

Student Maternity, Adoption and Related Leave Policy

Owner	Director of Student Services		
Version	2		
Changes	Updates for clarity and accuracy		
Approval date	December 2025	Approved by	Academic Council
Implementation date	January 2026	Date of next review	January 2029
Related internal policy	Fitness to Study policy		
Related external policies and regulations	The policy is informed by the Equality Act 2010, which protects students from discrimination because of pregnancy, maternity, or parenthood, and by guidance issued by Advance HE (formerly the Equality Challenge Unit) and the Office for Students (OfS) on supporting student parents and carers		

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1. Purpose and Principles

RCL (“the College”) is committed to supporting students who are pregnant, have recently given birth, are the partner of someone who has recently given birth, or are becoming parents through adoption or surrogacy.

This policy ensures that such students are treated fairly, without discrimination, and are supported to continue and complete their studies wherever possible.

The guiding principles are that:

- Students should not be disadvantaged academically or financially because of pregnancy, maternity, or adoption.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to support continuation or temporary suspension of study as needed.
- Information will be treated sensitively and confidentially.
- The College will take all reasonable steps to ensure a safe and supportive environment.

2. Scope and Definitions

2.1 Scope

This policy applies to registered students of RCL, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, regardless of mode or level of study.

RCL students registered with a partner university may fall under that institution’s policies rather than the College’s. The following table clarifies which policy applies in each case.

Programme of Study / Registration	Institution Whose Policy Applies
On a programme leading to an award from Pearson	RCL policy applies
On a programme leading to an award	RCL policy applies

Programme of Study / Registration	Institution Whose Policy Applies
from St. Mary's University	
On a programme leading to an award from Regent College London	RCL policy applies
On a programme leading to an award from Buckinghamshire New University	Buckinghamshire New University policy applies. Support is provided by the Student Success Officer
On a programme leading to an award from the University of Greater Manchester	University of Greater Manchester Policy applies. Support is provided by the Student Success Officer.

2.2 Definitions

- **Adoption** – when a student becomes the legal parent of a child through adoption processes.
- **Fertility treatment** – medical procedures undertaken to assist conception.
- **Maternity** – the period following childbirth, during which a student recovers and cares for the child.
- **Partner Leave** – leave for a student whose partner is pregnant or who is becoming a parent through adoption or surrogacy.
- **Pregnancy** – the period of conception through to childbirth, including miscarriage or stillbirth.
- **Pregnancy loss** – includes miscarriage, ectopic or molar pregnancy, or stillbirth.
- **Surrogacy** – an arrangement in which a surrogate carries and delivers a child for intended parent(s).

3. Equality, Confidentiality and Safeguarding

RCL upholds the Equality Act 2010, which prohibits unfavourable treatment on grounds of pregnancy or maternity.

- **Disclosure:** Students are encouraged to inform the College of their circumstances at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate support and risk assessment can be arranged.
- **Confidentiality:** Information will only be shared with relevant staff on a strict need-to-know basis, with the student's consent.
- **Safeguarding:** The College has a duty of care to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all students and their children while on campus or placement.

4. Notification and Support Procedures

4.1 Notification

Students should inform their Student Success Officer (SSO) as soon as reasonably possible if they become pregnant or are adopting.

The SSO will coordinate the creation of a Student Maternity Plan in consultation with the student, and relevant services (e.g. Student Wellbeing, Registry, International Student Advice).

4.2 The Support Plan will:

- Record key dates (expected week of childbirth, placement, or adoption).
- Outline any necessary health-and-safety adjustments.
- Specify academic arrangements in line with partner university policies.
- Identify contacts for ongoing support.
- Confirm arrangements for access to College systems during leave.

The plan should be reviewed regularly and updated if circumstances change.

5. Risk Assessment and Health & Safety

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as applied to students in learning environments), the College will conduct an appropriate risk assessment as soon as the student discloses pregnancy.

This assessment will consider:

- Exposure to hazardous substances, radiation or infectious agents.
- Physical demands (lifting, long standing, fieldwork).
- Travel or placement risks.
- Emergency procedures and first-aid access.

Where risks are identified, alternative study arrangements will be made to ensure safety.

6. Types of Leave and Entitlements

6.1 Maternity Leave

- Pregnant students are entitled to take a period of maternity-related absence from study.
- The minimum recommended period is two weeks (or four weeks for students on professional placements), but students may take up to twelve months in total, depending on course structure and external requirements.
- The period of interruption will normally be classed as a student led suspension of study; tuition fees may be paused in accordance with College and funding-body rules.
- Students will retain access to College email, learning systems and library resources during the leave period.

6.2 Partner Leave

- Students whose partner is pregnant, or who are becoming parents through adoption or surrogacy, may take up to two weeks' authorised absence around the time of birth or placement of the child.
- Longer leave may be approved through formal suspension of study (up to twelve months) dependent on availability of future programme intakes.
- The same procedures for support planning and return apply.

6.3 Adoption Leave

- Students adopting a child may request up to twelve months' suspension.
- Flexibility of the start date will be considered around the date of placement of the child, dependent on programme intakes.
- Only one student in a couple may normally claim adoption leave where both are adopting jointly.

6.4 Fertility Treatment

- Students undergoing fertility treatment may request reasonable time off to attend medical appointments or procedures.
- Time off should be arranged in advance where possible with the SSO and recorded in the Support Plan.
- The College recognises that treatment may be physically and emotionally demanding; academic adjustments may be considered where appropriate.

6.5 Surrogacy

- Intended parents who will become legal parents through a surrogacy arrangement are entitled to request Partner Leave or longer authorised suspension (up to twelve months).
- The College will support students to arrange flexible attendance or assessment adjustments as needed prior to and after the birth.

6.6 Pregnancy Loss and Baby Loss

- In cases of miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth or neonatal loss, students will be offered compassionate leave and appropriate academic flexibility.
- For a stillbirth after twenty-four weeks of pregnancy, the full maternity-leave entitlement will apply.
- Students may access emotional and counselling support, and external organisations such as Sands, Tommy's, or the Miscarriage Association will be signposted.

7. Access During Leave and Keeping in Touch

- Students on maternity, or adoption, leave will retain College email, IT and library access.
- Keeping in Touch (KIT) days: these may be used to participate voluntarily in meetings with the SSO, without ending leave.
- Participation in KIT activity is optional and must be agreed in advance with the SSO and recorded in the Support Plan.

8. Return and Support on Return

- Students should confirm their expected return date with the SSO at least four weeks in advance.
- The Support Plan will be reviewed to ensure a smooth re-entry, with consideration of flexible study arrangements, reduced loads, or phased return if needed.
- On return, students will be reminded of rooms available on each campus for breastfeeding or expressing milk.
- SSOs will ensure that academic adjustments (catch-up teaching, assessment scheduling, lab access) are in place.

9. International Students and Visa Compliance

International students holding a student visa must comply with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) attendance and enrolment rules.

- Students will meet with the College International Student Adviser to discuss the extent to which they will be able to engage with their studies.
- A decision will be taken as to whether they should continue or suspend their studies and return home.
- The College will issue a new Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for return if required.
- The Support Plan will record visa implications and contact points.

10. Financial and Funding Considerations

- Students receiving funding from Student Finance, or other sponsors must notify those bodies directly to confirm entitlement during leave.
- The College's Student Funding team can advise on hardship or discretionary funds.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Academic Council and Student Experience Committee, or sooner if legislation or sector guidance changes.