

Guidance for Students with Parental Responsibilities

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Changes and Reason for Changes – Amendments in terminology to reflect internal and external changes and ensure consistent use of terminology across University documents, and updates to expectations in relation to attendance and engagement.



GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Background

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) prides itself in 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.

We continually assess and improve our approach to students who have parental responsibilities. This includes developing customised support mechanisms and ensuring that facilities meet students' requirements, as well as addressing issues such as the management of 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.

This guidance is designed to encourage early notification of pregnancy or parental responsibilities and to outline the key responsibilities of staff, students and placement providers. This guidance applies to all students at the University of the West of Scotland.

Principles

The University is committed to ensuring that:

- students are encouraged and supported to achieve their full potential in their studies;
- students are encouraged and supported to maintain a healthy balance between family responsibilities and their responsibilities as a student;
- there is fair, safe and consistent treatment for all students; and
- the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met in relation to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity.

Approach

UWS supports pregnant students and these students are entitled to a period of parental 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.

UWS supports parents who return to their studies after the birth of their child and offers a period of parental leave of up to one academic session. We will also allow an interruption 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 1.56-1.57 in the Regulatory Framework, available by visiting <https://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/policies-procedures-guidance/>.) Further guidance specific to Authorised Interruption of Study can be found listed on the Policies, Procedures and Guidance section of the same webpage.

We support breastfeeding students by providing 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 Student Hub, which can be found by visiting <https://www.uws.ac.uk/current-students/supporting-your-health-wellbeing/the-hub/>.

The University undertakes due process to ensure the health and safety of a pregnant student and their child.

Discussion may take place in Schools regarding the requirements of any professional body or the academic requirements of the University.

UWS ensures 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.

Standard Procedures for Support to Pregnant Students

It is very important that students inform their Personal Tutor/ Programme Leader that they are pregnant as soon as they feel comfortable in doing so. The reasons for doing this are to enable discussions about, and planning for, the student's programme of study and assessments and also to ensure any special measures needed for the safety of the pregnant student and their child. Students living in UWS student accommodation are also encouraged to inform residences staff so that they can offer support.

Students on a sponsored student visa need to be aware that taking a period of absence from or interruption to their studies for any reason, including maternity, may affect a visa and permission to remain in the country of study.

- For example, for authorised absences of up to 60 days, the UK University campus can maintain visa sponsorship and the visa will not be affected. Students can request an authorised absence through the Change of Circumstances form. This can be found by visiting the International Student Support SharePoint at <https://studentmailuwsac.sharepoint.com/sites/student-services/SitePages/International-Advice.aspx#resources-for-uws-students>.
- For absences or interruptions of more than 60 days, the University will withdraw visa sponsorship. The visa will then be stopped by the Home Office and the student will be required to leave the UK. 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 Student Hub by visiting <https://www.uws.ac.uk/current-students/supporting-your-health-wellbeing/the-hub/>.

Once the School is aware of pregnancy, a Risk Assessment will be completed with the student and the School or in the placement setting to identify any relevant risks associated with the study programme and to manage these risks.

The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents.

Health and Safety advice can also be found at www.hse.gov.uk/mothers or by contacting healthandsafety@uws.ac.uk.

For students who do not wish to interrupt their programme of study, the School will try to make adjustments to the programme of study 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 curriculum or teaching programme or location of teaching.

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 interrupt their studies (or move to part-time registration or distance learning basis if feasible). Mandatory interruption might arise where a module or modules were a required part of a programme and were considered to constitute a high-level risk to the health and safety of the pregnant student or their child e.g. modules that involve the use of chemicals contra-indicated for pregnant people, where the learning outcomes of the module could not be achieved without exposure to that risk.

Please note that students are required to take a minimum of two weeks' leave from all University study following the birth. This is in alignment with sector guidance, with the aim of ensuring the health and safety of the mother following birth.

UWS is committed to providing learning and teaching that is flexible and digitally enabled. We are a campus-based institution, and will complement high-quality, interactive on-campus learning with opportunities for students to engage physically and digitally as suits the diversity of our disciplines and our students. The University endeavours to timetable all learning activities well in advance of each term and to notify students as soon as possible of the requirements for engagement and attendance. It is not usually possible to adjust timetabled learning activities in response to individual needs / responsibilities however, where possible, alternative engagement opportunities will be offered. Students should seek advice from their Personal Tutor/Programme Leader.

