

University of Cambridge logo

Document cover sheet

Title	Student maternity and family related leave (taught students)
Purpose	Guidance to departments on student rights and support as expectant parents and on parent-related leave.
Owner	PGRO
Contact within EQPO	Jane Clare
With effect from	June 2025
Next review due	Summer 2026
Version	V1.0
Comment	New policy

Student maternity and family-related leave (taught students)

The University is committed to supporting students during life events and believes that becoming a parent should not prevent a student from successfully completing their studies.

This policy covers students registered on taught courses¹ who are pregnant, the primary adopter of a child, or whose partner becomes pregnant or is the primary adopter of a child. It covers the University's approach to students regarding pregnancy, surrogacy, adoption and new-parent related leave. The policy applies to full-time and part-time registered students at all levels of taught study.

Contents

Planning to Become a Parent	2
Trying to conceive and fertility treatments	3
During pregnancy	3
Miscarriage and baby loss	4
Maternity or Adoption Leave	4
Paternity or Partner Leave.....	5
Students Acting As Surrogates.....	6
Intermission.....	6
Returning to study	6
Non-return/withdrawal	6
Supporting student parents.....	7
Helpful resources	7

Planning to Become a Parent

A student may become a parent through pregnancy, adoption, surrogacy, or a partner's pregnancy. Students expecting to become a parent should inform the collegiate University so that support can be arranged.

Students expecting to become a parent are expected to continue with their studies until around the time of the birth or adoption of the child, with some time to prepare for the child's arrival.

Students who are considering having a child during their studies should be aware that it may entail additional costs for accommodation, subsistence and childcare. It is the student's responsibility to meet the costs of any dependents whilst they are studying. Limited support

¹ Foundation year, undergraduate students, postgraduate taught students

is available from the University in the form of childcare bursaries. Additionally, many funders do not provide additional support for dependents. Students are advised to consider the level of financial support available to them from their own resources, their family, their funder or the State (through the welfare system).

Trying to conceive and fertility treatments

Students who are trying to conceive or undergoing fertility treatments should receive support. Where possible, flexibility should be provided to allow attendance at necessary medical appointments.

Students requiring more than two weeks away from study for a period of treatment or ill-health due to treatment side effects must apply to intermit.

Students may seek support from their College Tutor, College Nurse or via the [University Counselling Service](#).

An external source of advice is [Fertility Network UK](#) which offers some helpful [resources for those wishing to learn more about fertility](#) on their website. They also have a [regional online group](#) that offers peer support for those experiencing fertility issues.

During pregnancy

Students who become pregnant should inform the collegiate university of their pregnancy as early as possible and no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth. This is to ensure that appropriate support is put in place.

Undergraduate students can contact their Director of Studies, College Tutor or another member of their College Tutorial Office. Postgraduate taught students can contact their Course Director, the Director of Postgraduate Education or Postgraduate Administrator within their Department, their college Tutor or another member of the College Tutorial Office.

Students should be asked for permission to share this information with other relevant parties for the purposes of managing support. If the pregnancy has been disclosed to the College, this should be passed on to an appropriate contact within the student's department(s) and vice versa.

Students must complete a [risk assessment](#) to mitigate potential risks to themselves and their child. This is particularly important for students working with biological agents or certain chemicals. Students who receive any advice from a medical practitioner (e.g. a doctor, nurse or midwife) must share this so that further adjustments can be made if needed. Students can seek support from their college when completing the risk assessment.

If a risk assessment determines that Occupational Health advice is needed, a referral should be made by the student's Department or College using the [Management Referral Form](#).

Students are allowed time off to attend antenatal appointments. This applies to students who are pregnant and to partners. Similarly, students are allowed time away from their studies to attend pre-adoption appointments.

Students may also need time away from their studies due to pregnancy-related illness. Students who need more than two weeks away from their studies must apply to intermit their studies.

Students should be aware that an intermission may need to last for around a year so that they can re-start the course at the point they began to be impacted, or at the beginning of the next academic year.

