

Regent College London

Student Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy

Purpose

1. This student maternity, paternity and adoption policy describes how the College will support students during pregnancy and maternity, or during adoption if the student is the primary adopter. It also describes how the College will support students whose partners are going through pregnancy and maternity, or who are becoming a primary adopter.
2. The overall aim of the policy is to establish an environment where students feel confident in talking to the College about maternity, paternity and adoption, knowing that the College will support them and their continued engagement with their studies. The College is committed to doing all it can to adjust or adapt the requirements of a course for a student who is going through pregnancy, maternity, paternity or adoption to ensure they can continue to meet those requirements.
3. This policy has been developed by reference to [Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions](#), published by the Equality Challenge Unit in 2010. The College may refer to this guidance in dealing with any circumstances not described in this policy.

Who does this policy apply to?

If you are...	Then...
On a programme leading to an award from Pearson	All parts of this procedure apply to you.
On a programme leading to an award from the University of Bolton	This procedure does not apply to you. You should speak to your Customer Services Officer, who will refer to the University's procedures.
On a programme leading to an award from Buckinghamshire New University	This procedure does not apply to you. You should refer to the University's procedures.
On a programme leading to an award from St. Mary's University	All parts of this procedure apply to you.
On a programme leading to an award from Regent College	All parts of this procedure apply to you.
An international student	Some parts of the procedures apply to you.

4. If you are not sure about who gives the award at the end of your programme, please contact your Customer Service Officer.

College contacts

5. The Student Services team is the College's primary point of contact for all matters related to maternity, paternity or adoption.

6. Students needing advice and guidance about maternity, paternity of adoption should speak to their Customer Service Officer (CSO) or the Student Wellbeing team. Staff wanting advice and guidance about students going through maternity, paternity or adoption should speak to the Wellbeing team or to Academic Quality.

Pregnancy and maternity

Informing the College and proving your pregnancy

7. If you become pregnant, you should tell your CSO as soon as possible. The earlier you tell your CSO, the more time they will have to prepare a proper support plan. If you tell us less than 15 weeks before the baby is due, we may not be able to adjust the requirements of your course in time for you to benefit.

8. Your CSO will treat information about your pregnancy in the strictest confidence until you agree who else can be told about it. If you are an international student, your CSO will also need to inform the Director of Data Intelligence and UKVI Compliance.

9. Your CSO will ask if you have told your GP about your pregnancy and can give you details of other sources of advice and guidance about pregnancy and maternity. However, your CSO is not permitted to provide any counselling or guidance themselves.

10. Once you have notified your CSO (and, for international students, the Director of Data Intelligence and UKVI Compliance) of your pregnancy, you should submit the following evidence to be eligible for any maternity related absence:

- MATB1 certificate
- A letter from your GP supporting your fitness to carry on studying.

Please note: if you are not yet registered with your GP, you should register as soon as possible.

11. If you are an international student, documents that will not be acceptable to prove pregnancy include:

- Evidence from your home country
- A prescription listing medication from the UK or your home country
- Unverifiable evidence that would not meet the compliance requirements of UKVI.

Support plan

12. Once you have told your CSO, they will draw up a support plan for your pregnancy in consultation with academic staff, to ensure the College's support for you is coordinated and meets your needs during pregnancy, following the birth, and on your return to your studies.

13. The support plan will cover:

- Communication about the pregnancy – who else in the College needs to be informed about the pregnancy? Who is responsible for letting them know, and when?

- Communication with you – what information do you need during your pregnancy and during your maternity-related absence before and after the birth? And what is your preferred method of communication?
- Health and safety – we may need to conduct a health and safety assessment to safeguard your health and wellbeing during your pregnancy, particularly if you are on a work placement.
- Antenatal care – including the arrangements if antenatal classes coincide with teaching sessions.
- Examinations and assessments – will your pregnancy affect your ability to meet assessment deadlines or sit examinations? If so, what options or alternatives are there to ensure you can continue to meet the requirements of the course?
- Work placements (where necessary) – will the pregnancy affect your ability to complete a work placement? If yes, what options or alternatives are there to ensure the work placement is completed?
- Visa status (where necessary) – will the pregnancy affect your visa status? If yes, what are the implications?
- Maternity-related absence – when is the absence likely to start and end?

14. You should agree your support plan with your CSO and when you will review it. Regular review is important because things can change during pregnancy and some decisions cannot be made at the beginning, such as the length of the maternity-related absence. Your CSO will suggest how often and when you should review the plan.

Maternity-related absence

15. The following arrangements for maternity-related absence apply equally to live births and still births after 24 weeks.

