



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Student Maternity Policy

Advice to students who become pregnant during their course of study and staff who may advise them.

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Contents

1. Introduction

This Policy provides advice and guidance to:

- Students who may become pregnant during their studies and to their partners (if a current student) on issues related to study, health and safety, and finance.
- University staff who may have a role in advising students coming to them with these issues.

2. Scope of the Policy

The purpose of this document is to ensure that if you become pregnant or are about to become a father while you are a student at St Mary's University you know where to seek advice about your own health, the health of your child and the management of your course of study.

3. Policy Statement

St Mary's University is committed to promoting equality in all its activities and aims to provide a work, learning, research and teaching environment free from discrimination and unfair treatment. The University actively seeks to develop best practice in discharging its legal responsibility.¹

The University believes that becoming pregnant or caring for a child should not, in itself, prevent any student from succeeding in their studies. The University is committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to facilitate students' success, making sure no student is disadvantaged whilst ensuring academic standards are not compromised. The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary between faculties, but all faculties will follow the general approach set out in this document.

The health and safety of a pregnant student will be of paramount importance at all times, and faculties will deal with all students covered by this policy in a sensitive, non-judgmental and confidential manner. Only members of staff who need to be informed for valid reasons will be informed of a student's circumstances and this will be done only with the student's prior consent.

The policy focuses primarily on study-related matters, but sources of help and advice on related issues can be found at the end of the document.

¹The Equality Act 2010 places a duty to promote equality for the following protected characteristics including: pregnancy and maternity; age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

4. Rights and Responsibilities

This section covers rights and responsibilities for students, staff and the University.

4.1 For students who become pregnant during their studies

4.1.1. Confirming the Pregnancy

We would advise a student who suspects she is pregnant to see her GP to have the pregnancy confirmed as soon as she can. You can obtain confidential advice from the University Medical Practice or you can consult your own GP. It is in her best interest to disclose her pregnancy to the University.

If she decides to terminate the pregnancy, or miscarries, this need not be disclosed to the University. However the University can offer excellent counseling facilities to support a student if she chooses to disclose this information. Absence from the University required as a result should be classed as 'sick leave' but there is no need to give the specific reason, unless the absence affects any assessment. In this case the student would need to submit an Extenuating Circumstances claim with supporting evidence to the Examinations Office in Registry. Extenuating Circumstances claims are confidential. Details of the University's Absence Policy can be found at <http://simmspace/prog-admin/registry-forms/Pages/default.aspx> and the Extenuating Circumstances policy and forms can be found at <http://simmspace/prog-admin/registry-forms/Documents/Extenuating-Circumstances-Claim-Form.pdf>

4.1.2. Contacting the Faculty

If the student plans to continue with her pregnancy, she should let her Faculty know as soon as possible. The University can only make provision for the student if she lets them know she is pregnant. The student can initially choose to speak to any member of staff with whom she feels most comfortable. This is in the student's best interest as, in the event of an examination or other compulsory component being missed and the student being unable/unwilling to provide evidence (e.g. because it is of a confidential nature), the member of staff can confirm that she/he has seen evidence to cover the absence.

4.1.3. Implications for Study

A member of staff from the Faculty (usually the Programme Director) will meet with the student to discuss how the pregnancy is likely to impact on her study. There may need to be an interruption of studies depending on when the baby is due, and the student together with her Programme Director will decide (1) whether an interruption is needed and (2) if so, the time period this needs to cover. This decision also needs to consider the academic requirements of the student's Programme. A student with a baby due near the examination period might require confirmation from her doctor that she is fit to sit exams. Time off might also be needed for medical appointments.

A plan should be devised (in writing including a risk assessment) by the Programme Director or other nominated staff member, detailing any special arrangements required during the student's pregnancy, and the agreed timescale for her return to study. The student should receive a copy of this, as should other appropriate member(s) of staff requiring this information (including, where

required, Conveners of Boards of Examiners or Progress Committees). The student's permission should be established before passing on information.

