

# Student Pregnancy, Maternity, and New Parent Policy

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Effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024

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## 1.0 Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 The culture of the University of Manchester is one which genuinely wants to support students, whatever their circumstances. This document sets out the University's Policy on the arrangements and the support available to students if they are pregnant (including the requirements if they need time away from their programme due to antenatal care appointments), or are undergoing fertility treatment, adoption or surrogacy. It also outlines the support available for students who are new parents, including maternity, adoption and paternity (or secondary carer/partner) arrangements, and applies to all registered Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students across the University. The Policy provides a brief outline of the relevant legislation and considerations and sets out the main principles which staff and students must adhere to., The Policy is accompanied by more detailed guidance contained within the [Procedures for Supporting Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parents](#), which should be read in conjunction with this document.
- 1.2 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](#).
- 1.3 The Equality Act 2010 strengthened the legal protection that students are entitled to during pregnancy and maternity, with pregnancy and maternity now being protected characteristics, 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. It also aims to provide details of the support to students to enable them to continue with their studies during pregnancy or while becoming a parent.

## 2.0 Scope and Definitions

- 2.1 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; students undertaking fertility treatment (including surrogacy); and any registered student becoming a parent through adoption of a child. (Please see section 4 for definitions). The Policy is for staff members supporting 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.
- 2.2 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](#)):
- a) **Parent:** person(s) who will share the main responsibility for the child's upbringing.
  - b) **Partner:** the parent's 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.

## 3.0 General Principles

- 3.1 The University's view is that becoming pregnant, adopting a child, becoming a parent or taking a period of maternity, adoption or parental leave should not prevent a student from successfully completing their studies at the University. It is acknowledged, however, that pregnancy or the period after giving birth/ adopting a child can sometimes result in health issues that may affect a student's studies or progression. The support available to pregnant students and students who are new parents aims to help mitigate this as much as possible.
- 3.2 The University is committed to providing support and flexibility to students who become pregnant, adopt a child, or in other forms, become a parent. 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.

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

- a) **Avoiding less favourable treatment** - staff should make every effort not to treat a student less favourably than other students on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity/paternity or for reasons relating to adoption or fertility treatment.
- b) **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, adopt a child, or in other forms become a parent.
- c) **Demonstrating a non-judgmental and sensitive approach** – when working with students who become pregnant, adopt a child, or in other forms become a parent, 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. Once Staff members are aware of the student’s circumstances, they should be mindful of the possible physical and emotional issues which students who are either pregnant or become new parents may be experiencing, e.g. difficulty engaging with teaching and learning fully.
- d) **Enabling informed choices** - 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. Members of staff must not attempt to direct or unduly influence the decisions of a student.
- e) **Providing opportunities for students to engage with and continue with study successfully on their return.** A student may feel out of touch with university life and find it hard to engage in academic thinking after a pregnancy/ maternity etc. break. A student may also feel isolated due to former peers continuing and completing their studies within different time scales. Providing opportunities for contact during Maternity/Parental Leave, and access to the library to keep up to date with academic thinking in their field, can help a student to mentally prepare for, and to return to, academic life after Maternity/Parental Leave.

3.4 Pregnant students’ and new mothers/parents’ health and safety should be paramount at all times. Further details about health and safety issues for a pregnant student or new parent can be found in the Procedures for Supporting Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parents document.

## 4.0 Supporting documents and sources of support

- 4.1 The following supporting documents are available:
- Procedures for Supporting Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parents (LINK TO BE ADDED)
  - [Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parent Support Form](#) (TO BE UPDATED)
- 4.2 Advice and support for pregnant students and student parents is available from the following areas of the University:
- [Student Support Adviser](#) (based within the Student Hubs)
  - [UMSU Advice Service](#) (based within the Students' Union)
- 4.3 A range of external sources of advice and support is listed in the [Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parent Support Form](#) (TO BE UPDATED TO ACCOMPANY THE NEW POLICY)

Version amendment history box and Document control box

Version amendment history: Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parent Policy		
Version	Date	Reason for change
1.1	April 2024	Production of new Policy

Document control box	
Policy/procedure title:	Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parent Policy
Date approved:	April 2024
Approving body:	Senate
Implementation date:	September 2024
Version:	0.4
Supersedes:	N/A
Previous review dates:	N/A
Next review date:	June 2027
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	N/A
Related Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for Supporting Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parents (LINK TO BE ADDED)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Policy on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Policy on Mitigating Circumstances</a></li> </ul>
Related Procedures and Guidance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Guidance for Staff on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programme of Study</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Guidance for Students on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Guidance document for Students/Applicants with children</a></li></ul>
Policy owner:	Director of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
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