# Policy on support for pregnant students and students with very young[[1]](#footnote-1) children

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## [Key Steps](#_Key_Steps)

These are the steps that could most usefully be taken when a student or applicant discloses a pregnancy – [Section 6](#_6._What_process) of this policy contains more information about each stage.

**Step 1:** Student consults their GP and other appropriate services and considers disclosing their pregnancy to their School/Faculty, particularly where elements of their programme of study present risk to the health and safety of the student or child.

**Step 2a:** Taught Students; Student requests a meeting with their personal tutor, or other trusted member of staff, to discuss the implications of their pregnancy for their course of study.

**Step 2b:** Research Students; Student requests a meeting with their supervisor and/or their postgraduate research tutor to discuss the implications of their pregnancy for their programme of study.

**Step 3:** The member of staff considers the implications of the pregnancy for the course of study – and ensures that any appropriate risk assessment(s) are completed for any potentially hazardous elements of the programme of study, including course placements, study abroad and fieldwork.

**Step 4:** Student explores any potential implications of agreed flexibilities on payment of tuition fees with the Accounts receivable section of Student Administration.

**Step 5:** School/Faculty prepares a written statement detailing agreed flexibilities and sends a copy to the student.

**Step 6:** Responsible member of staff communicates written agreement to personal tutor and other relevant staff/exam boards along with, where appropriate, a mitigating circumstances form.

**Step 7:** Student and member of staff jointly monitor agreement and any risk assessments through pregnancy and agree further adjustments if the need arises.

## Introduction

This policy provides both students and staff – particularly personal tutors, academic tutors, programme managers, postgraduate research tutors and all other staff who have a role in advising or supporting students – with information about the University’s approach to supporting a student, or prospective student, who is pregnant or has decided to terminate a pregnancy or is a primary adopter. It also provides some information relating to supporting a student who has recently become a parent (including through adoption) or is the partner of someone who has a very young child. The University has a separate [policy on support for students who are parents or carers](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/148/policy_on_support_for_students_who_are_parents_or_carers_pdf) covering the support available to students with dependants.

## Key guiding principles

The University of Leeds believes that being or becoming pregnant, terminating a pregnancy or having a very young child (including through adoption) should not, in itself, be a barrier to a student starting, succeeding in, or completing a programme of study at the University. The University is committed to being as flexible as possible, whilst, at the same time, making sure that any accommodations made for the student do not compromise academic standards. The special arrangements which can and should be made for a student in these circumstances will vary from Faculty to Faculty and from programme to programme. However, the general approach to be taken in these circumstances is consistent across the University – as is the legal framework in which the University operates.

This policy is based on a set of important guiding principles, namely:

* **Avoiding less favourable treatment**. The University and its staff shall make sure they avoid treating a student less favourably than other students on the grounds that they are pregnant[[2]](#footnote-2) or has terminated a pregnancy. Whilst particular arrangements may need to be made for an individual student (for example, a student should not return to University for two weeks after giving birth for health reasons and 4 weeks in the event that they a on a factory based work placement), the University will seek to make sure that such arrangements do not place the student at a particular disadvantage compared to other students.
* **Taking a flexible approach**. The University recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and its staff will take a flexible approach to facilitating the continued learning of – and maintaining a high-quality and safe student experience for – a pregnant student, a student who is the parent of a very young child or a student whose partner is in either of these positions.
* **Demonstrating a non-judgmental and sensitive approach**. When supporting and working with a student on these matters, staff must take an open-minded and non-judgmental approach. Information provided by the student should be treated sensitively and only passed on to others on a need-to-know basis (for example, in order to set up appropriate adjustments for the student).
* **Enabling informed choices**. Members of staff will not attempt to direct or unduly influence a student’s decisions. Their role is to provide context and advice to the student, and to explore, in consultation with the student and others, flexibility that can be applied to the student’s programme or period of study to provide appropriate support.

## Summary of Key Responsibilities

The University will ensure that:

* Any student who becomes pregnant before or during a period of study at the University is accommodated as far as practicable to allow them to complete their programme of study, providing academic standards are upheld.
* Relevant staff are made aware of the terms of this policy and their responsibilities arising under it.
* Support and guidance is available for staff undertaking risk assessments on elements of the programme of study that are likely to result in a risk to the health and safety of the student or unborn child.
* Staff in the Equality Policy Unit are available to discuss with staff the best way to support the continuing study of a pregnant student to ensure they are able to complete their programme of study.
* Appropriate support is available to students through various support services.
* The policy is kept under review and updated as necessary.

