

Section 6: Programme-related  
matters

# Students with Parental Responsibilities Policy

## Advice to Students who become pregnant or whose partners become pregnant during their Course of Study

This document was approved by the University Board for Teaching and Learning on 28 April 2015. The purpose of this document is to ensure that if you or your partner becomes pregnant while you are a student at the University of Reading you know where to seek advice about your/their health, the health of your child and the management of your course of study.

*For students in the Henley Business School, references to 'School' shall be construed as 'programme area', references to 'Head of School' shall be construed as Head of Programme Area, and references to 'School Senior Tutor' shall be construed as Programme Area Senior Tutor.*

## Maternity Policy

### Early action

1. It is important to obtain sound advice **as soon as you know you are pregnant**. If you believe you are pregnant because of missed periods or because you have used an 'over the counter' pregnancy test, you should have your pregnancy confirmed, or otherwise, by a doctor as soon as possible. You can obtain confidential advice from the University Medical Practice from the UK campus or you can consult your own medical practitioner.
2. Delay can cause problems later on, whether you are considering a termination or a continuation of the pregnancy.

### Your future plans and action

3. If your pregnancy is to continue while you are a student, your doctor will arrange for you to receive appropriate antenatal care. It is very important that you let your Personal Tutor and/or Senior Tutor of your School or Department or your School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies (if you are a doctoral researcher) know that you are pregnant **as soon as possible**. The reasons for doing this are to make the best plans for your course of study and examinations and also to ensure any special measures needed for your safety and the safety of your child. Remember, if your course is Science based, the greatest risk to an unborn child from exposure to chemicals and radiation occurs in the first 13 weeks of the pregnancy.
4. In addition, you will not be excused from attendance at the University (e.g. for lectures, seminars, tutorials etc.) for antenatal appointments until you have notified the University of your pregnancy.

5. If you make the decision to terminate your pregnancy there is no need for any staff or students at the University to know about this but if you are away from classes you may wish to let your Personal Tutor or the Senior Tutor for your School or Department or your Director of Postgraduate Research Studies (if you are a doctoral researcher) know that you will be away for 'medical reasons'. A note from a doctor should be provided to justify your absence but this does not have to specify the exact reason. You may also want to seek support to help you cope with this, from University services or other specialist services.

### **Risk Assessments**

6. Once you have informed your School of your pregnancy a Risk Assessment will be completed with you to identify any relevant risks associated with your study programme and to manage these risks for your protection. The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents. The School may consult the University Safety Officer or occupational health when completing the Risk Assessment.
7. Health and Safety advice can also be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/mothers](http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers) and the University Risk Assessment policy and form can be found at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/health-and-safety/resources/hs-resources-sampleriskassessments.aspx>

### **Planning Ahead**

8. You will also need to plan with your School the impact of your pregnancy on your course of study. You are entitled to interrupt your course of study because of pregnancy and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of your study programme and your needs as a pregnant mother. You will need to plan according to your individual circumstances and the timing of the academic year. For example for a baby due in December the best option may be to suspend for a full calendar year after the baby is born (December to December) if that is compatible with your course of study or perhaps for the whole academic year (September to September).
9. Students studying on an international student visa need to be aware that taking a period of suspension from their studies for any reason, including maternity may affect their visa and permission to remain in the country of study. For example, suspensions of up to 60 days, the UK University campus will maintain Tier 4 visa sponsorship and the visa will not be affected. For suspensions of more than 60 days, the University will withdraw visa sponsorship. The visa will then be curtailed (stopped) by the Home Office and the student will be required to leave the UK, this may also affect the student's access to NHS treatment. Once a student is preparing to return to the University, they will require further visa sponsorship to be issued by the University and to obtain a new Tier 4 visa. Advice on this can be obtained from either the International Student Advisor (for Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate students) or the Doctoral Research Office (for Doctoral Researchers).
10. If you do not wish to suspend your course of study, your School will try to make adjustments to your programme in the light of the risk assessment (including any recommendations regarding any precautions to be taken in these circumstances). Such adjustments might involve modifications to the syllabus or teaching programme or location of teaching etc. However, there will be some situations where it will not be possible for the University to provide reasonable, practicable alternatives to a student's designated programme of study and in such cases a student will be required to suspend her studies (or move to part-time registration if that is feasible). Mandatory suspension might arise where a module or modules were a required part of a programme and were considered to constitute a high level risk to your health and safety or the health and safety of your child e.g. modules that involve the use

of chemicals contra-indicated for pregnant women, where the learning outcomes of the module could not be achieved without exposure to that risk.

11. It is important that you meet regularly with your Personal Tutor or designated member of staff to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements which have been put in place.
12. If you do not suspend, you should arrange with your School any absences needed for attendance at ante-natal clinics. Where any absences are substantial you may be better advised to suspend your programme of study (or go part-time where that is feasible).
13. If your baby is due near to or during an examination period you should seek advice from your GP, as the University may need confirmation that you are able to sit the exams. If you are unwell during your pregnancy you should let your School know and provide notes from your doctor as evidence of this. The University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy in relation to performance in assessment and exams is on the web at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx>

### **Field work and placements**

14. If you plan to take part in field work or a placement whilst pregnant, this must be specifically addressed in the Risk Assessment completed by the School as there may be special risks associated with the field work or placement. You may not be permitted to take part in field work or a placement where this constitutes a risk to you or your child.
15. Some professional bodies prohibit pregnant women undertaking placements and field work and where the placement is a mandatory part of your programme you will have to suspend your programme. You may also have to suspend if the field work or placement is a compulsory part of your degree and the programme cannot be modified to accommodate your inability to participate in this part of the programme.
16. Students who become pregnant whilst on a year abroad should contact their personal tutor/supervisor to make appropriate plans to ensure that their health is safeguarded and their academic progress is properly managed.