If the student continues to study during her pregnancy, we would recommend that she meet regularly with her Programme Director or other designated member of staff, to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements put in place. Where necessary, further adjustments can be made.

It is important that you meet regularly with your designated member of staff to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements which have been put in place.

The plan should be created according to the individual circumstances and the timing of the academic year. For example, for a baby due in December the best option may be to suspend for a full calendar year after the baby is born (December to December) if that is compatible with your course of study or perhaps for the whole academic year (September to September). To suspend studies or take a Leave of Absence a student must complete a form available from Registry. For advice on dates for leave of absence and when to resume studies, extenuating circumstances, assessments dates etc. students are welcome to contact the Deputy Registrar or Assistant Registrar in Registry. If your baby is due near to or during an examination period you should seek advice from your GP, as the University may need confirmation that you are able to sit the exams. If you are unwell during your pregnancy you should let your Faculty know and provide notes from your doctor as evidence of this. The University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy in relation to performance in assessment and exams is on the portal.

4.1.4 Field work

Where the student plans to take part in field work as part of their studies, pregnancy should be risk assessed by the Faculty responsible for organizing the field work. There may be particular risks associated with the field work and the student should discuss this fully with the appropriate member of staff. Students will not be permitted to take part in field work after the 7th month of pregnancy.

If you plan to take part in field work or a placement whilst pregnant, this must be specifically addressed in the Risk Assessment completed by the Faculty as there may be special risks associated with the field work or placement. You may not be permitted to take part in field work or a placement where this constitutes a risk to you or your child.

Some professional bodies prohibit pregnant women undertaking placements and field work and where the placement is a mandatory part of your Programme you will have to suspend your Programme. You may also have to suspend if the field work or placement is a compulsory part of your degree and the Programme cannot be modified to accommodate your inability to participate in this part of the Programme.

4.1.5 Study abroad/ placement

If the student becomes pregnant whilst on a study year abroad or a placement, she must contact the Faculty to make appropriate plans to ensure that health is safeguarded and academic progress is properly managed.

4.1.6 Resuming studies

The student must inform the Faculty when she is ready to return and plan with her Programme Director an appropriate timetable for re-integration into her Programme of study, including the examination schedule. The student must also notify Registry to ensure that her University record is updated to indicate that she is back on her Programme of study.

4.1.7. Health and Safety

There may be health and safety measures needing to be put in place in order to protect the student and her unborn baby, and this will be particularly relevant in certain Facultys (e.g. where the student might be exposed to harmful chemicals or radiation, or be expected to lift heavy objects or undertake other strenuous activity). Therefore, once the student has let her Faculty know of her pregnancy, a Risk Assessment will be completed by the Faculty with the student concerned. This will identify any risks that may be present which could harm the student or her baby, and detail steps that need to be put in place to alleviate or minimise and manage these risks. The Faculty may consult the University Health & Safety Officer when completing the Risk Assessment.

It should also detail any risks that may arise from any placement period or fieldwork due to be undertaken.

The greatest risk to an unborn baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy and so it is important that the student informs the University as early as possible.

Any student who has given birth must not return to study at University within two weeks of giving birth for health and safety reasons.

4.1.9. Accommodation

Students who become pregnant whilst living in University accommodation may find that this is no longer suitable for health and safety reasons. Contact should be made with the Accommodation Office for advice.

4.1.10. Babies/Children on Campus

For health and safety reasons, as well as to avoid the disruption of classes or study, babies and children must not be brought into teaching or learning areas. Students must ensure they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they are expected to be at University.

Students must not bring babies or children to the University with the expectation that any staff member will take responsibility for caring for the child whilst the student is in classes.

Students may of course bring babies and children into public areas of the University, but the University cannot accept any liability for the child in these circumstances.

The University provides baby change facilities on campus in the toilet complex in Shannon Corridor next to the Refectory.