Schools and faculties must ensure that:

* The policy is widely publicised and available to staff and students.
* Students are made aware of the policy and encouraged to disclose a pregnancy in confidence at an early stage, **particularly where elements of their programme of study might result in a risk to the health and safety of the student or unborn child** ([see Section 3](#_3._Does_a)).
* Staff are aware of the policy so that they can respond appropriately when a student discloses their pregnancy and seeks support to continue their programme of study.
* As soon as a student discloses that they are pregnant, a risk assessment, or series of risk assessments, are undertaken to ensure that there are no elements of the programme of study that present a risk to the health and safety of the student or the unborn child ([See Section 3](#_3._Does_a)).
* Wherever practicable, accommodation is made to ensure that a pregnant student, or student with a very young child, is able to complete their programme of study.
* If requested, an appropriate member of staff is identified with whom a pregnant student can discuss their support needs.
* The student is given information on other sources of advice/support (particularly immigration advice for international students, available from the International Student Office) ([see Section 12](#_12.__Links)).

### Individual staff members

All individual staff members are advised to:

* Familiarise themselves with this policy and the University’s responsibilities towards students who are pregnant or have very young children.

Individual staff members to whom a pregnancy is disclosed are **responsible for:**

* Reading the policy and, in particular, becoming familiar with the procedure for supporting pregnant students.
* Treating any disclosure of a pregnancy seriously and making students aware of appropriate sources of support.
* Respecting a student’s right to confidentiality and verifying that a student has no objections to their pregnancy being discussed with others – particularly when information needs to be passed on to other staff members to arrange any agreed accommodations to the programme of study or adjustments to fees.
* Ensuring accurate information is given to prospective students regarding the availability of support for students who are pregnant or have very young children.
* Seeking advice from colleagues or central support services within the University if they are unsure of how best to support the continued study of a pregnant student ([see Section 9](#_What_support_is)).

### Students (and applicants)

Students and applicants covered by this policy **are responsible for**:

* Disclosing their pregnancy to a trusted member of staff within their School or Faculty at an early stage of their pregnancy, with a view to discussing any necessary support arrangements or adjustments – particularly where elements of their programme of study might present a health and safety hazard to the student or unborn child ([see Section 3).](#_Does_a_student)
* In the case of applicants, it is advisable to inform their Admissions Tutor at an early stage so that consideration can be given to appropriate support being available from the commencement of their programme of study.
* Ensuring the safe supervision of any child they may bring onto campus.

Students and applicants covered by this policy are advised to:

* Read the policy in order to understand the University’s approach to supporting pregnant students and students with very young children.
* Ensure that they have a clear idea of what will be expected of them on their course of study in order to understand the potential impact of pregnancy related absence.
* Discuss any concerns they have relating to their pregnancy with the Leeds Student Medical Practice or their own GP and, if required, staff in one or more of the following services: the LUU Student Advice Centre, Student Counselling Centre, Health and Safety Services, Accommodation Services and the Chaplaincy ([see Section 12 for contact details](#_12.__Links)).

## Does a student need to notify the School/Faculty[[3]](#footnote-3) of their pregnancy?

**Please note that it is particularly important that a student informs their School/Faculty at an early stage of a pregnancy where there is a potential risk to the health and safety of the student and/or their child (see below). The School or Faculty should then carry out a risk assessment as soon as possible to minimise any potential risk.**

Students are not under any obligation to inform their School/Faculty if they become pregnant, have a child, or decide to terminate a pregnancy whilst they are a student here. However, it is important to note that a School/Faculty will not be able to take a flexible approach to the programme of study, or provide specific support to the student, unless it knows about the situation. If requested, the School/Faculty will identify an appropriate member of staff to discuss such support needs.

Whilst making a decision on whether or not to inform their School/Faculty, students are encouraged to consider the following:

* There may be elements of a programme of study that could present a health and safety risk to a pregnant student and/or their child`[[4]](#footnote-4). A student’s School/Faculty will not be able to arrange appropriate risk assessments unless it is aware of their pregnancy.
* If a student’s pregnancy-related absence (for example, for antenatal appointments) impacts significantly on the student’s studies, the School/Faculty will only be able to take proper account of the reasons for absence if they are notified of these[[5]](#footnote-5).
* In some cases, a student’s pregnancy-related absence from University might be something that needs to be discussed with other organisations. For example, if a postgraduate research student is in receipt of a University or Departmental Scholarship or funding from a Research Council or other external body, they should refer to the terms and conditions relating to their award. The student will generally be required to notify their supervisor and in some cases a relevant Maternity Leave Request form will have to be completed, supported by a MATB1 certificate or doctor's letter. This could make it more important for the student to notify the School/Faculty of the situation.
* Sometimes, the absence of a student from University can adversely affect the work of other students they are working alongside (for example, on a group project or in a research team), which might make it more important to notify the School/Faculty, so that plans can be made to deal with any such issues arising from the absence.

Various sources of advice and support are available to students, whether or not they decide to notify their School/Faculty of their circumstances ([see Section 12 for more information)](#_12.__Links).

**Note for International Students:** If an international student requires a Tier 4 General Student visa to remain in the UK during their period of study, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regulations must be taken into consideration. Where a student is in the UK with a Tier 4 (General) student visa the University is required to notify the Home Office of any suspension of study. This may result in the curtailment of immigration permission. Both the School/Faculty and the student should seek advice from the International Student Office as early as possible during the pregnancy. This will enable colleagues to ensure that the student understands any implications for their immigration status and that any arrangements agreed with the student comply with UKVI requirements. Early discussions are also important because a late or unexpected decision to fly home could be affected by health considerations. More information can be found on [the international student support webpage](https://linkto.leeds.ac.uk/).

## What support is available to assist a student in deciding whether or not to continue with a pregnancy?

Whilst only the student themselves can make the decision as to whether or not to continue with their pregnancy, a range of services across the University and students’ union can assist by providing confidential support and information about the options available, and, in some cases, other practical assistance. These services include, for example:

* The Leeds University Union (LUU) [Student Advice Centre](https://www.luu.org.uk/?utm_source=olddomains&utm_content=leedsuniversityunionorguk).
* The [Student Counselling Centre](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/100001/counselling).

See [Section 12](#_12.__Links) for links to these and other services.

Students also have access to external organisations for information, advice or support.

These include the student’s own GP, [Brook Advisory Centres](http://www.brook.org.uk), the [Marie Stopes International Leeds Centre](https://www.mariestopes.org.uk/find-us/), [the Family Planning Association](http://www.fpa.org.uk).

At this stage, a student may also wish to consider the impact that having a child may have on their studies. [Section 6](#_6._What_process) describes the procedure for a student to discuss with their School how their programme of study might be adjusted to take account of their pregnancy and/or childcare responsibilities.

## What support is available in the event of a miscarriage or stillbirth?

In the event of a miscarriage or stillbirth a student may wish to access support from:

* The [Student Counselling Centre](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/100001/counselling).
* [SANDS - the stillbirth and neonatal deaths society.](https://www.sands.org.uk/)

## What process should be followed for a student and their School/Faculty to discuss the impact that the student’s pregnancy or childcare responsibilities may have on their studies?

This section outlines a series of steps for students and staff to follow in order to discuss and respond to the requirements of an individual student who is pregnant. **This section should be read in conjunction with the key steps presented at the beginning of this policy.**

**Step 1**: The student is strongly advised to consult the Leeds Student Medical Practice or their GP to discuss medical issues relating to their pregnancy prior to approaching their School/Faculty. It is particularly important to take advice at an early stage if there is any possible health and safety risk[[6]](#footnote-6).

Since the focus of this 7-step process is on considering the implications of pregnancy on the student’s programme of study and academic work, students are also reminded that they can, at any stage, contact other sources of non-academic advice and support (including the Student Counselling Centre, the LUU Student Advice Centre, the Chaplaincy, Health and Safety Services, etc. [See Section 12 for contact details](#_12.__Links)).

**Step 2a: Taught Students**

The student has the right to request a meeting with their personal tutor or other trusted staff member. (Some Schools/Faculties may choose to identify another member of pastoral support staff for students to contact to discuss these issues. Any School/Faculty taking this route must publicise the appropriate point of contact to all students – e.g. on its website and in School handbooks.) If so requested, the School/Faculty will identify an appropriate member of staff to discuss the implications for the continuation of their study.

The student and the relevant staff member must meet to discuss and agree a plan for their continuation of study. Whenever possible, the member of staff should contact the student within 5 working days of the request being received from the student and meet their as soon as possible thereafter. Where the agreed accommodations fall under mitigating circumstances, the relevant form should be completed and submitted as normal.

At the meeting, it is essential that urgent consideration is given to undertaking a risk assessment ([see Step 3 below](#step3)). In addition, careful consideration must be given to the variety of ways in which the student can be enabled to continue their studies during their pregnancy or after the birth. For example, these might include:

* Agreeing periods of absence and making arrangements for the student to catch-up on lectures/tutorials missed for pregnancy/birth related reasons to ensure that they are not at an academic disadvantage.
* Adjusting timescales/deadlines for assessed coursework or exam submission deadlines if the pregnancy or birth prevents compliance.
* Consulting the Faculty or School Special Cases/Special Circumstances/Mitigating Circumstances Committee (local names vary - FSCC[[7]](#footnote-7)) about the potential for flexibility in relation to the way in which credits are scheduled/distributed.
* Seeking approval, as appropriate, from the FSCC for alternative means of assessment for the student (for example, a written assessment instead of a physical performance) if the pregnancy or birth prevents the normal methods of assessment.
* Allowing the student first attempt re-sits at future examination periods, for example in a situation in which the pregnancy or birth prevents the student from taking an examination at the normal time for their programme of study.
* The student taking some time out from their studies which would involve the student completing a Temporary Leavers Form (taught students) or speaking to their Research Tutor to discuss suspension/extension of study (research students), normally for a predetermined amount of time. The period of temporary leave may be extended if the time required to complete the programme of study will still fall within the maximum time limit allowed for the programme either by the University (and/or, where applicable, professional bodies).
* Consideration of a transfer to part-time study (information on the financial support available to part-time students is available from the Financial Aid section within Student Administration via telephone 0113 343 2007 or via e-mail.

