Student Guidance on Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption

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# Introduction

The University believes that becoming a parent or caring for a child should not, in itself, prevent any student from succeeding in their academic studies. The University is committed to being as flexible as is practically possible to ensure that no student is disadvantaged due to pregnancy, maternity or paternity (including adoption), whilst ensuring academic standards are not compromised. These guidance notes are based on the legal protection afforded to students under the Equality Act 2010 during pregnancy and maternity. The Act considers pregnancy and maternity to be a protected characteristic and prohibits discrimination on these grounds.

These guidance notes cover undergraduate and postgraduate students throughout their studies.

# Informing the University and Future plans

It is important to obtain sound advice as soon as you think that you are pregnant. You should have your pregnancy confirmed by your doctor as soon as possible and you can also obtain confidential advice from the [University Health Service](http://health.southwales.ac.uk/).

If your pregnancy is to continue while you are a student, it is very important that you let the University know via your course leader as soon as possible. This will allow the University to identify any areas of concern to protect your health and that of your unborn child and consideration to be given to how this may affect your studies. Remember, the greatest risk to an unborn child occurs in the first 13 weeks of the pregnancy.

If you make the decision to terminate your pregnancy, or if you miscarry, there may be no need for any staff or students at the University to know. However, we understand that this can have a physical and/or emotional impact, which may cause you to miss classes, assessments, or examinations which may impact on your studies and/or assessments. You should talk to the [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/) staff on your campus in the first instance for guidance if you are affected by any of these issues. Students studying the Bachelor of Nursing or Midwifery programmes should also inform your course leader. If you are a postgraduate research student, you may need to inform your Director of Studies. You may also want to seek support from the [Wellbeing Service](https://wellbeing.southwales.ac.uk/) or other specialist services.

# Continuing with your studies

Whether you decide to continue your studies will be a very personal decision and can depend on a range of circumstances. Your personal situation, the requirements of your course, the time of year that your baby is due and childcare arrangements once the baby is born should all be considered before reaching a final decision. [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/) staff will be able to direct you to the University’s relevant policies on whether [interrupting your studies](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/a2z/interruption-studies/) should be considered. You may also wish to seek guidance from the [Student Money Advice Team](https://studentmoney.southwales.ac.uk/) on how this may impact on your student loan or bursary (this can vary depending on how your course is funded). There may be some circumstances where the University will require you to interrupt your studies, e.g. where a module is a core requirement of your course and is considered to constitute a high-level risk to the health and safety of you and/or your unborn child. For example, a module that involves the use of chemicals contra-indicated for pregnant women, where the learning outcomes of the module cannot be achieved without exposure to that risk.

The University will, where possible, make reasonable adjustments in consultation with you but there may be occasions when this is not possible. For example, when a key practical element of the course cannot be rescheduled or an alternative assessment devised. Please note that pregnancy will not generally be considered under the Extenuating Circumstances Regulations unless there are associated health issues or unforeseen circumstances.

# Adoption

If you have been matched for adoption, you may wish to discuss this with your course team and your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/a2z/interruption-studies/) if this is going to impact on attendance and engagement with studies. If you are the primary adopter, the above guidance on pregnancy may be of use in considering the implications for your course of study.

# Paternity/Partners

If your partner is pregnant or is the primary adopter of a child, you may wish to take time off for antenatal appointments (or matching appointments). If these clash unavoidably with any teaching sessions you must make arrangements with your module/course leader to catch up on any missed work.

As a partner, if you find you are unable to sit an examination or submit or take part in a piece of assessment on time due to your partner’s labour or pregnancy-related illness/complications, you should notify your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/) as soon as possible to seek further guidance.

# Babies and children on campus

The University will support mothers who are breastfeeding and breastfeeding is accepted in all social spaces of the University.

You are reminded that should you choose to bring any children into the social spaces on campus they must be supervised by a responsible person.

# Checklist

The following checklist has been created to guide students through their responsibilities relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption arrangements. You may need to consider these points in consultation with those supporting you at the University. If you have any questions or concerns around the following points then please don’t delay in seeking guidance from the University:

