

## **Guidance on Student Pregnancy and Maternity**

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#### Abbreviations

AFARP	As Far as Reasonably Practicable
ASAP	As Soon as Possible
H&S	Health & Safety
HS&E	Health, Safety & Environment
NBM	Nominated Building Managers
NHS	National Health Service
PEEP	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
RA	Risk Assessment
RP	Responsible Person (Line Manager, Academic Supervisor or Security/Duty Manager)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TNE	Transnational Education
UCCSHE	University's Central Committee for Safety Health and Environment
UKVI	United Kingdom Visa and Immigration
UoS	University of Sunderland

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Sunderland [UoS] acknowledges and accepts its statutory duty to ensure and promote As Far as Reasonably Practicable [AFARP] the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees, students and those affected by the University's business activities. This is supported in compliance to the [Health & Safety at Work etc. Act \(1974\) Chapter 37](#) [HSWA] with the University's [Health, Safety & Environment Policy](#) and in conjunction with [ISO 45001:2018 Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems](#) to manage Health, Safety and Environment impacts from the University's activities.
- 1.2. The University seeks to achieve three key objectives;
  - to create a working environment for staff, students and visitors which promotes their health, safety and welfare;
  - to conduct its business in such a way that it promotes environmental responsibility and sustainability within its educational and operational activities; and
  - to implement the principles and standards of [Managing for Health & Safety \(2013, HSG 65\)](#) by the Health and Safety Executive [HSE] and to achieve continual improvements in health, safety and environmental management.
- 1.3. This procedure defines the methodology by which Health, Safety & Environment (HS&E) for the guidance on student pregnancy and maternity at the University of Sunderland [UoS].

## 2. Scope & Definitions

- 2.1. The wellbeing of new and expectant student parents (or partner) is of paramount importance. This document provides both students and staff with information about the support that the UoS can offer to a student (or where relevant, partner) who:
  - thinks they may be pregnant;
  - has recently given birth;
  - has recently experienced stillbirth or miscarriage;
  - has terminated a pregnancy.
- 2.2. This guidance applies to all students at UoS campuses, as well as Sunderland Online students, Independent Distance Learners, and students studying through UK or Transnational Education [TNE] partners. The way in which support is provided may vary depending on the location or mode of study.
- 2.3. The guidance also provides some information relating to supporting a student regardless of gender who has recently become a parent (including through adoption) or is the partner of someone who has a very young child (defined as children who are under the age of six months, or who are breastfeeding).
- 2.4. Where appropriate and/or relevant, references below to the mother may also be taken as referring to the partner.

## 3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1. The UoS believes that the scope of [2. Scope & Definitions](#) should not hinder a student successfully completing a programme of study. The UoS is committed to being as flexible and adaptive as possible, whilst ensuring that any adjustments/arrangements made for the student do not compromise academic standards, or the University's duties and obligations in respect of H&S or the safeguarding of children.

- 3.2. This guidance is based on a set of important guiding principles to endeavour to support the student through their programme wherever practicable, and reasonable adjustments should be made to facilitate this, namely:

3.2.1. Avoiding less favourable treatment

Staff shall make sure they avoid where practicable treating a student less favourably than other students where that student falls into the scope of this document.

3.2.2. Taking a flexible approach

The UoS recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and its staff will take a flexible approach to ensuring a new and expectant student parent has access to a safe environment which facilitates their learning. The University fully support, enable and engage with their students and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary depending upon the student's programme of study and the level of risk involved, balanced against the UoS's other obligations such as H&S.

3.2.3. Demonstrating a non-judgmental and sensitive approach

Staff will take a non-judgmental and unbiased approach when dealing with students to whom this policy applies. Information will be treated as confidential but may be shared on a need-to-know basis, if written consent has been obtained from the student to do so.

3.2.4. Enabling informed decisions

Members of staff will not attempt to direct or unduly influence a student in their decision making. Staff's role is to signpost appropriately enabling the student to make appropriate informed decisions (except in cases where a decision on Risk Assessment [RA] is made by the UoS).

