

## Student Parental Leave Policy

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LSHTM aims to provide an environment where students are supported and treated fairly and with dignity and respect, including during pregnancy, maternity, paternity / partner leave and the process of adoption.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new protection from discrimination for students during pregnancy and maternity. From 1 October 2010, a student who is pregnant, or has given birth within the last 26 weeks, is explicitly protected from unfavourable treatment.

Whilst the current UK legislation refers to 'paternity' leave, the term 'partner' is used throughout this policy to recognise that any employee who is the father/second parent or spouse/partner of an expectant mother/birth parent/primary adopter (including in a surrogacy arrangement) and who expects to have responsibility for the child is entitled to leave (interruption of study) under this policy.

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

The School is fully aware of the confidential nature of information provided by students with regards to maternity, paternity or adoption and will only pass on this information to those areas that need to be informed in order to provide support or adjustments for the student.

Key contacts include the relevant Personal Tutor, Programme Director, Taught Programme Director, Research Degree Supervisor(s), Departmental Research Degree Coordinator, Faculty Research Degree Director, Research Degree Manager, Student Adviser and Head of Registry. Students may at any time contact [Student Support Services](#) for confidential advice and support.

### 1. Disclosing Pregnancy

Following a consultation with their General Practitioner (GP) and/or other appropriate services, students are encouraged to notify the School about their pregnancy through their personal tutor/supervisor or other member of departmental staff. If a student is uneasy about discussing their pregnancy with the department, they could seek advice and support from the [Student Support Services](#).

It is important that the School is notified about a pregnancy if there are elements of the programme that may present a risk to the health and safety of the student and/or the child.

If a student decides not to notify the School about their pregnancy it will not be possible to put special arrangements in place for health-related absences, examinations, risk assessments or any reasonable adjustments.

If an overseas student requires a Student Visa to remain in the UK during their period of study, UKVI regulations must be taken into consideration. Students should seek advice from the School's [Immigration Advisory Service](#) in relation to their specific circumstances and the possible implications of this on their visa, including information about applying for a new student visa from overseas in order to resume their studies following an interruption of study.

When a student has disclosed a pregnancy, it is recommended that they meet with their personal tutor/supervisor in order to make the best plans for their programme of study, consider impact on academic work and any health and safety issues. MATB1 Certificate (provided to a pregnant woman after their 20-week scan), indicating their expected date of delivery, should guide these discussions.

## **2. Risk Assessments**

Risk assessments must be made where the environment might pose a threat to a pregnant student such as risks associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents. The Programme Director/Supervisor(s) must advise on any reasonable adjustments or additional control measures that may be required due to any risks associated with the programme of study, including field work, laboratory work and placements.

Students are not permitted to take part in field/laboratory work or a placement where it constitutes a risk to them or their unborn child. Where field/laboratory work or a placement is a mandatory part of the programme it is advisable for the student to consult their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) as to the impact upon their programme of study. Unless suitable modifications are possible, an interruption of studies is recommended until such time as the student is able to complete the compulsory element.

## **3. Maternity Leave**

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

After discussions with their personal tutor/supervisor, the student will need to decide whether an interruption of studies is required, the impact this may have on their studies and how long this period may be. The timing and length of the interruption of studies will be determined by several factors, including the due date, any associated health factors and the amount of time planned for maternity leave.

Students are strongly advised to contact [Student Support Services](#) for advice regarding the potential impact of pregnancy on student related finances including loans and fees and for advice on a range of available benefits which they may be able to apply for.

Students who hold UK Research Council or other sponsoring body awards must align their periods of interruption of study and funding body leave. Where there is a conflict between the two policies, the sponsoring body's policy will be followed in relation to the area(s) of conflict. Some funding bodies, like UKRI, provide paid leave. Students should check with their funder regarding their policies on maternity/parental leave and their entitlement to paid periods of leave.

School funded research degree students (such as Bloomsbury Colleges PhD Studentships where the primary supervisor is based at LSHTM) as well as School sponsored students on Doctoral Training Partnerships (such as BBSRC LIDo and MRC LID) who meet eligibility criteria stipulated by the funder, with an expected date of childbirth that occurs during the period of the studentship, are entitled to a funded leave matching leave entitlement stipulated by the main DTP funder (UKRI). Following a period of paid leave, students may take further interruption of study, during which no maintenance grant or tuition fees are payable.

#### **4. Paternity Leave**

Students wishing to take paternity related absence (including accompanying their partners to medical and antenatal appointments) are strongly advised to inform their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) at least twelve weeks before the baby is due (although some flexibility may be required) to arrange a meeting to discuss what support and reasonable adjustments are possible without jeopardising their academic progress.

In line with the entitlements that currently exist within employment law for paternity leave the School will support requests for paternity related absence which is a maximum of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of a child being born. Beyond this, students may take an interruption of study, in line with the arrangements made for maternity leave.

#### **5. Adoption Leave**

Students who are adopting a child will be offered the same level of support as those who have become parents by virtue of either their or their partner's pregnancy.

It is customary for arrangements for adoption leave to parallel those made for maternity and paternity leave, in that the main carer takes 'maternity leave', regardless of gender, and the carer's partner takes 'paternity' leave.

#### **6. Shared Parental Leave**

Shared Parental Leave enables parents to share leave and provides choice and flexibility in the way that they care for their child in the first year following birth, placement or surrogacy. Students may take an interruption of study, in line with the arrangements made for maternity leave.

#### **7. Returning to Studies**

Prior to starting your leave, the date that you intend to return should be discussed with your personal tutor/supervisor. Understandably, this date may change during your period of leave. You should maintain contact with your personal tutor/supervisor and communicate any anticipated changes to your return date as soon as possible. You are advised to meet with your personal tutor/supervisor prior to your return to discuss whether you will require any changes in the way that you study, additional support, and any other considerations. You may also consider meeting with [Student Support Services](#) prior to returning to discuss any potential barriers and the possibility of putting a Learning Support Agreement in place.

#### **8. Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Neonatal Death**

A student who has a stillbirth or whose baby dies shortly after birth should be entitled to the same length of maternity-related absence, financial and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn.