

Support for Pregnant Students

This document provides information to students and staff about the university's approach to supporting a student who is pregnant.

Guiding Principle

The university will ensure to the greatest extent possible that any student who becomes pregnant will be accommodated to allow her complete her programme of study while maintaining academic standards. Throughout the course of the pregnancy every effort will be made to give feasible care and attention to her health and wellbeing.

Notification

It is strongly recommended that a pregnant student discloses her pregnancy to her School/Department (or person nominated by the Head). This is to ensure that any risks to the health of the mother or baby that may arise as a result of her course-work, laboratory or research work, work-placement or study abroad or clinical attachment are assessed by scientific evidence and managed appropriately. Failure to disclose a pregnancy may result in a pregnant student unknowingly putting herself and/or her child in danger. This will ensure that the best plans are made for the student's course of study and examinations and also to ensure any special measures needed for her safety and the safety of her child are put in place.

If a student needs to be absent from class during her pregnancy she should let her Head of School/Department know that she is absent for medical reasons. In such cases she should provide a note from her doctor. The School/Department may seek permission to consult the Student Health Department, the student's own GP or the Student's obstetrician or midwife when completing the risk assessment with her to identify any relevant risks associated with her study programme and manage these risks for her protection. (*Where students do not attend the Student Health Department for their ante-natal care, a Consultant Obstetrician level of expertise may be required to address queries in certain risk assessments*). If a student is unhappy with the risk assessment she should consult with the Student Ombudsman.

The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agent. The greatest risk to an unborn child from exposure to chemicals and radiation occurs in the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Academic Studies and Pregnancy

A student will need to plan with her School/Department as soon as possible the implications of her pregnancy for her course of study. She will need to balance her academic responsibilities with her needs as a pregnant student, this with the support of her School/Department. She may apply to defer her studies to the next academic year or alternatively she may wish to discuss alternatives to deferral. The university will respect the student's wishes, in so far as this is practically possible, whether this be to defer or to continue her course of study. It may not be possible, for sound academic or health reasons, for the university to provide an alternative to deferral, in which case deferral becomes inevitable. In such circumstances, the university will work to mitigate the financial and academic consequences of the deferral and will work with the student to facilitate the resumption of her studies at the earliest opportunity. It is important that the Head of School/Department and the student meet to agree the effectiveness of any special arrangements which have been put in place.

Examinations

When required, alternative arrangements for end of year/repeat examinations can be made for pregnant students or students taking examinations shortly after giving birth. When organising alternative examination arrangements each case is considered on an individual basis and recommendations of the student's GP/Consultant are also taken into account.

If, because of pregnancy, a student is absent from summer examinations, she is automatically entered for the autumn examination in the module(s) missed (provided the Book of Modules provides for a repeat examination) and the marks achieved in the repeat examinations(s) are not capped at 40%. In the event that there is no provision for repeating the module(s) missed they will have to be taken in a subsequent year.

If, because of pregnancy, a student is absent from the autumn examinations she is required to repeat the year taking the modules she failed to complete due to pregnancy and the marks achieved in the repeat year are not capped at the mark agreed at College level. The HEA may cover fees in a repeat year when evidence of pregnancy complications such as certified illness is provided.

Postgraduate Research Degree Students

In the case of a postgraduate research degree student who becomes pregnant she should normally contact her supervisor(s). The supervisor will work with the Department/School Graduate Studies Committee to consider the impact of the pregnancy and any resultant suspension of study. The student will be responsible for checking the implications of a suspension of study with her scholarship awarding body at an early stage where relevant.

Students on Study Abroad and Work Placements

For pregnant students on study abroad or work placement the university is limited in the support it can realistically offer to the student. Where this is judged to present a particular risk to the student or her unborn child, she should consider taking time out or transferring to a different programme of study where this is possible.

A pregnant student on study abroad should seek advice from the Academic Co-ordinator of the Programme and the International Education Office.

A pregnant student on work placement should seek advice from the Academic Co-ordinator of the Programme and/or the Work Placement Officer in the Careers Service.

Field Work and Placements

If the student plans to take part in field work or a placement whilst pregnant, this must be specifically addressed in the Risk Assessment completed by the School/Department as there may be special risks associated with the field work or placement. A student may not be permitted to take part in field work or a placement where this constitutes a particular risk to the student or her child.

Where fieldwork or placement is a mandatory part of the student's programme a provision for deferral should be put in place.

Returning to Study

If a student takes leave of absence from her programme of study she should contact her School/Department in advance of when she wishes to return. She will need to plan with her School/Department the optimum timetable for her re-integration into her programme of study, including the examination schedule.

She will not be able to bring her baby into teaching or learning areas for reasons of health and safety **and/or** to avoid the disruption of classes or study. Reasonable accommodation must be made to facilitate nursing mothers when scheduling the times and locations of practicals, field work, and work placement, in particular when this requires the student to travel off campus.

University Accommodation

University accommodation is not suitable for children and therefore it is not permitted to live in this accommodation with a baby.

Student Complaints

Staff members will be expected to show understanding and sensitivity as to the impact a pregnancy can cause for a student academically, emotionally and financially and staff members will be expected to accommodate the student in their studies as long as this does not adversely effect the learning outcome of other students. A student who is unhappy with the university response to her pregnancy should consult with the Student Advisor & Ombudsman.

Services Available

The following services are available and will endeavour to offer support were necessary in a sensitive and respectful manner to students who may encounter challenges during pregnancy.

Students Union Welfare Officer

T +353 (0)21 4902181/(0)86 3836794
welfare@uccsu.ie
<http://www.collegeroad.ie>

Student Health Department (Ardpatrick, College Road)

T +353 (0)21 4902311
<http://www.ucc.ie/services/health/>

Student Counselling & Development (Ardpatrick, College Road)

T +353 (0)21 4903565
Text: +353 (0)87 2152505
E counselling@ucc.ie
<http://www.ucc.ie/studentcounselling/>

Chaplaincy (Iona, College Road)

Tel +353 (0)21 4902459
Ber.twomey@ucc.ie
<http://www.uccchaplaincy.com/>

International Education Office (“Roseleigh”, Western Road)

T+353 (0)21 490 4734
E isoffice@ucc.ie
<http://www.ucc.ie/en/study/international/>

University Crèche (Brookfield Health Sciences Complex)

T+353 (0)21 4901607
E creche@ucc.ie
<http://creche.ucc.ie/>

Fees Office (North Wing, Main Quadrangle)

T +353 (0)21 490 – 3929 / 3932 / 2365
E fees@fin.ucc.ie
<http://www.ucc.ie/en/financeoffice>

Student Advisor & Ombudsman **E studentombudsman@ucc.ie**

Work Placement Officer in the Careers Service

T +353 (0)21 4902349
E careers@ucc.ie

*The university acknowledges that this document has had regard to the policies produced by universities in the UK.
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