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| Student Pregnancy, Parental Support and Adoption Policy  |
|  **2024-2027**  |



**Student Pregnancy, Parental Support and Adoption Policy**

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# Summary

This policy provides advice and guidance on issues related to study, health and safety and signposts to information on finance for:

* Students who become pregnant during their studies; prospective students who are already pregnant when they commence their studies; students who have given birth within the previous 26 weeks, their partners and those who have recently become parents (e.g., adoption).
* University staff who may have a role in advising students coming to them in these circumstances.

# Glossary of Terms

Pregnancy – the period in which a fetus develops inside a womb.

Miscarriage - the loss of pregnancy during the first 23 weeks.

Neonatal death (infant loss) – is a baby born at any time during the pregnancy who lives, even briefly, but dies within 28 days after being born.

Stillbirth - is the death of a baby after 24 weeks of pregnancy, before or during birth.

Premature birth – If a baby is born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Termination - is a procedure to end a pregnancy.

Baby /child - we will use the term ‘baby’ or ‘child’ as a generic catch all term. However, it is understood that students may have a multiple pregnancy (e.g. twins or triplets), or that a student may adopt or assume responsibility for multiple children (of any age) at the same time.

Personal information – this is data/information that is related to an identified or identifiable individual and includes special categories of personal data, as identified under the Data Protection Act 2018. In this instance, Special category data includes personal data revealing or concerning data relating to health including pregnancy.

# Purpose

This policy should be used to support:

* Any applicant who is pregnant upon commencing their studies;
* Any student (undergraduate, postgraduate taught, international, apprentice or postgraduate research[[1]](#footnote-2)) who becomes pregnant during study;
* Any student who has given birth within the last 26 weeks;
* Any student whose partner is pregnant, where the student will assume parental responsibility for the child;
* Any student who becomes a parent through the process of adoption.

# Policy

Edge Hill University is dedicated to promoting and providing an environment that feels safe and protects the dignity and wellbeing of all. The University believes that becoming pregnant and/or acquiring parental responsibilities should not in themselves provide a barrier for students starting, continuing, or successfully completing their studies.

In addition to legal compliance under the Equality Act 2010, the University recognises the need to provide support in the form of parental support leave as part of our commitment to equality and diversity, to ensure students have the best chance of continuing their studies and realising their academic potential. In discharging its legal responsibilities in this regard, the University actively seeks to develop best practice in this area of student support.

Edge Hill University is committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to supporting all students who are or become pregnant, or welcome/have welcomed new children to their families. The same level of flexibility will be shown to supporting students who terminate a pregnancy, or experience miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal death. The University will ensure that no student is disadvantaged whilst guaranteeing that academic standards are not compromised.

The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary between academic departments and faculties because of requirements within different academic disciplines and their professional bodies or regulators. However, all Departments, Schools and Faculties will follow the general approach outlined in this policy.

Student Support is always the priority; therefore Departments, Schools and Faculties will support all students covered by this policy in a sensitive, non-judgemental, and confidential manner.

The University encourages students to inform us about a pregnancy to allow the department and other services to make any appropriate adjustments. While students are not obliged to inform us, if they choose not to, the University may not be able to provide necessary advice and support to the student to assist in their planning. It could impact their assessment, progression, or award as if a student is absent or misses a deadline and the student would be treated as all other students if they had not disclosed. The student may also be exposed to risks in respect of health and safety.

Information about pregnancy is classed as personal information. Once a student discloses, it is important that all relevant staff within the University are informed of the pregnancy, in order to provide the best possible support to the student. Staff receiving a disclosure should gain a student’s consent to share the fact they are pregnant with others. Staff should recognise and respect the student’s right to confidentiality and ensure they understand the student’s wishes and expectations regarding the sharing of this information. The University will share information with others except in cases where a student expressly requests confidentiality regarding their pregnancy-related information. In situations where there are genuine concerns about Safeguarding, the University reserves the right to share pertinent information without explicit consent. Where placements/professional practice are involved, there will be a requirement to inform the placement setting.

