



# Pregnant Students and Students with Very Young Children Policy

## Version 3

Approved by the Board of Governors

Last Amendment: September 2023

The following policy sets out the support arrangements the School will make to support students who are pregnant or who have become parents of young children; it has been compiled with due regard for the Equality Act 2010.

This policy is aligned to the expectations and core practices of the Regulatory Framework for Higher Education; particular regard is given to the Code's accompanying guidance themes of Enabling Student Achievement; *England's Regulatory Framework for Higher Education* is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education institutions and sets out how academic standards are established and maintained and how the quality of learning opportunities are assured and enhanced.

## Document Information

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Document owner(s)*:	Head of Student Lifecycle
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\*The document owner is responsible for maintaining and updating the content of this document and ensuring that it reflects current practice at the School.

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## **1. Introduction**

The London School of Science and Technology (LSST) believes that pregnancy or having a very young child should not, in itself, be a barrier to applying for, commencing, succeeding, or completing a programme of study. The School is committed to being as flexible, providing academic standards are upheld. The special arrangements which can and should be made for students in these circumstances may vary depending upon the expectations of the programme of study.

## **2. The School's Commitment**

2.1. This policy is based on a set of guiding principles, namely:

- i. Avoiding less favourable treatment; the School and its staff will make sure they avoid treating the student (or applicant) less favourably than other students or applicants on the grounds of pregnancy or parenthood of young child.
- ii. Taking a flexible approach; to supporting and facilitating the continued safe and high quality learning experience for pregnant students and/or students who are the parents of a very young child. (See Appendix 2 for further guidance). A student who is pregnant or has very young children will be actively involved in constructing up a support plan (see Appendix 4).
- iii. Demonstrating a non-judgmental and sensitive approach; when supporting and working with students who are pregnant or who have very young children staff must take an open-minded and non-judgmental approach and must not attempt to influence a student's decisions. The role of staff is to provide context and advice to the student to enable them to make informed choices in relation to their learning and teaching experience.

Information provided by the student should be treated as confidential and only passed onto other staff on a need-to-know basis.

## **3. Rights and Responsibilities**

### **3.1. Confirming the Pregnancy**

A student who believes they may be pregnant should consult their GP, so as to access all necessary health and wellbeing support and advice.

## Informing the School

Students are strongly encouraged to inform the School as soon as possible if they become pregnant or have a child whilst they are a student. The Student Support Centre would normally be the first point of contact but students can choose to speak to another member of staff with whom they feel more comfortable. If requested, Student Support Centre will identify a female member of staff to liaise with the student (students should note that their Course Leader and Personal Tutor will be kept informed of the student's circumstances).

The School wishes to support students in their studies and ensure that any risks to pregnant women, parent and child are appropriately addressed, but can only do so if students disclose their circumstances. Accordingly, the School cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of non-disclosure if the student decided not to share their circumstances.

In this respect, students should consider the following:

- There may be elements of a programme of study that could present a health and safety risk to a pregnant student and/or her unborn child. The School will not be able to arrange appropriate risk assessments unless it is aware of her pregnancy. (See also section 3.5)
- Pregnant students are encouraged to attend all pregnancy-related appointments and check-ups. Students should advise the teaching team if these are scheduled during lessons and or periods of assessment (e.g. Examinations). The Attendance Officer will only be able to take proper account of the reasons for absence if they are notified of these.
- Sometimes, the absence of a student from the School can adversely affect the work of other students s/he is working alongside (for example, on a group presentation), Students should again notify the School, so that plans can be made to deal with any such issues arising from the absence to ensure the students and their peers are not placed at a disadvantage.
- Ideally, students should inform the School of their pregnancy at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. The greatest risk to an unborn baby is during its first 13 weeks of pregnancy and so it is important that the student informs the School as early as possible so that risks can be assessed and any necessary health and safety measures can be identified and put in place in a timely fashion. This time frame also allows sufficient time for the School to discuss and agree the student support plan (see below), make any necessary arrangements, and ensure information is communicated as required.

