



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

## **Student Maternity Policy**

H&S Advice to students who become pregnant during their course of study and staff who may advise them.

### **HSPG 29**

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## **1. Introduction**

This Policy provides advice and guidance to:

- Students who become pregnant during their studies and to their partners (if a current student) on how to manage their studies, health and safety, and finance.
- University staff who have a role in advising students coming to them with these issues.

## **2. Scope of the Policy**

The purpose of this document is to ensure that if a student becomes pregnant or is about to become a parent, while they are a student at St Mary's University they know where to seek advice about their own health, the health of child and the management of course of study.

## **3. Policy Statement**

St Mary's University is committed to promoting equality in all its activities and aims to provide a work, learning, research, and teaching environment free from discrimination and unfair treatment. The University actively seeks to develop best practice in discharging its legal responsibility.

The University believes that becoming pregnant or caring for a child should not prevent any student from succeeding in their studies. The University is committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to facilitate students' success, making sure no student is disadvantaged whilst ensuring academic standards are not compromised. The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary between faculties, but all faculties will follow the general approach set out in this document.

The health and safety of a pregnant student will always be of paramount importance, and faculties and student services staff will support all students covered by this policy in a sensitive, non-judgmental, and confidential manner. Only staff members who need to be informed for valid reasons will be informed of a student's circumstances, and this will be done only with their prior consent.

The policy focuses primarily on study-related matters, but sources of help and advice on related issues can be found at the end of the document.

## **4. Rights and Responsibilities**

This section covers rights and responsibilities for students, staff, and the University.

### **4.1 For students who become pregnant during their studies**

#### **4.1.1. Confirming the Pregnancy**

We would advise a student who suspects they are pregnant to see her GP to have the pregnancy confirmed as soon as they can. Students can obtain confidential advice from their own GP. It is in their best interest to disclose their pregnancy to the University.

If the student decides to terminate the pregnancy, or miscarries, this need not be disclosed to the University. However, the University has a [wellbeing service](#) that offers advice, support, and counselling. Absence from the University, required as a result should be classed as 'sick leave' and there is no need to give the specific reason, unless the absence affects any assessment. In this case the student would need to submit an Extenuating Circumstances claim with supporting evidence to the Examinations Office in Registry. Extenuating Circumstances claims are confidential.

Details of the [Absence Policy, Extenuating Circumstances policy and forms](#) can be found on the website

#### **4.1.2. Contacting the Faculty and the wellbeing service**

If the student plans to continue with their pregnancy, they should let their faculty know as soon as possible, they can also contact the wellbeing service for advice and support. The University can only make provision for the student if they let them know they are pregnant. The student can first speak to any staff member with whom they feel most comfortable.

#### **4.1.3. Implications for Study**

A member of staff from the faculty, usually the Course Lead or staff from the wellbeing service will meet with the student to discuss how pregnancy is likely to impact on their study. There may need to be an interruption of studies depending on when the baby is due, and the student together with their Course Lead will decide (1) whether an interruption is needed and (2) if so, the time this needs to cover. Time off might also be needed for medical appointments.

A plan should be devised (in writing, including a risk assessment) by the course lead or other nominated faculty staff member, detailing any reasonable adjustments required during the student's pregnancy, and the agreed timescale for them to return to study. The student should receive a copy of this, as should other appropriate member(s) of staff requiring this information.

The student's permission should be established before passing on information.

If the student continues to study during their pregnancy, we recommend that they meet regularly with their course lead or other designated member of staff, to assess the effectiveness of any reasonable adjustments put in place. Where necessary, further adjustments can be made.

The plan should be created according to the individual circumstances and the timing of the academic year. For example, for a baby due in December the best option may be to suspend for a full calendar year after the baby is born (December to December) if that is compatible with the course of study to suspend studies or take a Leave of Absence a student must complete a form available on their student portal. For advice on dates for leave of absence, when to resume studies, extenuating circumstances and assessments dates students can contact [Registry](#). If the baby is due near to or during an examination period the student should seek advice from their GP. If they are unwell during their pregnancy, they should let the faculty know.

#### **4.1.4 Field work**

Where the student plans to take part in fieldwork as part of their studies, pregnancy should be risk assessed by the faculty responsible for organizing the field work. There may be risks associated with the fieldwork, and the student should discuss this fully with the appropriate staff member. Students will not be permitted to take part in field work after the 7th month of pregnancy.

Some professional bodies prohibit pregnant women undertaking placements and fieldwork. Where placement is a mandatory part of the program, the student should discuss this with their course lead to consider flexibility for placement dates. It may be that the student must suspend their course.

#### **4.1.5 Study abroad/ placement**

If the student becomes pregnant whilst on a study year abroad or a placement, they must contact the faculty to make appropriate plans to ensure that health is safeguarded, and academic progress is effectively managed.

