

Information for Students who are Pregnant

The University of Worcester recognises that pregnancy and parenthood can be daunting and exciting. We have therefore compiled the following questions and answers to help you choose the support you might need and want and to make sure that support is available and accessible. Hopefully the questions and answers will cover all your needs but if they do not, or you would like clarification on any points you can contact any of the following for help:

- Your academic tutor;
- Lucy Sandwell, Student Support and Wellbeing Manager; tel. 01905 85 5104, email l.sandwell@worc.ac.uk;
- Student Advisers, Worcester Students' Union; tel. 01905 54 3210, email suadvice@worc.ac.uk.

Q1. *I am pregnant; do I have to tell the university?*

You do not have to tell the university you are pregnant, however the university will be unable to provide you with individualised support unless you let us know. The university will only enquire if you are pregnant if it has good grounds to believe you are and there are genuine concerns about your health and safety.

Q2. *Who should I tell?*

If you decide to tell the university you should inform Lucy Sandwell, the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager (telephone: 01905 855104; email l.sandwell@worc.ac.uk). She will ensure you are made fully aware of the support available to you and will co-ordinate arrangements for that support. She will carry out a risk assessment with you and agree a personal support plan. An example support plan is shown at the end of these questions and answers.

During these discussions you will have the opportunity to name those members of university staff you wish to inform of your pregnancy and to give your permission for those people to be informed. The University will not inform any one about your pregnancy without your express permission, unless it has genuine concerns for your health and safety or the health and safety of your child.

Q3. *What if I would rather tell someone else?*

You may not wish the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager to be the first person at the university you inform about your pregnancy. If you would rather tell another member of university staff or a Student Union officer or staff member you should draw their attention to the document *Student pregnancy and maternity – guidance for staff* available at www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/.

Whilst it is your decision who you inform you should be aware that members of University staff other than the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager may not be as well placed to have an overview of the support available and to ensure you receive the support you need when you need it.

Q4. *When should I tell them?*

The highest risk of harm to your baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy so it is advisable you notify the university as soon as possible once you find out you are pregnant so that a risk assessment can be carried out and identifiable risks to you and your baby may be avoided. Even if you are unsure whether you wish to proceed with the pregnancy, it may still be beneficial to carry out a risk assessment.

Q5. *Will I have to leave university because I am pregnant?*

No. Being pregnant in itself does not necessarily mean you need to leave your course or suspend your studies. However there may be risks associated with continuing your studies at certain stages of your pregnancy which will depend on the requirements and nature of your course. For many courses these risks will be low but courses that involve the following are more likely to present greater risks:

- physical activity, including lifting and carrying
- the use of chemicals, including paints and pesticides
- exposure to radiation
- working in hot/cold or pressurised environments.
- where exposure to infectious disease is a possibility, including laboratory work and healthcare provision.

Where risks are identified during a risk assessment, you and, if necessary, your midwife or GP will be consulted on ways to alleviate or minimise the identified risks.

Q6. *What if I decide to take time off because of my pregnancy?*

You may choose to take a break from your studies for up to a year, or you may wish to return to study as soon as possible after your baby is born.

If you do decide to take time off from your studies because of your pregnancy you must inform Registry Services of the following in writing at least 15 weeks before your baby is due.

- the date on which you intend to start maternity-related absence
- the length of maternity-related absence that you intend to take and the date on which you intend to return to study.

15 weeks' notice should allow sufficient time for you and the university to liaise to review your personal support plan, make any necessary arrangements, and ensure information is communicated as required. (See also Q10.)

Q7. *What if I have assessments or am due to take exams whilst pregnant?*

If you are due to give birth near to, or during assessment deadlines, or an examination period and you want to complete your assessed work or sit your exams, you will not be prevented from doing so.

In examinations, pregnant students may require rest breaks and may need to visit the toilet more frequently than those who are not pregnant. They may also require a more comfortable and supportive chair. In such cases you may need to sit the examination in a location separate from other students. The university will agree with you adjustments it will be able to make to enable you to complete examinations and assessments during your pregnancy.

