Policy on Student Maternity, Paternity and Adoption

Introduction

This policy aims to provide you with guidance if you become pregnant during the course of your studies, if you have recently had a child, are in the process of adopting a child, or are the partner of a person in one of these situations.

If you become pregnant or are in the process of adoption you are encouraged to inform your Faculty Student Office or Grad School and your Personal Academic Tutor or Supervisor as soon as is reasonable, so that your plans can be discussed and arrangements made for leave and prospective return to study.

Should you be concerned about your financial situation during this time, the Financial Information & Assistance Team may be able to offer assistance. Please call the Student Services Centre on 02380 599 599 to book an appointment where you will be able to speak with an advisor.

Should you find yourself in need of support during this time, First Support can be contacted during office hours on 023 8059 7488.

The Student’s Union (SUSU) Advice Centre aims to provide all students at the University with free, independent and confidential advice and representation in a friendly, relaxed environment. For those students affected by this policy the Advice Centre can provide specific advice on student funding, money management, study arrangements, welfare benefits and employment rights. We recommend that you speak to the Advice Centre at the earliest opportunity. If you wish, you may do so in confidence prior to informing the University of your circumstances.

The University is committed to eliminating discrimination in pregnancy and maternity for students, visitors and staff, under the Equality Act 2010 and its additional Public Sector Equality Duty. You can find the overall Equality and Diversity policy at http://www.southampton.ac.uk/diversity/policies/equal_opportunities.page.

The University's existing support services are available to provide assistance to pregnant students and new parents. Details of the support available are provided below

Maternity Leave

(If you are a Tier 4 student seeking maternity leave, please see the section ‘Tier 4 Students’).

If you are pregnant you may take up to 52 weeks leave from your studies.

If you wish to take maternity leave you should apply for suspension of your studies under the University’s General Regulations, Section IV paragraph 2. This is particularly important in order to ensure that you do not have to pay fees for the duration of your suspension – see below under Finance.

Suspension will usually be ‘with services’ so that you can retain library access, access your University email account and Blackboard services.

A link to the Regulations may be found below:

http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/interruption.html

* Tier 4 Visa requirements may be subject to change at any time and UKVI regulations will overrule the information held within this policy.
If you have any queries please contact saavisa@soton.ac.uk.
Amended 26.02.2016 to reflect changes to Tier 4 regulations.
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You are not required to return to study for a period of at least 2 weeks after giving birth, the same statutory period that applies to employees.

Paternity Leave

*(If you are a Tier 4 student seeking maternity leave, please see the section ‘Tier 4 Students’).*

If you are the father of a child, or partner of a student who is pregnant or in the process of adoption who expects to have parental responsibility for the child, you may take two weeks paternity leave (without any removal of stipend for PGR students) immediately following the birth of the child or placement for adoption (and no later than 56 days after the birth or adoption). A request for paternity leave should be made via your Faculty Student Office or Grad School. You must also notify your Personal Academic Tutor or Supervisor. Fathers or partners who wish to take a longer period of paternity leave in order to care for a child should discuss this with their Personal Academic Tutor or Supervisor. A formal application for suspension should also be made in connection with any period of agreed leave.

Adoption Leave

If you are adopting you may apply for suspension of your studies for up to 52 weeks under the Regulations referred to above.

Caring for a child whilst studying will have an impact on a parent or carer’s study; therefore you should take advice from your Personal Academic Tutor and the Advice Centre to help you find ways to manage this additional responsibility.

The partner of a student who is adopting may apply for paternity leave. Please note that where a couple are adopting a child (which may include same sex couples) only one of them may apply for adoption leave. The other may apply for paternity leave.

Paid Leave

Undergraduate Students and Postgraduate Students on Taught Programmes

Maternity leave for registered students will generally be unpaid unless you are employed by the University and eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay.

Statutory Maternity pay will only apply if you are employed by the University as well as being registered as a student, are earning above the National Insurance Limit and meet the other statutory conditions for eligibility.

You are advised to check to see if you are eligible to receive Maternity Allowance, which is a state benefit. Contact the Advice Centre for further information and advice.

Statutory Maternity pay will only apply if you are employed on a contract by the University as well as being registered as a student, are earning above the National Insurance Limit and meet the other statutory conditions for eligibility. You can find out more about this from the HR website: [http://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/maternity_leave/index.php](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/maternity_leave/index.php).

If you believe you are eligible, you should then contact the HR Manager for the faculty or professional service group that you work for: [http://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/hrm_team/index.php](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/hrm_team/index.php). There are similar conditions for adoption.

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Funded Postgraduate and NHS funded Students

Postgraduate Research students may be eligible for a continuation of their funding, please check with your faculty.

