



Student Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy

Contents

1 Purpose and Scope of the Policy	3
1.1 Purpose	3
1.2 Scope	3
2 Policy	4
2.1 Commitment	4
2.2 Paternity/partnership and adoption	5
2.3 Restriction on return to study for the student who has given birth	5
2.4 International Students	5
2.5 Accommodation	6
3 Procedure	6
3.1 Student to inform School	6
3.2 Create a Maternity Paternity Adoption Support Plan (MPASP)	7
4 What will the Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Support Plan cover?	8
4.2 Health and Safety considerations for pregnant students	9
4.3 Absences	10
4.4 Exams and Assessments	10
4.5 Maternity-related/adoption related absence	10
4.6 Financial and funding advice and guidance	11
4.7 Intermitting studies (study break)	11
4.8 Resuming studies after Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Leave	12
5 Change in Circumstances	12
5.1 What if there is a change in your circumstances?	12
5.2 Unexpected circumstances/Pregnancy Related Complications	13
6 Links to other Policies and Procedures	14
6.1 Manual of General Regulations	14
6.2 Policies	14
6.3 Exemptions and Professional Bodies	14

Policy Owner: Deputy Director of Student Services

Department: Student Services

Version	Effective From	Amendments	Equality Analysis	Stakeholders Consulted (e.g. Disability & Dyslexia Team, Policy Review Group)	Approval Date	Author	Date for Review
V1.0	01/09/2023	Policy transferred to university policies template. Procedures updated to be distinct from the policy	22/05/2023	Members of EEC and AB Office for Institutional Equity Policy Review Group Disability and Dyslexia Team	14/07/2023	Lydia Pell	31/01/2025

This Policy is reviewed by Education & Experience Committee and approved by Academic Board



1 Purpose and Scope of the Policy

1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 To set out the advice and support available to students who become pregnant, adopt a child or wish to take paternity related absence during the course of their studies.
- 1.1.2 Detail the actions students and University staff are expected to follow to develop a personalised Maternity/Paternity and Adoption Support Plan (MPASP) for the student which supports both their learning and their health.
- 1.1.3 Being pregnant is not, in and of itself, a valid reason for applying for extenuating circumstance; however, the Equality Act 2010 provides protection against discrimination or unfavourable treatment related to pregnancy, miscarriage or related sick absence; in which instance requests must be confirmed by a GP or medical practitioner.
- 1.1.4 The development of the MPASP is the correct procedure to follow to ensure appropriate support and adjustments are in place for the student.
- 1.1.5 Pregnancy and maternity are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. This policy will provide additional support to students who are pregnant or prospective parents/ adoptive parents.
- 1.1.6 The policy is in line with the [Equality Challenge Unit's recommendations](#) and offers a 'best practice' approach towards pregnancy and maternity support.
- 1.1.7 The University will ensure that these students are not treated less favourably than other students and recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 This policy and procedure will apply only to those students who were enrolled directly with the University of East London and who were either studying with attendance, or through a distance learning programme. Institutions enrolling students on University of East London programmes through our Academic Partners will be expected to have their own local policy and procedure.



2 Policy

2.1 Commitment

2.1.1 The University is committed to supporting our students who are prospective parents by birth or adoption and those who have experienced pregnancy-related bereavement. We will be guided by the following principles when supporting our students:

- The University will work with our prospective parents in a supportive, non-judgmental and respectful manner.
- Once informed of a pregnancy or adoption, the University will work with the student concerned to ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place in a timely manner in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- The University will always treat the health and safety of the student as paramount.
- The University will always treat information provided to us confidentially and will only pass on information to those staff members that need be informed in order to provide support or adjustments for the student concerned.
- The University will treat all prospective parents equally in accordance with our legislative duties. Students who are adopting a child will be offered the same level of support as those who have become biological parents.
- The University will be respectful and considerate to any student who requires adjustments to prepare for or assist recovery after a termination.



