoption or fostering, please discuss with your Personal Tutor/Supervisor how this may impact on your attendance and study particularly if you require time off. Your Personal Tutor/Research Supervisor, or other member of staff from your Department/Faculty, and you can then draw up an action plan. If your partner is the primary adopter, you should discuss parental leave as outlined in the Parental Leave section.

## **Appointments, Antenatal Care and Pre-adoption/Fostering**

### **Appointments**

If you are pregnant or if you need to attend pre-adoption/fostering appointments, you are entitled to reasonable time off to attend appointments. Wherever possible, appointments should be arranged outside of teaching or at the start or the end of the placement working day. We appreciate that this may not always be possible.

If you are to become a Parent, you will be entitled to request time out of study. This is likely to include time off for medical/pre-adoption/fostering appointments as well as a period of parental leave. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this may be more limited in some awards than others. If this applies to you, then you should make an appointment with our [Advice and Money](#) Team staff to discuss this.

If your course is accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies e.g., Adult Nursing, you should discuss the implications of missed time in practice with your Course Leader/ Personal Tutor / Supervisor or designated member of staff e.g., placement coordinator in order to ensure this does not have a negative impact on your studies.

## **Assessments and Placements during Parental Leave**

You may wish to consider making an application for [extensions](#) or [special circumstances](#) if you:-

1. you choose to sit an examination while your partner is in labour or during your parental leave, or if you
2. are unable to sit an examination or submit coursework on time because of your own or partner's pregnancy, labour, neonatal death, miscarriage, stillbirth or if you
3. are unable to undertake as field trips or work placements, or complete laboratory work as a direct result of difficulties arising from pregnancy, you could consider making an application for extensions or special circumstances.

## Breastfeeding and Expressing Milk

If you are breast feeding you may wish to express milk so your child can access breast milk when you're not available. If you require somewhere to express your milk, please let your Personal Tutor / Research Supervisor know and arrangements will be discussed with you.

If you require time out of your course or placement to breastfeed or express milk, please discuss and draw up an agreed action plan with your Personal Tutor/Research Supervisor.

See Students on placement/Workplace Learning section for information about breast feeding and expressing milk at your placement/workplace.

## Course Assessments and Examinations during Pregnancy

In most cases, there will be no need for amendments in course assessments or examinations to be made due to pregnancy unless:

- Type of course assessment puts you and/or unborn child at risk
- There are pregnancy related complications, that mean you are unable to undertake course assessments and examinations
- The physical impact of late or multiple pregnancy (e.g., twins) would mean that you are put at a disadvantage in usual course assessments and examinations.

This may be particularly relevant for courses where there are practical elements to the assessments e.g., Sciences/Health courses. In these circumstances reasonable adjustments to course assessments and examinations should be considered as per [Reasonable Adjustments to Examinations Policy](#). We acknowledge this may not always be possible.

Taught and Research Master's, PGCE, PhD and Professional Doctorate students should liaise with their Course Leader/Supervisors regarding potential impact of pregnancy on their studies/research.

If you are unable to undertake course assessments or examinations due to difficulties arising as a result of pregnancy, you could consider making an application for extensions or special circumstances.

## Fertility Treatment

We recognise the challenges which may arise from undergoing fertility treatments.

If you are undergoing fertility treatment, you may need additional support due to:

- the impact of medical treatment
- other caring responsibilities
- related medical appointments.

If your partner is undergoing fertility treatment, then it may be possible for you to attend appointments with your partner.

If you require support, please make an appointment with our Advice and Money team.

## **Financial Support**

If you have caring responsibilities for children or dependent adults you may qualify for extra financial support from Student Finance or from other financial sponsors e.g., non-repayable grants.

Financial support available may be different depending on whether you are an Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate or Research Student, therefore we strongly advise you access funding and financial support and contact the Aber SU Advice Service.