4.1.11. Breastfeeding

Nursing mothers should be aware that there are no specific facilities for expressing milk on campus and that alternative arrangements should be made. Room E6 can be used as a breastfeeding room for nursing mothers.

4.2 Support for fathers who have responsibility for bringing up the child

Any student discovering he is to become a father, or any partner of a pregnant student who expect to be responsible for raising the child with the mother, will be entitled to request time out of study. This is likely to include time off for medical appointments prior to, and after, the birth, as well as a period of maternity support leave immediately following the birth. A student in this situation should contact his Programme Director or another staff member, to discuss this. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this will necessarily be more limited in some Programmes than others. It should be noted that the Programme Director will require to be informed, even if discussions involve a different staff member.

5. Complaints

Any student who feels that the University has failed to live up to the standards of this policy may raise a complaint under the University's Complaints Procedure <http://simmspace/services-students/AdviceandSupport/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>. It is suggested that problems are resolved as informally as possible in the first instance. The Student Services Centre can provide impartial, confidential advice to students in this situation (contact details at the end of this document).

6. Guidance for Staff

This section provides guidance on the support of students coming under the scope of this policy, for use by any member of staff with a role in advising or supporting students. At all times, staff must ensure those students are not treated less favorably than any other student on the basis of their circumstances. In line with the University's legal obligations, flexibility should be shown where possible to ensure continued learning is facilitated. Information given by students should be treated confidentially (being passed on where necessary only with the student's consent) and with sensitivity. Staff should not attempt to influence any student's decision but should provide impartial advice.

When a student contacts a member of staff to discuss any circumstances covered by this policy, a response should be made within five working days and a meeting arranged as soon as possible thereafter. If the member of staff being contacted by the student is not the student's Programme Director, the Programme Director should nonetheless be kept informed. Staff must inform the student of this intention.

Whilst it is recognized that each request must be dealt with on an individual basis, there are a number of measures that can be used in order to enable the student's continuation of study. These include:

- Allowing time out of study/ leave of absence (for a pre-determined amount of time) for the birth and a period of time thereafter
- Prior to and after the birth, giving permission for periods of absence for medical appointments (which should, where possible, be made outside of teaching times), and planning for the student to catch up on missed classes
- Showing a degree of flexibility regarding assignment deadlines if the student's circumstances make it difficult for them to be met
- Allowing re-sit examinations to be counted as first attempts where the pregnancy or birth prevents the student from taking them at the usual first attempt (subject to submission of a

successful Extenuating Circumstances claim)

- Consideration of any requests to transfer to part-time study, where this is possible (although the student should bear in mind the financial implications of this course of action). Staff should refer the student to the useful contacts section.
- Offering support to help the student reintegrate to their studies after any period of prolonged absence

It is important to take the views and wishes of the student into account, rather than applying a standard set of arrangements. All decisions taken should be based on discussion with the student.

Whilst an appropriate degree of flexibility should be exercised, care must be taken to ensure that academic standards are not compromised. A balance must be achieved between ensuring the student is not disadvantaged, and giving undue special treatment. It is not necessary for the University to grant every request made, although efforts should be made to meet reasonable requests. Requests should not be refused solely on the basis of being too costly to implement, although this will necessarily be considered when assessing the overall 'reasonableness' of a request. If any request is refused, the reasons for the refusal should be provided in writing for the student.

Where specific arrangements are required to be put in place for a student who is already granted additional arrangements (e.g. on the grounds of disability), these should be kept separate in order that it remains clear which arrangements relate to which particular circumstance. This ensures that these arrangements are in place for the required amount of time and also clarifies adherence to the different pieces of legislation.

