

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
Academic Quality Handbook

Information and Guidance to Students Who Become Pregnant or Adopt Children, and their Partners during their Studies

The University of Aberdeen is fully committed to supporting students, and to providing reasonable adjustments to ensure they are not disadvantaged in their studies due to pregnancy, or adoption of a child. This guidance applies to:

- a) Any student who becomes pregnant during her studies.
- b) Any student who is to become a parent during their studies.
- c) Any student who is the partner of a student who is pregnant (including a same sex partner).
- d) Any student becoming a parent through adoption of a child.

The guidance covers health and safety issues, as well as information relating to finance, accommodation, immigration, breastfeeding and academic considerations.

1. Students to become parents

Any student who has their pregnancy confirmed by a GP, is to become a parent, or is to adopt a child, is encouraged to make an appointment with a Student Support Adviser in the Student Advice and Support Office in order to consider the impact on their studies. This initial appointment will be confidential; however students will be encouraged to share information with their Personal Tutor, Postgraduate/Programme Director or Research Supervisor. The Student Support Adviser can facilitate this, in particular where there are issues of safety or where legal obligations exist. This will be fully explained during the appointment. Consideration will be given to the following:

- Whether an interruption of study will be required and, if so for how long (an interruption would not normally exceed one academic year;
- If assessments are pending, whether the student is fit to attempt the assessments;
- Any time-off or possible modifications to attendance that might be required so that the student can attend medical appointments.

A written record of the agreed adjustments will be produced by the Student Support Adviser and shared with personnel who have responsibility for the student's programme of study.

2. Study Abroad

Where a student has their pregnancy confirmed whilst studying abroad, they are encouraged to contact their Personal Tutor, Postgraduate/Programme Director, Research Supervisor or person nominated by their School to ensure that adequate steps are taken to make necessary adjustments.

3. Returning to Study

The student will be responsible for confirming that they are ready to resume their studies at the end of their agreed period of interruption. They should inform their Programme/Postgraduate Director/Research Supervisor and relevant administrator that they are to return so that the appropriate arrangements can be made in terms of course enrolments. Directly before, or as soon as practical after their return, the student should meet with their Programme/Postgraduate Director/Research Supervisor to ensure that any necessary adjustments are made to ensure a

smooth return to their programme of study. Students are reminded that it is not permitted to bring children into classes.

Childcare facilities available at the University include the Rocking Horse Nursery which is located on campus. www.abdn.ac.uk/rockinghorse. Places are extremely limited so you should place your name on the waiting list as early as possible. A list of other registered nurseries in Aberdeen city (including Foresterhill) is available at <http://www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk/>. SAAS students may be eligible to apply for financial assistance towards registered childcare. Application forms for this can be collected from the Student Advice and Support Office on the top floor of the Students' Union Building.

Breast-feeding: There are no restrictions on breastfeeding at the University. Should you require private circumstances (e.g. to express milk), it may be possible to provide access to first aid rooms for these purposes. Contact the Student Advice and Support Office for further details.

Coaching: Maternity coaching is available to Postgraduate Research students who are suspending their studies for maternity reasons. The purpose of the coaching is to support you in managing the transitions between study and leave. Further information is available from the Student Advice and Support Office on the top floor of the Students' Union Building.

4. Health

It is important that you are registered with a local GP and that you receive appropriate medical support throughout your pregnancy. The Student Advice and Support Office can provide details of local GP practices. It is important that you attend all relevant prenatal appointments. If these appointments clash with compulsory elements of your course (e.g. tutorials or lab work), you should try to change the date or time of your appointment to avoid this. If a change is not possible, or if you are unwell for short periods during your pregnancy, you should self-certify for your absence on medical grounds and contact the relevant course co-ordinator to make arrangements to catch up on any work you have missed.

If you decide your pregnancy is to be terminated, there is no need for anyone at the University to know, but, should you wish to talk to someone about this, staff in the Student Advice and Support Office or the University Counselling Service can speak with you in confidence. In the event of needing to take time off, you should follow the University's absence policies and procedures, in the normal way (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/medical-extenuating-circumstances.php>), but it is not necessary to provide specific details.

5. Safety

In certain circumstances, where there could be a potential risk to your unborn child (for example from exposure to certain pathogens, chemicals or radiation in the laboratory), it will be important that your School is informed as soon as possible to enable them to carry out a review of your study programme, and conduct a risk assessment. You can either approach your School directly about this or you can ask the Student Advice and Support Office to liaise with the School on your behalf.