As well as covering the student’s longer-term plans relating to their studies, the continuation of study plan should also:

* Accommodate the student’s antenatal care.
* include a break from attending University of at least two weeks after giving birth (or 4 weeks in the event of a work placement in a factory environment) for health reasons, and
* include provision for re-integrating the student to the programme of study on return from any prolonged absence.

The staff member overseeing the support. Arrangements should refer to the guidance below when considering what flexibility might be appropriate in any given situation.

**Step 2b: Postgraduate Research Degree Students**

If a research degree student becomes pregnant, the appropriate individual to contact will normally be their supervisor(s) and/or the postgraduate research tutor within the School/Faculty. The postgraduate supervisor(s) and research tutor will work together with the student to consider the impact of the pregnancy and any resulting suspension of study. This will include a risk assessment as described in step 3 below. Postgraduate students who are paid by the university will have employment status and the University’s Maternity Leave regulations will apply.

The Postgraduate Research Tutor may request permission from the Graduate Board, on behalf of the student, for a period of suspended study for reasons of maternity leave. [The Research Student Administration suspension / extension policy can be found online.](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html#progress) The student is responsible for checking the implications of a suspension of study with their scholarship awarding body or provider at an early stage. For students funded by a Research Council, or on a University Research Scholarship, advice is available from [Research Student Administration](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/policies.html).

**Step 3:** The staff member overseeing the support arrangements for the student (e.g. the personal tutor, research supervisor or other designated person) should ensure that appropriate steps are taken in relation to health and safety issues. In most cases, this will involve a risk assessment for the individual student. Advice can be sought from the School/Faculty Safety Supervisor and/or the University Health and Safety Service.

For some students – for example, those participating in field trips, studying a laboratory-based subject, working with equipment which poses a danger to the health of a pregnant person or unborn child (e.g. equipment producing radiation) or taking a programme of study which involves high levels of physical activity – it will be even more important that the health and safety implications of pregnancy are given serious consideration. In these situations, staff should seek advice as soon as possible from the School/Faculty Health and Safety Coordinator or Health and Safety Manager and/or University Health and Safety Services and a full risk assessment should be completed, [Health and safety risk assessment guidance (Word)](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2020/10/Health-and-Safety-Risk-Assessment-Guidance-Notes-Student-Pregnancy-Policy.docx) and the [Risk Assessment template (Word)](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2020/10/Risk-Assessment-Template-Student-Pregnancy-Policy.docx) can be viewed online.

If it is not practicable to alter the study conditions to respond to the risk(s) highlighted by this assessment, or if such an alteration would not avoid any identified risk(s), the student may need to take time out from their study to ensure the risks are avoided – although a concerted effort should be made by the School/Faculty to manage the health and safety risks and find alternative ways of allowing a student to continue their course in any situation where a temporary withdrawal is not in line with their wishes.

**Step 4:** A student who is considering suspending studies or changing the mode of study from full time to part-time should explore this at an early stage with their School and the Accounts Receivable section of Student Administration to identify any potential impact that the flexibility proposed may have in terms of payment of tuition fees. Please note that international students in the UK with a Tier 4 General Student Visa are not permitted to change to part-time study.

In the event that a student needs to suspend their studies, every effort will be made to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged e.g. if studies are suspended, the tuition fee would be reduced pro rata for the current year and would normally be at the same rate on return (subject to a small inflationary increase).

**Please note that, if the student is in receipt of a bursary or scholarship, they must also discuss the implications of any absence with the funding body.**

**Step 5**:The student and staff member should meet to discuss and agree a written plan for the student’s continuation of study (detailing any specific flexibility agreed to allow the student to continue their studies) and a copy held by the student and the School. Where the agreed accommodations fall under mitigating circumstances, the relevant form should be completed and submitted as normal.

Where a student is dissatisfied with the degree of flexibility offered, they may ask their School/Faculty for information about the local complaints procedures or make a formal complaint, if appropriate – in line with the [Student Complaints Procedure](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/student_complaints.html). The [Leeds University Union Advice Centre](https://www.luu.org.uk/?utm_source=olddomains&utm_content=leedsuniversityunionorguk) is available to advise on submitting and appeal or complaint.