#### **4.1.6 Resuming studies**

The student must inform the faculty when they are ready to return and plan with their course lead an appropriate timetable for re-integration into their course, including the examination schedule. The student must also notify Registry to ensure that their university record is updated to indicate that they are back on their Program of study.

#### **4.1.7. Health and Safety**

There may be health and safety measures needing to be put in place to protect the student and their unborn baby, and this will be particularly relevant in certain Faculties (e.g. where the student might be exposed to harmful chemicals or radiation or be expected to lift heavy objects or undertake other strenuous activity). Therefore, once the student has let their faculty know of their pregnancy, a Risk Assessment will be completed by the faculty with the student concerned. This will identify any risks that may be present which could harm the student or their baby, and detail steps that need to be put in place to alleviate or minimise and manage these risks. The faculty may consult the University Health & Safety Officer when completing the Risk Assessment.

It should also detail any risks that may arise from any placement period or fieldwork due to be undertaken.

Any student who has given birth must not return to study at university within two weeks of giving birth for health and safety reasons.

#### **4.1.9. Accommodation**

Students who become pregnant whilst living in university accommodation may find that this is no longer suitable for health and safety reasons. Contact should be made with the Accommodation team in student services, students can also discuss this with the wellbeing service.

#### **4.1.10. Babies/Children on Campus**

For health and safety reasons, as well as to avoid the disruption of classes or study, babies and children must not be brought into teaching or learning areas. Students must ensure they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they are expected to be at university.

Students may bring babies and children into public areas of the University, but the University cannot accept any liability for the child in these circumstances.

The University provides baby change facilities on campus in the toilet complex in Shannon Corridor, next to the Refectory and ground floor in E block.

#### **4.1.11. Breastfeeding**

There is a baby feeding room on the ground floor of E block which mothers can use as breastfeeding room. They can also store items for feeding babies in a small fridge plus a microwave oven to warm food up.

## **4.2 Support for fathers who have responsibility for bringing up the child.**

Any student discovering they are to become a parent and will be responsible for a child, will be entitled to request time out of study. This is likely to include time off for medical appointments prior to, and after the birth, as well as a period of paternity or shared leave immediately following the birth. A student in this situation should contact their course lead or another staff member to discuss this. Flexibility will be shown where possible.

## **5. Complaints**

Any student who feels that the University has failed to meet the scope of this policy may make a complaint under the University's Complaints Procedure. It is suggested that problems are resolved as informally as possible in the first instance. The student can also be directed to the student's union.

## **6. Sources of information and help**

### **St Mary's Contacts**

Student Services

Location:	J Building, 2nd Floor
Opening hours:	Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm
Contact:	studentservices@stmarys.ac.uk
Tel:	020 8240 2359

Online Advice:

[The wellbeing service](#)

[Pregnancy and support](#)

## EXPECTANT MOTHERS RISK ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS

All information contained in this risk assessment will be treated in the strictest confidence

Please note the following when completing this risk assessment:

Self-score key: 0 = no risk/not applicable, 1 = risk unlikely, 2 = risk possible, 3 = risk likely, 4 = risk very likely, 5 = risk certain

NAME OF STUDENT:

COURSE LEAD:

DATE:

Potential hazard	What is the Risk?	How to avoid the risk	Self-score for the risk in your studies (0-5) and add any notes	
<b>PHYSICAL HAZARDS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS</b>				
Manual handling* of loads where there is risk of injury.  (* Manual handling relates to excessive 'turning, bending, and twisting of the body and lifting heavy loads.)	Hormonal changes in pregnancy can increase risks of injury.  Postural problems may increase as your pregnancy progresses.	Students should consider altering the tasks they undertake to reduce the risk of injury.  Students are advised to avoid activities that need manual handling.	Score	Notes
Noise	Prolonged exposure to loud noise may lead to increased blood pressure and tiredness.  (No particular risk to breastfeeding students or new	The University already seeks to control noise, which should be sufficient, but discuss any concerns with your course lead, particularly if you undertake studies away from the University (e.g. placements).	Score	Notes

<p>Ionising Radiation</p>	<p>Significant exposure can harm the foetus.</p> <p>This could be either through external exposure or by breathing in radioactive contamination.</p> <p>This is not likely to be important unless your studies involve working with such materials.</p>	<p>Student studies should be designed to keep the exposure below the limit for pregnant women.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Electromagnetic fields and Waves (e.g. radio frequency radiation)</p>	<p>Over-exposure to EMF or radio-frequency radiation could cause harm by raising body temperature.</p>	<p>If you have concerns, you should check with your course lead.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Extremes of Heat</p>	<p>Pregnant women have less tolerance of heat and may faint more often or be liable to heat stress.</p> <p>Breastfeeding can be impaired by heat dehydration.</p>	<p>Be careful if you are exposed to prolonged heat, particularly in the summer months.</p> <p>Access to, and use of, rest facilities and refreshments will help you.</p> <p>If you consider you are having problems with the heat, you should talk to your course lead in the first instance.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Stress</p>	<p>University life and studies can be stressful, especially leading up to, and during, examination periods. The negative effects of such stressors can increase with pregnancy.</p> <p>Stress can cause sleeplessness. Sleep is important for your wellbeing - for example, it can affect your physical condition and impact on your ability to learn effectively.</p>	<p>If you feel your studies are becoming overpoweringly stressful, seek advice from your course lead.</p> <p>Students should remember that Student Services can also provide support and assistance through the wellbeing service.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>