If you are concerned about sitting examinations or meeting assessed work deadlines, or if you have a pregnancy-related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, you should seek advice from your midwife or doctor. If they advise against you sitting an examination or trying to meet the assessed work deadline, alternative methods of assessment may be explored with you.

If you are unable to undertake an alternative method of assessment, or if you experience significant pregnancy-related problems in the course of an examination or when undertaking assessed work, the university will make arrangements for you to resit the examination at the earliest possible opportunity or agree an extension for resubmitting coursework.

Q8. *What if I am due to go on placement?*

If you are due to undertake a placement as part of your course, the university will, with your permission and agreement, liaise with the placement provider to ensure a risk assessment is carried out. If fieldwork is a requirement of the course, this will need to be considered within a risk assessment.

UK students who are on placement or studying abroad will need to check their visa terms and conditions as they may need to extend their stay or return to the country at a later date.

As pregnancy is considered a pre-existing condition by insurance companies, students who are pregnant prior to commencing a field trip or their placement or study abroad will need to check whether their insurance covers them for pre-existing conditions.

Q9. *Will I be able to claim for exceptional mitigating circumstances?*

Normally you will be expected to take your pregnancy into account when preparing assignments or preparing for exams so an application for exceptional mitigating circumstances would not normally be appropriate. However if there are complications with the pregnancy or your health deteriorates to the extent your academic performance is affected then an application may be considered. You will however be expected to provide appropriate evidence to support your application e.g. a letter from your GP.

Q10. *Will I be able to carry on studying once my baby is born?*

If you choose to do so you will be able to take maternity-related absence following the birth of their child. How long you take will depend on your personal circumstances and the structure and content of your course. The university will work with you to agree a suitable return-to-study date.

If the structure or content of your course requires you to return to study sooner than you would like to, you will be notified in writing of the reasons.

You will normally be required to take as a minimum two weeks' compulsory maternity-related absence, or four weeks if you are on a placement with significant health and safety risks. This is in line with employment law, and is to ensure your health and safety following birth. If you are on a course of professional training or are receiving a bursary from a professional body you should check your minimum or recommended absence periods with the professional body concerned.

If the university is concerned about your health in relation to your proposed return date or your course requirements, you may be asked for your GP's confirmation of your fitness to return to study.

Normally you will be allowed to take up to one year out of study. If necessary the university will take steps to ensure you are kept up to speed with developments in your field of study, for example sending you lists of key reading and new research, dates and transcripts of relevant lectures and access to key journals.

In exceptional circumstances, you may need to extend the length of your maternity leave beyond the standard time allowed, for example in cases of postnatal depression, serious illness, loss of your baby, or where there is no available childcare.

The university will take steps to enable you to complete the requirements of your course or module before you take maternity-related absence. If you are unable to complete your course or module before taking maternity-related absence you will, if possible, be allowed to complete the course or module on your return.

You should decide when you start your maternity-related absence in agreement with the university. If you wish to, you may study up to your due date, or start your maternity-related absence a full term or semester before your due date.

If you are close to your due date and unable to study as planned, you may be able to start your maternity-related absence earlier than planned or, if appropriate, agree with the university alternative methods through which you can meet the course requirements.

You should discuss and agree with the university when you intend to return from maternity-related absence prior to beginning the period of absence. However, if you wish to change this date during the course of your absence, you should notify Registry Services as soon as possible.

Before you return from a period of maternity-related absence you should discuss with the university your study options and your continued support and agree your support plan before your return.

You may wish to consider resuming your course on a part-time or distance-learning basis. If so the university would normally agree to this unless there are justifiable reasons for not doing so. In that case the reasons will be confirmed to you in writing.

You should discuss your return to study with the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager and your academic tutor.

Q11. What financial benefits are available to me whilst I am pregnant or following the birth?

Your entitlement to benefits and other payments during and following pregnancy and the impact of the pregnancy and maternity-related absence on your funding from statutory and other sources can be complex so you should speak with the university's Money Advisers in Student Services to discuss your particular situation. You can make contact with them via the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager or by emailing moneyadvice@worc.ac.uk or telephoning 01905 855501/542091.

