Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Paternity Policy

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1. Introduction

The University of Central Lancashire is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for its students. The University aims to ensure that all students achieve their academic potential and that no student is unreasonably disadvantaged when applying to and studying at the University.

The University recognises its legal and moral obligations to students who are new and expectant mothers and fathers, and those who are adopting. Pregnancy should not generally be regarded as an ill health condition. Occasionally, some activities may impact on the health and safety of new and expectant mothers or their child(ren), resulting in aspects of their studies becoming potentially hazardous during pregnancy or whilst breastfeeding; however pregnancy in most instances, will not prevent women from continuing to study in a safe, healthy and productive way.

2. Aims

The aims of the policy are to :-

- Engender a culture in which new or expectant mothers are appropriately and properly supported with their studies
- Actively address any stigma associated with pregnancy, maternity, adoption or paternity
- Encourage students to disclose their pregnancy, in order that the University can identify the appropriate support and assist the student to access this
- Ensure that consistent procedures are adopted across the University

The policy is designed to provide advice and guidance to:

- Current students who are new or expectant mothers or who are adopting
- Prospective students, where they will begin their studies as a new or expectant mother (including those who are adopting)
- Any student who has given birth/suffered a miscarriage within the last 26 weeks
- Students who are about to become parents because their partner is pregnant
- Families only when the student has given consent.

3. UCLan Context

Students face a range of challenges during their time at university, which may include managing on a budget, making new friends, balancing study and social life, adapting to independent learning etc. Whilst this can be exciting and challenging, sometimes it can be overwhelming, especially for those who are new or expectant mothers or who are adopting. Such students may also have additional challenges with finances, ill-health, juggling workloads, post-natal depression and lack of sleep; factors that the University needs to consider when supporting parents of very young children.
4. Understanding pregnancy, adoption, maternity and paternity

“Demographic changes in the student population (an expected increase in mature and part-time students) mean that more students are likely to become pregnant or have a child during their studies. At the same time, the Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthens the legal responsibility of all higher education institutions to protect students from pregnancy- and maternity-related discrimination.”

The University recognises that new parents and expectant mothers may require additional support and flexibility during their studies. A number of solutions can relatively quickly resolve some of the practical needs of the student and help them to successfully complete their course; however, not every pregnancy is planned and students may need additional support from specialist services at this time. A number of students may be adopting children and may be matched at relatively short notice, thus also requiring equal amounts of support and flexibility.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 University responsibilities

The University will:-

- Ensure students have access to specialist support staff who can support students throughout their pregnancy, maternity, adoption or paternity.
- Provide clear information to students and potential students about the content and nature of the course, the assessment methods and learning outcomes and articulate clearly any professional body requirements around fitness to practice, in order that all applicants can assess their suitability for the course. The University will not discriminate against pregnant applicants and will also consider flexibility if requested e.g. deferred entry.
- Ensure all marketing and induction material contains clear information about the types of student support available at UCLan, both within the course and from other services e.g. the <i>, disability etc.
- Ensure course-level practices do not unlawfully discriminate against new or expectant mothers, or students who are adopting, but do include procedures for supporting students e.g. offering longer part-time placements (within professional body requirements, where appropriate) which are more accessible to such students.
- Ensure flexible plans are in place to support a student whilst on any placement/off-campus learning event
- Consider and implement flexible arrangements in teaching and learning for those students who may need this e.g. rest breaks, recording lectures, time off for antenatal and pre-adoption appointments etc
- Provide appropriate facilities on campus which enable mothers to breastfeed or express. Note - students can bring their child on to campus for the purpose of breastfeeding, but cannot normally take them into class.
- Support students to find appropriate ‘family friendly’ accommodation, as standard Halls of Residence are unlikely to be suitable. Students may also apply to be released from their existing accommodation contract, if it is with the university.

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without financial penalty.