Students on a student visa should contact the International Student Office for advice on the implications to their visa of taking a period of leave during pregnancy.

Miscarriage and baby loss

Students who or whose partners are pregnant but miscarry or terminate the pregnancy do not need to disclose this. Support is available from their College Nurse, College Tutor or the University Counselling Service. Students who need a break from their studies of more than 2 weeks should intermit.

If a student's child is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy or born alive any point during the pregnancy but does not survive, the student is entitled to a period of maternity or paternity/partner leave. Students should be encouraged to take leave but if they choose not to, they should not return to study earlier than two weeks after the birth.

The organisations below are also able to provide support:

The [Miscarriage Association](#) offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby during pregnancy. They offer a helpline, live chat service and telephone support, support groups as well as lots of information.

[SANDS](#) is charity that provides support to anyone affected by the loss of a baby. They research into the causes of stillbirth and neo-natal death and offer a helpline, local support groups and have a supportive online community.

Maternity or Adoption Leave

Students are entitled to a period of Maternity or Adoption Leave if they:

- Give birth to a child, unless they are acting as a surrogate (see below);
- Become the primary parent of a child born through surrogacy or;
- Become the primary adopter of a child.

Students are not required to take leave but should be encouraged to do so. Those who choose not to take extended leave must not return to their studies earlier than two weeks after the birth.

There are no limits to the number of times that students can take leave.

Students should discuss their plans with their College Tutor, including the proposed start date of their leave (which can start at up to 11 weeks before the expected birth date and must start at their due date at the latest) and the intended duration of their leave (up to 12 months). Together, the student and Tutor should explore how the leave can be accommodated within the student's course of study and agree on the next steps for the student to apply for a period of intermission.

Students are not expected to engage with their studies during a period of intermission.

Funded students may be entitled to receive a stipend during leave and should contact their funding administrator about their possible entitlement. Funded Students who receive their stipend during a period of leave but do not return to their studies will be required to repay all or part of the funding received during this period.

Students on a student visa should contact the International Student Office (International.Students@admin.cam.ac.uk) for advice on visa implications, as there may be restrictions on the amount of Maternity or Adoption Leave that they are able to take.

Paternity or Partner Leave

Students are entitled to Paternity or Partner Leave if they:

- Become a parent via their partner's pregnancy
- Are the partner of the primary parent of a child born through surrogacy or adoption

For these purposes a partner is defined as a person who lives with the birth parent and child in an enduring relationship but is not a parent, sibling, child, aunt or uncle.

They do not have to take a period of leave but should be encouraged to do so. There are no limits to the number of times that students can take leave.

Students should consult their College Tutor about how a period of leave can be managed. Students may take up to 2 weeks of leave without formal application. Those wishing to take leave of longer than two weeks (up to 12 months) will need to intermit.

Funded students may be entitled to receive a stipend during leave and should contact their funding administrator about their possible entitlement. Funded Students who receive their stipend during a period of leave but do not return to their studies will be required to repay all or part of the funding received during this period.

Students on a student visa should contact the International Student Office (International.Students@admin.cam.ac.uk.) for advice on any implications to their visa.

Students should bear in mind that there may be restrictions on the amount of paternity or partner leave that they are able to take.

Students Acting as Surrogates

Students acting as surrogates may need time to recover from the birth but are not entitled to a period of maternity leave. Students who need more than two weeks should apply to intermit.

Intermission

Students who wish to take more than two weeks away from their studies during pregnancy or to take maternity or parental/partner leave should apply to intermit. The application process differs depending on the course of study.

Information for foundation year, undergraduate and some postgraduate students² can be found here: [About the EAMC | Cambridge students](#).

Information for other postgraduate students³ can be found here: [Changes to your student status | Cambridge students](#)

Students should bear in mind that due to the termly-structure of Cambridge courses, they may need to take a longer period of intermission than they may otherwise have taken.