It is important that students meet regularly with their Personal Tutor/Programme Leader to assess the effectiveness of any arrangements which have been put in place.

Field work and placements

Plans to take part in field work or placements whilst pregnant, 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. Field work or a placement may not be permitted where this constitutes a risk to the pregnant student or child.

Returning to study

Students who decide to interrupt their programme of study must let their School know when they wish to return (subject to the University's general rules on the length of any interruption) and plan with their Personal Tutor/Programme Leader the optimum timetable for re-integration into the programme of study, including the assessment schedule. Students on a sponsored student visa should indicate their return date on the Change of Circumstances form, signed by the School. Study plans are shared with all members of the teaching team on the programme by your Personal Tutor/Programme Leader. This is to ensure consistency in the support and arrangements put in place.

Standard Procedures for Parental Support

If a student's partner becomes pregnant, it is very important that their own Personal Tutor/Programme Leader is advised as soon as possible, so that this can be considered in relation to the plans for their study and assessments.

Students with pregnant partners need to plan with their School the impact of the pregnancy on their own programme of study. Students are entitled to interrupt their programme of study because of impending parenthood and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of the study programme and their needs as an expectant parent. Plans are made according to individual circumstances and the timing of the academic year.

Students with pregnant partners are entitled to two weeks leave from University work after the baby is born and are entitled to absences needed for attendance at ante-natal clinics. The timing of ante-natal clinics and leave due to childbirth should be discussed with the Personal Tutor/Programme Leader or the designated person in the School as soon as possible. Where any absences are substantial, students are advised to interrupt their programme of study (or change to part-time or distance learning where feasible).

There should be discussion with the Personal Tutor/Programme Leader on how the academic requirements of the programme of study are met while also meeting parental responsibilities. The Personal Tutor/Programme Leader will share the academic plans for students with pregnant partners with the teaching team on the programme to ensure consistent treatment across all modules.

Standard Procedures for Adoption Support

If students and/or their partner are undergoing adoption procedures, it is very important to advise their Personal Tutor/Programme Leader as soon as possible so that this can be considered in relation to the plans for their study and assessments.

Students need to plan with their School the impact of the adoption on their programme of study while ensuring that responsibilities as an adoptive parent are met. Students are entitled to interrupt their programme of study because of upcoming parenthood and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of the study programme their needs as an expectant parent. Plans are made according to individual circumstances and the timing of

the academic year. The Personal Tutor/Programme Leader will share plans with the teaching team on the programme. to ensure consistent treatment across all modules.

Students who are not the primary adoptive parent are entitled to two weeks leave from University work after the child is placed in their care as well as for attendance at pre-and post-adoption appointments. Where any absences are substantial students are advised to interrupt their programme of study (or change to part-time or distance learning where feasible).

Parents and standard procedures (short term or unexpected)

Absences related to an inability to make arrangements for childcare or if a child is unwell are all excusable absences. If it is known that attendance at a class will be missed because of parental responsibilities it is the student's responsibility to notify their Personal Tutor/Programme Leader and arrange to discuss the implications that result from absence from the programme.

Student Accommodation

UWS Student Residences do not have units which accommodate families. UWS Student Union Case Workers can provide advice on accommodation options including private rentals and local council housing support options. More information can be found by visiting <https://www.uwsunion.org.uk/advice/accommodation/>.

Financial Support and Advice

The Funding and Advice Team at UWS provide financial advice and support for student parents. A range of student funding and money management guidance, including information on discretionary and childcare funds, is available at: <https://www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/>

The Funding and Advice team offers one-to-one advice and support for students who need to take a period of interruption due to pregnancy, maternity, adoption or parental leave. The advice focusses on how funding may be impacted as well as the funding available for students when they are ready to return to studies.

The Funding and Advice team can help students understand benefits that they may be eligible for as well as to help consider budgeting for a family. Find out more at <https://www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/money-debt-advice/benefits/>

The University also administers a range of childcare funds to help students meet this additional cost if they are unable to do so. For more information, including how to apply, students are encouraged to visit <https://www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/discretionary-childcare-funds/> or make an appointment with the Funding and Advice team through the Student Hub (hub@uws.ac.uk).

The Students' Union operate an information and advice service and manage a hardship fund. Details can be found by visiting <https://www.uwsunion.org.uk/advice/>