- Support students with advice and guidance on the financial implications of their pregnancy/adoption e.g. implications of interrupting their studies on maintenance loans etc
- Support students to adjust their mode of study e.g. moving from full time to part time study.
5.2 Student responsibilities

Students and prospective students have a responsibility to:-

- Declare their pregnancy (to Admissions) prior to entry on the course, or during their studies (at the <i>or to their Academic Advisor, Research Degrees Tutor or the Research Student Registry) as appropriate.
- Advise the University Health Centre, or their own GP as appropriate.
- Students on a Tier 4 Visa will need to seek immediate advice from the Student Immigration Compliance team (accessible through the <i>), as specific visa regulations apply.
- Review the course learning outcomes, assessment methods and professional body requirements, to understand what is required of students on the course and discuss the potential flexibility required.
- Work proactively with the Academic Advisor (or Research Degree Tutor), academic and support staff to agree the appropriate support required during pregnancy and maternity.
- Inform the University (the <i>or Academic Advisor) at least 15 weeks before the baby is due (or the date of adoption if known) of the date on which the student intends to take maternity/paternity/adoption leave, the length of the absence and the intended return date, in order that the course team can identify a suitable time of year for the student to return. Students are required to take a minimum of two weeks maternity leave. The maximum period of authorised absence during a semester is four weeks. Students wishing to take a longer period of maternity/paternity/adoption leave will need to consider applying for an interruption to study (the student should bear in mind the financial implications of this course of action).
- A student who suffers a miscarriage or decides not to continue with their pregnancy does not need to inform any staff or students. However, if a student is absent from classes they are advised to inform their Academic Advisor that they will be away for ‘medical reasons’. Support for students who suffer a miscarriage or choose not to continue with their pregnancy is available from Student Services and external specialist services.
Appendix ONE

1. Related UCLan policies and procedures

Extenuating Circumstances
Some students face significant unplanned and unforeseen events in their personal life, which have a greater impact on their studies than can be solved by the use of an extension. This may include a sudden or unpredictable illness related to their pregnancy, or the loss or termination of a pregnancy. Extenuating Circumstances are only a short-term solution to an immediate problem, so if a student is repeatedly asking for extensions or extenuating circumstances, it may be appropriate for them to meet with their Academic Advisor to investigate the reasons for this. More details of the Extenuating Circumstances process can be found at: https://www.uclan.ac.uk/students/study/examinations_and_awards/extenuating_circumstances.php

Interruption to Study
Students wishing to take maternity/paternity/adoption leave may wish to temporarily interrupt their study. The student, together with their Course Leader (or Director of Studies/Research Supervisor) will agree whether an interruption is needed, how a student will be supported to keep up to date during their absence (if appropriate), the financial implications of such an interruption and, the time period the absence needs to cover. This decision should also take into account the academic requirements of the student’s course. https://www.uclan.ac.uk/students/study/files/Interruption_to_study_leaflet.pdf

Fitness to Study
The Fitness to Study procedure can be used when a student is facing health or wellbeing issues that are preventing them from actively engaging in their course. The procedure is designed to be collaborative and supportive and aims to bring the student, appropriate academic staff (usually the Course Leader, Director of Studies or Research Supervisor) and specialist Student Services staff together to create a plan of action designed to keep the student on track. Where the University is concerned about a student’s health in relation to their pregnancy, or their expected return to study date, the student may be required to obtain confirmation from their GP that they are fit to study. More details are available at: http://www.uclan.ac.uk/study_here/assets/images/Fitness_to_Study_Procedure.pdf

Other UCLan policies that might be relevant include:-
- Disability Policy
- Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Regulations for the Conduct of Students
- Fitness to Practice procedure
- Fitness to Study procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Students with Caring responsibilities
- Children on campus policy
- Student Attendance Monitoring Policy

http://www.uclan.ac.uk/study_here/student-contract-taught-programmes.php
2. Related web resources

- Student Support general student web pages - http://www.uclan.ac.uk/study_here/student_support.php
- UCLan Pre-School - https://www.uclan.ac.uk/students/life/child_care.php
- UCLan Student Union Parents and Carers Society - http://www.uclansu.co.uk/groups/parents-and-carers
- Student Union Advice Centre – financial advice etc - http://www.uclansu.co.uk/advice
- National Union of Students – www.nus.org.uk
- Antenatal Results and Choices - http://www.arc-uk.org/