Returning to study

Students should be supported with flexibility when returning to study as they learn to balance their studies alongside new family dynamics.

Prior to returning to study, students should meet with their college Tutor to explore whether they need any changes to the way in which they study or if they need any additional support.

Students should have indicated their intended date of return as part of their application to intermit. Students must inform their college as soon as possible if this date changes.

Students on a visa should also contact the International Student Office (International.Students@admin.cam.ac.uk) and postgraduate students should also contact the Student Registry (student-registry-help@admin.cam.ac.uk) to ask them to update their student record appropriately.

Non-return/withdrawal

Students who choose not to return to study must inform their college, which will then take the appropriate steps to confirm the student's withdrawal from the University. Postgraduate

² Students on the following courses: EMBA, LLM, MAcc, MAsT, MBA, MCL, MFin, MMath, MMus, MSci and PGCE.

³ Students on the following courses: MPhil by Advanced Study, MRes, MSt, MEd, Advanced Diploma I Economics, Advanced Diploma in Hebrew Studies, Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Studies, Postgraduate Diploma in International Law.

Students should also formally withdraw from the University via their CamSIS account ([Withdrawal from Study | Cambridge students](#)).

Once withdrawn, students are not able to continue with their studies. There are funding and visa implications on withdrawing from study. Funded students who received a stipend during a period of intermission may be required to repay all or part of the stipend and should contact their funder to confirm requirements. Students on visas are advised to contact the International Student Office to understand the implications of withdrawal from study.

Supporting student parents

The University is committed to supporting student parents and offering flexibility to allow them to manage their studies alongside parental responsibilities.

A safe, private and lockable space should be made available for students who breastfeeding and need to express milk, along with refrigerated storage. These facilities should be available for students in both their College and their Department.

Students are expected to organise childcare in a way that allows them to participate fully with their studies. Support is available from the [University's Childcare Office](#) or [Designated College Childcare Contact](#). Students are not normally permitted to bring a child with them to lectures, labs or supervisions, as there may be health and safety implications for this. In an emergency, students can seek permission from their department or college for their child(ren) to accompany them but should bear in mind that it may not be possible to grant this permission if there are safety concerns or concerns about the potential disturbance of others.

The University recognises that student parents may have to take time away from their studies to look after their child(ren) at short notice due to sickness. This should be supported and treated with understanding. If a student requires more than two weeks away from study they should apply for intermission.

Helpful resources

University resources

The Student Advice Service can be contacted at advice@studentadvice.cam.ac.uk or on 01223 746999 (internal extension 46999).

Students on visas are strongly encouraged to speak to the International Student Office about the visa implications of any leave or change to mode of study. They can be contacted at internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk.

The University's Childcare Office has information about the support that is available for student parents on [their website](#). They can also be contacted at childcareservices@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Outside the University

Adoption UK – Adoption UK is a national charity run by and for adopters, providing self-help information, advice, support and training on all aspects of adoption and adoptive parenting: <https://www.adoptionuk.org/>

Direct Gov – Direct Gov is the UK government’s website. It provides information on health, care and benefits during pregnancy, benefits for parents etc: www.direct.gov.uk. The Direct Gov website also provides information on finding and choosing a childcare provider in your local area: www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Childcare.

Family Planning Association – The Family Planning Association’s mission is to establish a society in which everyone can make informed choices about sex, relationships and reproduction. Its website contains impartial advice on pregnancy, abortion, adoption and also contains a list of useful organisations: www.fpa.org.uk.

Family and Parenting Institute – The Family and Parenting Institution provides support to parents in bringing up their children and has a range of resources for parents: www.familyandparenting.org.

Marie Stopes – Marie Stopes is the UK’s leading provider of sexual and reproductive healthcare services. The services include unplanned pregnancy counselling, termination information and advice etc: www.mariestopes.org.uk/.

Miscarriage Association – The Miscarriage Association offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby during pregnancy: www.miscarriageassociation.org.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