The Safety Adviser in your School will arrange to carry out the risk assessment with you to identify any relevant risks associated with your study programme and to manage these risks for your protection and the protection of your unborn child. If you have any fieldwork scheduled during your pregnancy, this should be specifically addressed in the risk assessment completed by the School. The University will consider all reasonable adjustments to ensure that you can continue to participate safely in all activities and/or arrange an appropriate alternative activity. Where this is not possible, despite

consideration of possible reasonable adjustments, full or partial suspension of studies may be required. The exact outcome will depend on a number of issues relating to your personal circumstances and this will be discussed fully with you.

The University provides guidance to Schools on health and safety issues for new and expectant mothers but the School may also consult Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing for further guidance.

6. Personal Circumstances

Other than the important issues surrounding the health and safety of you and your child, a number of other matters will need to be considered. These will vary from student to student, according to your individual circumstances. If you are a postgraduate research student, you are encouraged to discuss the relevant matters with your PhD supervisor. Undergraduates and postgraduate students on taught programmes are strongly encouraged to discuss these matters with an appropriate person in your School(s), or an adviser in the Student Advice and Support Office as early as possible. The main issues to consider are:

- **Suspension of studies:** You should expect to take a minimum of 2 weeks off after the birth of your child. Depending on your personal circumstances, including your own health and the due date of your baby, you might need, or wish, to suspend your studies for a longer period of time. (Please consider visa implications – see advice for international students below.) A PhD student should discuss this with their supervisor in the first instance. An Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate student should either discuss this with a member of staff in their School or with an adviser in the Student Advice and Support Office, who will talk through options.
- **Examinations:** If you are unable to take your examinations due to pregnancy-related illness or the birth of your child, you follow the University's absence policies and procedures, in the normal way (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/medical-extenuating-circumstances.php>). You will then need to register for the resit attempt but this will count as your first sitting and no charge will be made. If you require any adjustments (e.g. a room near a toilet), you should approach your School office in the first instance and they will consider what reasonable adjustments would be possible.
- **Financial:** Unless you are already a lone parent or are a part-time student who meets the eligibility for benefits and/or tax credits, you will not be entitled to Government benefits before your child is born, as the majority of students are not entitled to these benefits until their course is completed. If you are in employment, you may be entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay or, if you have recently been in employment, but are no longer working, and have an adequate National Insurance Contribution record, you may be entitled to Maternity Allowance.

However, once your child is born, you may be able to claim certain benefits, depending on your personal circumstances.

For further information visit: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement>.

If you are funded by the Student Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS), you will need to inform them of your circumstances. Postgraduate research students should seek advice from their Graduate School in relation to contacting Research Councils or other sponsors about your change in circumstances.

The Scottish Government provides a Childcare Fund, administered by the Student Advice and Support Office, to help towards the cost of registered or formal childcare (childminders, after-school clubs, day care and nurseries). Application forms are available from the Student Advice and Support Office. Only full-time SAAS funded undergraduates and students within the scope of the student loan system (e.g. PGDE) are eligible to apply. RUK students may be eligible for childcare funding from SFE, SFNI, or SFW.

- **International students:** If you are an international student, subject to the "no recourse to public funds" condition, you will not be eligible for the benefits above. If you have financial sponsors you should inform your sponsors of your circumstances and agree an appropriate plan of action. For advice regarding the visa implications of your pregnancy, please make an appointment to meet with an International Student Adviser in the Student Advice and Support Office in the Students' Union Building as early as possible. If you decide to return home for the birth of your child, you should note that many airlines may refuse to carry pregnant passengers after the 28th week of pregnancy and that travel insurance may be harder to obtain.
- **Accommodation:** If you currently live in University accommodation, you should be aware that this accommodation is not suitable for children so you would need to find an alternative place to stay. In these circumstances, you would be released from your contract. Guidance on seeking private accommodation is available from the Students' Association (<http://www.ausa.org.uk/supportingyou/accommodation>).

7. Contacts and Useful Links

Student Advice and Support Office, The Students' Union Building, Elphinstone Road, Tel: +44 (0)1224-273935, e-mail student.support@abdn.ac.uk

Equality and Diversity policy: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/policies-procedures-plans-and-guidelines-399.php>

University policies and practices regarding examination and assessments, certification of absences and suspension of studies <http://abdn.ac.uk/infocenter/study/index.php>

Listings of nurseries in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire: <http://www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk/>

Student Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS): <http://www.saas.gov.uk/index.htm>

Government information relating to benefits: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement>

Aberdeen City Council Benefits Advice and Information:
http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/council_tax_benefits/council_tax_home.asp