

## **STUDENT PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY**

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London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is committed to offering consistent and unbiased support and advice to students, who whilst undertaking a programme of study at the School, become pregnant, adopt a child or wish to take paternity related absence. This policy sets out the main procedures to be followed by students and staff and offers guidance on important areas for consideration. Pregnancy and Maternity are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. A student who is pregnant, or has given birth within the last 26 weeks, is explicitly protected from unfavourable treatment in the area of education and provision of services.

The School is fully aware of the confidential nature of information provided by students with regards to maternity, paternity or adoption and will only pass on this information to those areas that need to be informed in order to provide support or adjustments for the student.

Key contacts include the relevant Programme Director, Taught Programme Director, Research Degree Supervisor(s), Faculty Research Degree Director, Research Degree Manager, Student Adviser and Academic Registrar. Students may at any time contact the Student Adviser for confidential advice and support.

### **MATERNITY**

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#### **1. INITIAL ACTION**

- 1.1 Once a pregnancy is confirmed, the student is strongly advised to inform their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) and arrange to meet in order to make the best plans for their programme of study, consider impact on academic work and any health and safety issues. The Programme Director/Supervisor(s) and student can then take action to ensure that the student is provided with the necessary support.
- 1.2 A pregnant student is strongly advised to obtain medical evidence indicating their expected date of delivery. This evidence should be given to the Programme Director/Supervisor(s) and the Student Adviser to help inform discussions and decision making. The evidence can consist of letters indicating GP/Midwife or Hospital Appointments and the MATB1 Certificate which is provided to a pregnant woman after their 20 week scan.

#### **2. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

- 2.1 At the meeting with their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) students will be asked to consider all implications of pregnancy upon their studies, for example health issues, attendance at appointments, ability to attend the School and/or undertake independent study. Some students may prefer to seek advice regarding interruption of their studies, whereas others may wish to continue but will require information regarding impact on student finances, Tier 4 visa requirements and professional body requirements. Students who wish to interrupt their programme of study will be permitted to do so but must be advised through discussions with their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) of any implications that may result from this course of action.
- 2.2 International students on a Tier 4 student visa are advised to seek advice from the School's Immigration Advisory Service in relation to the implications of an interruption of studies on their visa status. When making decisions about continuation or interruption, the academic

requirements of the programme of study, the individual needs of the pregnant student, and other personal factors, such as timing of due date, need to be given adequate and realistic consideration. Pregnant students will be expected to attend all scheduled teaching sessions provided it is safe to do so in accordance with their Risk Assessment (unless they are attending medical or antenatal appointments for which they can produce evidence).

- 2.3 Students should notify their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) of any absences who should also inform the Student Records team in the Registry for consideration of how it relates to the School's Student Attendance Policy.
- 2.4 Appointments which cause students to miss individual lectures /seminars will require additional effort from the student to maintain the continuity of their studies and the implications of this should be discussed with their Programme Director.
- 2.5 Students should notify their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) of the birth and will be required to take two weeks compulsory leave immediately following childbirth. Any implications of this should be discussed with their Programme Director/Supervisor(s).

### **3. RISK ASSESSMENTS**

- 3.1 A risk assessment must be carried out to identify any relevant risks associated with a student's programme of study and to manage these risks for their protection. The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents. Programme Director/Supervisor(s) must conduct a risk assessment and advise on any reasonable adjustments or additional control measures that may be required and identify any relevant risks associated with the programme of study, including field work, laboratory work and placements.
- 3.2 It is the responsibility of the student and the Programme Director/Supervisor(s) to ensure the implementation of appropriate control measures. If risks are identified, the Course Director/Supervisor will draw up a plan to, where possible, mitigate the risks or outline an appropriate alternative course of action and identify who the student needs to contact within the School.
- 3.3 The detail of the discussion will be recorded in writing by the Programme Director/Supervisor(s) and the student asked to confirm, date and sign the written record. This documentation will be kept in the student's file in Registry, is subject to the School's Data Protection Policy and will be kept secure and confidential. The student should also be advised that this information may be shared with other members of staff at the School to enable students to access the necessary support. This must be undertaken with the consent of the student. New students who have given birth within the previous 26 weeks upon commencement of their programme of study are strongly advised to also inform their Programme Director/Supervisor(s). The Programme Director/Supervisor(s) must conduct a risk assessment and advise on any reasonable adjustments or additional control measures that may be required and to identify any relevant risks associated with the programme of study, including field work, laboratory work and placements.
- 3.4 If a student plans to take part in field work, laboratory work or a placement whilst pregnant, the Programme Director/Supervisor(s) must ensure that this is specifically addressed in the Risk Assessment as there may be special risks associated with the field/laboratory work or placement. Students are not permitted to take part in field/laboratory work or a placement where it constitutes a risk to the student or unborn child. If the student has any concerns they should seek medical advice from their GP or midwife.
- 3.5 Where the placement is a mandatory part of the programme it is advisable for the student to consult their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) as to the impact upon their programme of study. Students should also consult their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) if the

field/laboratory work or placement is a compulsory element of the programme and cannot be modified to accommodate their inability to participate. In such cases an interruption of studies may be appropriate until such time as the student can complete the placement.