When a student informs the School that she is pregnant, it is important that she receives consistent, objective and unbiased support and advice to enable her to make informed choices. Not all advice relating to pregnancy and maternity can be provided by the

School: Appendix 1 contains information on other organisations which students may find helpful.

**In certain subject areas, particularly those which involve a placement in a health or education setting, students may be required to inform the placement provider of their pregnancy. Students should check the programme handbook or contact their Course Leader for further advice.**

### 3.2. Mitigating Circumstances

Whilst pregnancy itself is not considered to be a mitigating circumstance, there may be circumstances where pregnancy-related issues (e.g. medical conditions associated with the pregnancy, or the unborn child) impact on a student's studies/assessment. In these cases, the student must use the mitigating circumstances procedure to report them to the School (and provide appropriate supporting evidence, which can be submitted in confidence, if necessary).

### 3.3. Drawing up the Student Maternity Plan

Once the student has disclosed her pregnancy, the Student Support Officer and the Course Leader will meet with the student to discuss how the pregnancy is likely to impact on the student's study.

A written Student Support and Pregnancy Plan should be drawn up by the Student Support Officer, Course Leader and the student, detailing any special arrangements required during the student's pregnancy and the agreed timescale for her return to study. A template plan is included at Appendix 5.

It is essential that a risk assessment is carried out as a matter of urgency (see section 3.5 "Health and Safety" below).

Careful consideration must be given to the variety of ways in which the student can be enabled to continue her studies during her pregnancy or after the birth. For example, these might include:

- The date on which the student intends to start maternity-related absence
- The length of maternity-related absence that the student intends to take and the date on which she intends to return (N.B. in this case, and in that above, these dates may need to be revised as circumstances dictate).
- Advice on where the student can locate learning and teaching resources missed for reasons related to the pregnancy.
- Use of the mitigating circumstances procedure in cases where meeting with timescales/deadlines for assessments coincides with a pregnancy-related health condition or birth.



- Any reasonable adjustments that may be required if the student will be sitting examinations (e.g. need for regular breaks).

The student interrupting her studies for a pre-determined amount of time. This period of interruption may be extended if the time required to complete the programme of study will still fall within the maximum time limit allowed for the programme either by the School (and/or, where applicable, professional bodies).

The Student Support in Pregnancy Plan should also:

- i. Accommodate the student's antenatal care;
- ii. Include a break from attending School of a month, (this period could start just before the baby due date for health and safety reasons);
- iii. Include provision for re-integrating the student to the programme of study on return from any prolonged absence.

The student should receive a copy of the Plan, as should other appropriate member(s) of staff requiring this information including the student's Personal Tutor and the Programme Leader). The student must signify her agreement with the plan in writing. The student's permission should be established before passing on information.

If the student continues to study during her pregnancy, she should meet regularly with the Student Support Officer and the Course Leader to review her Support Plan. Plans will need to be reviewed at key stages, such as when the student is 16 weeks pregnant, 24 weeks pregnant, and prior to her return to study, or at key points of the academic year, such as prior to examinations. Support plans will also need to be reviewed prior to the student's return to study. Regular review is important as some decisions cannot be made at the start of a student's pregnancy, for example the length of maternity-related absence that she will take.

### **3.4. Health and Safety**

Pregnancy should not be equated with ill health. However, there are health and safety considerations that arise during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and the risks to which a student and her unborn child could be exposed need to be assessed.

The greatest risk to an unborn baby is during its first 13 weeks and so it is important that the student informs the School of her pregnancy as early as possible so that risks can be assessed and any necessary health and safety measures can be identified and put in place in a timely fashion.