**Step 6**: The staff member overseeing the support arrangements should communicate the agreed continuation plan to the Personal Tutor/Research Supervisor and other relevant teaching staff and/or examination boards, as appropriate. Information should be passed on sensitively.

**Step 7:** The student and their personal tutor/supervisor (or other chosen/designated staff member) should monitor the situation on an ongoing basis, particularly to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements that have been agreed to facilitate the student’s continued study. The student can request further meetings with their School/Faculty, particularly if they are experiencing any difficulties with their academic work as a result of these arrangements.

## How should a School/Faculty determine an appropriate degree of flexibility?

It is not possible to provide a definitive list of special arrangements that might be considered reasonable in every possible situation because the decisions about which arrangements are appropriate in each particular case will vary according to a wide range of factors. These factors include the student’s individual circumstances, the time of year, the structure and content of the particular programme of study, restrictions imposed by professional bodies and any related health and safety matters.

Staff members are advised to take into account the following when considering what might be appropriate in a given case:

* A student’s own views on their options are very important and it is vital that staff consult the student openly on the way forward, rather than seeking to implement a predetermined set of adjustments.
* At the same time, it is important to note that Schools/Faculties do not have to agree to any or all requests made by the student. There may be some situations in which it is impossible or unreasonable for a School/Faculty to agree to a particular request.
* To ensure best practice, and avoid any inadvertent discrimination, a School/Faculty should not normally decline a request from a pregnant student for particular special arrangements solely on grounds that they are too costly to implement (although this may be one factor taken into account when deciding on the overall reasonableness of meeting the request).
* If a School/Faculty decides to decline a flexibility request from a pregnant student, it is considered good practice for the School/Faculty to document its reasons for refusing the request and discuss with the student why this particular request is not considered “reasonable” in the particular circumstances.
* In cases where deferring their studies would lead to a student taking longer to complete a degree programme than would normally be permissible, the School/Faculty may decline a request for further time out from studies (in order to ensure that the information gained in previous parts of the programme remains current enough to count towards the qualification in question). However, in these circumstances the School/Faculty should still strive to demonstrate a flexible approach, where practicable, in relation to this deadline for programme completion, whilst ensuring that the student does not exceed the overall time limit allowed for their programme of study by the University or a relevant professional body.
* In some cases, it might be appropriate for a School/Faculty to show flexibility in relation to which modules count towards a particular qualification to accommodate a pregnant student, providing academic standards are upheld. In such circumstances normal procedures would need to be followed in terms of gaining approval for such changes e.g. via the School/Faculty or University Special Cases/Special Circumstances/Mitigating Circumstances Committee (local names vary). In some situations, however, such flexibility could lead to a student missing a piece of work or module which is required for professional or vocational accreditation. Care should, therefore, be taken to check that any missed work will not adversely affect the accreditation of the student or, at the very least, the student should be made aware of the potential impact in terms of their future employability.

**Staff members are also welcome to seek bespoke advice on what might constitute appropriate flexibility in a particular case from the Equality Policy Unit (**[**see Section 9**](#_What_support_is) **below).**

Occasionally, a situation may arise in which a School/Faculty is already making allowances for an individual student for reasons not related to pregnancy (for example, for reasons linked to disability or religion). This does not mean that it is unreasonable for the student to benefit from separate/additional flexibility relating to their pregnancy. It is important that, in these situations, the School/Faculty strives to separate out these different issues and clarify with the student what flexibility relates to which reasons[[8]](#footnote-8) . This approach will help Schools/Faculties to ensure that the flexibility remains in place only for as long as it is required and also that they are complying with the Equality Act 2010.

## What advice is available on Study Abroad and Work Placements?

For students who become pregnant before or during a period of study abroad or a work placement there may be circumstances where the University is limited in the support it can realistically offer to the student. Where this is judged to present a particular risk to the student or their unborn child, they may be strongly advised to take time out or transfer to a different programme of study.

If a student becomes pregnant before, or during a period of study abroad, advice may be taken from the Study Abroad Office via telephone: +44 (0)113 343 7900.

If a student becomes pregnant before, or during a work placement, advice should be sought from their School/Faculty Work Placement Support Tutor and/or the Work Placement Support Officer in the Careers Centre via telephone: +44 (0) 113 343 5295.

It should be noted that the University’s travel insurance limits the amount payable for medical care for a child born outside of the UK during an insured journey to £50,000 (as at March 2012) while such child is under the age of 6 months.

## What support is available to staff members to help them to advise, or take a flexible approach to, a pregnant student?

### Support from the Equality Policy Unit

If, at any stage, a member of staff would like some assistance in thinking through the practical implications of an individual student’s pregnancy, they are welcome to request a meeting with an Equality and Inclusion Manager from the Equality Policy Unit to act as an initial sounding board.

