

## **Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy**

### **Introduction**

1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the detailed guidance notes in Appendix 1, 'Help and advice for students who are pregnant or who have very young children'.<sup>1</sup>
2. The National Film and Television School believes that being or becoming pregnant, terminating a pregnancy or having a very young child should not prevent a student from starting, succeeding in or completing a course at the School. Whilst we have to ensure that academic standards are not compromised, we are committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to facilitate students' success.
3. This policy and the accompanying guidance notes have been produced to ensure we provide clear guidance on the implications of pregnancy on a student's studies and we will seek to make, with the overall student experience in mind, appropriate reasonable adjustments for the continued safety and learning of a pregnant student or parent of a very young child.

### **Legislation**

4. The Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthens legal protection for students (including applicants to higher education) during pregnancy and maternity. Under the Act, pregnancy and maternity are protected characteristics and discrimination on these grounds is prohibited. Discrimination can occur against a student because of their pregnancy or because they have given birth if:
  - the student is treated unfavourably because of their pregnancy
  - within 26 weeks of the day of giving birth the student is treated unfavourably because they have given birth – this also applies in cases of miscarriage, still birth and neonatal death provided more than 24 weeks of the pregnancy has elapsed
  - the student is treated unfavourably because they are 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to very young children relates to children under the age of 6 months and, with particular regard to health and safety considerations, those beyond 6 month who are still being breastfed

## **Scope of the policy**

5. This policy covers:

- any student who becomes pregnant during their studies
- students who are about to become fathers
- any student who is the partner (including same sex partner) of someone who is pregnant and expects to be responsible for the child
- any student becoming a parent (e.g. through adoption) of a child.

## **Advice**

6. The provision of advice on the implications of pregnancy, adoption and responsibility for a child on continuation of studies will of course be dependent on many factors including:

- the course being studied
- the timing during the academic year

The student must be given the appropriate advice in a sensitive non-judgemental manner.

## **Student and applicants' responsibilities**

7. Students and applicants need to disclose their pregnancy to either their Head of Department, Curriculum Co-ordinator or Student Support and Wellbeing, at an early stage of their pregnancy, with a view to discussing any necessary support arrangements or adjustments – particularly where elements of their programme of study might present a health and safety hazard to the student or unborn child (see Appendix 2).
8. Students and applicants need to ensure the safe supervision of any baby they may bring onto the School site and ensure that the appropriate risk assessments are completed.
9. Students and applicants covered by this policy are advised to discuss any concerns they have relating to their pregnancy with their own GP and, if required, staff in Student Support and Wellbeing may be able to give support and signposting to other services.
10. Absence related to a student's pregnancy will be treated in accordance with the School's Attendance Policy. If a student is unable to attend any scheduled curriculum sessions they should advise their Coordinator and Head of Department as soon as possible.
11. **International students** studying on a Student visa must advise Registry of their situation, as there are likely to be visa and/or finance implications.

## **Staff responsibilities**

12. The School will ensure that any student who becomes pregnant before or during a period of study at NFTS is enabled, as far as practicable, to complete their programme of study, providing academic standards are upheld.

13. As soon as a student discloses that they are pregnant, a risk assessment, or series of risk assessments, are undertaken to ensure that there are no elements of the programme of study that present a risk to the health and safety of the student or the unborn child (see Appendix 2).
14. All individual staff members are advised to familiarise themselves with this document and the School's responsibilities towards students who are pregnant or have very young children.
15. Individual staff members to whom a pregnancy is disclosed are responsible for:
  - Reading this document and, in particular, becoming familiar with the procedure for supporting pregnant students.
  - Treating any disclosure of pregnancy seriously and making students aware of appropriate sources of support.
  - Respecting a student's right to confidentiality and verifying that a student has no objections to their pregnancy being discussed with others who need to know.
  - Ensuring accurate information is given to prospective students regarding the availability of support for students who are pregnant or have very young children.
  - Seeking advice from Student Support and Wellbeing staff if they are unsure of how best to support the continued study of a pregnant student.