The University acknowledges that individual students will have different needs and requirements, and it is not possible to provide detailed information to cover all circumstances and situations. The guidance contained in this policy is intended to be used as a framework, to facilitate individualised planning around the specific needs of each student.

The University holds a UKVI sponsor licence to sponsor international students on student visas and must be compliant with [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-sponsor-guidance). Hence, this policy conforms to UKVI compliance requirements on student engagement and reporting.

Whilst the intention of this guidance is to enable students to plan for pregnancy and parental related absence, support students with additional responsibilities, and to consider adjustments in respect of normal arrangements for study and assessment, it is recognised that there may be circumstances where the adjustments requested are not considered to be reasonable. In the case, the Director of Student Services (or their nominee) must review the case and decision, and the student must be provided with a written explanation.

If a student opts not to disclose their pregnancy and participate in related policies and processes, the student assumes responsibility for the health and safety of both themselves and their baby.

If any student is not satisfied with their treatment under this policy, they should raise this in the first instance with their programme team.

## Rights and Responsibilities

This section covers rights and responsibilities for students, staff and Edge Hill University.

## For applicants

Applicants who are pregnant or who will have caring responsibility for a child under the age of one year old at the time of enrolment are advised to notify the relevant admissions team of their circumstances, so that arrangements can be made for consultation with the student in respect of support and adjustments. This consideration will be made entirely separately from the decision on the application for admission.

## For students who become pregnant during their studies

### Confirming the pregnancy

A student who believes they may be pregnant or has confirmed a pregnancy is strongly advised to contact their [midwife or GP](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-health-services/maternity-services) to arrange for appropriate medical advice, guidance and if required antenatal care, including advice about the impact on study as the pregnancy progresses.

### Contacting the Department, School or Faculty

Whilst there is no absolute requirement to share information about a pregnancy with the University, students are strongly encouraged to do so, so that the University can provide individualised support and to ensure consideration is given to matters of health and safety. Sharing this information will enable students to potentially manage the pregnancy and maternity alongside their studies and ensure that the University can consider reasonable adjustments.

Students should disclose in the first instance to a member of their academic programme team, or the Student Support Team, or to another member of staff with whom they feel more comfortable. Students who disclose a pregnancy to their academic area will be referred to the Student Support Team so that they can help students access appropriate support.

If a student remains uncertain about whether to disclose, or is not sure who to disclose to, they may seek impartial advice from the Students' Union Advice team.

### Implication for study

Students should take responsibility for understanding the specific requirements of their programme of study, and the possible impact of any pregnancy or maternity related absence on arrangements for study and assessment, including unplanned absences because of the pregnancy.

Following disclosure students should participate fully in the process of developing and reviewing a Pregnancy Risk Assessment and a personalised New and Expectant Parent Plan, in conjunction with a designated member of staff from the **Student Support Team** and an appropriate member of staff from their academic department. Without a Pregnancy Risk Assessment and personalised New and Expectant Parent Plan, the University may not be able to provide necessary support to the student. It could impact their assessment, progression, or award as if a student is absent or misses a deadline and the student would be treated as all other students if they had not disclosed a pregnancy. The student may also be exposed to risks in respect of health and safety.

Students should note that if their baby is due close to the examination period, they may require confirmation from their doctor that they are fit to sit exams.

If a student is unable to sit an exam or assessment, they will be given advice on the options available. The appropriate member of academic staff will offer advice and information regarding alternative assessment/exam arrangements in accordance with their department’s policies regarding extensions, and Personal Circumstances.

### International students

In accordance with UKVI regulations, international students on a UK Student visa must be actively engaged on their course. The University has an obligation to report any interruption in studies to the UKVI. This ***may*** affect the conditions of leave of the visa. International Students who become pregnant should speak to a member of their academic programme team or the Student Support Team as soon as possible, who will refer them to the International [Office](http://Office) for advice as soon as the University has been notified of the pregnancy. The Student Support Team will also provide broader advice and support to students.