<p>Posture and Movement, Mental and Physical Fatigue</p>	<p>Tiredness from standing and other physical work can be associated with miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight.</p> <p>Excessive physical or mental pressure may cause stress, anxiety and raised blood pressure.</p> <p>Difficulties can arise in studying for extended periods in small spaces or through doing activities which require dexterity, agility, coordination, speed, reach and balance – as this can increase the risk of accident.</p>	<p>Students are advised to limit how long you study, and how much you do. See if you can change the way you manage your study workload.</p> <p>Make sure there is adequate seating available and try not to stand for extended periods.</p> <p>Take longer or more frequent breaks.</p> <p>Adjust your workstations or desk if this makes you feel more comfortable.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Working Alone</p>	<p>Pregnant women are more likely to need urgent medical attention.</p>	<p>Depending on their medical condition it may be necessary to review and revise the students access to communications with others and levels of (remote) supervision involved, to ensure that help and support is available when required, and that emergency procedures (if needed) consider the needs of expectant mothers.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>

**BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS**

<p>Any biological agent of hazard groups 2, 3 and 4.</p>	<p>It is highly unlikely that any student will be exposed to such biological hazards.</p> <p>For most students the risk of infection is not any higher at the University than from general living in the community.</p> <p>Many agents within the three risk groups can affect the unborn child if the mother is infected during pregnancy, e.g. hepatitis B, HIV, herpes, TB, syphilis, chicken pox and typhoid.</p>	<p>Much depends on the way in which infection takes place, and existing control measures.</p> <p>In the unlikely event that this is a concern for you, discuss this with your doctor.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Biological agents known to cause abortion of the foetus, or physical and neurological damage.</p>	<p>The risks of infection are generally no higher for students than others in the community.</p> <p>Rubella (German measles) and toxoplasma can harm the foetus, as can some other biological agents.</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>

**CHEMICAL HAZARDS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS**

<p>Substances labelled R40, R45, R46 and R47 ; mercury and mercury derivatives</p>	<p>These substances may cause risk to health to you and/or the unborn or breastfed child, depending on how they are used.</p>	<p>The University protects all its students appropriately. (including protection from lead and asbestos), especially new/expectant mothers.</p> <p>If you have any concerns, raise them with your Program director.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Chemical agents that are known to be dangerous and may be absorbed through the skin (includes some <b>pesticides</b>).</p>	<p>The risks depend on how the substance is used and its hazardous properties.</p> <p>Absorption through the skin can result from localised contamination – e.g. splashes on skin or clothing, or in certain cases from exposure to high atmospheric concentrations of vapor.</p>	<p>Students should avoid using areas on campus where chemicals may be used by ground staff.</p> <p>If you have concerns, raise them with your course lead.</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Notes</p>

Lead and lead Derivatives.	The nervous system of young children is particularly sensitive to the toxic effects of lead, and you should avoid this kind of exposure.  Lead may affect students who work with paints and glazes (e.g. in Art) and chemicals.	Check with your course lead the contents of any chemicals (including paints and glazes).	Score	Notes
Work with display screen equipment (VDUs)	Radiation levels produced by display screen equipment are well below those that pose a risk to human health. There are no special protective measures required to protect the health of people from this radiation.	Students do not need to stop work with display screen equipment	Score	Notes

**PLEASE NOTE:**

The list above is not exhaustive. It has been compiled with reference to 'New and Expectant Mothers at Work - A guide for Employers', published by the Health and Safety Executive, and is intended to cover the possible risks for students attached to the University.

Other aspects of pregnancy that may affect course work at the university.

<b>Aspects of Pregnancy</b>	<b>Factors in your Studies and Life</b>
Nausea	Working excessively long hours, exposure to nauseating smells
Backache and pain	Standing, manual handling, posture, cushions, footrest, ergonomic chair
Varicose veins	Standing, sitting
Bathroom breaks	Difficulty in leaving activities, classes, lectures, consider sitting near exit
Tiredness	Working excessively long hours, social life, evening work, mental health
Balance and coordination	Problems of working on slippery/wet surfaces, consideration of furniture, use of lifts & consideration of footwear
Pregnancy complications	Diabetes and other short-term health issues due to pregnancy

**CONFIRMATION OF COMPLETION OF RISK ASSESSMENT/ACTIONS IDENTIFIED**



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