- 3.2.5. For compliance to the UoS's [Policy and Procedure for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults \(Safeguarding\)](#) and to avoid disruption to others, students should not bring their children on to the University campus, and are expected to make relevant childcare arrangements when they are expected to be at the University.

#### 4. Support & Guidance

- 4.1. New and expectant student parents support and guidance is available from UoS [Student Wellbeing Services](#) as well as a variety of external sources to help in the effective development of a student support plan.
- 4.2. The UoS Student Wellbeing Team can provide information to the new and expectant student parent about all of their support needs including their mental/physical health, childcare arrangements, living/socialising changes, and the university's approach to breastfeeding and milk expression/storage.
- 4.3. UoS new and expectant student parents confidential support is available from:
- UoS Campus:
    - Student Wellbeing Team, [wellbeing@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@sunderland.ac.uk), 0191-515-2933;
    - Childcare service 0191-515-2826.
  - UoS in London [UoSIL]:
    - Health and Wellbeing Team, for face-to-face meeting (drop-in or booked appointments) [londonhealth@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:londonhealth@sunderland.ac.uk), 0207-531-7343;
    - Childcare service is not available at UoSIL).
  - Sunderland Online:

- Student Wellbeing Team, wellbeing@sunderland.ac.uk, 0191-515-2933;
  - Childcare service is not available for Sunderland Online students.
- 4.4. A student's finance can be affected by pregnancy/maternity leave, so all students are encouraged to seek guidance from the [Student Financial Services](#).
- 4.5. International students have particular needs relating to their visas and support for international students is available from an International Adviser at either Campus. The International/wellbeing adviser can also offer guidance in respect of UK norms around the care and protection of children by emailing [internationalstudentsupport@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:internationalstudentsupport@sunderland.ac.uk).
- 4.6. If a new and expectant student parent is resident in student accommodation, they should have an early discussion with the UoS's [Residential Services](#) team about accommodation options. The UoS has limited access to family accommodation and so external/private rented accommodation may need to be arranged by the student prior to the birth. The Wellbeing Team can offer support and guidance in helping find suitable alternative accommodation
- 4.7. Although the Wellbeing Team can offer support to new and expectant student parents, this does not include the sourcing of cots, bedding or baby clothing in preparation for the birth. This is the responsibility of the individual student and their family. Wellbeing can assist by referral to community-based support available for all residents of Sunderland.
- 4.8. If a student (excluding online) is expecting a baby during their course of study and/or they have a child under 12 months and are experiencing hardship, they may be eligible for a one-off payment of £300 via a 'Student Support Fund' application providing they are NOT eligible for or have already received:
  - a Government Maternity Award; or
  - a Sure Start Maternity Grant.
- 4.9. Support is available from the Student Wellbeing Team (Health and Wellbeing Team for UoSIL) for students to parents who have adopted. Students who are to become parents through adoption should inform (as soon as possible, so that discussion can take place, and a 'Student Support Plan' can be agreed as above):
  - UoS Campus:
    - the faculty.
  - UoS in London [UoSIL]:
    - Health and Wellbeing Team.
  - Sunderland Online:
    - Health and Wellbeing Team.
- 5. Notification**
- 5.1. Students are not under any obligation to inform the UoS if they (or their partner) are in one of the categories indicated in the scope of this document. However, students are encouraged to disclose to the UoS at the earliest possible opportunity. If a student chooses not to disclose, they should do so knowing that the UoS cannot undertake the Risk Assessment [RA] and wellbeing support arrangements outlined below. Late disclosure may mean that alternative arrangements for study and/or assessment may not be possible if needed.
- 5.2. In deciding whether or not to inform the UoS, campus-based students are encouraged to consider that there may be elements of a programme of study that could present a H&S risk to new and expectant student parents or the unborn child. A suitable & sufficient Risk Assessment [RA] can only be undertaken if there is awareness of a pregnancy.