A Risk Assessment will be completed by the Operational Manager as part of the drawing up of the Student Support in Pregnancy Plan (see 3.4 above). The Risk Assessment will identify any risks that may be present in the learning and teaching environment which could harm the student or her baby, and detail steps that need to be put in place to alleviate or minimise these risks. It should also detail any risks that may arise from any

placement period due to be undertaken (see also 3.6 and 3.7 below). A template plan is included at Appendix 4.

### 3.5. Students on work placement

If the student becomes pregnant whilst on a work placement, she must contact the School (via the Work placements Coordinator) to make appropriate plans to ensure that her health, and that of her child, is safeguarded and academic progress is properly managed. This is likely to require the School liaising with the placement provider. There may be circumstances where the School is limited in the support it can reasonably offer to the student. Where this is judged to present a particular risk to the student or her unborn child, she may be strongly advised to defer or interrupt her studies.

### 3.6. Resuming studies

**LSST requires students to take a break from attending the School for at least two weeks immediately after birth, on health and safety grounds.**

An indication of the timescale for return to study will have been incorporated into the Student Support and Pregnancy Plan. Students should make contact with the Student Support Officer and the Course Leader after the birth of the baby to confirm their return plans or, if a change of plan is necessary, to discuss this in more detail.

If there are concerns about a student's health in relation to her proposed return date or her course requirements, the Course Leader must be consulted; it may be necessary for the student's GP or health worker to confirm the student's fitness to return to study.

### 3.7. Financial issues

Where students receive government funding support, they are strongly encouraged to contact the Finance Department to discuss the implications for their support. Generally, when students suspend their studies because of pregnancy Student Finance England can continue to award statutory support where the student requests it. Access to Learning fund payments can also be made during periods of suspension of study on the grounds of pregnancy.

### **3.8. Babies / children on campus**

Students must ensure they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they are expected to be in the classroom or at activities related to their learning experience.

Please do not bring your children to LSST campuses; unfortunately, we do not have childcare facilities and cannot safely or appropriately accommodate nor care for children on campus.

### **3.9. Support for fathers and partners (including same-sex partners)**

Any student who is to become a father, or any student who is a partner of a pregnant student (including same sex partners) who expects to be responsible for raising the child with the mother, will be entitled to request time out of study. This is likely to include time to attend necessary appointments with their partner prior to, and after the birth, as well as a period of maternity support leave immediately following the birth. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this will necessarily be more limited in some programmes than others.

Whilst the Course Leader would normally be the first point of contact, students can choose to speak to another member of staff with whom they feel more comfortable. If requested, the Student Support Centre will identify a female member of staff to liaise with the student (students should note that their Course Leader and Personal Tutor will normally be kept informed of the student's circumstances).

### **3.10. Adoption**

As arrangements for the placing of children for adoption may take place within a very short timescale, it is important that students about to become parents through adoption should inform the School of their circumstances and intentions as soon as possible.

Whilst their Course Leader would normally be the first point of contact, students can choose to speak to another member of staff with whom they feel more comfortable (students should note that their Course Leader and Personal Tutor will normally be kept informed of the student's circumstances).

A meeting with the student should then be arranged with the Course Leader and a Student Support Officer in which an Adoption Plan can be completed; this can be based on the "Support in Pregnancy Plan" where appropriate.





## Appendix 1- Sources of advice and support outside the School

### **Gov.UK**

The UK government's website provides information on health, care and benefits during pregnancy, benefits for parents, and information on childcare providers in your local area (at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting>)

### **Family Planning Association**

Aims to establish a society in which everyone can make informed choices about sex, relationships and reproduction. Its website contains impartial advice on pregnancy, abortion and adoption, and also contains a list of useful organisations.

[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk) Helpline: 0845 122 8690

### **National Health Service**

Provides information relating to pregnancy, abortion, health in pregnancy and maternity, and services provided by the NHS.

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **National Union of Students**

Provides information and advice to students and students' unions about student finance, rights and welfare. Information for student parents is available on its website, along with research and publications about students with dependent children.

