

HE Student Pregnancy and Paternity Policy



<u>Policy Title</u>	HE Student Pregnancy and Paternity Policy and Procedure
<u>Policy Category</u>	Compliant
<u>Owner</u>	Deputy Director HE Quality and Standards
<u>Group Executive Lead</u>	Deputy Principal Newcastle College, Executive Lead HE
<u>Date Written</u>	September 2023
<u>Considered By</u>	HE Quality and Standards Committee / Policy Review Council
<u>Approved By</u>	Academic Board
<u>Date Approved</u>	November 2023
<u>Equality Impact Assessment</u>	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics.
<u>Freedom of Information</u>	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
<u>Review Date</u>	November 2026
<u>Policy Summary</u>	This policy outlines the options, adjustments and support available regarding pregnancy and paternity.

<u>Applicability of Policy</u>	<u>Consultation Undertaken</u>	<u>Applicable To</u>
Newcastle	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form	No	No
Carlisle	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster	Yes	Yes
Lewisham	No	No
Southwark	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire	No	Yes
Professional Services	No	No

<u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u>	
<u>Previous Approval Date</u>	<u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u>
N/A	New policy

<u>Linked Documents</u>	
<u>Document Title</u>	<u>Relevance</u>

Equality Impact Assessment

	Judgement	Explanatory Note if required
EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy/procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in 2.0?	No	
EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy/procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below?	No	
Age	No	
Disability / Difficulty	No	
Gender Reassignment	No	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No	
Race	No	
Religion or Belief	No	
Sex	No	
Sexual Orientation	No	
EIA3 - Does the proposed policy/processes contain any language/terms/references/ phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals?	No	
EIA4 - Does the policy/process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals?	No	
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals?	No	
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals?	No	
EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct?	The policy has been consulted on with the relevant colleges, the HE Quality and Standards Committee and the Policy Review Council.	

1. Policy Overview

NCG Higher Education aims to provide an environment where students are supported and treated fairly, with dignity and respect, including during pregnancy, maternity, paternity, the process of adoption and while breastfeeding. We believe that becoming pregnant or having a young child should not be a barrier to study and we aim to balance flexibility with provision of consistent, non-judgemental, accurate and high-quality information, guidance and support.

The Equality Act 2010 includes protection from discrimination for students during pregnancy and maternity, by extending the protection that exists for women in employment to those in higher education.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy covers any student who is pregnant, enrolled students who become pregnant during their studies and enrolled students whose partners are pregnant. In addition, any enrolled students who become a parent, for example, through adoption are also covered by this policy.

3. Disclosing a Pregnancy

Following a consultation with their General Practitioner (GP) and/or other appropriate services, applicants and students are encouraged to notify us about their pregnancy through their programme leader at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. If a student is uneasy about discussing their pregnancy with the curriculum area, they could seek advice and support from the relevant college support team.

It is important that NCG is notified about a pregnancy if there are elements of the programme that may present a risk to the health and safety of the student and/or the child.

If a student decides not to notify NCG about their pregnancy it will not be possible to put special arrangements in place for health-related absences, examinations, leave of absence, risk assessments, reasonable adjustments, return to study.

If an international student is pregnant upon enrolment or becomes pregnant, whilst enrolled to a programme, they are still covered by this policy, however, UKVI regulations must be taken into consideration. Students should contact the international office for advice about visa regulations and requirements.

When a student has disclosed a pregnancy, it is recommended that they meet with their academic member of staff in the curriculum area, so they can be referred to the college support team and start completing a Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan and if necessary, a risk assessment form. The support plan will be held in OneNote or equivalent and shared with the student.

4. Maternity Leave

The Equality Act 2010 recommends that students take up to **four weeks** maternity leave from their studies after the birth of their child, subject to medical advice/individual medical circumstances.

In exceptional circumstances, students may need to extend the length of maternity leave that they take beyond the standard time allowed of 4 weeks, for example in cases of postnatal depression, serious illness or where there is no available childcare, this would be through mitigation process or suspension of studies, depending on the amount of leave required.

Students are permitted to decide when they start their maternity-related absence in agreement with their programme leader. Where a student is close to their due date and unable to study as planned, we may, in consultation with the programme leader, start their maternity-related absence earlier than planned or, if appropriate, explore alternative methods through which they can meet the programme requirements.

5. High Risk Pregnancies

If a pregnancy is classed as high risk, and a student may require more flexible arrangements in relation to in-person attendance or methods of assessment, and the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan is not able meet the needs of the student, then students are required to apply for mitigation.

6. Paternity Leave

Students are able to take paternity-related absence, for up to **four weeks** after the birth of their child subject to medical advice/individual medical circumstances.

Any student whose partner is pregnant or has been matched for adoption should discuss absences related to medical appointments, the birth of a child or meetings related to

adoption with their programme leader. Absences have to be reasonable i.e., no more than 2 consecutive in a week and agreed with your programme leader or other member of curriculum staff in advance.

7. Ante-natal or Pre-adoption Appointments

Students and partners are entitled to reasonable time off to attend ante-natal or pre-adoption appointments. Students and partners should provide evidence in advance of appointments to their programme leader or other member of curriculum staff. Regular appointments should, wherever possible, be scheduled around study commitments or at the start or end of the working day.

8. Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan (Appendix 2)

The Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan aims to guide discussions with students during pregnancy and maternity. It should be completed and agreed by their programme leader or other member of curriculum staff and the student, with support from the college support team if required. The Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan, will consider all assessment types and submission dates, in relation to the students due date. To discuss, mitigation and suspension of studies if appropriate.

9. Assessments

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

In time constrained assessments, 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. Consequently, the student may need to sit the examination in a location separate from other students.

If a student is concerned about sitting a time constrained assessment or meeting assessed work deadlines, or if they have a pregnancy-related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, they should be advised to seek advice from their midwife or doctor. If the student's midwife or doctor advises against them sitting an examination or trying to meet the assessed work deadline, an alternative method of assessment will be explored. If a

student is unable to undertake an alternative method of assessment, or if they experience significant pregnancy-related problems in the course of an examination or when undertaking assessed work, arrangements will be made for them to submit a mitigation application to agree an extension for resubmitting the assessments. All assessments or examinations should be considered as the student's first attempt.

Extensions to assessments can be agreed as part of the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan. No longer than a 4-week extension can be given to an assessment deadline. Any extensions needed because of complications to pregnancy, will go through the mitigation process.

10. Suspension of Studies

A student may choose to take a break from their studies, for up to a year, to focus on childcare. This would need to be discussed with their programme leader to consider the student's personal circumstances and the specifics of their programme of study, there will be funding implications of suspending studies, which will need to be discussed with the student. Students should be referred to the suspension of studies policy and will have to complete a suspension of studies form.

Students Sponsored Under NCG's UKVI Student Sponsor Licence

A student sponsored under the UKVI Student sponsor licence cannot extend their length of stay in the UK in order to complete their course. Therefore, the one-year suspension of studies option is not available to UKVI sponsored students. Sponsored Students studying at RQF levels 3-5 should be withdrawn from their programme of study if they fall below 70% attendance in 3 consecutive calendar months.

Sponsored Students studying at RQF level 6 and above should be withdrawn from their programme of study if they are unable to engage with their studies for a period of 60 calendar days.

The relevant curriculum staff member will work with the student to complete the pregnancy and maternity support plan, enabling Sponsored Students to take four weeks of absence after the birth of their child, followed by a phased return which ensures they remain within the respective UKVI rules stated above. Advice can be sought by the NCG International Compliance Officer regarding reasonable adjustments within the above UKVI rules and can be referred to the mitigation panel where necessary.

11. Returning From Maternity-related Absence

The date when a student intends to return from maternity-related absence will be discussed and agreed with the student prior to commencing the period of absence (see above).

However, this date may change during the course of the absence, and students should be encouraged to notify their programme leader as soon as possible of any change in their expected return date. The programme leader or other member of curriculum staff will need to review the support plan and agree a new return date with the student in writing.

Before a student returns from a period of maternity-related absence, consideration should be given to their requirements on return. The student's study options, and the continued support provided by NCG should be discussed with the student in developing their support plan, and can be confirmed with the student prior to their return; examples include the following:

- Varying the mode of study – Students should be made aware of any options that exist to resume their course on a part-time or distance-learning basis. If a student requests to study part-time rather than full-time, the request should not be declined unless it can be justified, and the justification should be provided in writing.
- Ensure a smooth return – Formal welcome-back meetings can be organised with key staff, for example the personal tutor, head of department, placement staff or a member of the college support team.
- Continued contact – The student's key contact if they encounter any difficulties should be made clear.

12. Expressing Milk on Campus

For students who would like to express milk, there are spaces on campus. The student's key contact will advise on suitable locations.

No babies should be brought onto campus.

13. Still Births/Miscarriages and Abortions

If a student miscarries, has a still birth or neonatal death, they are entitled to take time off (medical leave) or apply for a leave of absence. Counselling and advice services are listed below.

[Coping with loss | Bliss](#)

[Sands | Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.](#)

[Stillbirth Help and Support for Dads and Partners | Tommy's \(tommys.org\)](#)

A student who has a still birth or whose baby dies shortly after birth is entitled to the same length of maternity-related absence and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn.

Appendix 1

Student Pregnancy Journey

This journey provides details of the steps that might happen but not necessarily in the order shown below when a student or applicant discloses a pregnancy.

- A student consults their doctor and/or other appropriate services and disclosing a pregnancy to NCG at least 15 weeks before the baby is due.
- The student then requests a meeting with their programme leader or other member of curriculum staff, to disclose a pregnancy.
- Following the disclosure, they should be offered a referral to the relevant team for a risk assessment - if applicable
- Programme leader will complete the pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan along with the student.
- This may highlight implications of the pregnancy for the programme of study i.e. completing assessments and these will need to be considered by the programme leader member in collaboration with the support team and the student.
- Complete a Risk Assessment including referral to the relevant team for Emergency Reaction Plan in the case of medical complications/illness and personal emergency egress plan.
- The programme leader or another member of curriculum staff to communicate with other relevant services/departments as agreed with the student in the Support Plan.
- The Support Plan is monitored by the programme leader and the student and if required updated and further adjustments made.

Appendix 2

Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan

Date:

Name:	
Due date:	
Modules and submission dates:	
Revised submission dates and module titles	
Appointment dates (if known)	
Risk Assessment complete	YES or NO
Notes	
Review 1 Date	Review 1 discussion

Review 2 Date	Review 2 discussion
Review 3 Date	Review 3 discussion