

CITY OF LONDON COLLEGE



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A UNIVERSITY SECTOR PREMIER College

STUDENT PREGNANCY POLICY

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CITY OF LONDON COLLEGE STUDENT PREGNANCY, MATERNITY, ADOPTION, AND PARTNER LEAVE POLICY

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1 Introduction

- 1.1. The College values the diversity of its student population and is strongly committed to creating and sustaining a first-rate and positive learning experience for all.
- 1.2. Demographic changes mean that more students are likely to become pregnant or have a child during their studies, and, in addition, the Equality Act 2010 has significantly strengthened the legal protections for students during periods of pregnancy and maternity. Both students and applicants are now protected in relation to:
 - Admissions
 - The provision of education
 - Access to any benefit, facility or service
 - Disciplinary proceedings

2 Scope

- 2.1. This document provides both students and staff with information about the College's approach to supporting a student who is pregnant or has decided to terminate a pregnancy.
- 2.2. The arrangements and procedures detailed in this Policy in relation to pregnancy and maternity also apply in circumstances where a student is a primary adopter (where appropriate).
- 2.3. References to very young children relate to children under the age of six months and, with particular regard to health and safety considerations, those older than six months who are still being breastfed.

3 Statement of Principles

- 3.1. Students will be supported throughout pregnancy and maternity and, wherever practicable, will not be unreasonably prevented from applying for, registering upon, or successfully completing a programme of study.
- 3.2. All practical steps will be taken to avoid less favourable treatment of pregnant students and students in a period of maternity. The degree of flexibility shown is likely to vary between programmes of study as a result of their differing requirements.
- 3.3. The College will endeavour to enable student choice in a fair and non-judgmental way, and will not attempt to influence decisions in cases where the pregnancy is unwanted or unplanned.

- 3.4. The health and wellbeing of pregnant students will be considered of paramount importance at all times.
- 3.5. All students covered by this Policy will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.
- 3.6. Unless there are serious and valid concerns for the health and wellbeing of the pregnant student, only members of staff who need to know will be informed of her circumstances, and this will be only with the student's prior consent.

4 Notification of Pregnancy

- 4.1. There is no legal requirement for applicants or students to inform the College if they are pregnant or become pregnant whilst registered on a programme of study. However, applicants and students are strongly encouraged to disclose a pregnancy at the earliest opportunity (and preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due) as this will enable the College to put in place appropriate support measures.
- 4.2. Early notification is especially relevant for pregnant students following programmes that may involve potentially high risks to the student and/or her child.
- 4.3. Students should inform a Student Adviser of their pregnancy and give an early indication of the period of time-out they are anticipating (if known). The Student Adviser will liaise with the academic department regarding the implications for the student's programme of study.
- 4.4. Permission to share the information on a need-to-know basis will be expressly sought from the student.
- 4.5. The student should be referred as appropriate for further sources of advice and support, e.g. her GP, or a midwife.
- 4.6. Students are also actively encouraged to inform their Programme Director of Studies, and/or their Academic Personal Tutor of their pregnancy as well as Student Services.

5 Health and safety

- 5.1. Upon notification of a student pregnancy, the academic department (usually the Programme Manager, or his/her nominee) will make a judgement on whether it will be necessary to undertake a review or update of the health and safety risk assessment for the activity or programme that the student is involved in (including of placements, fieldwork, or study abroad, if applicable).

- 5.2. A Health and Safety risk assessment will inform the College of any particular action that may be necessary.
- 5.3. Any issues arising from the risk assessment, including any practical implications, will be reported to Student Services and will be taken into account when making decisions around how the pregnancy might be accommodated and what adjustments may need to be made.

6 International students

- 6.1. International students on tier 4 student visas who become pregnant during their studies are advised that they *must* seek up-to-date immigration advice promptly.
- 6.2. Students cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity, and the maximum period of approved authorised absence will be considered on an individual basis in line with UK Border Agency regulations.
- 6.3. In all cases, the College's legal responsibilities in relation to the sponsorship of international students under the points-based immigration system will take precedence.

7 Students on professional programmes

- 7.1. Students on professional programmes have to meet specific requirements related to the need to demonstrate certain knowledge, skills and competencies required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies that cannot be compromised. In confirming the Pregnancy Support Plan these will be taken into account when agreeing what adjustments will be made to accommodate the pregnancy and maternity, including an associated period of maternity-leave.

8 Student support

- 8.1. There will be implications on a student's financial arrangements of the pregnancy and any agreed period of time out, both in terms of fees payable and student support available. A Pregnancy Support Plan will be drawn up with the help of appropriate staff to ensure that the students' educational support needs are met during pregnancy, following the birth, and on the student's return to her programme of study. They will liaise with the academic department, the student, and other professional services as necessary, taking into account issues of confidentiality, in order to ensure that the necessary arrangements are made.