Since this meeting is intended to assist the member of staff in thinking through options, and because the Equality Policy Unit does not normally provide advice to individual students, the student would not normally be present at the meeting. (The student, of course, is welcome to make use of the LUU Student Advice Centre at any stage as an alternative.)

The Equality and Inclusion Manager may be contacted by e-mail or by telephoning 0113 34 36560.

Members of staff may also wish to consult their own manager/supervisor or one of their local Equality & Inclusion Coordinators as alternative sources of advice on these matters (bearing in mind the need to respect confidentiality if so requested by the student).

### Support relating to health and safety issues

Advice on health and safety issues relating to pregnant students may be sought from a School/Faculty Health and Safety Coordinator or Health and Safety Manager and/or [University Health and Safety Services](https://wsh.leeds.ac.uk/). The [Health and safety risk assessment guidance (Word)](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2020/10/Health-and-Safety-Risk-Assessment-Guidance-Notes-Student-Pregnancy-Policy.docx) and the [Risk Assessment template (Word)](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2020/10/Risk-Assessment-Template-Student-Pregnancy-Policy.docx) can be viewed online.

## What support is available for a student whose partner is pregnant?

In most cases, full-time and part-time programmes are likely to be flexible enough to enable a student whose partner is pregnant, or whose partner is about to adopt a child, to take occasional breaks – perhaps to attend antenatal appointments with their partner and/or take some time to be with their partner around the time of the birth or adoption.

In the case of research students, some funding bodies may allow a period of time for paternity leave. Students should refer to the terms and conditions relating to their award.

Where circumstances are more complex, a student whose partner is pregnant or about to adopt may still wish to discuss this with their School/Faculty (normally their personal tutor/research supervisor) – especially if they feel that this may significantly affect their studies. In these circumstances, staff members are encouraged to demonstrate a similar degree of flexibility to that described in [Section 6 step 2a](#_6._What_process) above.

In such circumstances a student may wish to seek support from the [Student Counselling Centre](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/100001/counselling)

If a student requires legal advice concerning parental status etc. The [Leeds University Union Advice Centre](http://www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/helpandadvice/) can direct the student to appropriate sources of such advice.

Such advice will also be available from the [Leeds Citizen’s Advice Bureau.](http://www.leedscab.org.uk/)

## **What support and facilities are available for a student who has recently become a parent?**

Whilst the procedure proposed in [section 6](#_What_process_should) above relates to a student during pregnancy, this also provides a helpful model for considering flexibility for a student who has recently become a parent, including through adoption. As above, what constitutes a reasonable degree of flexibility to take account of a student’s caring/parental responsibilities will vary from Faculty to Faculty and from programme to programme[[9]](#footnote-9). The University has developed a separate [policy on support for students who are parents or carers](http://www.equality.leeds.ac.uk/university-policies-2/) which covers this in more detail.

There are also sources of practical support available, administered by either the University or LUU, to assist parents with the costs associated with studying at this University. (Links to more information about these funds are provided in [section 12](#_12.__Links) below.)

### Bringing children onto campus

Students may be accompanied by children in **general public areas** such as the refectory, or in one-to-one tutorials if the tutor permits. Children brought onto the campus are the responsibility of the adult who brings them and must be supervised at all times. From a Health and Safety perspective, the University environment is not, in general, designed for, nor does it take specific account of, the needs of young children and toddlers; therefore close and continuous supervision by the parent / carer will be required at all times. Under no circumstances should children be brought into areas where there is the possibility of a risk to health and safety (notable examples would include laboratories and workshops) unless specific authorised approval has been given by an authorised member of the relevant School, in relation to an individual proposed entry.

Parents are allowed to bring their children into **the University Library** for a short time providing that they are supervised at all times. The University Library cannot be held responsible for what might happen to an unattended child in University Library buildings. There are silent study areas that are unsuitable for children to use. If a child causes disruption to other University Library users the parent and child may be asked to leave. The libraries may house materials on open access shelves or have available on PCs that some parents would find unsuitable for their children to see.

Parents are able to take children swimming at The Edge, where a specific family swimming session is held on Sundays from 12.30pm – 3.30pm, with a defined shallow end, segregated from deeper water. Children are welcome at all other times that the pool is open for general swimming but parents should note that in there will be a smaller shallow end, without clear division from deeper water. There are also times when swimming is in deep water only. An up to date timetable is available at the [University of Leeds Sport webpage.](https://sport.leeds.ac.uk/)

Students **should not** normally bring their child with them into any **public teaching and research areas** – such as lecture theatres, seminar or teaching rooms, laboratories or shared work spaces – and so they will need to make arrangements for the care of their child whilst they are in these locations. ([See Section 12](#_12.__Links) for details of the University childcare centre, called Bright Beginnings, which provides a service for children between the ages of 3 months and 5 years).

