



THE UNIVERSITY OF
BUCKINGHAM

MEDICAL SCHOOL

MB ChB

Guidance on Student Maternity, Paternity and Adoption

1 Introduction

These guidelines provide advice and guidance to registered students who are pregnant or become parents at the commencement of or during their studies. Although they are focussed on study related issues they aim to give information on other sources of advice. The document is also intended to be used as a point of reference by staff who have a role in advising students and whose advice and guidance may be sought on these issues. The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new protection from discrimination for students during pregnancy and maternity. This policy has been developed using the Equality Challenge Unit guidance Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions.

2 Policy Statement

The Medical School aims to provide an environment where students are supported fairly and with dignity and respect, including during maternity, paternity, the process of adoption and whilst breastfeeding. We believe that becoming pregnant or caring for a very young child should not prevent a student from succeeding in their studies. We will therefore apply Regulations as flexibly as possible, seeking to ensure that students are not disadvantaged whilst ensuring that academic standards are maintained. The degree of flexibility which can be applied will vary according to the stage of the course.

Staff will demonstrate a supportive approach when discussing issues with students and will advise them of other available services if they are unable to provide appropriate advice themselves. Any information provided by a student will be handled confidentially and will only be shared with others with the student's consent.

3 Disclosure

Students are required to notify us if they become pregnant or a parent while they are a student to enable us to consider whether it is possible to adopt a flexible approach, to provide appropriate support, and to conduct a health and safety assessment.

Students are encouraged to disclose a pregnancy, in confidence, at an early stage in case their studies carry potential health and safety risks for the mother and her unborn child. Other considerations will include whether ante-natal appointments might impact on studies and whether other bodies, such as placement providers and the Occupational Health services need to be informed for the purposes of risk assessments for example. Students should request a meeting with their Personal Tutor or the Student Support Lead to discuss and agree a plan for their studies. Potential risks to the student should be reviewed by the school and where necessary, adjustments made to procedures. Discussions should also take place about agreeing any periods of absence and making arrangements for the student to catch up on any missed lectures/tutorials so she/he is not placed at a disadvantage. Consideration may also need to be given to whether any special arrangements need to be put in place with respect to

placements at LEP's or Electives or Assistantships. Advice should also be given on how to apply for suspension of studies to allow for a period of maternity or adoption related absence, if required by the student; including the mandatory two week leave period after delivery.

4 Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave

The Medical School understands that some students, or their partners, will have a pregnancy during the course, and will need a period of leave. The first principle is that all students must meet the standards set by the Medical School and General Medical Council in order to graduate. Within that requirement, we will facilitate, as a minimum the provision of maternity/paternity leave on broadly the same term as if the student were in employment. It must be accepted, however, that this will in most cases, delay the date of graduation.

All women who become pregnant during the course will be entitled to legally take a minimum period of 2 weeks leave preceding and following the expected date of delivery. The nature of the medical course means that depending on the timing of the due date a student may need to take a much longer period than this minimum leave in order to return to the course at an educationally appropriate point.

If a student suffers a stillbirth after the 24th week of pregnancy, the student will be entitled to the same maternity leave as if her baby was born alive.

Students are strongly advised to delay adoption of young children until after they graduate, but in the unlikely event of the adoption of a baby one partner will be entitled to the same period of post adoption leave as a student who has given birth to a baby. Details of the adoption must be supplied to the Medical School as soon as is possible to do so.

A woman who becomes pregnant whilst a medical student will normally suspend completely her studies before the expected date of delivery. The usual time for suspension will be at 34-36 weeks gestation. Mitigating circumstances in relation to the pregnancy will be considered through the Mitigating Circumstances process and through discussion with the Occupational Health Services who will provide appropriate advice. The suspension will normally continue for a period of 6 to 8 weeks post-delivery, though the precise time of return will depend upon circumstances, so the period is likely to be considerably longer. The exact period of suspension will depend on where the student is within the course and the assessment period, the recommendations from the Occupational Health Services and relevant risk assessment. The normal expectation is that a student will take a period of up to 12 months of temporary withdrawal. The reason for this length of suspension is because all elements of the course have to be satisfactorily completed and the fact that year examinations are at set times.

In Phase 1 of the course the nature of the Unit teaching and the End of Term assessments means that any period of absence of greater than 2 weeks makes it extremely difficult to catch up. In Phase 2 of the course students are required to satisfactorily complete all clinical placements. It is likely that a student will miss at least two blocks as a minimum while on maternity leave. In all such cases the student will be required to take a year of suspension.

There may be a limited number of students where the timing of the delivery adjacent to a holiday period might result in missing only one clinical block. In such circumstances it may be possible to review the return date. This will depend on the absence being early in the rotation, the student's prior academic and attendance record, the recommendation of the Occupational Health Services and taking the re-sit examination rather than the main examination in order to catch up missed work.

In Phase 2 every effort will be made to organise reasonably family-friendly placements for the first block after return, but it must be recognised that any further concessions will, in an overstretched system, inevitably disadvantage other students and will not normally be allowed. Students may apply for 'special circumstances' and any request will be considered. Some students may request a longer period of maternity leave. This will be discussed at an individual level. Taking a longer break, or having more than one pregnancy will delay graduation, and put a student at risk of not completing the course within 7 years, which is a regulatory requirement in our MB ChB Policies and Procedures

All students whose partner becomes pregnant will be entitled to a short period of leave (normally 5 working days) following the delivery of the child, provided that this does not coincide with major assessments (unless the student accepts that their graduation may be delayed as a result).

Students receiving funding from a sponsor should contact their sponsor for further advice regarding maternity/paternity leave.

5 Visa issues for International Students

International students should seek advice from the University's Visa Officer at the earliest opportunity to determine whether there are any implications for their visa status. In exceptional cases, International Officers may seek further advice from the UKVI to determine appropriate options for a particular student.

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 they leave the UK. International students who have a financial sponsor should also contact them for further advice and guidance.

6 Accommodation

Students living in University accommodation who find this is no longer suitable during their pregnancy should seek advice from Accommodation. The University has some accommodation for families with children and babies. This is subject to availability.

7 Placements, Electives and Assistantships

Where a student becomes pregnant before or during Electives there may be circumstances where the University is limited in the support it can provide. Where there is judged to be a risk to the student or her unborn child she may be strongly advised to remain in the UK. Consideration of travel/study abroad/work placements should be informed by the advice of a registered midwife or doctor and Occupational Health Services. Where a student is on placement/assistantships she will be required to follow her employer's regulations/policies in addition to University requirements.

8 Exams and academic work

Appropriate reasonable adjustments may be made if students need to sit exams whilst pregnant. The Medical School will follow the advice of the midwife and Occupational Health Service concerning the suitability of sitting exams whilst pregnant.

Document Version Information

Document Title: Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy

Originator: Dr Claire Stocker, Mrs Nikki Dean

Date: 1st August 2019

Replacing Document: v1

Approved: Programme Exec August 2019, Chairs Action

Date: 14th August 2019