- 8.2. It will be necessary to identify which members of staff will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy, and when other staff members and fellow students will be informed, and by whom.
- 8.3. Key information will need to be communicated to the student during her pregnancy, and a person responsible for the communication, and the agreed method of communication, will need to be agreed.
- 8.4. Arrangements will be needed for ante-natal appointments. Where known, the dates of ante natal appointments will be put into the plan and the arrangements made to enable her to catch up if any of the appointments coincide with teaching.
- 8.5. A view will be taken on whether the student's pregnancy and maternity will affect her ability to meet study deadlines and/or sit examinations. Any adjustments required in order to ensure that the student meets the requirements of her programme, including any special examination arrangements to be made, will be outlined.
- 8.6. Adjustments may be required arising from the health and safety risk assessment.
- 8.7. If the student is required, or has opted, to do a placement, fieldwork or period of study abroad as part of her programme, an assessment will be made on whether her pregnancy will affect her ability to complete it. If so, the measures to be taken to ensure that she fulfils these requirements will be outlined (e.g. doing the placement, fieldwork or study abroad at an earlier stage of pregnancy or on her return from maternity-related absence).
- 8.8. The student may wish to take a lengthy period of time out from her studies, or she may wish to return as soon as possible after giving birth. The plan will detail when the student is likely to commence her period of absence and when she is expected to return. It will also detail the arrangements for communication with the student during this period. A date will also be given by which the student will need to confirm the date of return to her studies and whether she intends to breastfeed (so that appropriate facilities can be identified).

9 Extenuating Circumstances

- 9.1. If the student becomes unwell during her pregnancy, or something unplanned or unexpected occurs (such as early labour, a miscarriage or a still birth/neo natal birth), the student is likely to need additional support beyond that outlined in her Pregnancy Support Plan. In such circumstances, the Student Adviser should be contacted to ascertain whether Reasonable Adjustments may be made (e.g. moving an assessment deadline by a week or two).
- 9.2. In more serious cases, the Extenuating Circumstances procedure should be used and the necessary medical certification provided for students undertaking taught programmes.

- 9.3. The College will give sensitive consideration to the impact of such circumstances on the student's ability to undertake their studies, including assessments and examinations.

10 Maternity-Related Absence and Return to Study

- 10.1. The period of this absence will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of her programme of study.
- 10.2. There is no legal minimum period of time-out, but the College strongly recommends that a minimum of two weeks is taken in order to ensure the health and safety of the child and mother
- 10.3. In cases where the College is concerned about a student's health in relation to her proposed return to study date, she may be required to provide confirmation from her GP or health worker of her fitness to return to study.
- 10.4. Where a student is following a programme where there is concern about her knowledge of the field being affected by the period of time-out she takes, the Pregnancy Support Plan will detail the steps that will be taken by the department to ensure that she is kept up-to-date, e.g. through the provision of reading lists, research articles, transcripts of lectures, etc.
- 10.5. Where there are concerns about the student meeting the requirements of the programme (e.g. coursework assessments or examinations), arrangements may be made for alternative methods to be used, or for her to complete the requirements prior to the commencement of the maternity-related absence or during it. Reasonable Adjustments such as these will be detailed in the Pregnancy Support Plan.
- 10.6. In certain exceptional cases, an extension to the usual period of time-out may be agreed, e.g. in cases of post-natal depression, serious illness or loss of a baby or where there is no suitable childcare.

11 Partner Leave

- 11.1. A student whose partner is pregnant will be permitted reasonable time off study in order to enable him/her to attend antenatal appointments prescribed by a doctor, midwife or health visitor with his/her partner. The student should provide evidence of these appointments and the department will take steps to ensure that he/she is able to catch up with any teaching missed.

- 11.2. If a student wishes to take a period of time out, either because their partner is due to have a baby or he/she is a primary adopter, the request should be made via Student Services and normally 15 weeks before the baby is due.
- 11.3. The period of the absence agreed will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of his/her programme of study, including any requirements of the professional body (if appropriate).
- 11.4. An absence totalling two weeks is usually considered the norm. However, this may differ in certain situations, e.g. when the partner is taking primary caring responsibility.
- 11.5. The College will ensure that students taking partner leave are provided with materials from teaching missed.
- 11.6. If a student undertaking a taught programme is unable to submit coursework or sit an examination (or whose performance is affected in an examination) because he/she feels seriously affected by a partner's termination of a pregnancy, or something unplanned associated with his/her partner's pregnancy or labour occurs, he/she should use the College's Extenuating Circumstances arrangements.