### Breastfeeding facilities on campus

Whilst there are no restrictions on feeding (bottle feeding or breastfeeding) at the University, there are currently no specific facilities available for these purposes or for the preparation of food or expression of milk. Should a student require a private space for these purposes, they can speak to their School/Faculty (normally their personal tutor/research supervisor) who should endeavour to provide a private, safe area for the student’s use. If a birth parent intends to feed their child regularly in a space provided by the School/Faculty, a further health and safety risk assessment should be considered. If requested, rest facilities will, where possible, be provided which are near to toilets and which include the facility to lie down.

Leeds University Union supports the City of Leeds’ initiative to become the first breastfeeding friendly city in Europe and the Advice Centre will make available one of the guidance rooms on request. The Advice Centre is located on the first floor of the Leeds University Union building in the centre of the campus.

The Lifelong Learning Centre in the Marjorie and Arnold Ziff Building welcomes student parents and will make a quiet room available for their use if possible.

Bright Beginnings childcare centre may also be able to make suitable facilities available by arrangement (see [Section 12 for contact details](#_12.__Links)).

### Emergency short term child care

In some circumstances, Bright Beginnings childcare centre may be able to provide emergency support for parents who have need for short term emergency childcare; for example in the event of their regular childcare provider being ill, or for students who need to take examinations and have no other childcare cover ([see Section 12 for contact details](#_12.__Links)).

### Accommodation

The University has a small number of flats suitable for family accommodation, although there is generally a waiting list for these. For more information, students should contact the Staff and Family Accommodation Co-ordinator in Accommodation Services, who can also provide advice to students about finding non-University owned family accommodation.

Some University accommodation will be unsuitable for children, or may, in some circumstances, be difficult for someone in the later stages of pregnancy to access. If a student wishes to discuss such issues, they should approach the relevant Warden or Accommodation Services in the first instance. Pregnant students may also consider disclosing their pregnancy to the relevant Warden if they are concerned that they may need support in an emergency situation, such as early labour or miscarriage.

* [UNIPOL student homes](https://www.unipol.org.uk/Home) provides housing for students, including those with families.
* [The Leeds University Union Advice Centre](http://www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/helpandadvice/) is also available to provide housing advice.

## 12. Links to sources of further information and support

Here are some frequently asked questions concerning sources of further information or support for students and staff members:

**Is there anywhere that lists student advice services covering a range of different problems?**

* [**Help@Leeds**](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/) is a web site devoted to identifying sources of help for students facing a variety of problems.

**Is there any financial support available from the University to help me to continue with my studies?**

* The Access to Learning Fund (ALF) is Government funding to help students access and remain in Higher Education – particularly those who need financial help to meet extra costs which cannot be met from other sources of support. More information **is available from** [**Access to Learning Fund**](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10231/access_to_learning_fund) **or via telephone**: 0113 3432007.

**Where can I find out about family accommodation available through the University?**

* [**Accommodation Services**](http://accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/)

**Where can I find out about other family accommodation in Leeds?**

* Unipol specialises in providing houses for students who are not adequately catered for in the private rented sector. An important part of Unipol's housing is reserved specially for students with dependants. [**UNIPOL student homes**](https://www.unipol.org.uk/Home).

**Who do I need to talk to about the impact on my fees of any temporary absence?**

* [**Accounts Receivable (Fees)**](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/info/128004/fees_and_funding/15/fees)

**Is there anybody who can provide advice to me as a member of staff who has been approached by a student to help me to determine the best way to support them?**

* [**The Equality Policy Unit**](http://www.equality.leeds.ac.uk) can provide **advice to staff members** on how to provide flexible support for a pregnant student/student parent/student carer.

**Is there anywhere on the University’s web site that has information on support and networking for student parents?**

* [**The Lifelong Learning Centre**](https://www.llc.leeds.ac.uk/students/student-support-and-well-being/support-for-student-parents)**,** has a web site dedicated to information for student parents.

 **What support can I expect from the Students’ Union?**

* [**Leeds University Union (LUU)** has a student advice centre](http://www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/helpandadvice/) which can provide **advice to students on a whole range of topics** – The service is open 9.30 – 5.00 Monday to Friday. They can be contacted via telephone on: 0113 380 1290 or via e-mail.

The following sections [of the Leeds University Union website](https://www.luu.org.uk/) may be particularly relevant:

* Information about the University’s Access to Learning Fund
* Information about the LUU Abortion Fund
* Information about the LUU New Born Baby Fund
* General information about pregnancy
* Information about the Student Advice Centre
* Information about the Student Parents Society
* Information on where to seek legal advice

**Where can I seek advice about health and safety during my pregnancy or when I’m breastfeeding?**

* The [Health and safety risk assessment guidance (Word)](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2020/10/Health-and-Safety-Risk-Assessment-Guidance-Notes-Student-Pregnancy-Policy.docx) and the [Risk Assessment template (Word)](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2020/10/Risk-Assessment-Template-Student-Pregnancy-Policy.docx) can be viewed online and provide guidance on potential hazard during pregnancy and breastfeeding and the need to carry out a risk assessment. [Further advice is available from **Health and Safety Services**](https://wsh.leeds.ac.uk/safety-topics).