2.2 Paternity/partnership and adoption

- 2.2.1 Once paternity/partnership or adoption can be evidenced the University will support paternity/partnership and adoption-related adjustments (e.g. to attend hospital appointments, matching panel meetings.) in the same way as for those who are pregnant.
- 2.2.2 UEL has opted to use Employment law to guide the following policy in regards to Paternity/ partnership and adoption, therefore UEL will support paternity and adoption related absence for a maximum of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of a child being born, or the adoption placement date. The two weeks do not have to be taken consecutively but will need to be taken in week-long blocks. If both parents/partners or adoptive parents are UEL students then both are eligible to take leave.

2.3 Restriction on return to study for the student who has given birth

- 2.3.1 The Equality Act 2010 cites that compulsory maternity leave is adopted two weeks immediately after birth therefore students will not be allowed to attend University for during this time.
- 2.3.2 If you go beyond your expected due date, you will need to provide additional medical evidence to confirm that it is considered safe for you to continue to attend the University. This mandatory period of absence will be recorded separately from the usual attendance monitoring procedures of UEL.
- 2.3.3 You should familiarise yourself with the [Engagement and Attendance Policy](#).

2.4 International Students

- 2.4.1 International students on a student visa should seek advice from the International Student Advice team (booked via the Hub) in relation to their pregnancy and the possible implications this may have on their visa particularly if a break in studies may be needed. A break from UEL does not mean that the VISA will be automatically extended.



2.4.2 You will need to seek Immigration Advice on this matter. It is important to have earlier discussions about this as an unexpected decision to fly abroad could impact health.

2.5 Accommodation

2.5.1 Students who become pregnant whilst living in University accommodation will find that this is no longer suitable for health and safety reasons as UEL do not have family accommodation and Under 18s are not allowed in University accommodation during term time.

2.5.2 Students who are pregnant or on maternity leave will be allowed to end their Halls of Residence contract early with pro-rated refunding of associated costs in line with the Residential Life Early Release Policy and can be supported by the Residential Life team to find appropriate off campus accommodation.

2.5.3 Students who wish to remain in the Halls of Residence throughout their pregnancy will be supported by the Residential Life team who, if appropriate, will enable a move to a more appropriate room as required.

3 Procedure

3.1 Student to inform School

3.1.1 Once a pregnancy or adoption is confirmed the student should inform their Programme Leader or Academic Advisor (Undergraduates) or Director of Studies/Dissertation supervisor (Postgraduates) when you feel comfortable to do so, so that appropriate adjustments can be considered through the development of the Maternity/Paternity and Adoption Support Plan (MPASP).

3.1.2 If you would prefer to share your news to a School staff member who you feel more comfortable with then that is acceptable, but do remember that staff member will need to inform your Programme Leader or Academic Advisor (Undergraduates) or Director of Studies/Dissertation supervisor (Postgraduates).



- 3.1.3 The University cannot provide support if it is unaware and the ***duty rests with the student to inform*** the University of their pregnancy/adoption and the University can only put reasonable adjustments in place if we are informed.
- 3.1.4 It is in your best interest to inform the University at the earliest opportunity so that we can put as much support in place as possible at the earliest stage of your pregnancy. The highest risk of harm to a baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. Consequently, students should notify us as early as possible of their pregnancy so that a support plan can be drawn up and a health and safety risk assessment can be conducted.
- 3.1.5 Remember being pregnant is not a valid reason for applying for extenuating circumstance, unless unexpected complications arise. The development of the MPASP is the correct procedure to follow to ensure planned support and adjustments are in place for you.

3.2 Create a Maternity Paternity Adoption Support Plan (MPASP)

- 3.2.1 Your School will arrange a support plan with you to identify any risks associated with your programme. The plan will also cover important information like study leave and return to study. It will help the University coordinate support for you throughout pregnancy, post birth and return to study.
- 3.2.2 To obtain a support plan (MPASP) you will need to arrange a meeting with either your Programme Leader, Academic Advisor, or Dissertation Supervisor. They will ask you to provide the University with details of the pregnancy/adoption. In particular, we will require your expected date of delivery, or placement date in order to properly ascertain your support needs.
- 3.2.3 As pregnant students are unlikely to have documentary evidence of their pregnancy before 20 weeks the MPASP can be drawn up prior to evidence being received.