- 3.6 The Programme Director/Supervisor(s) will make contact with the placement provider to inform them of the student's pregnancy and ensure that the placement provider will undertake a risk assessment to assess any special risks that may be presented in these environments to the pregnant student. Placement providers must also advise on any reasonable adjustments or additional control measures that may be required and to identify any relevant risks associated with the placements.
- 3.7 The School's Safety Adviser is available for advice at any stage in the risk assessment process.

#### **4. IMPACT ON COURSEWORK SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION**

- 4.1 If a coursework submission deadline coincides with a pregnant student's due date, or falls within two weeks either side of the due date, students will be advised that they can submit work earlier than the last hand - in date, consider applying for an extension to the deadline or an interruption to studies. If the due date is during the examination period or within two weeks either side of it, extenuation claims may be submitted, and will normally be accepted provided they are accompanied by valid and appropriate medical evidence for example the MAT B1 Certificate or a Doctors letter.
- 4.2 Reasonable adjustments during examinations and assessments such as rest breaks should be requested in advance of examination through the School's Student Advice & Counselling team.

#### **5. EXTENUATION**

- 5.1 Students who become ill during pregnancy or give birth prematurely (before 37 weeks) and, as a result, miss scheduled teaching, are unable to study, complete or submit coursework or participate in examination(s), are strongly advised to obtain medical evidence and apply for extenuating circumstances in the usual way.
- 5.2 Evidence that certifies pregnancy alone will offer insufficient grounds to support extenuation claims for coursework or examination, unless these dates coincide with the period of two weeks before the due date or two weeks after the date of delivery.
- 5.3 Extenuation can only be sought if these circumstances occur within the time periods stated above. Additionally, the School will also give consideration to the impact of a termination, miscarriage, still birth or neonatal death on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations. Students will need to obtain medical evidence and apply for extenuation in the usual way.
- 5.4 The School's Extenuating Circumstances policy can be found at  
<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/study/new-students/starting-your-course-london/regulations-policies-and-procedures>

#### **6. INTERRUPTION OF STUDIES**

- 6.1 Students seeking a formal interruption of studies should do so in accordance with the School's Interruption of Studies & Withdrawal Policy:  
<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/study/new-students/starting-your-course-london/regulations-policies-and-procedures/interruption-or>

## **7. FINANCE**

- 7.1 Students are strongly advised to contact the Student Adviser for advice regarding the potential impact of pregnancy on student related finances including loans and fees and for advice on a range of available benefits which they may be able to apply for.
- 7.2 Students who hold UK Research Council or other sponsoring body awards must align their periods of School interruption and funding body leave. Where there is a conflict of interest between the two policies, the sponsoring body's policy will be followed in relation to the area(s) of conflict.
- 7.3 School funded research degree students who become pregnant, with an expected date of childbirth that occurs during the period of the studentship are entitled to a six month period of maternity leave during which funding can continue. After this six month period of paid maternity leave a student may have a suspension of the studentship for a further six months, during which no maintenance grant or tuition fees are payable. A School funded PhD student is therefore entitled to a total of twelve months leave of absence for maternity leave, of which six months are paid and up to six months are unpaid. The paid period of absence and the interruption can only be taken consecutively.

## **8. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

- 8.1 International students on a Tier 4 student visa should seek advice from the School's Immigration Advisory Service in relation to their pregnancy and the possible implications of this on their visa.
- 8.2 The Immigration Advisory Service would also be provide further information about applying for a new Tier 4 student visa from overseas to resume studies at the next available opportunity.
- 8.3 Those students who receive official financial sponsorship should notify their sponsor if they are required to take a break due to the pregnancy and agree an appropriate plan of action.

## **9. RETURNING TO STUDIES**

- 9.1 Students who have given birth are encouraged to resume their studies as soon as is reasonably possible, however they will not be permitted to attend the School for two weeks immediately after giving birth. Students returning to the School after a maternity break should contact their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) and the Student Adviser prior to the start of the term in which they wish to return, and plan the most appropriate timetable for their return to their programme of study.
- 9.2 Students are not permitted to bring their baby into teaching or learning areas for reasons of health and safety and to avoid the disruption of classes or study.

