



BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

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BGU Student Advice

Student Maternity, Secondary Carer and Adoption Leave Policy

Introduction

BGU's policy is to challenge discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and maternity in recognition they are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. BGU must ensure that all students/applicants who are pregnant, on maternity leave or breastfeeding will not be discriminated against or treated unfavourably because of: their pregnancy, the termination of a pregnancy, breast-feeding, maternity leave or any relevant reason connected to these.

BGU will provide support to its students who are about to, or have recently become parents. This policy is designed to assist and help them understand their rights and processes for arranging Maternity, Secondary Carer (Paternity) and Adoption Leave.

BGU recognises the important part that secondary carers and adoptive parents play in caring for a newborn or adopted child. BGU also recognises that individuals who are a partner of a woman who is pregnant or has given birth should not be treated unfavourably.

This policy is intended to provide students and staff with a framework of guidance for the provision of information in a confidential context in such situations. It also aims to provide information about health, safety and well-being measures for students during pregnancy and early parenthood.

This procedure has been drafted using consultation with BGU students.

A. Maternity

A1 Notification of Pregnancy

The student should be aware that it is their responsibility to notify BGU of their pregnancy. The student should usually notify an academic member of staff so that implications for study can be assessed. The student should be aware it is likely they will benefit from guidance from BGU's Student Advice team to ensure they are aware of all the options for support which may be available to them, including financial implications.

It is important that BGU staff recognise the sensitive nature of information about a student's pregnancy, and that ***information should only be passed on with the student's express consent.***

The student should be asked to indicate the extent to which they would like information regarding the notification to be circulated to relevant members of staff/services.

BGU will not always require evidence of the pregnancy at the time of notification, but the student should be aware evidence will be required in support of procedures for extensions, extenuating circumstances, intercalation and other formal adjustments to assessment and attendance.

A2 Students who wish to continue their studies during pregnancy

A student who becomes pregnant during her studies will usually wish to understand the implications, if any, of the continuation of her present studies within the original time scale, or whether a period of intercalation should be considered. A pregnant student may continue to attend their studies at BGU for as long as they feel they are able to before the birth of their child.

A student who becomes pregnant during her studies should be aware that she will not be able to claim she is unable to complete an assessment on account of her being pregnant – she should explore the following procedure to ensure appropriate support is put in place.

- The student is strongly advised to consult her GP to discuss medical issues of pregnancy/motherhood as soon as she feels able to.
- The student should notify a member of academic staff of their pregnancy, so that an assessment of the impact on study can be assessed. A risk assessment should also be undertaken at this time.
- The student should contact Student Advice for advice and guidance about the potential impact of pregnancy on her current and on-going period of study, and other considerations such as finances.
- Student Advice will discuss the results of the risk assessment with the student, and consider the possible adjustments to her course of study, and any additional support available (for example, the Access to Learning Fund, information and advice about social security benefits, the counselling service).
- International students who are pregnant should seek immigration advice as soon as possible, if they require a visa to remain in the UK longer than originally planned. Information is available from the Student Advice team.

Students on programmes approved by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies should discuss the implications of missed time in practice with a member of the programme team.

Possible adjustments to a student's course of study may include:

- **Time off to attend ante-natal appointments** - without detriment to the student (however, students should endeavour to arrange appointments outside of lecture/seminar times wherever possible). Arrangements of how to catch up any missed lectures/seminars should be discussed. Students should provide evidence of time off for appointments to their school office
- **Examinations/Assessments:** if the student's pregnancy means a deadline is affected, an extension, assessment deferral or alternative means of assessment may be provided to help the student meet the course requirements - for example, a written assignment in place of physical performance
- **Placements:** if the student's pregnancy affects her ability to complete a required placement, or fieldwork, the student may undertake the placement or fieldwork at an earlier stage of her pregnancy, or on return from maternity-related absence. However, most schools will not accept placement trainees who are 6 months pregnant or more, due to Health and Safety requirements. Possible adjustments to the course required as a result should be discussed with academic staff.
- **Intercalation, or temporary absence:** the student should indicate at the earliest opportunity if she needs to take time out from her studies. If she wishes to recommence study in the next academic year, an intercalation form will need to be submitted. If a shorter period of absence is required, this should be discussed with the programme team and the student should give planned dates of

absence and return at the earliest opportunity. (The Equality Challenge Unit recommends a minimum period of two weeks' absence.)

The university may make reasonable contact with the student (and vice-versa) while they are on maternity leave to discuss a range of issues – e.g. to discuss plans for returning to study or to keep the student informed of important developments with their course or programme of study. Students should consider keeping up with their course emails and with information posted on course web and blackboard sites. The student may wish to discuss arrangements for keeping in touch with their Faculty contact prior to the start of their Maternity Leave.

