

## **GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

1. UWS prides itself as being inspirational, innovative, international and inclusive. We celebrate and value the diversity of our student population and we are committed to providing Higher Education opportunities to enable people of all backgrounds to fulfil their full potential. This includes those students who have parental and/or caring responsibilities.
2. It is vital that we continually assess, and improve our approach to students who have parental responsibilities. This will include developing support mechanisms and making sure facilities meet students' requirements, as well as addressing issues such as dealing with parental-related absence, absence due to the ill health of a child, return to studies following the birth or adoption of a child, and the practicalities of completing assessments.
3. This guidance applies to all students at the University of the West of Scotland and to professional and academic staff who may advise students on these matters.

#### **Aims and Principles**

4. In developing this guidance, the University aims to:
  - Support and encourage students to achieve their full potential in their studies and in developing graduate skills and attributes;
  - Support and encourage students to maintain a healthy balance between their family responsibilities and their student responsibilities.
  - Ensure fair, safe and consistent treatment for all students
  - Meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity

#### **Approach**

5. UWS supports pregnant students and these students are entitled to a period of maternity leave. We are committed to treating pregnant students and those returning to study after a period of leave / absence fairly and we will also support them if they wish to continue with breastfeeding on their return to their studies.
6. UWS supports parents who return to their studies after the birth of their child and will offer a period of maternity/paternity/adoption leave of up to one academic session. We will also allow a deferral of studies for a similar period. The interruption to study may be extended depending on the individual circumstances of the parent. A period of Authorised Interruption of Study will not normally exceed one academic session, and the total period of Authorised Interruption of Study, which may be granted throughout the programme of study, will not normally exceed two academic sessions' (see University Regulation 1.62-1.63).
7. We also support breastfeeding students and will provide appropriate facilities on all campuses including a room suitable for expressing milk and access to a

fridge. To arrange access to the facilities at any of our campuses, please contact the Hub.

8. The guidance is designed to encourage early notification of pregnancy or parental responsibilities and to outline the key responsibilities of staff, students and placement providers.
9. The University will meet the needs of individual students and undertake due process to ensure the health and safety of a pregnant mother and her child. Discussion may take place in Schools with regard to the requirements of any professional body or, any professional body or the academic requirements of the University.
10. UWS will ensure staff are provided with appropriate support to fulfil their specific roles in relation to this guidance and to refer students to the correct agency for further professional guidance. Contact [healthandsafety@uws.ac.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@uws.ac.uk).

## **Support for students with parental responsibilities**

### Maternity support and standard procedures

11. During your pregnancy, your doctor will arrange for you to receive appropriate medical care. It is very important that you let your Personal Tutor know that you are pregnant as soon as you feel comfortable in doing so. The reasons for doing this are to make the best plans for your course of study and examinations and also to ensure any special measures needed for your safety and the safety of your child.
12. Students studying on a Tier 4 (G) or Student visa route need to be aware that taking a period of absence/interruption from their studies for any reason, including maternity may affect their visa and permission to remain in the country of study. For example, authorised absences of up to 60 days, the UK University campus can maintain Tier 4/Student visa sponsorship and the visa will not be affected. Students can request an authorised absence through the Change of Circumstances form. For absences or interruptions of more than 60 days, the University will withdraw visa sponsorship. The visa will then be curtailed (stopped) by the Home Office and the student will be required to leave the UK, this may also affect the student's access to NHS treatment. Once a student is preparing to return to the University, they will require further visa sponsorship to be issued by the University and to obtain a new student visa. Advice on this can be obtained from the International Student Advisors. Students can book appointments with the Advisors through the Hub ([hub@uws.ac.uk](mailto:hub@uws.ac.uk)).
13. Once you have informed your School of your pregnancy a Risk Assessment will be completed with you by your School or in your placement to identify any relevant risks associated with your study programme and to manage these risks for your protection. The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents.
14. Health and Safety advice can also be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/mothers](http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers) or [resilienceandsafety@uws.ac.uk](mailto:resilienceandsafety@uws.ac.uk).
15. If you do not wish to suspend your course of study, your School will try to make adjustments to your programme in the light of the risk assessment (including any recommendations regarding any precautions to be taken in these

circumstances). Such adjustments might involve modifications to the syllabus or teaching programme or location of teaching etc. However, there will be some situations where it will not be possible for the University to provide reasonable, practicable alternatives to a student's designated programme of study and in such cases a student will be required to suspend her studies (or move to part-time registration or distance learning basis if feasible). Mandatory suspension might arise where a module or modules were a required part of a programme and were considered to constitute a high level risk to your health and safety or the health and safety of your child e.g. modules that involve the use of chemicals contra-indicated for pregnant women, where the learning outcomes of the module could not be achieved without exposure to that risk.