[www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

### **Adoption UK**

A national charity run by and for adopters, providing self-help information, advice, support and training on all aspects of adoption and adoptive parenting.

[www.adoptionuk.org.uk](http://www.adoptionuk.org.uk)

### **Antenatal Results and Choices**

A national charity that provides non-directive support and information to expectant and bereaved parents throughout and after the antenatal screening and testing process.

[www.arc-uk.org](http://www.arc-uk.org)

### **British Pregnancy Advisory Service**

Supports reproductive choice and health by advocating and providing high-quality, affordable services to prevent or end unwanted pregnancies with contraception or by abortion. Also offers a range of other reproductive health services.

[www.bpas.org](http://www.bpas.org)

### **Family and Parenting Institute**

Provides support to parents in bringing up their children [www.familyandparenting.org](http://www.familyandparenting.org)

### **The Miscarriage Association**

Offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy.

[www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

### **SANDS**

The still birth and neonatal death charity – provides support to anyone affected by the loss of a baby and conducts research into the causes of still and neonatal death.

[www.uk-sands.org](http://www.uk-sands.org)

## Appendix 2 - Further Guidance for Student Support

It is not possible to provide a definitive list of special arrangements that might be considered reasonable in every possible situation because the decisions about which arrangements are appropriate in each particular case will vary according to a wide range of factors. These factors include the student's individual circumstances, the time of year, the structure and content of the particular programme of study, restrictions imposed by professional bodies and any related health and safety matters.

Staff members are advised to take into account the following when considering what might be appropriate in a given case:

- A student's own views on her options are very important and it is vital that staff consult her openly on the way forward, rather than seeking to implement a predetermined set of adjustments.
- At the same time, it is important to note that the School does not have to agree to any or all requests made by the student. There may be some situations in which it is impossible or unreasonable for the School to agree to a particular request.
- To ensure best practice, and avoid any inadvertent discrimination, the School should not normally decline a request from a pregnant student for particular special arrangements solely on grounds that they are too costly to implement (although this may be one factor taken into account when deciding on the overall reasonableness of meeting the request).
- If the School decides to decline a flexibility request from a pregnant student, it is considered good practice for the School to document its reasons for refusing the request and discuss with the student why this particular request is not considered "reasonable" in the particular circumstances.
- In cases where deferring her studies would lead to a student taking longer to complete a programme than would normally be permissible, the School may decline a request for further time out from studies (in order to ensure that the information gained in previous parts of the programme remains current enough to count towards the qualification in question). However, in these circumstances the School should still strive to demonstrate a flexible approach, where practicable, in relation to this deadline for programme completion, whilst ensuring that the student does not exceed the overall time limit allowed for her programme of study by the School or a relevant professional body.

Staff members are also welcome to seek bespoke advice on what might constitute appropriate flexibility in a particular case from the Student Support Centre.

Occasionally, a situation may arise in which the School is already making allowances for an individual student for reasons not related to pregnancy (for example, for reasons linked to disability). This does not mean that it is unreasonable for her to benefit from separate/additional flexibility relating to her pregnancy. It is important that, in these situations, the School strives to separate out these different issues and clarify with the student what flexibility relates to which reasons. This approach will help the School to ensure that the flexibility remains in place only for as long as it is required and also that they are complying with all of the different pieces of anti-discrimination legislation.

### Appendix 3 - Legal protection for students during pregnancy and maternity

*(Source: Equality Challenge Unit: Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions)*

The Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthens legal protection for students (including applicants to higher education) during pregnancy and maternity in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act considers pregnancy and maternity to be a protected characteristic and prohibits discrimination on these grounds.