7. Sources of information and help

Reproductive Health and Pregnancy advice

British Pregnancy Advisory Service

<http://www.bpas.org/bpaswoman>
08457 304030

Health and Safety Executive

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>
and
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg373.pdf

Childcare

Child Care Services Association

www.childcareservices.org/

Childcare UK

www.britishservices.co.uk/childcare.htm

General information and advice

Gingerbread Single parents, equal families

www.gingerbread.org.uk

/ Adoption UK

www.adoptionuk.org.uk
0844 848 7900

Finances

Department of Work and Pensions

www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/famchild

Child Benefit Office	www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit
Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme	www.orsas.ac.uk/england
Students domiciled in England	www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
Students domiciled in Northern Ireland	www.studentfinancenir.co.uk
Students domiciled in Wales	www.studentfinancewales.co.uk
Students domiciled in Scotland	www.saas.gov.uk

St Mary's Contacts

Student Services Manager	020 8240 4189
Counsellors	020 8240 4187
Funding Officer	020 8240 4048

For further information relating to St Mary's Accommodation Office, Funding, Counselling, Medical Centre and Chaplaincy please log on to simmSPACE.stmarys.ac.uk.

Please note St Mary's University does not endorse or take responsibility for the information provided by external organizations.

EXPECTANT MOTHERS RISK ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS

All information contained in this risk assessment will be treated in the strictest confidence

Please note the following when completing this risk assessment:

Self-score key: 0 = no risk/not applicable, 1 = risk unlikely, 2 = risk possible, 3 = risk likely, 4 = risk very likely, 5 = risk certain

NAME OF STUDENT:

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR:

DATE:

Potential hazard	What is the Risk?	How to avoid the risk	Self-score for the risk in your studies (0-5) and add any notes	
PHYSICAL HAZARDS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS				
Manual handling* of loads where there is risk of injury (* Manual handling relates to excessive 'turning, bending and twisting of the body and lifting heavy loads.)	Hormonal changes in pregnancy can increase risks of injury. Postural problems may increase as your pregnancy progresses.	You should consider altering the tasks you undertake to reduce the risk of injury. You are advised to avoid activity that needs manual handling.	Score	Notes
Noise	Long exposure to loud noise may lead to increased blood pressure and tiredness. (No particular risk to breastfeeding students or new mothers)	The University already seeks to control noise, which should be sufficient, but discuss any concerns with your Programme director, particularly if you undertake studies away from the University (e.g. placements).	Score	Notes

Ionising Radiation	<p>Significant exposure can harm the foetus.</p> <p>This could be either through external exposure or by breathing in radioactive contamination.</p> <p>This is not likely to be important, unless your studies involve working with such materials. You will know this from your Programme content and your Programme director will be able to advise you.</p>	Your studies should be designed to keep the exposure below the limit for pregnant women.	Score	Notes
Electromagnetic fields and Waves (e.g. radio frequency radiation)	Over-exposure to EMF or radio-frequency radiation could cause harm by raising body temperature.	If you have concerns, you should check with your Programme director.	Score	Notes
Extremes of Heat	<p>Pregnant women have less tolerance of heat and may faint more often or be liable to heat stress.</p> <p>Breastfeeding can be impaired by heat dehydration.</p>	<p>Be careful if you are exposed to prolonged heat, particularly in the summer months</p> <p>Access to, and use of, rest facilities and refreshments will help you.</p> <p>If you consider you are having problems with the heat you should talk to your Programme director in the first instance.</p>	Score	Notes
Stress	<p>University life and studies can be stressful, especially leading up to, and during, examination periods. The negative effects of such stressors can increase with pregnancy.</p> <p>Stress can cause sleeplessness. Sleep is Important for your wellbeing - for example, it can affect your physical condition and impact on your ability to learn effectively.</p>	<p>If you feel your studies are becoming overpoweringly stressful, seek advice from your Programme director.</p> <p>You should remember that Student Services can also provide support and assistance through the Counselling Service.</p>	Score	Notes