Provided other eligibility requirements are met students with children are one of the priority groups for awards from the Access to Learning Fund. The Money Advisers can give more information and advice on applying to the fund.

Q12. Will I have to leave my university managed accommodation because I am pregnant?

You will not be asked to leave your existing accommodation because you are pregnant, and you will be supported in finding suitable accommodation prior to the arrival of your baby or prior to your return from maternity-related absence, whichever is most appropriate for you.

Given the demand for student accommodation, you are advised to consider your accommodation requirements in the early stages of your pregnancy.

Contracts for university owned and managed accommodation will allow students to end their contract early because of pregnancy or maternity without penalty. Where a student is in private accommodation, the university will, where possible, provide support and advice on terminating their contract.

Once your baby is born you will not be able to live with her/him in university managed accommodation as children under the age of 18 are not permitted in halls of residence or other university managed accommodation.

Q13. I am studying in the UK but my home is in another country. Does this affect my rights during pregnancy?

Unless you are advised not to do so by your doctor or midwife, you should be able to travel during pregnancy. However, there are some considerations.

- Airlines have different policies and may not allow travel beyond 36 weeks or, in the event that the pregnancy is complicated or multiple, beyond 32 weeks. You will need to check individual airline policies before travelling,

and be aware that airlines will ask students for proof that it is safe for them to travel.

- As pregnancy is considered a pre-existing condition by insurance companies, students who are pregnant prior to commencing a field trip or their placement or study abroad will need to check whether their insurance covers them for pre-existing conditions.

If an international student becomes pregnant during their studies, she will be likely to require a longer stay in the UK. However, at present students who require a visa to study in the UK cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity. All visas allow for a short period of stay in the UK in addition to the time spent on a course. At the time of writing the period allowed was as follows:

- students on main and pre-sessional courses lasting 12 months or longer can remain in the UK for the length of their course plus four months
- students on main and pre-sessional courses lasting more than six months but less than 12 months can remain in the UK for the length of their course plus two months
- students on main and pre-sessional courses lasting six months or less can remain for the length of the course plus seven days

The additional time allowed may not be sufficient for some students to take maternity-related absence. Consequently, international students who become pregnant while studying in the UK should obtain the latest information on the visa implications of:

- taking maternity-related absence
- returning home to have the baby
- having a dependant to support in the UK

If a student is studying or on a placement abroad during her pregnancy or maternity, the university will liaise with the host institution or placement provider to ensure, where possible, that her needs are met.

Q14. Are child care facilities available on campus?

The university has an Ofsted approved nursery and early years education centre on campus, Unitots, located in Bredon building. The nursery takes children aged from 3 months to 5 years of age. Places are limited and are allocated on a first come first served basis. Parents are advised to make contact with Hazel Rutherford, the Nursery Manager as soon as possible to apply for a place. Enquiries and applications can be made before your baby is born. Enquiries can be sent to unitots@worc.ac.uk or telephone 01905 855277.

Room BB180 in Bredon building has been set aside as a rest room and breast feeding facility. The room contains a bed, reclining chair, upright chairs for adults, a baby's high chair and low table and chairs for small children. Nappy changing facilities are available. The room is suitable for mothers wishing to express breast

milk and a fridge and microwave are provided to store and re-heat milk and baby foods. The room is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

In addition to BB180 breast feeding can take place anywhere on campus. High chairs are provided in the refectory for small children eating there.

You may wish to breast feed in parts of the campus which are in or near to buildings and services you use frequently. You are free to do so. If others feel uncomfortable about this, for example for religious reasons, your needs will take precedence.

Q15. *Will I be able to take my child into lectures?*

Students will not be prevented from attending their course or accessing university facilities or services if they are breastfeeding, or have with them a baby under 26 weeks old.

As long as babies are supervised at all times and any health and safety risks identified can be resolved, babies are allowed onto university premises. However their presence in seminars, lectures, the library and study areas may potentially be disruptive to other students and their studies. Students with babies should therefore check with teaching staff and fellow students if their baby's presence is acceptable and have alternative arrangements for child care in place for those instances where having their baby with them is not practicable.

Q16. *My partner is also a student here? Will this affect his/her studies?*

The university will allow students who are partners of new mothers to take paternity-related absence; this will include those in a same sex relationship.