16. Please be aware that the University has an obligation to operate an efficient and effective timetable and as such teaching is scheduled across the working day to make full use of facilities, for the benefit of all students. Weekday operating times for full time students are 9am-5pm and part time students potentially attending up to 9pm. The University minimises classes on Wednesday afternoon to enable students to participate in sporting or other such engagement activities. The University is unable to alter timetabling of its classes such that they meet the needs or preferences of individual class cohorts. You should therefore anticipate the potential for teaching to take place across the full working day and seek to make arrangements to allow you to play a full part in attending classes. The University endeavours to prepare teaching and other timetabled activity well in advance of each term and to notify students as soon as possible of the requirements for attending. It is not possible however to adjust programme timetables in response to individual needs/ responsibilities.
17. It is important that you meet regularly with your Personal Tutor to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements which have been put in place.

#### *Field work and placements*

18. If you plan to take part in field work or have placements whilst pregnant, this must be specifically addressed in the Risk Assessment completed by the School, or the placement provider, 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.

#### *Returning to study*

19. If you decide to suspend your programme of study you must let your School know when you wish to return (subject to the University's general rules on the length of any suspension) and plan with your Personal Tutor the optimum timetable for your re-integration into your programme of study, including the examination schedule. Students with a Tier 4 or student visa should indicate their return date on the Change of Circumstance form, signed by your School. You are required to take a minimum of two weeks leave following the birth of your child from all University study. Please be aware this is a legal requirement and must be adhered to in all cases.
20. Your study plans will be shared with all members of the teaching team on your programme by your Personal Tutor. This is to ensure consistency in the support and arrangements put in place to support your studies.

**Paternity/parental support and standard procedures**

21. If your partner becomes pregnant, it is very important that you let your Personal Tutor know as soon as possible. The reasons for doing this are to make the best plans for your course of study and examinations.
22. You will need to plan with your School the impact of the pregnancy on your course of study. You are entitled to interrupt your course of study because of impending parenthood and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of your study programme and your needs as an expectant parent. You will need to plan according to your individual circumstances and the timing of the academic year.
23. You are entitled to two weeks leave from University work after the baby is born and you are entitled to absences needed for attendance at ante-natal clinics. You should discuss the timing of ante-natal clinics and leave due to child birth with your Personal Tutor or the designated person in your School as soon as possible. Where any absences are substantial you may be better advised to suspend your programme of study (or go part-time or distance learning basis where feasible).
24. You should discuss with your personal tutor how you will meet the academic requirements of your course while also meeting your parental responsibilities. Your Personal Tutor will share your academic plans with the teaching team on your programme so that you will be treated consistently.

**Adoption support and standard procedures**

25. If you or your partner are undergoing adoption procedures, it is very important that you let your Programme Leader know as soon as possible. The reasons for doing this are to make the best plans for your course of study and examinations.
26. You will need to plan with your School the impact of the adoption on your course of study while ensuring you can meet your responsibilities as an adoptive parent. You are entitled to interrupt your course of study because of impending parenthood and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of your study programme and your needs as an expectant parent. You will need to plan according to your individual circumstances and the timing of the academic year. You should discuss your plans with your Personal Tutor who will share your plans with the teaching team for your programme. This is to ensure that you are treated consistently across all your modules.
27. If you are not the primary adoptive parent, you are entitled to two weeks leave from University work after the child is placed in your care as well as for attendance at pre-and post-adoption appointments. Where any absences are substantial you may be better advised to suspend your programme of study (or go part-time or distance learning basis where feasible).

**Parents and standard procedures**

28. Absences related to an inability to make arrangements for child-care or if your child is unwell are all excusable absences. If you know that you are not able to attend class as a result of your parental responsibilities it is your responsibility to

notify your Personal Tutor and arrange to discuss the implications that result from absence from your programme.

29. The University may be able to provide accommodation that is suitable for families. We will evaluate this on a case by case basis in order to understand an individual student's needs and provide the best options available. Students should email [accommodation@uws.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@uws.ac.uk) to discuss their needs with the Accommodation Team.

### Financial Support and Advice

30. The Student Support Advisers at UWS provide financial advice and support for student parents. The following web page offers specific advice for student parents in relation to childcare, both in terms of sourcing and funding: <https://www.uws.ac.uk/university-life/student-support-wellbeing/supporting-you/>
31. The Student Support Advisers are available for one to one advice and support for students who need to take a period of interruption due to pregnancy or maternity. The advice focusses on how funding may be impacted as well as the funding available for students when you are ready to return to your studies. The Student Support Advisers can help you understand benefits that you may be eligible for as well as to help you consider budgeting for a family. You can find out more at <https://www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/other-financial-support/benefits-tax-credits/>
32. The University also administers a range of childcare funds to help students meet this additional cost if they are unable to do so themselves. For more information on, including how to apply, visit <https://www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/other-financial-support/discretionary-childcare-funds/> or make an appointment with one of the advisers through the Hub ([hub@uws.ac.uk](mailto:hub@uws.ac.uk)).
33. The Student Association operate an information and advice service and manage a hardship fund. Details can be found by visiting <https://www.sauws.org.uk/advice/>

**Procedure Author** – Vice-Principal, Learning, Teaching & Students

**Procedure Owner** – Vice-Principal, Learning, Teaching & Students

**Parent Policy Statement** – Student Experience

**Public Access or Staff Only Access** – Public

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**Changes and Reason for Changes** – updated to reflect new guidance to student visa