|  |
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| Notifying the University of a pregnancy  |
| It is your responsibility to ensure you inform any relevant people your pregnancy. You must inform your Course Leader, if you need support to do this then please contact your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/). |
| Communication  |
| You must ensure the University has up to date contact details and those of an emergency contact person. The main method of communication from the University will be via your university email address. You can update your personal details [online](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/a2z/maintain-your-personal-details-online/) or via the [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/). |
| Health and Safety Risk Assessments |
| Once you have informed your course leader of your pregnancy, a Risk Assessment will need to be carried out to identify any relevant risks associated with your study programme and to manage these for your protection. The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents. The Faculty may consult the [University’s Department of Occupational Health and Safety](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/healthandsafety/sitepages/en-gb/home.aspx) when completing the Risk Assessment.  |
| Pregnancy-related absence |
| During pregnancy, you may need to take time for antenatal appointments. If these clash unavoidably with any teaching sessions you will need to make arrangements to catch up on any missed work. If there is a clash with fieldwork, short work placements, or practical sessions, please contact the relevant tutor/course leader as soon as possible to discuss your options. If you need support to do this, please contact your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/).If pregnancy-related illnesses affect your ability to undertake particular aspects of your course, this will be treated in the same way as other ill health via the University [Extenuating Circumstances](https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/extenuating-circumstances/) Regulations. You can claim extenuating circumstances through [Advice Zone Online](https://advicezone.southwales.ac.uk/Login/login?cctc).  |
| Assessments/Examinations and the Extenuating Circumstances Regulations |
| The University does not consider pregnancy in itself as a reason for consideration under the Extenuating Circumstances Policy. Pregnancy should not necessarily mean that you are unable to complete assessments, but if you become ill due to your pregnancy and this affects your ability to prepare for, or complete assessments, please refer to the [Extenuating Circumstances](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/a2z/extenuating-circumstances/) process and discuss the situation with your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/) for further guidance.If your baby is due near to, or during, an examination period you should seek advice from your doctor or health visitor as the University may need confirmation that you are fit to sit any examinations. Once you have this written confirmation please discuss with your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/). If you need adjustments to examinations (such as the need for a different chair or comfort breaks) then the University may be able to accommodate these with adequate notice. Please discuss these with your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/) as soon as possible. The [Disability Service](https://disability.southwales.ac.uk/) is able to help with assessing whether reasonable adjustments are appropriate to support you.  |
| Maternity-related absence (students should provide information in writing at least 15 weeks before their due date) |
| The University would encourage you as a new mother to seek advice from your Doctor or Health Visitor about how much time you need or should take off following the birth. Once you know, please ensure you notify your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/). Employment legislation recommends new mothers take at least two weeks off, however individual circumstances can vary greatly. Please note there are processes in place for [exceptional leave of absence](https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/leave-absence/) for periods of 10 – 20 working days, which you will need to follow. If you wish to take a longer period of leave, you will need to contact your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/) for further advice. You may also need to consider the implications of an extended period of absence on student loans or bursaries. Advice can be sought from the [Student Money Advice Team](http://studentmoney.southwales.ac.uk/).  |
| Students on placement |
| If you are currently on a work placement connected with your studies it is your responsibility to inform your host organisation as they may need to carry out a risk assessment to ensure your safety. There should be no reason why you cannot complete your placement unless there is a risk to you or your unborn child. If you are due to undertake a work placement or exchange programme during your pregnancy this may need to be discussed with the host organisation to ensure that any risks can be identified and managed and again you should ensure that your Faculty are aware of your pregnancy. |
| Financial support |
| If you receive financial support such as a student loan; bursary or any other funding source you should establish what will happen to such funding in the event of a need to consider suspending or withdrawing from studies. There may be government benefits or grants available and advice on which should be sought from the local benefits office. The University’s [Student Money Advice Team](http://studentmoney.southwales.ac.uk/) may be able to direct you to sources of funding.  |
| Baby feeding |
| Please be aware that the University will support mothers who are breastfeeding and that this is accepted in all social spaces of the University. The University will do its best to accommodate students wishing to breastfeed and would ask that you discuss this with your [Advice Zone](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/) if you require specific arrangements outside of any social spaces on campus.You are reminded that should you choose to bring any children onto campus you must supervise them at all times. Children should not accompany their parent or carer to teaching sessions.  |
| Childcare  |
| Details of local childcare should be available from the local authority. The University has [crèche facilities](https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/a2z/childcare/) available on the Treforest campus. |
| Students on placement abroad |
| If you are a student on placement abroad, you should discuss the situation with your key contact at your host institution/ organisation and your contact at the University.Please remember airlines have restrictions relating to the number of weeks up to which they will allow you to fly, so we suggest you find out this information as soon as possible. Additionally, you will need to check any insurance policies in place to establish what you are covered for relating to the pregnancy or any pregnancy-related health issues which may arise.  |
| International students |
| If you are an international student, you will need to check the implications of your pregnancy for your visa. You **must** contact the [Immigration and International Student Advice Team](https://intadvice.southwales.ac.uk/) for Advice. There is also online information regarding [babies born in the UK.](https://intadvice.southwales.ac.uk/immigration-advice-home/babies-born-uk/) Please remember airlines usually have restrictions relating to the number of weeks up to which they will allow you to fly, so we suggest you find out this information as soon as possible.  |