<p>Posture and Movement, Mental and Physical Fatigue</p>	<p>Tiredness from standing and other physical work can be associated with miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight.</p> <p>Excessive physical or mental pressure may cause stress, anxiety and raised blood pressure.</p> <p>Difficulties can arise in studying for long periods in small spaces or through doing activities which require dexterity, agility, coordination, speed, reach and balance – as this can increase the risk of accident.</p>	<p>You are advised to limit how long you study, and how much you do. See if you can change the way you manage your study workload.</p> <p>Make sure there is adequate seating available and try not to stand for long periods.</p> <p>Take longer or more frequent breaks.</p> <p>Adjust your workstations or desk if this makes you feel more comfortable.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Working Alone</p>	<p>Pregnant women are more likely to need urgent medical attention.</p>	<p>Depending on their medical condition it may be necessary to review and revise the students access to communications with others and levels of (remote) supervision involved, to ensure that help and support is available when required, and that emergency procedures (if needed) consider the needs of expectant mothers.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS

<p>Any biological agent of hazard groups 2, 3 and 4.</p>	<p>It is highly unlikely that any student will be exposed to such biological hazards.</p> <p>For most students the risk of infection is not any higher at the University than from general living in the community.</p> <p>Many agents within the three risk groups can affect the unborn child if the mother is infected during pregnancy, e.g. hepatitis B, HIV, herpes, TB, syphilis, chicken pox and typhoid.</p>	<p>Much depends on the way in which infection takes place, and existing control measures.</p> <p>In the unlikely event that this is a concern for you, discuss this with your doctor.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
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Biological agents known to cause abortion of the foetus, or physical and neurological damage.	The risks of infection are generally no higher for students than others in the community Rubella (German measles) and toxoplasma can harm the foetus, as can some other biological agents.	As above.	Score	Notes
CHEMICAL HAZARDS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS				
Substances labelled R40, R45, R46 and R47 ; mercury and mercury derivatives	These substances may cause risk to health to you and/or the unborn or breastfed child, depending on how they are used.	The University protects all its students appropriately (including protection from lead and asbestos), especially new/expectant mothers. If you have any concerns, raise them with your Programme	Score	Notes
Chemical agents that are known to be dangerous and may be absorbed through the skin (includes some pesticides).	The risks will depend on the way in which the substance is being used, as well as its hazardous properties. Absorption through the skin can result from localised contamination – e.g. splashes on skin or clothing, or in certain cases from exposure to high atmospheric concentrations of vapour.	You should avoid using areas on campus where chemicals may be used by ground staff, for example. If you have concerns, raise them with your Programme director.	Score	Notes
Lead and lead Derivatives.	The nervous system of young children is particularly sensitive to the toxic effects of lead, and you should avoid this kind of exposure. Lead may affect students who work with paints and glazes (e.g. in Art) as well as with chemicals.	Check with your Programme director the contents of any chemicals (including paints and glazes).	Score	Notes
Work with display screen equipment (VDUs)	Radiation levels produced by display screen equipment are well below those that pose a risk to human health. There are no special protective measures required to protect the health of people from this radiation.	You do not need to stop work with display screen equipment	Score	Notes

PLEASE NOTE:

The list above is not exhaustive. It has been compiled with reference to 'New and Expectant Mothers at Work - A guide for Employers', published by the Health and Safety Executive, and is intended to cover the most likely possible risks for students attached to the University.

OTHER ASPECTS OF PREGNANCY THAT MAY AFFECT COURSE WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY

Aspects of Pregnancy	Factors in your Studies and Life
Morning sickness	Working excessively long hours, exposure to nauseating smells
Backache	Standing, manual handling, posture
Varicose veins	Standing, sitting
Haemorrhoids	Working in hot conditions
Frequent visits to the toilet	Difficulty in leaving activities
Increasing Size	Use of protective clothing, work in confined areas, manual handling
Tiredness	Working excessively long hours, over enthusiastic social life, evening work
Balance	Problems of working on slippery/wet surfaces
Comfort	Problems with poorly designed furniture
Dexterity, agility, co-ordination, speed, reach	May be impaired because of increasing size and changes in posture

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