### Placements and field work

Where students plan to or are required to take part in placements or field work as part of their studies whilst pregnant, or within the first 26 weeks following the birth of child, a risk assessment will be carried out by the department responsible for organising the placement. The placement provider may also wish to carry out a Pregnancy Risk Assessment for their workplace and they will share this with the University.

The Student Support Team will co-ordinate relevant teams to work with the student, their academic teams/department and the employer/placement provider to help develop a New and Expectant Parent Plan. Relevant actions from the employer/placement provider’s risk assessment will be included in the Plan and joint review dates agreed.

### Study abroad and international placements

Students who become pregnant whilst on a study year abroad or international placement are required to contact their Department, School or Faculty to make appropriate plans to ensure the health and safety of the student.

### Maternity related absence

All students are required to take maternity related absence following a birth. By law they must take at least 2 weeks off after the baby is born. The overall length of the absence will be determined by the personal circumstances of the student and the structure and content of their course of study.

The intended date for return to study should be discussed and agreed as part of the New and Expectant Parent Plan and/or Interruption Support Agreement if this option is taken.

Normally, registered Home students are eligible to take a period of interruption for one year, however not all academic programmes can facilitate this. Staff in Academic Registry and the Student Support Team will support Departments and Faculties to provide the student with options. These options will help form the New and Expectant Parent plan.

Students should indicate within their plan, the date on which they intend to start maternity related absence. It is recommended that students inform the Department, School or Faculty in writing at least 15 weeks before the baby is due to allow time to review the support plan, make necessary arrangements and ensure information is communicated as required.

### International student visa and maternity related absence

All International students on a Student visa are allowed to take maternity-related absence following a birth. The length of the absence will be determined by the personal circumstances of the student and the structure and content of their course of study.

International students should note that by law they must take at least 2 weeks off after the baby is born. The intended date for return to study should be discussed and agreed as part of the New and Expectant Parent Plan and/or Interruption Support Agreement if this option is taken.

International students will be advised by the International Office regarding the implications of any pregnancy-related absence on their visa.

If a student chooses to defer their studies i.e. resume their studies in the next academic year, their student visa will be cancelled and they will need to reapply for a new student visa.

If a student chooses to apply for authorised absence over the standard 2 weeks, they must apply to the Department, School, or Faculty by email, copying in the international team. The faculty will take a decision on the leave in consultation with the International Compliance Manager.

In exceptional circumstances the student may ***apply*** for an interruption of their course for a period of no more than 60 days. It is expected that appropriate evidence must be provided to justify the reasons for this request. The request must be made by email to the Department, School, or Faculty copying in the international team. The faculty will take a decision on the leave in consultation with the International Compliance Manager.
- We may refuse an interruption if we determine the student is unlikely to complete their studies on time.
- If approved, any interruption ***must be reported to the UKVI*** and may affect further extensions on this route.

Unauthorised absence which affects a student's ability to complete on time will result in the removal of visa sponsorship and the student will be asked to leave the UK.

It is imperative that international students seek early advice as any interruption of studies could have serious consequences in relation to visa permissions and study status.

## Pregnancy loss, Miscarriages, Stillbirths, and Premature births

### Termination

Students who are uncertain whether to continue with a pregnancy should be signposted to support and advice to help them reach a decision, with contact details available on the NHS website. If a student decides to terminate a pregnancy, the student may need time off before and after the procedure. Consideration should also be given to the emotional and psychological impact of termination, and the student should be signposted to support services (Student Wellbeing Services can be contacted for advice).

The impact of termination on physical and psychological wellbeing may require flexibility to be applied in respect of deadlines and exams, and staff should be mindful of the need to adopt a sensitive and confidential approach (see [Support for Students](#_Support_for_students)).

### Miscarriage

Students who experience miscarriage may require support and flexibility to allow them to recover from the physical and psychological impact, and to attend medical appointments. The student should be reminded of the availability of support services. The impact of miscarriage on physical and psychological wellbeing may require flexibility to be applied in respect of deadlines and exams, and staff should be mindful of the need to adopt a sensitive and confidential approach. This also applies to students who are partners of a pregnant person who suffers a miscarriage.