3.2.4 Evidence will be required though for the University to consider examination arrangements or alternative assessments but a risk assessment, advice on pregnancy or adoption related absence to attend appointments, and possible academic implications can be discussed and implemented prior to evidence being received.

3.2.5 The evidence a student may provide includes (but is not restricted to):

Pregnant students

- Any letters indicating GP/Midwife, Antenatal or Hospital Appointments.
- A MATB1 Certificate (provided to a pregnant student after their 20-week scan).
- Any medical evidence indicating their expected date of delivery.
- Any reasonable proof of relationship for partners that are unmarried or in a civil partnership.

Adoptive Parents

- Matching Panel decision with Agency Decision Maker approval.
- Placement order.
- Adoption Order.
- Evidence of any adoption-related dates that will affect attendance or ability to study (for example adoption approval panel, matching panel, introductions).
- Evidence of a concurrent planning placement order (may be called fostering for adoption or early permanency).

3.3 What will the Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Support Plan cover?

3.3.1 Your Programme Leader, Academic Advisor or Dissertation Supervisor will work with you to complete the Maternity/Paternity and Adoption Support Plan.



- 3.3.2 Any recommendations will be dependent on your individual needs and will take account of the requirements of your course and the effect of your circumstances on your ability to undertake this.
- 3.3.3 The Plan will set out your responsibilities and the responsibilities of staff and may include (but is not restricted to):

3.4 Health and Safety considerations for pregnant students

- 3.4.1 A risk assessment to ensure that any Health and Safety issues relating to your programme of study are identified and addressed. This is very important if your course includes physical activity or exposure to chemicals, radiation or biological agents, as these have been identified as high risk particularly within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. This also includes any relevant risks associated with field work, laboratory work and placements.
- 3.4.2 You may be asked to provide additional evidence from a responsible medical practitioner who confirms that there will be no risk to you or your unborn child from taking part in part in field work, laboratory work or a placement.
- 3.4.3 Your School will provide you with the information relevant to your course and will also be able to identify whether such work is a core competence and explore any alternative assessments as necessary.
- 3.4.4 Where placements form a compulsory part of a programme of studies the MPASP will be shared with the placement provider to ensure that a risk assessment assesses any special risks that may be presented in these environments to the pregnant student.
- 3.4.5 Placement providers will also be asked to contribute to any temporary reasonable adjustments or additional control measures that may be required based on their knowledge of the workplace and local arrangements.



3.5 Absences

3.5.1 Agreeing and documenting all known Maternity/Paternity and Adoption related absences in advance. These absences can be considered against any course deadlines with a view to identifying how it is possible for any missed work or assessments to be covered and how this could be done e.g., consideration of alternative methods of assessment.

3.6 Exams and Assessments

3.6.1 Exploration of alternative arrangements where you are unable to complete any assessments due to pregnancy or maternity related absence e.g., for those whose expected due date and the 2 weeks post-natal compulsory non-attendance period, conflict with submission or examination deadlines (competency standards allowing) will be sought. Such recommendations will be subject to practicality and administrative deadlines.

3.6.2 If a student is due to give birth near to or during assessment deadlines or the examination period and wishes to complete their assessed work or sit their examinations, they should not be prevented from doing so but notice should be received in order to make any necessary required adjustments.

3.6.3 Where a pregnant student is sitting exams, they should be referred to the Disability and Dyslexia Team to consider examination arrangements.

3.7 Maternity-related/adoption related absence

3.7.1 The MPASP should also consider the following

- How much absence the student intends to take.
- When the student intends to start their absence.
- When the student intends to return from their absence.



- Consider whether the dates of absence will affect the student's ability to complete any course module requirements. If so, what arrangements could be made to enable the student to complete the module?
- Consider what information the student will require during their absence to keep up to date on course developments and who will provide it.
- Agree a proposed return to study plan with timetable.

