

## **POLICY ON MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND ADOPTION IN RELATION TO STUDENTS.**

### **Introduction**

This policy aims to provide you with guidance if you become pregnant during the course of your studies, if you have recently had a child, are in the process of adopting a child, or are the partner of a person in one of these situations.

The University's existing support services are available to provide assistance to pregnant students and new parents. Further details of the support available are provided below.

If you become pregnant or are in the process of adoption you are encouraged to inform Student Services and your tutor or supervisor as soon as is reasonable, so that your plans can be discussed and arrangements made for leave and prospective return to study.

Advice on your entitlements may be obtained from the Financial Information and Advice Team in Student Services.

The Student's Union Advice and Information Centre (SUAIC) aims to provide all students at the University with free, independent and confidential advice and representation in a friendly, relaxed environment. For those students affected by this policy SUAIC can provide specific advice on student funding, money management, study arrangements, welfare benefits and employment rights. We recommend that you speak to SUAIC at the earliest opportunity. If you wish, you may do so in confidence prior to informing the University of your circumstances.

### **Maternity Leave**

If you are pregnant you may take up to 52 weeks leave from your studies.

If you wish to take maternity leave you should apply for suspension of your studies under the University's General Regulations, Section IV paragraph 2. This is particularly important in order to ensure that you do not have to pay fees for the duration of your suspension – see below under Finance.

Suspension will usually be 'with services' so that you can retain library access etc.

A link to the Regulations may be found below:

<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/interruption.html>

You must not return to study for a period of at least 2 weeks after giving birth, the same statutory period that applies to employees.

### **Paternity Leave**

If you are the father of a child, or partner of a student who is pregnant or in the process of adoption who expects to have parental responsibility for the child, you may take two weeks paternity leave (without any removal of stipend for PGR students) immediately following the birth of the child or placement for adoption (and no later than 56 days after the birth or adoption). A request for paternity leave should be made via Student Services. You must also notify your tutor or supervisor. Fathers or partners who wish to take a longer period of paternity leave in order to care for a child should discuss this with their tutor or supervisor. A formal application for suspension should also be made in connection with any period of agreed leave.

### **Adoption Leave**

If you are adopting you may apply for suspension of your studies for up to 52 weeks under the Regulations referred to above.

Caring for a child whilst studying will have an impact on a parent or carer's study; therefore you should take advice from your tutor, Student Services and SUAIC to help you find ways to manage this additional responsibility.

The partner of a student who is adopting may apply for paternity leave. Please note that where a couple are adopting a child (which may include same sex couples) only one of them may apply for adoption leave. The other may apply for paternity leave.

### **Paid Leave**

#### ***Undergraduate Students and Postgraduate Students on Taught Programmes***

Maternity leave for registered students will generally be unpaid unless you are employed by the University and eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay.

Statutory Maternity pay will only apply if you are employed by the University as well as being registered as a student, are earning above the National Insurance Limit and meet the other statutory conditions for eligibility.

You are advised to check to see if you are eligible to receive Maternity Allowance, which is a state benefit. Contact SUAIC for further information and advice.

#### ***Postgraduate Research Students***

Postgraduate Research students who are in receipt of third party funding and who become pregnant may apply for up to six months of their maternity leave to be paid at normal stipend rates. You should inform the funding body of your pregnancy and likely suspension of studies, and comply with the terms and conditions of your funding in this regard.

Maternity leave will only be paid for longer than six months where this is part of the terms and conditions of the funding arrangements.

Wherever possible, the University will seek to recoup the cost of maternity pay from the funder.

You must continue your studies up to your 29<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy to become eligible for paid maternity leave. However it is recognised that for health and safety reasons it may be necessary for you to cease some activities earlier if they may present a hazard to you or your unborn child (see below).

If you wish to claim maternity pay, you should apply direct to Student Services and notify your Tutor or Supervisor. You should obtain form MAT B1 from your midwife and lodge this at the same time in support of your claim.

Student Services will notify your Faculty and Registry, Finance and Student Services Centre of your planned leave.

As with students on taught programmes, it is worth checking to see if you are entitled to Maternity Allowance – contact SUAIC for further information and assistance.

If adopting or the partner of a student who is pregnant or adopting, you may be entitled to paternity or adoption pay, depending on the rules of your particular funding body.

### ***NHS funded students***

If you are NHS funded, different arrangements may apply to you if you become pregnant. It is suggested that in addition to notifying Student Services and your Academic Tutor, you should also contact SUAIC and the NHS for information and advice about your entitlements.

For NHS contact:

NHS Student Grants Unit:-

[www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk](http://www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk) or tel 0845 358 6655 (Students only).

### **Health and Safety**

Once you have notified the University that you are pregnant, a risk assessment should be carried out.

In some cases, if you are working in conditions that may be hazardous to you or to your unborn child you may have to suspend your studies prior to the 29<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. This might include some placements, field work and laboratory or other experimental work.

If you are planning to fly within the UK or abroad in connection with your studies, you should also check insurance arrangements and the rules of the airline as to whether you are able to travel on your planned dates.

### **Study Arrangements**

As stated, having notified Student Services it is helpful if you notify your tutor or supervisor as soon as possible if you become pregnant.

