

Guidance for students on pregnancy and parental leave

If you or your partner become pregnant, this guidance has been developed to help you manage this as easily as possible. It covers the University’s approach regarding student pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption leave.

The guidance below applies to undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research students who are about to become parents. If you believe you may have more specific needs or different requirements, please refer to the Student Registry for further information. Please refer to section K for a flow diagram outlining the steps to be taken in arranging parental leave for students.

Definitions:

Maternity: a student who will give birth or adopt a child

Paternity: a student who will be the father of a child, the husband or partner of the mother (or adopter), the child’s adopter or the intended parent

A. Summary of responsibilities

<p>Students are responsible for: Disclosing their pregnancy to a member of their College in order to discuss any necessary support arrangements, required study adjustments or possible health and safety issues. Students on Tier 4 visas should contact the International Student Team for advice on visa implications.</p> <p>The College will communicate with the Department / Faculty with the student’s consent.</p>	<p>The University should ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any student who becomes pregnant is accommodated as far as practicable in completing their programme of study • Relevant staff are made aware of this guidance and their responsibilities • Appropriate support is made available through University support services
<p>Faculties and Departments should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant staff are made aware of this guidance and their responsibilities if a student discloses a pregnancy • A risk assessment is conducted if required • Students are aided in organising time off for appointments and any required teaching adjustments. • Students receive accurate advice and guidance, in line with the recommendations of this document, in a timely and appropriate manner. 	

B. Who to speak to if you become pregnant

Obviously you should speak to someone you feel most comfortable with. However, following that initial conversation you are advised to speak with your College Tutor or give permission for the person you spoke to initially to pass on the appropriate information to your College Tutor. You should inform your College no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth, to ensure that any arrangements can be made in good time.

If you are an International student you should contact the International Student Team (International.Students@admin.cam.ac.uk) for advice on any implications to your visa of taking a period of maternity leave.

If you make the decision to end the pregnancy, or you miscarry, then you do not have to inform your College or the University. If you need to take time away from your studies, you are advised to inform your Director of Studies or Supervisor that you will be away for medical reasons.

At any stage and if for any reason you would like some support, please contact the University Counselling Service or the Student Advice Service. They can offer support and advice on academic and personal matters including pregnancy.

C. Managing your studies

Your College should arrange for a meeting with your Department or Faculty to discuss how the pregnancy is likely to impact upon your studies and how best to manage this prior to intermitting. They may suggest that a risk assessment is carried out by Occupational Health to protect both your health and that of your unborn child, but this will depend on your Department or course of study.

D. Maternity leave

Please see the flow diagram on page 7

All students should be permitted to take a period of maternity-related absence following the birth of their child. If you do not want to take time out of your course as a result of pregnancy and/or maternity, there is no requirement for you to do so but it is strongly recommended that new mothers do not return earlier than two weeks after the birth.

After discussions with your Tutor, you will need to decide whether an interruption of your studies is required, the impact this may have on your studies and how long this period may be.

The exact length of the period of time you may wish to interrupt your studies for (known as 'disregarding terms' if an undergraduate or 'intermitting' if a graduate student) should be determined by a number of factors including when the baby is due and the requirements of the course undertaken. If you are advised that the structure of the course requires you to return before you would otherwise wish to, the reason should be detailed in writing to you. Graduate students may intermit their studies for up to 12 months.

You can start your maternity leave at any point during the pregnancy, after discussion with your Tutor. You may wish to study up to your due date, or begin the maternity leave a term prior to that date, where practicable.

If your child is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy or born alive at any point of the pregnancy, you should be allowed to take a period of maternity leave.

Maternity leave is unpaid for students unless you are entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay, or are a graduate student who is eligible for a stipend during a period of maternity leave.

Additional information for Graduate and Postgraduate students

Graduate students who wish to take time out of their studies for maternity, paternity or adoption leave must apply for an intermission of study for this period. When you apply for intermission, indicate the dates that you intend to be away from your studies (you may apply to intermit for up to 12 months). Your thesis submission deadline will be recalculated to take account of any period of intermission.

Some graduate students may be entitled to a period of paid maternity leave, depending on their funding body. If you are funded by a Research Council grant or by your Department, Faculty or School you may be entitled to receive your usual stipend for a period of up to 26 weeks of maternity leave or up to 2 weeks for paternity leave. You should contact your funding administrator to determine your entitlement.