Section 17 of the Act expands the protection from discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity, which already exists for women in the workplace and vocational training, to women outside the workplace. In doing so, the Act specifically mentions the higher education sector. Under the Act, discrimination can occur against a student because of her pregnancy or because she has given birth if:

- the student is treated unfavourably because of her pregnancy;
- within 26 weeks of the day of giving birth the student is treated unfavourably because she has given birth; this also applies in cases of miscarriage, still birth and neonatal death provided more than 24 weeks of the pregnancy has lapsed;
- the student is treated unfavourably because she is breastfeeding and the child is less than 26 weeks old; if the child is more than 26 weeks old, unfavourable treatment because of breastfeeding is likely to constitute sex discrimination.

The protection afforded due to pregnancy and maternity is narrower than other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Consequently there is no protection afforded for discrimination that occurs by being associated with someone who is pregnant or in a period of maternity, or being perceived to be pregnant or in a period of maternity. However, if a woman's partner is treated unfavourably because of her pregnancy or because she has given birth, this may constitute sex discrimination.

Under the Act, it is unlawful for HEIs to discriminate against applicants and students in relation to admissions; the provision of education; access to any benefit, facility or service; and disciplinary proceedings. The protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity is included in the public sector equality duty (PSED) of the Equality Act. The PSED requires HEIs to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act,
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

## Appendix 4 – Pregnancy Risk Assessment

### Pregnancy Risk Assessment

(To be completed by Operational Manager with student)

Name ..... Student Number.....

Programme ..... Stage.....

Due Date ..... Date of Assessment .....

### Pregnancy health and safety check sheet

	YES	NO
<b>1 – Physical demands</b>		
Does the programme involve lifting or pushing heavy objects?		
Does the programme involve standing or squatting for long periods?		
Does the programme involve a lot of walking?		
Does the programme involve working at heights or climbing steep steps?		
Does your programme involve prolonged physical activity e.g. dance		
Does your programme involve accessing areas with limited space?		
Will any tasks become more hazardous as the student changes size and shape?		
<b>2 – Mental demands</b>		
Does the programme involve meeting challenging deadlines?		
Does the programme involve rapidly changing priorities and demands?		
Does the programme require a high degree of concentration?		
<b>3 – Facilities – general</b>		
Are there any issues with accessibility to toilet facilities?		
Are there any limitations to taking toilet breaks?		
Can the student take rest breaks when needed?		
Can the student control the pace of her work?		



	YES	NO
<b>3 –Facilities– general – continued.</b>		
Are there any obstacles in corridors or offices that could cause problems for pregnant women e.g. in the event of a fire evacuation?		
Is the student exposed to smoking on campus?		
Is the temperature in her class reasonable?		
Will there be enough room as the pregnancy develops?		
<b>4 – Equipment Hazards</b>		
Does any part of the programme require participation in any workshops, laboratories, or clinical skills to be exposing the student to of the following?		
Vibration		
Noise		
Heavy Machinery Other		
<b>5. Other</b>		
Does any part of the programme involve off campus activities eg. Work placements?		
If so, has the work placements coordinator been informed?		
Are there any other issues not identified above (please note in the comment box below)		

**Any further comments made by student e.g. aches/pains health problems being experienced: (Continue on separate sheet if necessary)**

## **Appendix 5 - Student Support and Pregnancy Plan**

**Note: This form is to be completed by a Student Support Officer and the Course Leader together with the student.**

This form aims to guide discussions with students during pregnancy and maternity. It should be completed and agreed with the student. It is not intended that all the form should be completed at a first meeting as initially a student will be unable – and should not be expected – to respond to all the issues raised.

The form should be reviewed at key stages (e.g. 16 weeks pregnant, 24 weeks pregnant, and prior to return to study); or at key points of the academic year (e.g. prior to examinations and field trips). If the student's circumstances change, the plan will also need to be reviewed.