## **Health and Safety Considerations**

If you're pregnant or have given birth within the previous six months, or you're breastfeeding, you can face specific risks to your health and that of your unborn child or baby. For most new, expectant or breastfeeding mothers, normal Health and Safety measures are adequate. When participating in a University activity, the level of risk you're exposed to will depend on:

- the requirements and nature of the event or activity
- your individual circumstances, as there are physiological and psychological changes during pregnancy that may make you more vulnerable.

Some of the more common hazards might be:

- lifting, handling, carrying heavy loads
- posture, travelling, mental and physical fatigue
- workstations, working at height, or working alone
- standing or sitting still for long periods of time
- exposure to biological agents, harmful or high-risk substances, or radioactive material
- exposure to shocks, vibrations, excessive noise, or extreme heat.

In particular:

- The highest risk of damage to an unborn baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy
- When breastfeeding, there is a risk of passing certain chemicals or biological agents to your baby via your milk.

It is important that you tell us about any advice you've received from a doctor or midwife (for example pregnancy-related medical conditions such as high blood pressure, a history of miscarriages) that could affect the risk assessment.

## **Students on Placement/Workplace Learning**

If you are pregnant prior to commencing placement or become pregnant whilst on placement you should discuss implications of pregnancy (in relation to [Health and Safety](#), course requirements, support needs etc.) with your Course Leader, Personal Tutor, Supervisor or other designated member of staff e.g., placement officer. If your partner is or you are undergoing fertility treatment, or going through the adoption process, you should also discuss the implications of this in terms of your placement, to ensure that a plan of action is agreed by all involved.

If you are in a workplace learning environment, (e.g., placement) then you should discuss arrangements for a Health and Safety risk assessment with your employer. If you are required to undertake a placement as part of your course, the Department should liaise with the placement provider to ensure a Health and Safety assessment is conducted by the organisation in which you will carry out your placement.

It is important that you discuss the implications of pregnancy, maternity and undertaking fertility treatment or adoption with your placement/ workplace supervisor/ research degree supervisor, in order to negotiate and agree adjustments to working practices. Dependent on the nature of your placement/ workplace there will be some adjustments that realistically cannot be put into place due to the nature of the work being carried out including adjustments related to breast feeding, expressing and storing milk e.g., biomedical labs. In addition, it may not always be possible for you to take time away from your placement/workplace for appointments e.g., working shifts as part of a health placement or you are an apprentice. This applies to all students who undertake placements or workplace learning, including students who are undertaking awards at partner organisations.

## **Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment**

We are committed to ensuring that anyone who studies at the University can do so without fear of discrimination. We want everyone to experience a culture of openness in which everyone is valued equally and respected.

We will not tolerate any individual being subjected to abuse, harassment or bullying particularly because of their personal characteristics – in this case Pregnancy and Maternity.

If you have been subjected to abuse, harassment or bullying for any reason, please tell us and the matter will be investigated. You can report any incidents of abuse, harassment or bullying through the University's Report & Support portal - <https://reportandsupport.aber.ac.uk/>

If you wish to make a complaint, please refer to the Complaints section.

## **Disputes and Complaints**

If a disagreement arises between a student or partner and academic or support staff on how this policy should be implemented in respect of their circumstances, the Academic Registrar may be asked to advise or make the final decision.

Students who are dissatisfied with the University's handling of this policy in respect of their circumstances may complain using the Student Complaints Procedures.

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the University's handling of this policy in respect of their circumstances may complain using the Regulations Governing Appeals and Complaints by Applicants against an aspect of their Admission Process. [caostaff@Aber.ac.uk](mailto:caostaff@Aber.ac.uk)

## **Monitoring and review**

The implementation of the policy will be reviewed after one year to ensure its effectiveness. Thereafter, the policy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis.

## **Related policies and standards/documentation**

1. Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
2. HR Policies
3. Health, Safety & Environment [Guidance](#) & [Forms](#)

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Pregnancy Support Flowchart

Appendix B: Student Support Plan Guidance and Template