### Stillbirth or infant loss

A student who experiences a stillbirth or death of a baby shortly after birth should be entitled to the same support, adjustments, and entitlements to maternity or paternity support; and parental leave, paid or unpaid, as a student whose baby is not stillborn. The student should be reminded of the availability of support services. The impact of stillbirth or infant loss on physical and psychological wellbeing may require flexibility to be applied in respect of deadlines and exams, and staff should be mindful of the need to adopt a sensitive and confidential approach. This also applies to students who are partners of a woman or pregnant person who experiences a stillbirth or infant loss.

### Premature births

If the baby is born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) the student may need to begin their maternity, paternity, or parental leave early and may require additional support.

### Support for students

If Department, School or Faculty staff require additional advice and support in any of the circumstances described above, they can contact the Student Support Team. Although the Wellbeing team do not have specific expertise in miscarriage or child death, they may be able to provide links to external support services. Staff should also consider supporting the student through the use of extensions and personal circumstances applications and provide a supporting statement where appropriate. If medical confirmation is required for any of the above situations, this can be requested by the student from their midwife, GP, or the hospital as appropriate, or equivalent evidence if the student is not based in the UK. Staff should be mindful of the need to adopt a sensitive and confidential approach.

## Resuming studies

Students will be contacted by Academic Registry to confirm their scheduled return to studies and notify the Student Support Team of the confirmation date. The Student Support team will act as a single point of contact for returning students to discuss any support needs and will liaise with a student’s Department, School or Faculty when they are ready to return, so that the support plan can be reviewed.

If no return date has been agreed prior to the birth of the baby, students should contact the University no later than 10 days before their planned date of return, and sooner, if possible, to confirm arrangements for return. This information will be added to the New and Expectant Parent Plan and/or Interruption Support Agreement if this option is taken.

### Financial considerations

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students can access advice about potential implications for their funding of any pregnancy related absence from Academic Registry teams – Academic-Records Team and Tuition Fees, and for Maintenance and Childcare grant information from the Money Advice Team.

In addition, the [Students' Union](https://www.edgehillsu.org.uk/advice) advice team provide impartial and independent advice about financial matters.

### International students and financial considerations

In the case of international students, arrangements for pregnancy and maternity-related absence related to tuition fee payments and stipend payments will differ depending on the nature of the funding arrangements. Students will be referred to the International Office and the Graduate School for advice regarding the implications of any pregnancy related absence.

### Accommodation

The University does not have accommodation that is suitable for families. Students are therefore advised to consider their accommodation requirements in the early stages of pregnancy, as they will not be permitted to stay in University accommodation with a child.

Any student who provides medical evidence of pregnancy will be released from their accommodation contract, if they so wish, subject to the usual conditions. It is essential that students inform the Accommodation Service as soon as they become aware that they are pregnant, as it will be necessary to discuss the implications in terms of accommodation and it may be necessary to conduct a risk assessment. Students living arrangements will be considered as part of the Department’s New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessment and New and Expectant Parent plan.

Students can register with [Studentpad](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/news/2024/05/finding-your-next-home/) via the Students’ Union to look for and view suitable accommodation in the local area, prior to the arrival of the baby, or prior to the students return from maternity related absence. It should be noted that Landlords may be reluctant to permit students with children to rent in a shared student household. As such we recommend that students also contact their local authority to advise them that they are a new parent and wish to be considered for Local authority housing”

### Childcare

Students are advised that this will need advance planning and suggest that arrangements are made at the beginning of a pregnancy. The University does not have any creche facilities available on campus. Staff can signpost students to sources of information and advice on childcare provision ([Get childcare: step by step - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).](https://www.gov.uk/get-childcare)

Children may be brought into the social spaces of Edge Hill University as they can into any public building, but they are not normally permitted in teaching spaces. Students cannot choose to take their own children with them to timetabled sessions. The only occasion when a child is permitted in a teaching space is where this forms part of the lesson and is led and organised by the teaching staff. If teaching staff bring children or babies into a teaching session, they are responsible for conducting an appropriate risk assessment in advance with due consideration of the material being presented.

