



**LEICESTER
STUDENTS'
UNION**

May 2024



ACADEMIC ADVICE

**Student pregnancy,
maternity, paternity
and adoption**

Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy

Who does the policy cover?

The policy covers you if you are a registered student or prospective student who is pregnant or you become pregnant at the commencement of or during your studies.

What is the purpose of the policy?

Becoming pregnant or caring for a very young child should not prevent you from succeeding in your studies. This policy tries to make the University's Senate Regulations more flexible although the degree of flexibility will vary according to your programme of study. The policy states that any information you share relating to your pregnancy will be handled confidentially and will only be shared with others if you consent to it being shared. If a staff member is unable to support you with a specific issue, then they will provide you with the information of other available services.

Do I need to tell somebody at the University that I'm pregnant?

You are **NOT** usually required to notify your department if you become pregnant/ become a parent while you are a student. However, we advise you to tell somebody in your department so they can work out if they need to do any of the following for you:

- They need to adopt a flexible approach,
- They can provide appropriate support,
- They need to conduct a health and safety assessment,

The exception to this is if you are on a programme whereby your department needs to know for health and safety reasons.

Why do we advise you to tell your department?

It is ultimately up to you however; we advise you tell somebody in your department to ensure you receive adequate and relevant support throughout your pregnancy. Additional things to consider when deciding whether to tell your department includes:

- Are there elements of your programme of study which could present a health risk to either yourself or your unborn child?
- Are there potential pregnancy-related absences, for example ante-natal appointments, that might impact your attendance – which is useful for your department to be aware of ahead of time?
- Are there other bodies, such as sponsors, who need to be informed?

What happens when I tell somebody from my department?

If you tell somebody from your department, the Head of Department should ensure that a member of staff is given the responsibility of reviewing any health and safety risks to you and your unborn child.

What should my department do when I tell them I'm pregnant?

Your department should work with you to make any reasonable adjustments to support you with your studies (these must be in accordance with the existing Regulations and the maintenance of academic standards).

If you want to, you can request a female member of staff to discuss your support plan/ any other pregnancy related topics with.

Your department should be made aware of any sources of advice and support available to you.

Your department should keep you update to date with any developments in your field.

Your department should facilitate a smooth return from maternity/ adoption related absence.

If you are on a taught programme:

If you are on a Taught Programme, you are especially advised to tell your personal tutor or another member of staff from your department who you feel comfortable talking to. If you're unsure, you can come through to us in Advice and we can attend the meeting with you for moral support.

Once you have told your department, they should:

- Work out if there are any potential risks to you and if you need any adjustments to be made to procedures.
- Discuss any agreed periods of absence and make arrangements for you to catch up on any missed lectures/tutorials so that you are not placed at a disadvantage.
- Discuss if any consideration needs to be given as to any special arrangements need to be put into place in terms of placements or fieldwork.
- Give you advice on how to apply for a suspension of studies to allow for a period of maternity or adoption related absence, if you require it.

If you are a postgraduate research student:

It is strongly recommended to arrange a meeting with a member of your supervisory team or the Postgraduate Tutor to discuss and agree for a plan of your studies, including arrangements for taking time off for your medical appointments.

Once you have told a member of your supervisory team or Postgraduate Tutor, they should:

- Identify any potential risks to you and where necessary, make adjustments to procedures.
- Give you advice on how to apply for suspension of studies to allow for a period of maternity related absence, if you need it

Maternity related absence

You will normally be able to formally suspend your studies for up to one calendar year for maternity/ adoption leave. The length of tie will be determined by your personal circumstances and the structure of your programme of study.

If you choose not to take a suspension of studies, you are still required to take two weeks of compulsory leave of absence, immediately after you give birth – this is a mandatory and authorised absence. When possible, you should make the application of absence three months before it is due to commence.

Choosing not to suspend your studies for maternity related absence

If you choose not to suspend your studies for maternity leave, then you are agreeing that you will continue to engage with your studies in the normal way, including attending and submitting work as required.

If you choose not to suspend your studies but need an extension to registration, this will be considered in the usual way per [Senate Regulation 2](#) or [Senate Regulation 9](#) and the appropriate tuition fees will be charged.

Changing your mind

You cannot request for periods of suspension or have an adjustment of fees retrospectively. Meaning, if you choose to not suspend your studied but then need to extend your studies, you will need to pay the relevant fees – at this point you cannot swap to a suspension. So it is important to consider if you would benefit from a suspension of studies and maintain conversations with your department.

Please note, if you are an undergraduate student, normally, funding will stop if you choose to suspend your studies. For more information, check the [Student Finance guidance](#).

For more guidance on general financial matters and any entitlements, you can book an appointment with the [University's Welfare team](#).

Arranging maternity related absence:

If you choose to suspend your studies, you should meet with either your personal tutor, supervisor or another member of staff from your department to discuss arrangements for a suspension of studies. You and your tutor/supervisor should discuss the implications of suspending your studies in terms of your programme of study.