The university will be flexible in allowing a student to attend their partner's antenatal appointments. In addition, a student may need to take time off if their partner has complications with her pregnancy or a serious pregnancy-related illness.

If a student wants to take paternity-related absence, they should initially inform Registry Services and their academic or personal tutor of their partner's pregnancy at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. Early notification is encouraged as partners may need to attend antenatal appointments.

The university will allow students paternity-related absence in line with entitlements that exist in employment law for paternity leave. This is currently a maximum of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of the child being born.

The university will ensure students on paternity-related absence are able to access materials from seminars and lectures missed. If students want to take extended paternity-related absence consideration will need to be given to the support provided to the student, and it may be appropriate to develop a student support plan. Initial enquiries should be made to the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager.

If a student chooses to sit an examination while their partner is in labour or during their paternity-related absence, they should be aware of the university's exceptional mitigating circumstances policy. If a student is unable to sit an examination or submit

coursework on time because of their partner's pregnancy or labour, they should be allowed to resit the examination at the earliest possible opportunity or should be given an extension. Such arrangements may also be appropriate if the student's partner has a serious pregnancy-related illness.

In other compulsory elements of courses, such as field trips or work placements, the university can consider the feasibility of students undertaking them at an alternative time. Where this is not possible, justification will be provided to the students in writing.

Q17. *I have had a miscarriage what should I do?*

Should you miscarry or have a still birth, or if your baby dies shortly after it is born the university will do its best to support you.

You may wish to meet with one of the university's counsellors to discuss your situation. The counsellor will be able to provide support and advice on other sources of help you may wish to use.

You should tell the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager what has happened and she will meet with you to establish the support you are receiving from your healthcare provider and the support available from the university. If you do not inform the University of your Situation, we will be limited in the support we can provide.

If you do miscarry you may need time off study for tests and to recover and it may impact on your ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations.

If you have a still birth or your baby dies shortly after birth you will be entitled to the same length of maternity-related absence and financial and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn.

Q18. *I am thinking of having an abortion, what should I do?*

If you are considering an abortion you will be offered counselling by the NHS or, if attending one, a private abortion clinic. Counselling will also be offered by these agencies following an abortion. You may also like to meet with one of the university's counsellors to discuss your situation. Contact counselling@worc.ac.uk for an appointment.

Students may need time off from study for tests before, and to recover after, an abortion. This time will be treated in line with the university's usual sickness absence policy, but consideration may be given to the impact of an abortion on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations.

Q19. *What if I am unhappy with the support I have received?*

If at any time and for any reason you are not happy with the support you are receiving from the University you should in the first instance raise your concerns with the member of university staff involved. If this does not resolve the matter to your satisfaction you should follow the University's Complaints Procedure which is

available at www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/662.htm . You may also wish to consult the Student Advisers in the Worcester Students' Union (see *Useful contacts*).

Useful contacts

Student Support and Wellbeing Manager

Tel: 01905 855104;

Email: l.sandwell@worc.ac.uk .

firstpoint, Peirson Study and Guidance Centre

Tel: 01905 542551;

Email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk .

For advice on the University's complaints and appeals procedures, mitigating circumstances, private housing or University Managed accommodation, money advice (including bursaries, child benefits, statutory maternity pay etc), please contact **firstpoint**.

Counsellors

Email: counselling@worc.ac.uk

Website: www.worc.ac.uk/counselling.

Student Advisers, Worcester Students' Union

Tel: 01905 54 3210,

Email: suadvice@worc.ac.uk.

Sample support form

This form aims to guide discussions with students during pregnancy and maternity. It should be completed and agreed with the student. It is not intended that the form should be completed at a first meeting as initially a student will be unable – and should not be expected – to respond to all the issues raised.

The form should be reviewed at key stages (e.g. 16 weeks pregnant, 24 weeks pregnant, and prior to return to study); or at key points of the academic year (e.g. prior to examinations and field trips). If the student's circumstances change, the plan will also need to be reviewed.

