



**ROBERT GORDON
UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN**

Student Pregnancy & Parenting/Caring Responsibilities Policy



Approved by	The Executive		
Date Approved	October 2022	Status	Approved
Policy Owner	Director of Student Life	Impact assessed	Yes
Version	1.1	Date of next review	October 2025

Version Number	Purpose/Change	Date
1	Creation of Student Pregnancy & Parenting/Caring Responsibilities Policy	September 2022
1.1	Updated to Approved status, updated links to risk assessment and Support and Adjustment Plans and clause 2.1 has been updated to reflect PSRB requirements.	October 2022

STUDENT PREGNANCY & PARENTING/CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University believes that being or becoming responsible for a child or dependent adult should not be a barrier to success for students at RGU.
- 1.2 In order to ensure that we will:
 - 1.2.1 Provide support and advice to students that enable informed decisions and flexible arrangements for family responsibilities.
 - 1.2.2 Provide a welcoming and inclusive environment, on and off campus.
 - 1.2.3 Empower students to progress within study.
 - 1.2.4 Work in partnership with students and staff to have ongoing dialogue about our culture which enhances wellbeing for all.
 - 1.2.5 Ensure there are consistent, fair, and effective procedures to safeguard the health, safety, and wellbeing of our University community, and provide specific guidance to academic leaders and managers.
 - 1.2.6 Ensure the required standards of health, safety, and welfare are maintained.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Students are not normally required to disclose a pregnancy (unless required to do so under PSRB) however the University encourages students to disclose pregnancy or parenting/caring responsibilities so the University can provide support, advice, assist in planning, and to ensure students are not exposed to risks in respect of health and safety if pregnant.

- 2.2 Students will be provided with support and advice to enable them to make their own informed decisions, to make arrangements for pregnancy and for subsequent periods of leave as well as for parenting/caring responsibilities. This will ensure that study can continue, academic standards are upheld, and routine University business is not disrupted/compromised.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy is intended to assist students, applicants, and staff in the following circumstances:
- 3.1.1 Any applicant who will be pregnant when commencing studies;
 - 3.1.2 Any student who becomes pregnant during study;
 - 3.1.3 Any applicant/student who has given birth within the last 26 weeks;
 - 3.1.4 Any applicant/student whose partner is pregnant;
 - 3.1.5 Any applicant/student going through the adoption process;
 - 3.1.6 Any applicant/student with parental or caring responsibilities;
 - 3.1.7 Any applicant/student undergoing fertility treatment.

4. Student/Applicant Responsibilities and Support Processes

- 4.1 Should an applicant or student wish to disclose any of the circumstances in Section 3, they should do so in the first instance to an appropriate member of staff in their School; for example, their Personal Tutor, Course Leader, or Supervisor.
- 4.1.1 Students are strongly encouraged to make a disclosure in order to facilitate the support and planning process and to enable them to manage these alongside their studies.

- 4.1.2 Students and applicants who are pregnant are advised to disclose as early as possible to engage with staff to complete an [Expectant & Nursing Mothers Risk Assessment](#) to ensure their safety during the course of their studies.
- 4.1.3 It is acknowledged that the timeframe for adoption arrangements may not allow as much time for planning in comparison with a pregnant student, and where this is the case, the student and the member of staff will follow the principles and processes as far as they are able.
- 4.2 Following disclosure students and applicants should participate fully in the process of developing and reviewing a personalised [Student Pregnancy Support and Adjustment Plan](#) or [Student Parenting/Caring Support and Adjustment Plan](#) (the Plan), in conjunction with an appropriate member of staff from their academic school and, if required, a member of staff from Student Life with responsibility for pastoral support.
- 4.2.1 Alongside the Student Pregnancy Support and Adjustment Plan, staff will complete an [Expectant & Nursing Mothers Risk Assessment](#) with the student and the School Health & Safety Co-Ordinator.
- 4.3 Flexible arrangements may be put in place including permissible absence for medical appointments and consideration of the circumstances of the students in respect of deadlines, assessment and exams or interruption to studies.
- 4.4 Students and applicants should take responsibility for understanding the specific requirements of their program of study, and the possible impact of short- or long-term absence on arrangements for study and assessment.