### **Financial Implications**

17. Additional student grants and DWP benefits may be available to UK/EU students towards the end of the pregnancy. These can help with the costs of childcare and other child related costs. Further information is available at the RUSU Advice Service, or equivalent services provided at Branch campuses.
18. If you are in receipt of a studentship administered by the University, you will need to take note of the specific Terms and Conditions applicable to that studentship. These will set out any entitlements in regard to a period of maternity pay from your sponsor. To check this, please contact either the Student Services Helpdesk (for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate students) or the Doctoral Research Office (for Doctoral Researchers).

### **Returning to study**

19. If you do suspend your programme of study you must let your School know when you wish to return (subject to the University's general rules on the length of any suspension) and plan with your Tutor or Supervisor the optimum timetable for your re-integration into your programme of study, including the examination schedule. You are required to take a minimum of two weeks leave following the birth of your child from all University study. Please be aware

this is a legal requirement and must be adhered to in all cases. Note that your School may impose a condition which must be met before you are permitted to return to study. In addition, it is recommended that returning students meet with their personal/senior tutor/supervisor prior to commencement of their studies following parental leave.

20. The Students Union, or equivalent at Branch Campuses, can provide help and guidance on returning to study and whether your baby can attend the RUSU nursery, or equivalent services provided at Branch campuses.
21. You may also find it useful to consult the University Study Advisors before you return to study.
22. You must never take your baby into a laboratory or other potentially hazardous environment, and your baby must not be taken on field trips unless you have explicit written permission from the member of academic staff leading the trip and a risk assessment has been undertaken.
23. If you are a breast-feeding mother, you may bring your baby into classes, except for those indicated in paragraph 22 above, provided that the baby is held or in a sling or baby carrier at all times, is quiet and does not disturb the class; if these conditions are not met, you must remove the baby from the class immediately. You are responsible for the safety of your baby at all times.
24. **Please note that accommodation at the University of Reading is mostly comprised of single occupancy study bedrooms. There is limited accommodation available for families and couples.**

## **Paternity/Partner Policy**

### **Your future plans and action**

25. If your partner becomes pregnant, it is very important that you let your Personal Tutor and/or Senior Tutor of your School or Department or Supervisor know **as soon as possible**. The reasons for doing this are to make the best plans for your course of study and examinations.
26. If you and your partner make the decision to terminate the pregnancy there is no need for any staff or students at the university to know about this but if you are away from classes you may wish to that you let your Personal Tutor and/or Senior Tutor of your School or Department or your Supervisor know that you will be away for 'medical reasons'. A note from a doctor should be provided to justify your absence but this does not have to specify the exact reason, only that you are caring for someone who has undergone medical treatment. You may also want to seek support to help you cope with this, from University services or other specialist services.

### **Planning Ahead**

27. You will need to plan with your School the impact of the pregnancy on your course of study. You are entitled to interrupt your course of study because of impending parenthood and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of your study programme and your needs as an expectant parent. You will need to plan according to your individual circumstances and the timing of the academic year. For example for a baby due in May the best option may be to undertake your examinations during the August/September examination period.

28. You are entitled to two weeks leave from University work after the baby is born and you are entitled to absences needed for attendance at ante-natal clinics. You should discuss the timing of ante-natal clinics and leave due to child birth with your personal tutor or the designated person in your School as soon as possible. Where any absences are substantial you may be better advised to suspend your programme of study (or go part-time where that is feasible).
29. If your pregnant partner becomes unwell during the pregnancy and this is negatively impacting on your studies you should let your School know and provide appropriate evidence from your partner's doctor as evidence of this. The University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy in relation to performance in assessment and exams is on the web at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx>

### Financial Implications

30. Additional student grants and DWP benefits may be available to UK/EU students towards the end of the pregnancy. These can help with the costs of childcare and other child related costs. Further information is available at the RUSU Advice Service, or equivalent services provided on Branch campuses.

### Returning to study

31. If you do suspend your programme of study you must let your School know when you wish to return (subject to the University's general rules on the length of any suspension) and plan with your Senior and/or Personal Tutor or Director of Postgraduate Research Studies the optimum timetable for your re-integration into your programme of study, including the examination schedule. Note that your School may impose a condition which must be met before you are permitted to return to study.
32. The Students Union, or equivalent at Branch Campuses, can provide help and guidance on returning to study and whether your baby can attend the RUSU nursery, or equivalent services provided at Branch campuses.
33. You may also find it useful to consult the University Study Advisors before you return to study.
34. You must not bring your baby into teaching or learning areas for reasons of health and safety and to avoid the disruption of classes or study.
35. **Please note that accommodation at the University of Reading is mostly comprised of single occupancy study bedrooms. There is limited accommodation available for families and couples.**

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date
1	AGS	Annually	UBTL	28 April 2015	
2	AGS		UBTL	12 June 2018	immediately