16. Students have the right to take a maternity-related absence following the birth of their child. At a minimum we expect you to take two weeks' compulsory maternity-related absence (or four weeks if you are on a work placement), to ensure your health and safety is protected. Normally, the maximum length of maternity-related absence we will permit is one year, although that may be extended in exceptional circumstances (for example, in cases of postnatal depression or other serious illness).

17. If we are concerned that you are not fit to return to study after a maternity-related absence, then we may ask you to ask your GP or health worker to confirm you are fit to return.

18. Where we think the maternity-related absence may have an impact on the knowledge you will need when you return to study, we may take steps to ensure you can keep up to date, for example by compiling a reading list for you to work through during your absence.

19. If you are an international student, depending on the length of leave required, you may be required to return to your home country. Visa Compliance will then report this to the UKVI. International students must check the terms of their visa closely and comply with any restrictions or requirements. If any clarification is required in terms of the visa, this should be sought immediately by emailing Visa Compliance (visacompliance@rcl.ac.uk). All sponsored students with unauthorised absences of 60 days or more will lead to withdrawal from their programme and withdrawal of their sponsorship. Any authorised absence will be monitored closely by the Welfare and Compliance team so that the students do not breach the conditions of their visa.

20. If further maternity related absence arrangements are required, the student must provide further medical evidence to their CSO as to what and why arrangements are to be put in place. If further arrangements are required and this absence will take a sponsored student over their visa end date the student should be advised to return home and their visa reported to the Home Office.

Starting the maternity-related absence

21. It is up to you to decide when you want the maternity-related absence to begin, in discussion with your CSO. You may wish to study up to your due date or start your absence a full term or semester before your due date. You should record when you expect to start your absence in your support plan at the start of your pregnancy and keep that date under review.

22. If we are concerned you are not fit to study up to your due date, we may suggest starting the maternity-related absence earlier than you had planned.

23. If you wish to adjust your period of study, you must notify your CSO. If you are an international student, you must also notify Visa Compliance (visacompliance@rcl.ac.uk).

Maternity-related absence and student finance

24. If you are a full time UK undergraduate student and have to take time out due to pregnancy, you may be able to request that your student finance continues to be paid during your period of suspension. Your CSO will be able to provide further information and advice about this.

Returning from maternity-related absence

25. The date when you expect to return from your maternity-related absence should be recorded in your support plan. If you want to change that date during your absence you should talk to your CSO. Your CSO may need to amend various aspects of your plan and agree a revised plan with you in writing.

26. Regardless of whether you want to change your return date, you should keep in contact with your CSO during your absence as set out in your support plan. Your CSO and Senior Lecturer may suggest having a return to study meeting near the end of your absence to confirm (and, if necessary, adapt) the arrangements for your return. The Director of Data Intelligence and UKVI Compliance must also be notified in the case of sponsored students.

27. If you are an international student sponsored by the College and travel back to your home country and then wish to return and continue studying, you will be required to make a new visa application from your home country. You will not be able to travel or use your previous visa to travel back to the UK. If you wish to return to your home country for the duration of the maternity leave, please note that airlines may not carry passengers who are 7 months pregnant or more.

Miscarriage, still births and neonatal death

28. If you suffer miscarriage, still birth or the death of your baby shortly after it is born, we would encourage you to tell your CSO about this. Your CSO can then ensure you know how you can access support. Your CSO will treat what you say in strictest confidence unless you want other people to know about the situation.

Paternity

29. If your partner is pregnant, you should tell your CSO as soon as possible and at least 15 weeks before the due date. They will discuss with you whether the College may need to make any adjustments to your study arrangements, for example if the due date coincides with examinations. The Director of Data Intelligence and UKVI Compliance must also be notified in the case of sponsored students.

Time off for antenatal appointments or pregnancy-related illness

30. Any time off you need to take for antenatal appointments or look after your partner during a serious pregnancy-related illness will be regarded as an authorised absence. If you anticipate having to take significant time away from your studies for these reasons, you should talk to your CSO who might suggest making some adjustments to your study arrangements.

Paternity-related absence

31. Arrangements for paternity-related absence apply equally to live births and still births after 24 weeks.

32. Students have the right to take a paternity-related absence when their partner gives birth. The maximum length of absence is two consecutive weeks within 56 weeks of the birth. We will provide you with materials from any teaching sessions you miss during that absence.

33. If your absence falls when an assessment is due or when an examination takes place, and you have not made adjustments for this earlier in the pregnancy, you may apply for an extension or deferral under the Mitigating Circumstances procedure.

Adoption

34. If you have been matched for adoption you should inform your CSO as soon as possible. The Director of Data Intelligence and UKVI Compliance must also be notified in the case of sponsored students.

35. If you are the primary adopter, your CSO will draw up a support plan like the support plan for pregnant students (see above). If your partner is the primary adopter, upon formal adoption of the child you will be allowed time off from your studies in line with the policy on paternity-related absence set out above.

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