Contact details		
1	Student's details	
	Name	
	Address	
	Telephone	
	Email address	
	Student number	
2	Emergency contact's details	
	Relationship to student	
	Telephone	
3	Course details	
	Course title	
	Institute	
	Academic/Personal Tutor	
	Year of course	
4	Details of the student's first point of contact within the HEI	
	Name	
	Title	

	Location	
	Telephone	
	Email	

Key dates (to be reviewed and added to over the course of pregnancy and maternity)

5	What is the student's due date?	
6	How many weeks pregnant was the student when she notified HEI of pregnancy?	

Communication with the student

7	What is the student's preferred method of communication:	
	during pregnancy?	
	during maternity-related absence?	
	on return to study?	

Informing other staff and students

8	Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed? (NB Unless stated otherwise the student will inform the people listed below)	
	Name and title	Date

Health and safety assessment (attach copy to this form)

9	Has an assessment been conducted that covers (where relevant):	
	the student's course?	
	course placements or study abroad?	
	examinations or other assessments?	
	field trips?	
	return from maternity-related absence?	

	breastfeeding?	
	safety of baby if attending seminars and lectures with a parent?	
10	Where changes are required to alleviate or minimise risks, who is responsible for ensuring they are implemented?	
Rest facilities		
11	Has the student been informed about rest facilities on campus for use by pregnant students?	
Pregnancy-related absence		
12	Will the dates or times of antenatal appointments affect the student's study?	
13	Have you discussed any pregnancy-related illness that has affected the student's ability to undertake their course?	
14	If yes to either of the above questions, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to catch up?	
Assessments		
15	Is the student unable to complete any assessments due to her pregnancy or maternity?	
16	If so, provide details:	
17	What alternative arrangements have been made for any outstanding or incomplete assessments?	
Maternity-related absence (students should provide information in writing at least 15 weeks before their due date)		
18	How much maternity-related absence does the student intend to take?	
19	When does the student intend to start maternity-related absence?	
20	When does the student intend to return from maternity-related absence?	

21	Will the dates of maternity-related absence affect the student's ability to complete any course module requirements?	
22	If so, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module?	
23	What information will the student require during maternity-related absence to keep up to date on course developments?	
24	Who will be responsible for providing the information to the student?	
Financial support		
25	Has the student been informed about sources of financial support or been referred to an external organisation that can do so?	
26	Is the (UK) student aware of how any benefits they receive will affect their student support entitlements, and vice versa?	
27	Specify any follow-up required:	
Baby feeding		
28	Does the student intend to feed their baby on university facilities on their return to study?	
29	Does the student intend to breastfeed? If so, see health and safety section above.	
30	Has the student been informed about the facilities available?	
Childcare		
31	Has the student been informed about childcare facilities on campus or in the local community?	
32	Is the (UK) student aware that their mode of study will affect their childcare funding entitlements?	
International students/those on placement abroad		
33	Have international students or students on placement abroad been informed about:	
	possible airline restrictions?	

	the need to check visa implications of returning home or extending their stay due to pregnancy and maternity?	
Students on placement		
34	Has the placement provider been notified of the student's pregnancy?	
35	Has the placement provider conducted a health and safety assessment?	
36	Is the placement provider aware of the HEI's policy on supporting students during pregnancy and maternity?	
37	Will the student be able to complete her placement?	
38	If not, what alternative arrangements will be made?	
39	Who is responsible for liaising with the placement provider?	
Mitigating circumstances		
40	Have students been informed about the HEI's exceptional mitigating circumstances policy in the event that their pregnancy or maternity affects examinations and assessments?	
Accommodation		
41	Does the student intend to move to alternative accommodation?	
42	Has the student received advice on alternative accommodation and terminating existing accommodation contracts?	
43	At what point does the student want to move to alternative accommodation?	
44	Will the student require university accommodation?	
Return to study		
45	What support will be provided to the student on their return to study? (e.g. meetings with key	

	staff, put in contact with other student parents, etc)	
Further information		
46	Any other information or comments	
Signatures		
Plan to be reviewed on		
Agreed by staff member		
Name		
Title		
Signature		
Date		
Agreed by student		
Name		
Signature		
Date		
Record of subsequent reviews		
Date	Notes	