- 5.3. If a student's pregnancy-related absence (e.g., antenatal appointments) impacts significantly on the student's studies, the UoS will only be able to take proper account of the reasons for absence if they are notified of these. Sometimes, the absence of a student can adversely affect the work of other students she is working alongside (e.g., on a group project). To enable plans to be made to deal with any issues arising from such an absence, it is important to notify:

- Programme Leader (for UoS Sunderland campus and Sunderland Online);
- Programme Manager (for UoSIL);
- Director of Studies (for research students).

## **6. Risk Assessment [RA]**

- 6.1. For students studying on campus, the student becomes a new and expectant student parent, they must declare it to the UoS As Soon as Possible [ASAP. This is so Risk Assessments [RA] can be undertaken by a competent member of staff in the faculty/service (for UoSIL Campus, by the Health and Wellbeing Manager and 'Programme Leader') to ensure that there are no elements of the programme of study that present a risk to the H&S of the new and expectant parent, or the unborn child. This may include, for example, risks associated with physical activity such as lifting or carrying, or the use in laboratory work of chemicals or micro-organisms.
- 6.2. The RA process can be supported and guided through use of the checklist in Appendix 2. A RA template is available to be downloaded from the [RA portal](#) (with a specific [pregnancy RA template](#)) that can be amended as necessary for individual student circumstances. This will include consideration of welfare needs and support to the student.
- 6.3. RA's for new and expectant parents is inclusive to students on placement or off-site activities that the student may engage in (this excludes online learning).
- 6.4. Where a student may be on placement, the respective roles and responsibilities between provider and student should be clearly agreed and detailed as part of the RA. Where a student makes a disclosure, the information will be shared with the provider on a confidential basis in order that the provider can carry out any RA's required by its own internal policies. Such RA's must be shared with the student and may also include specific assessments under regulations such as the [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations \(SI 2002/2677\)](#) or the [Manual Handling Operations Regulations \(SI 1992/2793\)](#).
- 6.5. Faculties will determine the competent staff to make a suitable & sufficient assessment of risks associated with activities the student may be exposed to. The lead in RA will normally be the 'Programme Leader' ('Programme Manager' at UoSIL Campus) or Director of Studies, but they may also consult other competent academic/technical staff with key expertise, the UoS's Occupational Health Service or any other appropriate body for relevant advice. Although the student will be consulted in the process of the decision on risk, the judgement is not open to appeal. This does not remove the student's rights under UK law or the UoS's [Student Complaints Procedure](#).
- 6.6. The outcome of a RA should seek to eliminate risk or to control it to an acceptable level. If the risk cannot be avoided by other means, alternative arrangements should be offered where practicable. The assessment should build in appropriate review points where necessary.
- 6.7. The outcomes of RA's will be stored as confidential data by the faculty and should be disposed of securely after year of graduation/withdrawal plus one year.





## 7. Student Support Plan

- 7.1. To accompany the RA a 'Student Support Plan' should be developed by Student Wellbeing Team in collaboration with the students Programme Leader/Manager and/or Director of Studies in conjunction with the student to enable the student to:
  - continue study;
  - appropriate alternative arrangements;
  - plan any necessary leave of absence.
- 7.2. Students on professional programmes may have to meet certain specific requirements or demonstrate specific competencies set out by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. These requirements may mean that adjustments cannot be made (e.g., to a competency standard). In these cases, the student may need to take a leave of absence.
- 7.3. If the 'Student Support Plan' means that a student is continuing with their studies, they should meet regularly with their 'Programme Leader'/'Programme Manager', Director of Studies or nominee to assess the effectiveness of any specific arrangements put in place, or the need for any further adjustments.
- 7.4. New and expectant student parents are encouraged disclosure to the UoS ASAP to ensure an effective 'Student Support Plan' can be determined and implemented. Delayed disclosure may result in some adjustments not been available.
- 7.5. For pregnant students on campus, once the 'Student Support Plan' has been established, the UoS H&S team must be contacted ([hse@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:hse@sunderland.ac.uk)) to establish a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan [PEEP]. This must be communicated to relevant Programme Leaders, Academics and Nominated Building Managers [NBM] where the student will be studying.