Students funded by Departments, Faculties or Schools may be entitled to a funded period of up to 26 weeks for maternity leave or a funded period of up to 2 weeks for paternity leave, at the normal rate of stipend. If you take maternity or paternity leave during the period of your funding award, you will be entitled to paid leave. If, after taking a period of paid maternity or paternity leave you do not return and complete your course of study you will be required to repay all or part of the funding received during this period. If both parents are funded by Departments, Faculties and Schools they may wish to consider shared parental leave, up to a maximum of 26 weeks paid leave between them.

E. Returning to study

Prior to starting your maternity leave, the date that you intend to return should be discussed with your Tutor. This date may change during your maternity leave. You should maintain contact with your College and Faculty / Department and communicate any anticipated changes to your return date as soon as possible. If you are a graduate student and you wish to change the dates of your intermission for maternity leave, you should also contact the Student Registry (Student.Registry@admin.cam.ac.uk) and the International Student Team (International.Students@admin.cam.ac.uk) if you are a Tier 4 visa holder.

You are advised to meet with your Tutor prior to your return to discuss whether you will require any changes in the way that you study, additional support and any other considerations.

F. Students with babies and young children

University social spaces will be available to you while you are breastfeeding or have a baby less than six months with you. Rest facilities for pregnant and breastfeeding women should be made available where possible within your Faculty / Department if you request it, and you should also be given access to refrigeration if required. Faculties / Departments may wish to extend facilities they already make available to breastfeeding staff to students or other nearby University or College facilities may be available.

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for you to request permission for a baby or young child to

accompany you to tutorials and lectures. This may not always be possible, as there may be health and safety issues to consider, as well as the potential disturbance of other students. Any such request should be an exception, and should not be as a substitute to on-going child care provision.

Information on the University's childcare facilities is available from the [Childcare Office](#).

G. Students who are fathers or partners (including same-sex)

If your partner is pregnant you can request absence from your studies to attend medical appointments, as well as a period of paternity leave following the birth. You should discuss this with your Tutor as soon as practical.

In the case of same sex couples, if you are a woman who is pregnant then you will be eligible to take maternity leave, whereas if you are her partner you will be able to take paternity leave.

If you wish to take paternity leave then the University may allow you to intermit for up to a year.

If you are a student receiving funding from a research council, then you are permitted a period of paternity leave and additional paternity leave if required. You should contact the Student Registry (Fees and Funding Team) for more information.

H. Adoptive parents

If you have been matched for adoption, you should inform your Tutor as soon as possible. If you are a student who adopts a child then you will be entitled to intermit for the purposes of adoption leave, but please note that only one of the adoptive parents may take adoption leave. The other parent will be entitled to take paternity leave (regardless of whether he / she is a student or not).

I. University Contacts

Tutor: for an undergraduate student this will be the Senior Tutor, or you may wish to speak to your Director of Studies in the first instance. For graduate students, this will be your Graduate Tutor.

Student Registry can be contacted at student.registry@admin.cam.ac.uk or on 01223 766302 (internal extension 66302)

Student Advice Service can be contacted at advice@studentadvice.cam.ac.uk or on 01223 746999 (internal extension 46999)

International Student Team can be contacted at internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk or on 01223 761806 (internal extension 61806)

J. Additional information

Adoption UK – Adoption UK is a national charity run by and for adopters, providing self-help information, advice, support and training on all aspects of adoption and adoptive parenting: www.adoptionuk.org.uk.

Direct Gov – Direct Gov is the UK government’s website. It provides information on health, care and benefits during pregnancy, benefits for parents etc: www.direct.gov.uk. The Direct Gov website also provides information on finding and choosing a childcare provider in your local area: www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Childcare.

Family Planning Association – The Family Planning Association’s mission is to establish a society in which everyone can make informed choices about sex, relationships and reproduction. Its website contains impartial advice on pregnancy, abortion, adoption and also contains a list of useful organisations: www.fpa.org.uk.

Family and Parenting Institute – The Family and Parenting Institution provides support to parents in bringing up their children and has a range of resources for parents: www.familyandparenting.org.

Marie Stopes – Marie Stopes is the UK’s leading provider of sexual and reproductive healthcare services. The services include unplanned pregnancy counselling, termination information and advice etc: www.mariestopes.org.uk/.

Miscarriage Association – The Miscarriage Association offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby during pregnancy: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk.

National Union of Students Provides information and advice to students and students’ unions about student finance, rights and welfare. Information for student parents is available on its website, along with research and publications about students with dependant children: www.nus.org.uk

SANDS – The Still Birth and Neonatal Death charity provides support to anyone affected by the loss of a baby and conducts research into the causes of still and neo-natal death: www.uk-sands.org.

K. Pregnancy/Maternity/Paternity/Adoption leave flow diagram