Your Faculty Grad School will notify Registry and Finance of your planned leave.

As with students on taught programmes, it is worth checking to see if you are entitled to Maternity Allowance [https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance/overview](https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance/overview) – contact the Advice Centre for further information and assistance.

If adopting or the partner of a student who is pregnant or adopting, you may be entitled to paternity or adoption pay, depending on the rules of your particular funding body.

NHS funded students

For NHS contact:

NHS Student Grants Unit: www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk or tel 0845 358 6655 (Students only).
http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/1667.aspx
http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/816.aspx
https://www.gov.uk/nhs-bursaries/overview

Health and Safety

Once you have notified the University that you are pregnant, a risk assessment should be carried out by your Faculty Health and Safety Officer.

In some cases, if you are working in conditions that may be hazardous to you or to your unborn child you may have to suspend your studies prior to the 29th week of pregnancy. This might include some placements, field work and laboratory or other experimental work.

If you are planning to fly within the UK or abroad in connection with your studies, you should also check insurance arrangements and the rules of the airline as to whether you are able to travel on your planned dates.

You must continue your studies up to your 29th week of pregnancy to become eligible for paid maternity leave. However it is recognised that for health and safety reasons it may be necessary for you to cease some activities earlier if they may present a hazard to you or your unborn child (see below).

Study Arrangements

As stated, having notified your Faculty Student Office or Grad School it is helpful if you notify your Personal Academic Tutor or Supervisor as soon as possible if you become pregnant.

Your Personal Academic Tutor or Supervisor should meet with you to discuss the point at which you wish to suspend your studies and start your maternity leave, any special arrangements that might need to be made while you are pregnant, and likely date of return to study. A written record of this meeting must be made and placed on your student file, and a copy given to you.

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Careful consideration will need to be made as to whether you can undertake field work, placements or laboratory work, or study abroad, whilst pregnant. Where necessary, health and safety and/or medical advice should be sought.

Where pregnancy impacts upon your health, you should keep your Personal Academic Tutor or Supervisor informed of the situation.

You may wish to apply for special considerations if pregnancy has impacted upon your studies, in terms of examinations or any other form of assessment. If you want advice about this contact SUSU.

You should indicate when you plan to return to your studies and should contact your Faculty Student Office, Grad School, Personal Academic Tutor or supervisor at least a month prior to return to discuss your planned date of return and how your return to study will be managed.

If you are a clinical student in the Faculty of Medicine or are studying for any other professional qualification which involves placements (eg nursing and midwifery, teaching or social work) you are advised to make contact about your planned return date as early as possible and keep in regular contact to allow your Faculty to plan suitable placements for your return.

Under the University’s regulations, suspension for a period of more than 2 years will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

**Accommodation**

Single occupancy halls are not suitable as a living environment for a parent and child. If you are pregnant and living in a single occupancy hall you need to get in touch with the Residences team as soon as possible. A member of the team, with appropriate discretion, will work with you to conduct a risk assessment that will identify and offset any risk of you being resident in halls during your pregnancy. We will also ask that you liaise with your Faculty to obtain an Amendment of Registration document that you can collect from your Faculty Student Office. This must be completed by you and signed by an appropriate member of staff in your Faculty (normally your Personal Academic Tutor). This form will ensure that we will release you from your contract when you have made suitable arrangements for your accommodation prior to reaching the full term of your pregnancy. Your responsibility will be to make these arrangements, with advice from the University and SUSU, so that they are in place for you once you have given birth.

If you are living in a University owned house and decide to suspend your studies the principle of release from contract would remain the same. However you may be permitted to remain in residence if a) the house is suitable in terms of size and facilities for the extra family member and b) in the case of international students, that you have permission to remain in the UK.

If you are returning to study after giving birth or adoption you may apply for family accommodation through University Residences. However please note that places are very limited and there is no guarantee that suitable accommodation will be available. If you are seeking family accommodation you are advised to contact University Residences at the earliest possible opportunity. University Residences will also be able to offer advice and guidance on finding suitable private rented accommodation.

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Finance

When you suspend your studies for reasons of pregnancy and maternity leave you will not be charged fees for the period of suspension. Undergraduate students should note that funding may stop when a leave of absence begins. Students should seek advice from their funding body (for example Student Finance England) or from the Students’ Union (SUSU) Advice Centre. To ensure that our financial records are kept in alignment with your period of suspension it is essential that you apply for suspension of your studies under the University's General Regulations, Section IV paragraph 2 http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/interruption.html

Childcare - Early Years Centre

Ideally situated on the Highfield campus, The Early Years Centre provides high quality education and childcare for children and babies aged 3 months to 5 years. The Early Years Centre is open from 8am to 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. Children can attend for either one or two sessions (morning and/or afternoon) per day.