**Commented [NC1]:** Phil - any thoughts on how we'd manage this for Sunderland Online?

## 8. Attendance & Leave of Absence

- 8.1. New and expectant students who are engaging with study at the UoS are expected to meet the attendance requirements with the exceptions for short term absences (e.g., minor illnesses). If attendance requirements cannot be met, then the student should take a leave of absence.
- 8.2. Sunderland Online Online students may also wish to discuss the option for informal study breaks with their 'Student Success Coordinator'. If a student does not take a leave of absence, but also does not attend over a period of time, then the UoS's policy on non-attendance will apply. The student must consider whether their circumstances will allow them to engage with study with appropriate attendance: if they do not, then a leave of absence should be taken.
- 8.3. New and expectant students should not return to study within two weeks after giving birth, in alignment with the statutory restriction of the same duration for women in employment. This period will not be considered as an absence by the UoS in its recording of student attendance (this is applicable to online students too).
- 8.4. If the UoS is concerned whether a new and expectant student is fit to return to the UoS, she may be required to provide medical evidence to confirm fitness.
- 8.5. The standard UoS [Student Leave of Absence Policy](#) applies, with the exception where the student is required to be of 'good academic standing' to be granted a leave of absence does not apply. Provided that a student conforms to the maximum period of registration of their programme, as set out in the academic regulations, and the general requirements of the

[Student Leave of Absence Policy](#), a leave of absence for maternity would not prevent a later leave of absence for any other reason.

- 8.6. 'Programme Leader's ('Programme Manager's for UoSIL and Student Success Coordinators for UoS Online) should routinely refer any student taking a Leave of Absence to the UoS's [Student Financial Services](#) (Engagement Team for UoSIL), but it is particularly important that students covered by this policy are signposted to this.
- 8.7. Any student whose partner is pregnant and who will be responsible with the mother for raising the child is entitled to request time out of study. This may be for medical appointments before or after the birth, or for a leave of absence following the birth. Any student in this position should consult their 'Programme Leader', 'Programme Manager' or 'Student Success Coordinator' as soon as possible to discuss this. Agreements to absence are subject to the same provisos as indicated in the Student Support Plan.

## 9. Extenuating Circumstances

- 9.1. New and expectant student parents are not defined under extenuating circumstance. However, complications arising from a pregnancy may be considered as extenuating circumstances which would require additional support beyond that laid out in the Support Plan. This would be considered on an individual basis as with any other extenuating circumstances claim.
- 9.2. For extenuating circumstances the UoS [Regulations Governing Extension of Assessment Deadlines and Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances](#) applies, including the principle of 'fit to sit' (i.e., if a student engages with an assessment, they have deemed themselves fit and cannot then make a retrospective extenuating circumstances claim). If a student is not fit to engage with an assessment, then an extenuating circumstances application should be submitted in advance.
- 9.3. The 2 week period following birth, although it does not meet the standard test in the UoS [Regulations Governing Extension of Assessment Deadlines and Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances](#), it does exceptionally count as an event which would be grounds for extenuating circumstances to be automatically granted (e.g., to have assessments within those 2 weeks to be deferred until the next assessment point).
- 9.4. Other short-term absences as referred to in the Attendance section (section 8.) above would not normally be considered as grounds for extenuating circumstances, although may provide grounds for a student to apply for an extension as defined in the UoS [Regulations Governing Extension of Assessment Deadlines and Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances](#).
- 9.5. The new and expectant student parent must consider whether their circumstances will allow them to study effectively and to engage with assessments: if they do not, then a leave of absence should be taken (or a study break for Sunderland Online students).
- 9.6. The partner of a new and expectant student parent would not be eligible to use the pregnancy as extenuating circumstances. The immediate period including and following the birth (up to a maximum of 1 week) would provide valid reason for a claim. Where complications arise in any of the events covered by the scope of this document, this should be treated as would any extenuating circumstances claim based on illness of a partner with ordinary circumstances.