(Form overleaf)



## London School of Science and Technology

### Student Pregnancy and Support Maternity Plan

#### Part 1: Declaring a pregnancy

Contact details		
1	<b>Student's details</b>	
	Name	
	Telephone	
	Address	
	Email address	
	Student ID Number	
3	<b>Course details</b>	
	Course title	
	Year of Course	
	Course Leader	
	Personal Tutor	
2	<b>Emergency contact details</b>	
	Name	
	Telephone	





Key dates (Student Support Officer) (to be reviewed and added to over the course of pregnancy)		
3	Expected due date:	
4	Antenatal Appointments (list as necessary):	
5	<p><b>Date of Meeting with Student Support Adviser:</b> <b>Name of Staff member:</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>Contact:</b></p> <p><u><b>Notes</b></u> Please include notes of your conversation and any recommendations for other teams/departments to consider.</p>	



Health and Safety Assessment (Operational Manager)		
6	Staff member name:	
7	Date:	
8	Has a Health and Safety Risk Assessment been completed?	Yes / No
<p>Please provide details of the outcome of the risk assessment or attach notes where necessary.</p>		



## Part 2: Support on the course

This section should be completed by the Programme Leader. The purpose of this section is to note what arrangements can be made to support the student on the course and to manage the student's maternity leave.

### Managing Attendance (Course Leader/ Tutor)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 9 | Please outline the agreed arrangements to enable the student to 'catch up' on any missed lectures or seminars. You may want to consider referring the student to Academic Support Centre or offering additional tutorials, providing lecture or seminar notes / video files. |
|---|--|

### Assessments (Course Leader)

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 10 | Staff member name:   |
| 11 | Date:  |
| 12 | Dates of scheduled assessments taking place prior to due date:   |
| 13 | Does the student foresee any challenges to completing assessed work as a result of their pregnancy? Yes / No |
| 14 | Has the student been informed of the Mitigating Circumstances Procedure? Yes / No                            |
| 15 | Notes:   |
| 16 | Please attach the results of any Mitigating Circumstances applications.                                      |

This section can be updated over time, depending on the needs of the student.



Students on placement (Course Leader)		
17	Is the student required to undertake a placement whilst pregnant?	
18	Staff member name:	
19	Date:	
20	<p><b>Notes</b></p> <p>Please set out arrangements for ensuring the student is supported during the placement, e.g. agreeing time off for appointments, pregnancy related sick leave, ensuring health and safety assessments are undertaken.</p> <p>Who is responsible for liaising with the placement provider?</p>	
21	Will the student be able to complete her placement?	
22	If not, what alternative arrangements will be made?	



### Maternity leave (Course Leader)

Students should inform the School of their intention to take maternity leave at least **15 weeks prior** to their due date.

23	Expected date of maternity leave commencing:	
24	Expected date of return:	
25	Has the student submitted a request to defer the course?	

### Returning to study (Course Leader)

26	Date of return:	
27	What support will be provided to the student on their return to study? (e.g. Support from tutor or Academic Support Centre)	

### Informing other staff and students

28	Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed?	
	Name and title	Date



## Version History

### **Version** 1.0 – 2.0

Original author(s): Head of Student Support

Reviewed by: Executive Committee  
September 2017  
September 2018

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### **Version** 2.1 – 2.2

Revised by: Quality Audit Manager

Revision summary: *Minor amendments and updated external references in Appendix 1: document formatting. Changes reviewed by the Publications Committee and Executive Committee.*

Approved by: Board of Governors  
September 2019

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### **Version** 2.3

Revised by: Quality Unit

Head of Student Lifecycle  
Revision summary: *Annual review and update.*

Approved by: Board of Governors  
October 2020

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### **Version** 2.4

Revised by: Quality Unit

Head of Student Lifecycle  
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Approved by: Board of Governors  
October 2021

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### **Version** 2.5

Revised by: Quality Unit

Head of Student Lifecycle  
Revision summary: *Annual review and update; Additions made to 'Confirming the Pregnancy'; Minor grammatical errors throughout.*

Approved by: Board of Governors  
September 2022

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### **Version** 3

Revised by: Quality Unit

Head of Student Lifecycle  
Revision summary: *Annual review; version control applied*

Approved by: Board of Governors  
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