If you are in financial hardship you may be able to get help from the University's Hardship Fund to pay the Early Years Centre fees. Parents are a priority group. Eligibility can be assessed by contacting the Financial Information & Assistance Team in the Student Services Centre on 02380 599 599.

For further information visit:

http://www.southampton.ac.uk/earlyyearscentre

Tier 4 Students*

If you are an on a Tier 4 Visa you should meet with the VISAs team in Building 37, as soon as possible and they will be able to give you advice. Visa Advice Drop-in sessions are usually held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00am – 11:00am at the Visa Waiting Area in Student Services Centre, Building 37. Alternatively, if you would prefer to arrange a private one-to-one appointment with a Visa Advisor please call Student Services Centre on 02380 599 599.

The Home Office states that any Tier 4 students who interrupt their studies for a significant period of time should leave the UK. This absence will require you to leave the UK and obtain a new CAS and Visa to enable your return, following your maternity leave. Please note that if you have dependents related to your visa, this will also apply to them. In addition you will need to apply for a Dependent visa for your new baby

As a Tier 4 sponsored student, thinking about maternity leave, the University wants to support you as much as it can and would encourage you to get medical advice as early as possible. You should also speak to your airline, as some airlines do not permit pregnant women to fly after a certain time during pregnancy. According to the NHS website, after week 28 of your pregnancy most airlines will require a letter from your Midwife or Doctor confirming that you’re in good health, that you have a normal pregnancy and to confirm the expected date of your child’s birth. Please be aware that your Doctor may charge you for the letter. Some airlines may require medical clearance if your delivery date is less than four weeks after your departure date, or if any complications are expected during the birth of

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Your child. Check with your airline as restrictions can vary. Most airlines not allow you to travel after week 36 of pregnancy, or week 32 if you’re pregnant with twins or multiples.

The University has to comply with Home Office legislation which means we will need to suspend you and inform the Home Office of this suspension. This means that we will have to remove sponsorship of your current Tier 4 visa and as soon as you have been notified of this you will have 60 days in which you and your dependents must leave the UK. If you choose to remain in the UK to have your child, you may be risking the Immigration status of your family. The immigration rules could affect yourself, any dependants on your visa and your child and may make it difficult to return to the UK.

For further information please see the Visa and Immigration web pages: http://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentservices/visa-and-immigration/index.page

You must not return to study for a period of at least 2 weeks after giving birth.

**Tier 4 Paternity Leave**

Current paternity leave is limited to 2 weeks maximum and you should seek authorisation for this from your Faculty Student Office or Grad School. If you wish to take paternity leave for the permitted two week period this can be processed as an authorised absence. Please request an Authorised Absence Form from your Faculty Student Office or Graduate School. You will need to complete the form and then obtain a signature from your Tutor or Supervisor. Once this has been done please return a hard copy of the form to the Office and they will forward this to the VISAs Team for authorisation.

**Returning to University**

There are baby changing facilities in the Early Years Centre and in the Jubilee Sports Centre. When on campus, quiet, private rooms may be available for breastfeeding within the Student Services Centre and The Early Years Centre. Rooms are not bookable in advance, however staff within both centres will endeavour to locate a room where possible on a drop in basis. Please enquire at reception. You should enquire in other buildings for localised availability of space suitable for breastfeeding as other areas may be available.

The Early Years Centre offers emergency childcare for anyone who may require it, however please note that this is dependent on availability. Please contact your Faculty Student Office or Grad School who will advise on whether children will be permitted to attend lectures should childcare be an issue.

There will be a room available for breastfeeding and expressing within the Nuffield Theatre at the end of 2015. Further details will be advertised on SUSSED and on the Parents & Carers Network.

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SOURCES OF ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Student Services Centre
- Highfield Campus
- Tel: 023 8059 9599
- Email: ssc@soton.ac.uk

Students' Union (SUSU) Advice Centre
- Building 40, Highfield Campus
- Tel: 023 8059 2085
- Fax: 023 8059 5235
- Email: advice@susu.org

- First Support
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 7488
  - Email: firstsupport@soton.ac.uk

- Financial Information and Assistance
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 9599
  - Email: stufunds@soton.ac.uk

- University Residences
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 5959
  - Email: accommodation@soton.ac.uk

- University Early Years Centre
  - The Early Years Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 3465
  - Email: eycentre@southampton.ac.uk

- The Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service (VISAS Team)
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 9599
  - Email: visa@soton.ac.uk
  - http://www.soton.ac.uk/studentservices/index.html

- University of Southampton, Parents & Carers Network
  - www.southampton.ac.uk/pcn
  - Although this is a staff network, valuable information can be found on their website.

- National Union of Students (NUS)

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