Your tutor or supervisor should meet with you to discuss the point at which you wish to suspend your studies and start your maternity leave, any special arrangements that might need to be made while you are pregnant, and likely date of return to study. It is helpful if a written record of this meeting is made and placed on your student file, and a copy given to you.

Careful consideration will need to be made as to whether you can undertake field work, placements or laboratory work, or study abroad, whilst pregnant. Where necessary, health and safety and/or medical advice should be sought.

You may take time away from your studies to attend medical appointments, although it is suggested that you try and arrange these outside timetabled teaching periods.

Where pregnancy impacts upon your health, you should keep your tutor or supervisor informed of the situation.

You may wish to apply for special considerations if pregnancy has impacted upon your studies, in terms of examinations or any other form of assessment. If you want advice about this contact SUAIC

You should indicate when you plan to return to your studies and should contact your tutor or supervisor at least a month prior to return to discuss your planned date of return and how your return to study will be managed.

If you are a clinical student in the Faculty of Medicine or are studying for any other professional qualification which involves placements (eg nursing and midwifery, teaching or social work) you are advised to make contact about your planned return date as early as possible and keep in regular contact to allow your Faculty to plan suitable placements for your return.

Under the University's regulations, suspension for a period of more than 2 years will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

### **Accommodation**

Single occupancy halls are not suitable to house a parent and child. If you are pregnant and living in a single occupancy hall, you may be released from contract on receipt of written notice. You should complete an Amendment to

Registration Status form and have it signed by the appropriate member of staff in your Faculty. Your liability ends seven days after receipt of this notice as long as the accommodation has been vacated and the keys returned, otherwise you will be charged until you vacate the room and return of keys.

If you are living in a University owned house and decide to suspend your studies the principle of release from contract would remain the same. However you may be permitted to remain in residence if a) the house is suitable in terms of size and facilities for the extra family member and b) in the case of international students, that you have permission to remain in the UK.

If you are returning to study after giving birth or adoption you may apply for family accommodation through the Accommodation Service. However please note that places are very limited and there is no guarantee that suitable accommodation will be available. If you are seeking family accommodation you are advised to contact the Accommodation Service at the earliest possible opportunity. The Accommodation Service will also be able to offer advice and guidance on finding suitable private rented accommodation.

## **Finance**

When you suspend your studies for reasons of pregnancy and maternity leave you will not be charged fees for the period of suspension. To ensure that our financial records are kept in alignment with your period of suspension it is essential that you apply for suspension of your studies under the University's General Regulations, Section IV paragraph 2.

## **Early Years Centre**

Ideally situated on the Highfield campus, Student Services provide high quality education and childcare for children aged four months to five years. The Early Years Centre is open from 8am to 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. Children can attend for either one or two sessions (morning and/or afternoon) per day.

Southampton University's Students' Union (SUSU) provide an Early Years Centre Refund of £2.25 per session to student parents who meet the following criteria:

- have single parent status or
- both parents are students and
- are not eligible for Access to Learning Funds (ALF)

If you are in financial hardship you may be able to get help from the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) to pay the Early Years Centre fees. Parents are a priority group. Eligibility can be assessed by contact the Financial Information and Assistance Team in the Student Services Centre.

For further information visit:

<http://www.soton.ac.uk/studentservices/nursery.html>

## **International Students**

If you are an International student sponsored by the University to obtain a visa to enter the UK you should meet with the Visa Guidance Team within Student Services if you plan to take maternity or adoption leave as there may be implications regarding your visa status. Depending on the circumstances, the University may have to report to the UK Border Agency any visa sponsored student who takes leave of absence. The UKBA may subsequently require you to leave the UK during your leave of absence.

International students should also inform their funder of their pregnancy or planned leave and comply with any requirements made by that body.

## **Breastfeeding**

Students returning to study who wish to continue breastfeeding can make use of the Clarkson Room at the Nuffield Theatre, which is a designated quiet area for students. Students wishing to use this facility should contact Student Services. There are baby changing facilities in the Early Years Centre and in the Jubilee Sports Centre. You should enquire in other buildings for localised availability of space suitable for breastfeeding as other areas may be available.

## **SOURCES OF ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

- First Support
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 7488
  - Email: [firstsupport@soton.ac.uk](mailto:firstsupport@soton.ac.uk)
  
- Financial Information and Assistance
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 9599
  - Email: [stufunds@soton.ac.uk](mailto:stufunds@soton.ac.uk)
  
- Student Services
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 9599
  - Email: [ssc@soton.ac.uk](mailto:ssc@soton.ac.uk)
  
- Accommodation Service
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 5959
  - Email: [accommodation@soton.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@soton.ac.uk)
  
- University Early Years Centre
  - The Early Years Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 3465

- Email: [earlyyearscentre@soton.ac.uk](mailto:earlyyearscentre@soton.ac.uk)
- International Office
  
- SUAIC
  - Building 40, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 2085
  - Fax: 023 8059 5235
  - Email: [suaic@susu.org](mailto:suaic@susu.org)
  
- Visa Guidance Team
  - Student Services Centre, Highfield Campus
  - Tel: 023 8059 9599
  - Email: [visa@soton.ac.uk](mailto:visa@soton.ac.uk)

<http://www.soton.ac.uk/studentsservices/index.html>