Students studying on programmes based at Ormskirk or a partner site in the UK will be responsible for the safety and supervision of their child if they bring them on to campus and should identify any areas of campus that they may normally have access to which would not be considered a safe environment for children.

### Breastfeeding and milk expression

Students are welcome to breastfeed/express milk anywhere in public spaces on campus. Breastfeeding in public places is protected under the Equality Act 2010. The University provides several locations on campus that have been designated as breastfeeding-friendly locations, which provide a space to express and store milk during the working day.

### Support for partners who have responsibility for bringing up the child

Any student who is the partner of a pregnant person, or who has or is likely to have parental responsibilities for a very young child, is entitled to ask for flexibility in respect of arrangements for study and assessment. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this will necessarily be more limited in some programmes than others and should be discussed in advance with personal tutors in Departments, Schools or Faculties.

Students in such circumstances are encouraged to discuss their situation with their Personal Academic Tutor or the Student Support team. If a student is unsure who to disclose this information to, they should seek advice from the Students' Union advice team.

Flexible arrangements may include authorised absence for medical appointments prior to and after the birth, a period of absence at the time of the birth (parental support leave), consideration of the circumstances of the student in respect of any deadlines, assessment and exams, or suspension of studies (interruption), depending on personal circumstances.

Interruption of studies for partners may be approved where it is shown that childcare following the birth of the child would be equally shared during the maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave.

International students based in the UK on a student visa who are considering absence as a result of their partner’s pregnancy and maternity, will be advised by the International Office’s Visa and Immigration Team, in respect of any implications to their visa as a result of interruption or a change in the expected completion date for their studies. It is imperative that international students seek early advice as any interruption of studies could have serious consequences in relation to visa permissions and study status.

## For students about to become parents through adoption

Students who are planning to or who have become parents because of adoption are entitled to the same support and advice as other students who become parents during their studies, and the principles and processes outlined in this guidance should apply.

It is acknowledged that the timeframe for adoption arrangements may not allow as much time for planning in comparison with a pregnant student, and where this is the case, the student and the member of staff will follow the principles and processes as far as they are able.

Where two students are jointly adopting, only one member of the couple will be considered as the primary caregiver, who will be entitled to be considered for maternity/parental related absence. The other partner will be afforded the same entitlements as is outlined for partners in Section 4.3 above.

## Responsibilities of all University staff

All staff should familiarise themselves with the detail of this policy and should seek specialist advice on any areas which require it.

Staff who are involved in advising and supporting students to make informed decisions about their pregnancy and maternity should do so in an open-minded and non-judgmental way. All staff are legally bound to not treat the student less favourably because of their pregnancy and maternity. Staff can refer the student to another member of staff for support if required.

Staff are not expected to be experts in all matters relating to pregnancy or maternity, and it is anticipated that there will be limitations to the advice that they will be able to offer. In this respect staff should be clear with students about limitations of their knowledge and experience and should seek further advice from the Student Support Team if required.

The Student Support Team are responsible for oversight of support for pregnant students and will provide advice and can support the development of Student Pregnancy Risk Assessments and New and Expectant Parent Plans.

### Responsibilities of Department, School and Faculty staff – Assessing Risk and Devising an Inclusive Student Support Plan

Staff in the Academic Department, School or Faculty are responsible for advising students on the impact of the pregnancy and maternity on their studies. Normally this will be the Personal Academic Tutor or Programme Leader. They should be familiar with the requirements for the student’s programme of study. This will enable them to complete the following:

1. A New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessment
2. A New and Expectant Parent Plan
	1. Which includes actions from the Risk Assessment
	2. Including consideration of reasonable adjustments
	3. With details of review frequency and arrangements

### The New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment documentation can be downloaded from your Academic Department, School or Faculty SharePoint area or the main University website.

Reasonable adjustments in line with our duty of care and legal responsibilities for students, should always be discussed in dialogue with the student and a specialist student support team (e.g., wellbeing or the inclusion team).