**This policy was amended in April 2023**

## Appendix 1

### Help and advice for students who are pregnant or who have very young children

#### Scope

1. The purpose of this document is to ensure that if you become pregnant while you are a student at NFTS you know where to seek advice about your own health, the health of your child and the management of your course of study.

#### Early action

2. It is important to obtain sound advice as soon as you know you are pregnant. If you believe you are pregnant you should have your pregnancy confirmed, or otherwise, by a doctor as soon as possible. Delay can cause problems later on, whether you are considering a termination or a continuation of the pregnancy.
3. If your pregnancy is to continue while you are a student, your doctor will arrange for you to receive appropriate ante-natal care. It is very important that you let your Head of Department, Curriculum Co-ordinator and the Student Support and Wellbeing team know that you are pregnant as soon as possible. The reasons for doing this are to make the best plans for your course of study and to ensure any special measures needed for your safety and the safety of your child. In addition, the School can only make provision for you if you let us know your circumstances.
4. If you make the decision to terminate your pregnancy, or you miscarry there is no need for this to be disclosed to the School. Absence from the School required as a result should be classed as 'sick leave' but there is no need to specify the exact reason. You may also want to seek support to help you cope with this from Student Support and Wellbeing or other specialist services.

#### Risk assessments

5. Once you have informed NFTS of your pregnancy a Risk Assessment (Appendix 2) will be completed with you to identify any relevant risks associated with your study programme and to manage these risks for your protection. The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation and biological agents (unlikely in the context of your studies at the School). The Facilities Manager or the Production Manager (Safety Advisor), or other appropriate staff member may be consulted when completing the Risk Assessment. Health and Safety advice can also be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/mothers](http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers)

#### Implications for study

6. You will also need to agree a written plan concerning the impact of your pregnancy on your course of study (see Appendix 3). You are entitled to interrupt your course of study because of pregnancy and it is important to make a plan to take account both of the academic requirements of your study programme and your needs as a pregnant student. You will need to plan according to your individual circumstances, financial implications and the timing of the academic year. You will need to meet with your Head of Department who will be aware of potential issues in such cases, including issues specific to their particular discipline area, so as to be able to

comment on the likely impact of the pregnancy on the immediate continuation of your studies. Possible adjustments include:

- Interruption of studies
  - consideration of Extenuating Circumstances claims
  - consideration of claims for extensions to coursework assessments
  - amendments to course schedules where feasible
  - alternative means of assessment where feasible.
7. If you do not wish to interrupt your course of studies, the School will try to make adjustments to your course in the light of the risk assessment (including any recommendations regarding any adjustments to be taken in these circumstances). Such adjustments might involve modifications to the curriculum or location of placements, teaching etc. However, there will be some situations where it will not be possible for the School to provide reasonable, practicable alternatives to a student's designated course of study and in such cases a student will be required to suspend their studies.
  8. It is important that you meet regularly with an agreed member of staff to assess the effectiveness of any special arrangements which have been put in place.
  9. If you do not interrupt your studies, you should arrange with your Curriculum Co-ordinator for any absences needed for attendance at antenatal clinics. Where any absences are substantial, you may wish to seek advice about interrupting your studies.

### **International students (Student visa holders)**

*NB As the School is bound by Home Office, UK Visas and Immigration rules and regulations, the guidance in this section may be liable to change at short notice.*

10. Travel – unless advised not to do so by their doctor or midwife, students should be able to travel during pregnancy. However, airlines have different policies and may not allow travel beyond 36 weeks or, in the event that the pregnancy is complicated or multiple, beyond 32 weeks. Students will need to check individual airline policies before travelling, and be aware that airlines will ask for proof that it is safe for them to travel.
11. If an international student becomes pregnant during their studies, they may not be able to complete the course as planned within the visa duration. In this case the student will be expected to defer their studies. The School will notify the Home Office and the student's Student 4 visa will be curtailed. The student will be expected to leave the UK unless they are medically not able to do so. They can resume studies when they are ready to do so at a later date but will have to meet the requirements to apply for another Student visa. All visas allow for a short period of stay in the UK in addition to the time spent on a course. At the time of writing this guidance, the period allowed for Master's students was four months but students are advised to check with Registry for the most up to date advice.