## 10. International Applicants & Students

- 10.1. If a new and expectant student parent is in the UK on a student visa, taking leave as a result of a pregnancy may impact on the United Kingdom Visa and Immigration [UKVI] Home Office immigration rules. Hence it is vital, and the student's responsibility, to seek advice from the Senior International Student Adviser (UoS Campus) or Gateway International Adviser (UoSIL) ASAP in the pregnancy, to ensure that any arrangements which are made are UKVI compliant. Students and applicants should be aware that they may be charged for health care costs by the National Health Service [NHS]. Please see advice from the Senior International Student Adviser (UoS Campus) or Gateway International Adviser (UoSIL) for further information.
- 10.2. An international student may request an authorised leave of absence. The faculty (or Student Administration Team for UoSIL) will decide if such a leave of absence will be agreed, with reference to the UoS [Student Leave of Absence Policy](#). If a leave of absence is authorised for more than 4 academic weeks the student will be required to return overseas. The student will be advised of this when the leave of absence is authorised. Students are reminded that many airlines will not carry passengers who are more than 7 months pregnant and should take this into account in their planning. Delaying travel will not impact upon the UoS's duty to report any break in study.
- 10.3. If an international applicant discloses that they are a new and expectant parent prior to registration, they should be signposted to the 'Senior International Student Advisor' at UoS campus or 'International Student Adviser' at UoSIL campus. Advice and support will be offered to the applicant and the content of the discussion will include the following:
  - clarification of the UoS regulations regarding leave of absence in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester;
  - clarification of the visa implications when taking a deferral from studies;
  - consideration given to deferral of studies depending on the advancement of pregnancy and the impact the pregnancy and birth will have on their ability to continue with their studies without a break;
  - the UoS attendance monitoring system;
  - offering practical and emotional support from the UoS 'Student Wellbeing Team'.
- 10.4. If the applicant chooses to register on to their programme of study following a full discussion, they should not be prevented from doing so for reasons of new and expectant parent.

## **11. Maternity Rest and Breast-Feeding Facilities on Campus**

- 11.1. Rest facilities are defined as designated rooms on campus in which new and expectant parents or new mothers utilise the room to express breast milk available to both staff and students. It is important that the rooms are not utilised to deliver 1<sup>st</sup> aid due to the risk of cross contamination.
- 11.2. The oversight of use and maintenance of the facilities is led by Estates & Facilities [E&F] Services.
- 11.3. Maternity rest rooms are available on UoS's main campuses in Sunderland at;
  - EB121, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Edinburgh Building, City Campus; bookings to go via the wellbeing inbox [wellbeing@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@sunderland.ac.uk);
  - RV406, Reg Vardy Building, St Peter's Campus; bookings via the E&F helpdesk, [estatesandfacilities.helpdesk@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:estatesandfacilities.helpdesk@sunderland.ac.uk).
- 11.4. Maternity rest rooms is available on UoSIL campus at;
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Marsh Wall Building, London Campus (no booking is required).

## 12. Associated Documents

### Legislation, Guidance & Links

- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act \(1974\) chapter 37](#) [HSWA]
- [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations \(SI 1999/3242\)](#) [MHSWR]
- [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations \(SI 2002/2677\)](#) [CoSHH]
- [Manual Handling Operations Regulations \(SI 1992/2793\)](#) [MHO]

### UoS Documents & Links

- [UoS; Health, Safety & Environment Policy](#)
- [Health, Safety & Environment Policy](#)
- [Policy and Procedure for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults \(Safeguarding\)](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Student Leave of Absence Policy](#)
- [Regulations Governing Extension of Assessment Deadlines and Consideration of Exenuating Circumstance](#)

## Appendix 1; Guidance for Students (FAQ)

### *I think I may be pregnant what should I do?*

If you have recently missed a period or think you could be pregnant, you should visit your General Practitioner [GP] as soon as possible. If you have used a home pregnancy kit, the GP will not generally repeat the test.

