

DRAFT Policy for Supporting New Student Parents

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the University's Policy on supporting new student parents, including student pregnancy, maternity, adoption and paternity (or secondary carer/partner) arrangements, and applies to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students across the University.
- 1.2 The Policy provides a brief outline of the relevant legislation and considerations and sets out the main principles which staff members must adhere to, while being accompanied by more detailed guidance contained within the *Procedures for Supporting New Student Parents*, which should be read in conjunction with this document.
- 1.3 The Policy aims to support new student parents to enable them to continue their studies whilst also becoming a parent.

2. Context

- 2.1 This Policy and the associated Procedures aim to support the guidelines set out in the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)'s document [Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions](#).
- 2.2 The Equality Act 2010 strengthened the legal protection that students are entitled to during pregnancy and maternity, with pregnancy and maternity now being a protected characteristic and discrimination on these grounds being prohibited. Consequently, this Policy is based on principles which must be adhered to by staff members dealing with students who are pregnant or parents of very young children.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This Policy covers any registered taught students (based either on or off campus, including distance learning and blended modes of study) who become pregnant during their studies; students who have given birth within the previous 26 weeks; registered taught students whose partner become pregnant; and any registered student becoming a parent through adoption of a child. (Please see section 4 for definitions). The Policy will be useful to staff members dealing with these students, including Student Support staff, Academic Advisors, and academic programme team staff. Staff members working closely with students should ensure that they are familiar with the content of this Policy and the associated Procedures.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions are used (based on those found within the University's [Shared Parental Leave Policy and Procedures](#)):

- **Parent:** one of two people who will share the main responsibility for the child's upbringing (and who may be the mother, the father, or the mother's partner if not the father).
- **Partner:** the parents' spouse, civil partner or someone living with them in an enduring family relationship, but not their sibling, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

5. Policy

5.1 The University's view is that becoming pregnant or adopting a child (or taking a period of maternity, adoption or parental leave) should not prevent a student from successfully completing their studies at the University.

5.2 The University is committed to providing support and flexibility to students who become pregnant or the primary adopter of a child or whose partners become pregnant or the primary adopter. The level of flexibility that can be offered may vary according to different programmes, level and mode of study, and whether there are any statutory or professional body requirements of a programme of study.

5.3 It is expected that all staff should follow the principles set out in this document, along with the guidelines and arrangements contained within the accompanying *Procedures for Supporting New Student Parents*, as much as is practicable. This includes:

- Avoiding less favourable treatment - staff should ensure that they do not treat a student less favourably than other students on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity or for reasons relating to adoption.
- Taking a flexible approach - the University recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and staff must take a flexible approach to facilitating the continued learning of, and high-quality, safe student experience for, students who become pregnant or the primary adopter or whose partners become pregnant or the primary adopter.
- Demonstrating a non-judgmental and sensitive approach – when working with students who become pregnant or the primary adopter or whose partners become pregnant or the primary adopter, staff must take an open-minded and non-judgmental approach and treat students with sensitivity and confidentiality. A student's circumstances should only be revealed to staff members who have a valid reason for the knowledge, and only with the prior consent of the student concerned.
- Enabling informed choices - members of staff must not attempt to direct or unduly influence the decisions of a student. The staff member's role in these circumstances is to provide advice to the student, and to consider, in consultation with the student and other relevant parties, the level of flexibility that can be applied to the student's programme or period of study to provide appropriate support.

5.4 Pregnant students' and new mothers' health and safety should be paramount at all times.

6. Supporting documents and sources of support

6.1 The following supporting documents are available:

- Procedures for Supporting New Student Parents (LINK TO BE ADDED)
- [New Student Parent Support Form](#)

6.2 Advice and support for pregnant students and student parents is available from the following areas of the University:

- [Student Support Adviser](#) (based within the Atrium, University Place)
- [UMSU Advice Service](#) (based within the Students' Union)

6.3 A range of external sources of advice and support is listed in the [New Student Parent Support Form](#).

Document control box	
Policy/procedure title:	Policy for Supporting New Student Parents
Date approved:	TBC
Approving body:	TLG / Senate
Implementation date:	TBC
Version:	0.3
Supersedes:	N/A
Previous review dates:	N/A
Next review date:	TBC
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	N/A
Related Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study • Policy on Mitigating Circumstances
Related Procedures and Guidance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures for Supporting New Student Parents (LINK TO BE ADDED) • New Student Parent Support Form • Guidance for Staff on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programme of Study • Guidance for Students on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study
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