Student Advice will not be required, and will not attempt, to seek to influence the student's decisions - their role is to provide advice on the extent of any adjustments that can be made to the student's course of study, in liaison with the student's programme team.

Student Advice will assist the student in making a realistic assessment of their situation, including consideration of the student's post-natal situation.

In cases where a student experiences illness during pregnancy (including illnesses related to the pregnancy), she should contact Student Advice as soon as she is able to. Student Advice will provide appropriate information and guidance, including assistance with making an application for extenuating circumstances, where necessary.

A3 Assessments and examinations

If a student is due to give birth near to or during assessment deadlines or the examination period, and wishes to complete her assessed work or sit her examinations, she should not be prevented from doing so.

In examinations, pregnant students may require:

- Rest/toilet breaks
- Operator's chair
- Location near an exit, or undertake the examination in a separate room

If a student is concerned about sitting examinations or meeting assessment deadlines, or if she has a pregnancy-related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, she should be advised to seek advice from her midwife or doctor. If the student's midwife or doctor advises against her sitting an examination or trying to meet an assessment deadline, an alternative method of assessment should be explored.

If a student is unable to undertake an alternative method of assessment, or if she experiences significant pregnancy-related problems in the course of an examination or when undertaking assessed work, BGU will make arrangements via relevant procedures for her to undertake the examination at the earliest possible opportunity, or agree an extension for resubmitting coursework.

A4 Still Births and Miscarriages

If the student's foetus or baby is miscarried, or still born, they are entitled to take sick leave or apply to intercalate their studies.

An extenuating circumstances application, or intercalation of study application should be submitted to Quality & Student Data.

Counselling and advisory services are available through the Student Advice team.

B Secondary Carers

Students who are secondary carers may also apply for a reasonable leave of absence, normally no more than two weeks in total, from study or placement. The secondary carer is normally defined as the:

- The baby's biological father; or
- Spouse/Civil partner to the mother, or partner/same-sex partner
- Adoption - Civil partner/same sex partner, husband or partner to the primary carer for adoption.

The secondary carer may only apply for the leave to take time off study/placement to support the mother/primary carer or care for the child.

Academic staff should discuss and advise the student (secondary carer) on study and placement considerations. Any changes of dates of leave of absence should be provided to the student's School Office as soon as possible.

C Adoption

Students who are in the process of waiting for or making an adoption placement should notify a member of academic staff as soon as possible. Academic staff should inform students of the welfare, student finance and counselling services available from Student Advice.

- **Time off to attend pre-adoption appointments** - without detriment to the student (however, students should endeavour to arrange appointments outside of lecture/seminar times wherever possible). Arrangements of how to catch up any missed lectures/seminars should be discussed. Students should provide evidence of time off for appointments to their school office
- **Intercalation, or temporary absence:** the student should indicate at the earliest opportunity if she needs to take time out from her studies. If the student wishes to recommence study in the next academic year, an intercalation form will need to be submitted. If a shorter period of absence is required, this should be discussed with the programme team and the student should give planned dates of absence and return at the earliest opportunity.

The university may make reasonable contact with the student (and vice-versa) while they are on adoption leave to discuss a range of issues – e.g. to discuss plans for returning to study or to keep the student informed of important developments with their course or programme of study. Students should consider keeping up with their course emails and with information posted on course web and blackboard sites. The student may wish to discuss arrangements for keeping in touch with their Faculty contact prior to the start of their adoption leave.

Where an adoption placement is ended, then students may wish to renegotiate a return to study date.

D1 Students who wish to continue studies with very young children.

A pregnant student or the parent (female or male) of a baby too young to attend nursery may request a meeting with the designated member of staff in their department to agree a plan for the continuation of study, detailing any adjustments agreed. Specific agreed adjustments should be communicated to relevant members of staff.

The University provides rest and breastfeeding facilities for students' use. These can be used if they are not already engaged.

Breastfeeding

Students wishing to breastfeed or whose child is under 26 weeks of age are given explicit protection under the Equality Act 2010. It is also unlawful to ask students not to breastfeed under the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). In the event of others feeling uncomfortable, it is the needs of the woman who is breastfeeding that should take precedence:

- If the student is still breastfeeding and require private and safe facilities to express and store breast milk they should contact Student Advice. A private space is available by prior arrangement with Student Advice.
- Academic staff should allow some flexibility in break times and study or placement hours to allow students to express milk during study or placement hours.
- There are no restrictions on breastfeeding or bottle feeding in public areas, such as the Curiositea cafe, Refectory, and Sports and Fitness centre.

As long as students ensure a baby under 26 weeks of age is supervised at all times, and any health and safety risks identified can be resolved, the baby is allowed onto BGU premises and – provided their presence does not disrupt other students' learning – into seminars and lectures.

Students may be accompanied by their child in general public areas, and in one-to one tutorials, if the tutor permits.

Students will be entitled to request further meetings with the designated member of staff in their department, as detailed above.