### *How will I manage my studies during my pregnancy?*

When your pregnancy is confirmed, you should make an appointment with the 'Wellbeing Adviser' who can support you in liaising with your 'Programme Leader/Manager' to discuss the best way to progress your academic studies whilst pregnant.

### *What might the financial implications be for me?*

You should make an appointment with the University's Student Financial Advice Service to discuss this. This can include the implications of taking time out of study, and the possibilities for claiming Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, and other grants/benefits to which you may be entitled as a parent.

### *I am not sure if I wish to continue with the pregnancy, who can I discuss this with?*

The University is committed to making sure that unbiased advice and/or signposting is available for women in this situation and students should feel confident to approach any member of the staff team for assistance. Specialised and confidential advice can be sought from the UoS's 'Health Wellbeing Adviser'. Advice can also be obtained via your local GP, 'Sexual Health Service' or 'Family Planning Association'. [Marie Stopes International](https://www.mariestopesinternational.org/) is a useful online source of information (<https://www.mschoices.org/#>).

### *I have recently had a miscarriage or a stillbirth*

The 'Wellbeing Team' is available for students who have recently had a miscarriage or stillbirth. They can provide support and liaise with academic and student support staff with regards to return to study if, and when, a student is able to do so. [Sands](https://www.uk-sands.org/) are a national charity that can provide support ([www.uk-sands.org](https://www.uk-sands.org/)).

### *I am an international student studying in the UK, and my partner is pregnant - can I take time off?*

Any student whose partner is pregnant or who has recently become a parent (both of which includes students in same-sex relationships), is advised to speak with the Gateway to seek approval for a short period of absence. A formal leave of absence is unlikely to be approved for this reason for international students and students on Student visas would be required to withdraw and return home if they took an extended period of leave of absence.

**Appendix 2; Pregnancy/Maternity Support: Risk Assessment [RA] Checklist and link to RA template**

Student Details			
Name:		Course:	
Address:		Year of Course:	
Tel:		Faculty:	
Email:		Due Date:	
Next of Kin:			
Programme Leader or Manager, Director of Studies:			

Notifications	
Date of notification to UoS:	List of staff that the student would like informed and when:

Checklist	Y, N, N/A	Comments & Action Required:
<b>Risk Assessment [RA] (<a href="#">pregnancy RA template</a>)</b> This RA is not required to be uploaded onto the RA portal as it is for local information only and should be amended accordingly for individual circumstances. The RA should be reviewed regularly as pregnancy progresses.		
Course - lectures, seminars etc.?		
Course – practical/lab/workshop work?		
Assessments?		
Field trips/conferences, off-site activity?		
Placements?		
Study abroad?		
Other?		
Does the RA specify who is responsible for any actions?		
<b>Absence – Antenatal</b>		
Will antenatal appointments affect the student's study?		
Is there any pregnancy related illness which would impact on the student's ability to study?		
<b>Absence – Postnatal</b>		

When does the student intend for this to start?		
When does the student intend to return?		
Will this period affect the student's study, and if so, how? (give details to what remedies have been agreed and what support will be provided to the student on their return)		
Does this period require a formal leave of absence, and if so, has the student been directed to the procedure so that she can apply?		
<b>Support</b> <i>Things to cover with Wellbeing – socialising, mental health and emotional support, childhood beyond campus – UK norms and expectations (international students, health and wellbeing, funding and finances, referrals and signposting (NHS/community support services), accommodation, breastfeeding/expressing facilities, maternity grants</i>		
Has the student been referred to the 'Student Financial Advice Service'?		
Has the student been referred to 'Wellbeing'?		
Has the student been informed of the 'Childcare' provision on the UoS campus if applicable?		
If the student is an international student, has the student seen the International 'Student Advisor'?		
Has the student been advised to consult the 'Accommodation Service' if needed		

Both student and relevant staff member to print name, sign and date each time the 'Pregnancy/Maternity Support Plan' is reviewed, and to agree date for next review:

Student name:	
Student signature:	
Relevant staff member's name:	
Relevant staff member's signature:	
Agreed date for next review:	

## Guidance on Student Pregnancy and Maternity

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