### The New and Expectant Parent Plan

The Programme leader/ PAT will lead on developing the New and Expectant Parent Plan. The initial plan must incorporate the actions agreed from the Risk Assessment and should be completed as soon as possible after the notification of the student’s pregnancy.

The plan should consider scope for flexibility around arrangements for study and assessment, including the following:

1. Absence for antenatal, postnatal and medical appointments;
2. Mitigations for unplanned absence;
3. Deadline extensions where required;
4. Alternative arrangements for exams – for example allowing extra time, availability of food and drink;
5. Group work, field trips, placements, laboratory working, workplace seating arrangements.

Where the plan includes reasonable adjustments, departments may request medical evidence from the student; typically, this would be the MATB1 form which can be obtained from their midwife or GP, or the hospital as appropriate, or equivalent evidence if the student is not based in the UK. Staff should be mindful of the need to adopt a sensitive and confidential approach.

The student and staff completing the initial plan should agree the arrangements for review, taking account of key dates within the cycle of pregnancy and maternity (16 weeks, 24 weeks, 34 weeks, or the student requires any additional support between these periods, and in advance of return to study).

The arrangements for review should also take account of key points in the academic year, e.g., assessments, exams, placements, field trips. The plan should also be reviewed if there is a change to the student’s circumstances, or to the programme of study.

### Authorisation and storage

The New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessment and New and Expectant Parent Plan should be authorised and signed off by the Academic department with input from other central teams.

Once a student discloses, it is important that all relevant staff within the University are informed of the pregnancy, in order to provide the best possible support to the student. Staff receiving a disclosure should gain a student’s consent to share the fact they are pregnant with others. Staff should recognise and respect the student’s right to confidentiality and ensure they understand the student’s wishes and expectations regarding the sharing of this information. The University will share information with others except in cases where a student expressly requests confidentiality regarding their pregnancy-related information. In situations where there are genuine concerns about Safeguarding, the University reserves the right to share pertinent information without explicit consent. Where placements/professional practice are involved, there will be a requirement to inform the placement setting.

The New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessment and the New and Expectant Parent Plan should clearly identify which other University staff and services the student has consented these documents can be shared with. The department/ programme team is responsible for sharing the risk assessment/plan with these staff once authorised.

New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessments and New and Expectant Parent Plans will be kept and retained within Department, Schools or Faculties in line with the University’s records management. In addition, Student Wellbeing Services will retain copies of New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessments for service enhancement, in line with the University’s records management.

### Staff outside of the programme team – information sharing

Where a student has disclosed a pregnancy to a member of staff who is not a member of the programme team which the student is based, that member of staff should ask for the student’s consent to share this information with the academic department and the Student Support team. The member of staff should explain that this is so that a New and Expectant Parent Risk Assessment can be carried out and a New and Expectant Parent Plan devised.

#

# Key to Relevant Documents

Assessment and Submission Process

[Assessment-submission-process-student-version-.docx (live.com)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.edgehill.ac.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F04%2FAssessment-submission-process-student-version-.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

Procedures for the submission of Personal Circumstances

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/appendix-7-procedures-for-the-submission-of-personal-circumstances-2023-2024/>

Interruptions Policy

[Appendix 9: Interruption Policy 2023-2024 - Edge Hill University](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/appendix-9-interruption-policy-2023-2024/)

Repeat Year Policy

[Appendix 10: Repeat Year Policy 2023-2024 - Edge Hill University](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/appendix-10-repeat-year-policy-2023-2024/)

# Annexes

Pregnancy Risk Assessment

New and Expectant Parent Plan

Partner Plan

# End matter

| Title | Student Pregnancy, Parental Support and Adoption Policy |
| --- | --- |
| Policy Owner | Head of Student Support and Guidance |
| Policy Manager | Student Services Compliance Officer |
| Approved by | Learning & Teaching Committee |
| Date of Approval |  |
| Date for Review  |  |

1. Graduate Teaching Assistants are also supported under the **Family Friendly Policy** and should be referred to via HR advisory. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)