- 4.5 Students and applicants wishing to take a temporary suspension of studies are required to have this approved by the School Academic Board, as per [Academic Regulations](#) A2: Admission and Enrolment, 9. Temporary Suspension of Studies.
- 4.5.1 Students and applicants should note that they will not be permitted to return to their studies for a period of at least two weeks following the birth of a baby for required Health and Safety reasons. Where possible, the intended date for return to study should be discussed as part of the Plan.
- 4.6 International students and applicants should seek advice from the Student Immigration Team via [Ask RGU](#) at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.6.1 International applicants who are pregnant should be aware that while no direct disclosure will be asked in the visa application, it may be necessary to disclose if a [TB test](#) is required. International applicants may be asked to provide UK Visa & Immigration with information on how the University will provide support and manage health and safety risks. This will take the form of the Pregnancy Support and Adjustment Plan and [Expectant & Nursing Mothers Risk Assessment](#). It is vital that international applicants disclose a pregnancy to the University as early as possible for the University to support them in their visa application process.
- 4.6.2 It is imperative that international students seek early advice as any interruption of studies could have serious consequences in relation to visa permissions and study status.
- 4.7 Students and applicants should seek advice about potential implications for their funding of any absences. As well as the Student Finance Office, the Student Union can provide impartial and independent advice about financial matters. In the case of postgraduate students, arrangements for absence will differ depending on the nature of the funding arrangements. It is imperative that all students seek early advice as any interruption of studies could have serious consequences in relation to funding arrangements during or following a temporary period of leave.

5. Staff Responsibilities

- 5.1 Staff who are involved in advising and supporting students to make informed decisions about their pregnancy, maternity, parental or caring responsibilities should do so in an open-minded and non-judgmental way and should always avoid treating the student less favourably because of their circumstances, as per the University's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) and [Dignity at RGU Policy](#).
- 5.2 Where a student has disclosed a circumstance within the scope of this policy to a member of staff, that member of staff should notify and seek advice from their Dean. The Dean should subsequently identify appropriate staff tasked with supporting the student in developing a Plan.
- 5.3 The student should be supported in developing the Plan by a member of staff from their School who has sufficient understanding of the academic structure of the student's programme of study to consider the impact of pregnancy and maternity, parenting or caring arrangements for study and assessment, and to suggest flexibility and adjustments. It should also involve a member of staff with appropriate experience in welfare and pastoral support, to advise on wider support related issues and the School Health & Safety Co-Ordinator to advise on health and safety risk or seek further advice from the Occupational Health and Safety Department.
- 5.4 The University ensures, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of all employees, students and others (non-employees) and that they are not adversely affected by its work activities or the conduct of our undertaking. Staff advising students who are pregnant must ensure that an [Expectant & Nursing Mothers Risk Assessment](#) is completed before any tasks other than computer/desk work resume. On completion of the risk assessment, the School should ensure that any adjustments are made as recommended on the form. This is particularly important where there are known personal or work area risks.

5.4.1 The initial Plan and [Expectant & Nursing Mothers Risk Assessment](#) should be completed as soon as possible after the notification of the student's pregnancy. The student and staff completing the initial Plan should agree the arrangements for review, taking account of key dates within the cycle of pregnancy and maternity (16 weeks, 24 weeks, and in advance of return to study).

5.5 Staff should familiarise themselves with the detail of this Policy and should seek specialist advice on any areas which require it.

5.6 Staff who are advising students on the impact of the pregnancy and/or parent or carer leave should familiarise themselves with the requirements for the student's program of study, in order to assist them in considering support and adjustments.

5.7 Staff are not expected to be experts in matters relating to family planning, pregnancy, or difficulties in pregnancy, and it is anticipated that there will be limitations to the advice that they will be able to offer. In this respect staff should be clear with students about limitations of their knowledge, experience, and boundaries of the staff student relationship, and should signpost to [further advice](#) as appropriate from other individuals and medical services.

5.8 Staff who are responsible for undertaking the Plan with the student should ensure that arrangements for review are clearly stated within the Plan.

5.9 The Plan should be approved and signed off by the Dean. In the case of research students, a copy should be sent to their Grad School.

6. Termination, Miscarriage and Stillbirth

6.1 Students who are uncertain whether to continue with a pregnancy should be signposted to support and advice to help them reach a decision.

- 6.2 If the student decides to terminate a pregnancy, the student may need time off for medical tests before and to recover after the procedure. Consideration should also be given to the emotional and psychological impact of termination, and the student should be reminded of the availability of support services. The impact of the termination on physical and psychological wellbeing may require flexibility to be applied in respect of deadlines and exams, and staff should be mindful of the need to adopt a sensitive and confidential approach.
- 6.3 Students who experience miscarriage may require support and flexibility to allow them to recover from the physical and psychological impact, and to attend medical appointments. Consideration should also be given to the emotional and psychological impact of miscarriage, and the student should be reminded of the availability of support services. The impact of the miscarriage on physical and psychological wellbeing may require flexibility to be applied in respect of deadlines and assessment, and staff should be mindful of the need to adopt a sensitive and confidential approach.
- 6.4 Stillbirth is defined as the death of the baby in the womb, or at the time of the birth, after 24 weeks of pregnancy. A student who experiences a stillbirth or death of a baby shortly after birth will be entitled to the same support and entitlements as a student whose baby is not stillborn.

7. Compliance

- 7.1 Compliance of the Student Pregnancy and Parenting/Caring Responsibilities Policy is necessary for the University's Health and Safety Requirements along with its wish to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for all its students.

8. Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required.



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