## **10. SAME SEX COUPLES**

- 10.1 In cases which do not fall under the arrangements for adoption leave set out below, the woman who gives birth to the child will be eligible to take maternity leave while her partner will be eligible to take paternity leave.

## **11. PATERNITY**

- 11.1 Students wishing to take paternity related absence (including accompanying their partners to medical and antenatal appointments) are strongly advised to inform their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) at least twelve weeks before the baby is due (although some flexibility may be required) to arrange a meeting to discuss what support and reasonable adjustments are possible without jeopardising their academic progress.
- 11.2 Appointments which cause students to miss individual lectures/seminars will require additional effort from the student to maintain the continuity of their studies and this should be discussed in advance with their Programme Director/Supervisor(s). Students are strongly advised to inform their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) of their wife/partner's due date and if they will be absent from the School after the birth of their child. In line with the entitlements that currently exist within employment law for paternity leave the School will support requests for paternity related absence which is a maximum of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of a child being born.
- 11.3 As with maternity related absence, students wishing to take paternity related absence will also need to provide appropriate evidence of attendance at these appointments to their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) and the Student Adviser who will inform the Student Records team in the Registry for consideration of how it relates to the School's Student Attendance Policy.
- 11.4 Taught programme students are permitted to take two weeks' (ten working days) paternity leave either at the time or within three months of the birth. This will not entail dispensation to miss exams. Students will also be eligible for a longer period of absence, in line with the arrangements made for maternity leave. Formal interruptions of study will be for twelve months due to the nature of the taught programmes. The possibility of additional fee liability with annual fee increases should be taken into account. If students wish to take up to two weeks of paternity leave during term time, Programme Directors may be able to advise them on ways to make up lost time.
- 11.5 Research degree students are permitted to take two weeks' (ten working days) leave either at the time or within three months of the birth. In line with the policy adopted by UK Research Councils, this leave is not taken as an interruption of study and the submission date is not adjusted.
- 11.6 Students who are eligible for a further period of paternity leave from their UK Research Council or sponsor may request a matching period of leave from the School. The School will support student requests for a period of interruption where permitted by their funding body, up to a usual maximum of one year. Where there is a conflict of interest between the two policies, the sponsoring body's policy will be followed in relation to the area(s) of conflict. The submission date will be adjusted accordingly.

## **12. ADOPTION**

- 12.1 Students who will become parents through adoption are strongly advised to inform their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) as soon as possible to discuss any possible health and safety issues, impact on academic work and any actions that need to take place. Students who are adopting a child will be offered the same level of support as those who have become parents by virtue of either their or their partner's pregnancy.
- 12.2 In drawing up comprehensive policies for maternity and paternity leave, the School would not wish to treat adoptive and biological parents unequally. It is customary for arrangements for adoption leave to parallel those made for maternity and paternity leave, in that the main carer takes 'maternity leave', regardless of gender, and the carer's partner takes 'paternity' leave.

- 12.3 The child's main carer will be eligible to take up to one year leave in line with maternity leave provisions. Adoption leave may commence at any point after the student has been notified that s/he has been matched with a child.
- 12.4 A student who is the partner of an adopting parent will be eligible for leave in line with the relevant model for paternity leave.
- 12.5 Research degree students who are eligible for a period of adoption leave from their research council or sponsor may request a matching period of leave from the School, up to a usual maximum of one year. Where there is a conflict of interest between the two policies, the sponsoring body's policy will be followed in relation to the area(s) of conflict.

### **13. TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY**

- 13.1 A student may decide to terminate their pregnancy for many reasons including personal circumstances, because of risks to their health, or because there is a high probability the baby will have a serious medical condition.
- 13.2 Usually, students who are considering a termination will be offered counselling by the National Health Service (NHS) or a private clinic before and after the procedure. The School recognises that students may need time off from study for tests before, and to recover after a termination.

### **14. MISCARRIAGE, STILL BIRTHS AND NEONATAL DEATH**

- 14.1 Students are encouraged to inform their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) in the event of a miscarriage, still birth or neonatal death. The Programme Director/Supervisor(s) should organise a meeting (when possible) with the student to establish the support they are receiving and the support available from the School. The Programme Director/Supervisor(s) will also give consideration to the impact of a miscarriage, still birth or neonatal death on a student's ability to attend classes, meet deadlines and sit examinations and progress on their programme.
- 14.2 A student who has a still birth or whose baby dies shortly after birth should be entitled to the same length of maternity-related absence, financial and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn.
- 14.3 Students are strongly advised to notify their Programme Director/Supervisor(s) and relevant Module Leaders of any absences who will inform the Student Records team in the Registry for consideration of how it relates to the School's Student Attendance Policy.

Registry

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