Mitigating Circumstances and pregnancy:

If you should find yourself experiencing complications as a result of your pregnancy and you need additional time off, then you can submit a claim through the mitigating circumstances policy. If you need support with this, the [Advice Team](#) can help you through the process.

Being pregnant itself is not viewed as a mitigating circumstance but if you suffer a pregnancy-related illness or other complications which impact your attendance and assessments, then this would be viewed as a mitigating circumstance.

If you wish to submit a mitigating circumstance claim, you can do so using the usual procedure, by making a request on your MyStudentRecord.

Suspending my studies and Visa issues

If you are an international student, you should seek advice from the International Officers at the Student Welfare Service as soon as possible. If required, the International Officers may seek further advice from the UKVI to determine the appropriate options for you.

The University is required to report any Tier 4 students who take a suspension of studies to the UKVI and there may be a requirement that you leave the UK.

If are an international student and have a financial sponsor, you should contact them for further advice and guidance.

University Accommodation

If you are renting University owned Accommodation and find it is no longer suitable during your pregnancy, you should seek advice from the Accommodation and Residential Services.

Study abroad, work placements and field trips:

If you become pregnant before or during a period of study abroad or a work placement, the support the University can provide you might be limited. You can discuss this with your department and/or the International Office. If there is judged to be a risk to you or your unborn child, they might strongly advise you to suspend your studies or, if possible, transfer you onto a variant of a degree programme which does not require a period of study abroad.

Consideration of travel/ study abroad/ work placements should be informed by the advice of a registered midwife or doctor.

If you are on placement, you are required to follow your employers' regulations/ policies, in addition to the University's requirements.

Adoption leave:

If you are the primary adopter, you may apply for a suspension of studies for up to one year. If you are adopting with a partner, only one of you can apply for adoption leave (this applies regardless of whether one/ both of you are registered students. The other member of the couple can apply for paternity or maternity support leave.

Adoption leave is unpaid, unless you are entitled to Statutory Adoption Pay or there are provisions from your funder for payment. If you are employed, you should seek advice from your employer.

If you are a research student who is funded through a Research Council or University studentship, you will be entitled to six month paid adoption leave and a further six months, unpaid, should you require it.

Is your partner pregnant or adopting?

Normally, programmes are flexible enough to allow you to take time off from your studies to accompany your partner to ante natal and post-natal appointments. You should speak to your personal tutor or supervisor to agree arrangements for taking leave and catching up on work missed.

If your partner is pregnant or adopting, you can apply to take two weeks paternity/maternity support leave, by discussing this with your department and inline with the University's authorised absence policy. This leave is usually unpaid unless you are also in employment or, if your finding body allows a period of paid paternity leave.

If you are sponsored, you should contact your sponsor to ask what arrangements apply to you.

Babies and children on campus and breast feeding facilities:

You can bring your baby/children on campus, in any public areas, but they need to be supervised at all times. Babies and children are not allowed in any areas where they are health and safety risks, for example in laboratories. Babies and children are not usually allowed at teaching sessions or assessment events. However, if you are breastfeeding or if your baby is under 26 weeks, you are protected under the Equality Act 2010, so you should contact your personal tutor or supervisor to discuss what appropriate arrangements can be made.

Breast feeding facilities on campus

In the Attenborough Seminar Block (room 103), there is a room available for breast feeding/ expressing milk which has storage facilities. You can make use of this facility by getting further information from the Equalities Unit: equalities@le.ac.uk

How can the Advice Service help you?

Here in the [Advice Service](#), we provide confidential academic and housing advice. We also offer guidance and signposting to Employment Rights, Legal and Wellbeing Services and anything else that enriches your University experience. We are an independent organisation and separate from the University. Therefore, we have no involvement in the decision-making processes of the University and we do not have access to any of the data on academic and/or personal records. This means we can only advise or signpost based on what you tell us.

We can help you find the right person from your department to talk to about your pregnancy and attend a meeting about suspending your studies, if you would feel more comfortable with us there. Should complications arise that are either related to your pregnancy, or separately, we can support you with how to make a mitigating circumstances request. We hope this isn't the case, but if you have told your department about your pregnancy and they fail to do anything listed above or you feel discriminated against due to being pregnant, we can support you with how to make a complaint.

Please get in touch with us via our [contact form](#), and we will then get back to you within 4 working days to offer you an appointment, or provide further advice.

Opening hours are 11-3pm, Monday to Friday.

Useful Links

[Policy on student pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption](#)

[University of Leicester's Students' Union Mitigating Circumstances guidance](#)

[Policy on student engagement](#)

[Student responsibilities](#)

[Senate regulation 4: Regulations governing student obligations](#)

leicesterunion.com/advice

Advice Service

advice.le.uk

0116 223 1132



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