 **Is there anywhere I can go to discuss my circumstances outside of my School/Faculty?**

* [**The Student Counselling Centre**](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/100001/counselling) is open 8.30 – 5.00 Monday to Friday and offers the opportunity to talk to a BACP accredited Counsellor. The web site also contains various online self help resources to help cope with stress etc.

**Is there anywhere I can discuss my circumstances in confidence outside of the University?**

* [**The Stillbirth and Neonatal Deaths Society**](https://www.sands.org.uk/)offers on-line advice and support

 **Where can I go for spiritual guidance?**

* The Chaplains at [**Universities Chaplaincy in Leeds**](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/chaplaincy)  are experienced at listening and offering support and guidance to students and staff of all faiths and none.

**Is there any advice available specifically for research students at the University?**

* The staff in [**Research Student Administration**](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10112/research_degrees) have an understanding of the needs of and regulations relating to research students.

**I’m an international student. Where can I go for advice?**

* [**International Student Office**](https://linkto.leeds.ac.uk/).

**Does the University have childcare facilities on site?**

* [**Bright Beginnings**](http://www.brightbeginningschildcare.co.uk/)**, Mount Preston Street, LS2 9JT** is a nursery for children aged 3 months and 5 years – holiday play scheme for children aged between 5 and 11 years. Bright beginnings can be contacted via telephone: **0113 343 1818, or** **via e-mail****.**

**Is there any additional financial help available to me as a student parent?**

* Home students with dependent children who are in full time higher education may be able to get extra financial help. [A Childcare Grant](https://www.gov.uk/childcare-grant) is available to help with childcare costs, and the Parents' Learning Allowance with learning costs. Other help includes Child Tax Credit and the Access to Learning Fund.

**Is there any additional financial support available to me a student with caring responsibilities for an adult dependant?**

* A home student in full-time higher education who has an adult who depends on them financially may be entitled to extra help through the [Adult Dependants’ Grant](https://www.gov.uk/adult-dependants-grant).

 **Is there any general advice available concerning my rights as a parent in the UK?**

* [The government has produced a guide to childcare](https://www.gov.uk/) which covers child health and safety, preschool provision, school provision, care during pregnancy, financial support etc.

This policy has been produced by the Equality Policy Unit, with thanks to all those from across the University who commented on previous draft versions.

**Policy content update:** February 2015

**Policy format and language update:** October 2020

1. Reference to very young children relates to children under the age of 6 months and, with particular regard to health and safety considerations, those beyond 6 month who are still being breastfed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits organisations, including the University, from treating a person (including a student, staff member or visitor) less favourably than others on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity. Discrimination on the grounds that a student is pregnant or breastfeeding can constitute unlawful discrimination. The University also has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity for those with a protected characteristic. These guidelines have been drafted with these legal obligations in mind [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In most cases, the most appropriate place to report, and receive support for, pregnancy related needs will be the student’s School. In Unitary Faculties (LUBS and Biological Sciences) it may be the Faculty or a sub-unit within the Faculty. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In most cases, the most appropriate place to report, and receive support for, pregnancy related needs will be the student’s School. In Unitary Faculties (LUBS and Biological Sciences) it may be the Faculty or a sub-unit within the Faculty. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In the case of pre-arranged antenatal appointments, the School/Faculty would normally need to be notified of these in advance in order to take these into account. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [Guidance on health and safety issues during pregnancy](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2020/09/Health-and-Safety-Risk-Assessment-Guidance-Notes-3.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. If the flexibility required is not within the remit of the local FSCC, that Committee may put forward a recommendation to the University Special Cases Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. If, for example, a pregnant student is already receiving reasonable adjustments relating to disability, the School/Faculty should ask itself what flexibility it would permit for a non-disabled student who is pregnant and ensure that the same flexibility is permitted to the pregnant student. Otherwise, the School/Faculty would be in danger of treating the disabled student less favourably than a non-disabled student would be treated in the same situation. The same approach should also be taken by Examinations Boards or those dealing with academic appeals in cases like these. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The same services that are referred to in [sections 3](#_3._Does_a) [and 6](#_6._What_process) of this policy (i.e. Equality Policy Unit for staff members and a range of different support services, such as the LUU Student Advice Centre, for students) are also open to staff and students who are seeking advice about the implications of a student’s new parental responsibilities for their studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)