3.8 Financial and funding advice and guidance

- 3.8.1 As a prospective parent, you may be eligible for additional funding or welfare benefits.
- 3.8.2 You should contact the Student Money Advice and Rights Team (SMART), smart@uel.ac.uk who will be able to advise you. SMART will also be able to advise regarding any childcare benefits you may be entitled to once your child is born. This may help you plan for your return to study.
- 3.8.3 If you are considering a break in study, it is essential that you see SMART so that they can help you to resolve any issues with your funding body (e.g., Student Finance England, Research Council funding). This is very important if you wish to protect your funding or if you are considering moving from Full time to Part time status (or vice-versa) on your return to study as this may affect your student funding entitlements or benefits.

3.9 Intermitting studies (study break)

- 3.9.1 In certain instances, it may be necessary to consider intermitting.
- 3.9.2 The MPASP should include notes of the discussion had when considering the possible impact on academic progression and any study break options.
- 3.9.3 Refer to the [Student Initiated Intermission, Withdrawal and Transfer Policy](#).



3.10 Resuming studies after Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Leave

3.10.1 The student should inform their School when they are ready to return and plan with their Programme Leader or supervisor an appropriate timetable for their re-integration into the programme of study, including the examination schedule. The earlier the student can let their School know their return date the better.

4 Change in Circumstances

4.1 What if there is a change in your circumstances?

4.1.1 You should contact your School so your MPASP can be updated:

- If there is a change in your circumstances that affect your ability to attend or study.
- If you go beyond your expected due date and wish to continue to attend the University. Further medical evidence stating that you are well enough to attend may be required.
- If you make any decisions that affect your planned return to study.
- If you require additional support because you have experienced a still birth, miscarriage or neonatal death (you may prefer to make an appointment directly with the Student Wellbeing Team wellbeing@uel.ac.uk) but you should still advise your School so they are aware of your circumstances.
- If you require additional support due to an unsuccessful adoption placement you may prefer to make an appointment directly with the Student Wellbeing Team wellbeing@uel.ac.uk) but you should still advise your School so they are aware of your circumstances.



4.1.2 If you experience any attendance difficulties relating to maternity, paternity or adoption, you should discuss these with your Academic Advisor/Programme Leader or Director of Studies/Dissertation Supervisor immediately.

4.2 Unexpected circumstances/Pregnancy Related Complications

4.2.1 If you become ill, or develop a medical complication, during pregnancy or give birth unexpectedly early and, as a result are unable to complete or submit coursework or participate in examination(s), students are strongly advised to obtain medical evidence and apply for extenuation in the usual way.

4.2.2 Additionally, UEL will also give consideration to the impact of a termination, miscarriage, still birth or neonatal death on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations. Students will need to obtain medical evidence and apply for extenuation in the usual way and according to the [Manual of General Regulations: Part 6 – Extenuating Circumstances](#).

4.2.3 The MPASP is the method with which the University will support you during and after pregnancy. You should only apply for extenuating circumstances if there are complicating factors that have arisen which are not covered in the MPASP.

4.2.4 Students that have suffered a miscarriage, unexpected complications during pregnancy, still birth or neonatal death may need further emotional support and/or time off from study to recover after bereavement.

4.2.5 Likewise, a student who has a termination of pregnancy, for whatever reason, may also need emotional support and/or time off from study. In all cases it is strongly advised to refer or signpost the student to the Student Wellbeing Team for such support.

4.2.6 The Students' Union has an Advice Service if students wish to receive independent advice and guidance. The Students' Union also has a parents and carers community group.



5 Links to other Policies and Procedures

5.1 Manual of General Regulations

[MoGR Part 6: Extenuation](#)

5.2 Policies

[Student Initiated Intermission, Withdrawal and Transfer Policy](#)

5.3 Exemptions and Professional Bodies

Refer to your Course Leader if you are on a course that is accredited by a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body.