12. The additional time allowed may not be sufficient for some students to take maternity-related absence. Consequently, staff responsible for supporting international students should provide any international student who becomes pregnant while studying in the UK with the latest information on the visa implications of:
- taking maternity-related absence
  - returning home to have the baby
  - having a dependent to support in the UK.
13. Further information on student visas can be found on the Home Office website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/student-visas>  
<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Dependants?q=pregnancy&ExactMatch=#layer-3382>

### **Study trips, placements, work experience**

14. If your course contains a plan to take part in a study trip, placement or obtain work experience whilst you are pregnant or planning to breastfeed, this must be specifically addressed when the Risk Assessment is completed as there may be special risks associated with non-campus based activities. You may not be permitted to take part in a study trip or a placement where this constitutes a risk to you or your child.
15. You may also have to interrupt studies if the study trip or placement is a compulsory part of your course and the curriculum cannot be modified to accommodate your inability to participate in this part of the programme. The period of interruption will be dependent on the nature, duration and cycle of the course.

### **Productions**

16. If your course requires you to be involved in production work, this must be specifically addressed when the Risk Assessment is completed as there may be special risks associated with production activities. *Babies and young children will not be permitted to be present during any production activities.*

### **Financial considerations**

17. Postgraduate students receiving funding from external bodies should follow the guidance for their particular scheme, or contact their funding body or sponsor for further advice.
18. **International students** (Student visa holders) with financial sponsors must contact their sponsors and agree a plan of action (such as deferring study/ when to resume study etc.). Those international students who are not entitled to any maternity benefits in the UK may prefer to return home for the duration of their pregnancy. Students should be aware that airline policy on carrying passengers who are 7 months pregnant or more can vary and this needs to be taken into account when planning.

19. The benefit rules are currently different for EU students and further advice should be sought from Registry or Department for Work and Pensions.

### **Accommodation**

20. You are advised to consider whether your accommodation is suitable for families and whether the terms of your accommodation contract allows you to remain there after the baby is born.

### **Babies/children on campus/breastfeeding**

21. Students who are breastfeeding can continue to have access to School facilities or services when they are breastfeeding or if they have with them a baby under 26 weeks old provided that their baby is always supervised, and any health and safety risks identified can be resolved. However, babies and children are not permitted to be in any curriculum session, or any social, extra or co-curricular activity.
22. A breastfeeding/rest room is located in the Admin building.
23. Students must ensure they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they are expected to be at NFTS or on location etc.
24. Students must not bring babies or children to the School with the expectation that any staff member will take responsibility for caring for the child whilst the student is in classes.

### **Support for fathers and partners (including same-sex partners) who have responsibility for bringing up the child**

25. Any student discovering they are to become a father, or any partner of a pregnant student (including same sex partners) who expect 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 off for medical appointments prior to, and after, the birth, as well as a period of maternity support leave immediately following the birth. A student in this situation should contact their Head of Department at least 15 weeks before the baby is due, to discuss this. Flexibility will be shown where possible although this will necessarily be more limited in some courses than others. Students should also be aware that there could be some funding implications.
26. Students are entitled to paternity-related absence in line with entitlements that exist in employment law for paternity leave. This is currently a maximum of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of the child being born. Employed fathers or partners of new mothers are entitled to take up to six months' additional statutory paternity leave in the second six months of their child's life as long as the mother has returned to work. This is in addition to the two weeks' statutory leave to which they are currently entitled following the birth of their child. Students may also have expectations surrounding these entitlements and may wish to interrupt their study when their partner returns to study or work.

27. Students on paternity-related absence will need to be provided with materials from taught sessions, where these exist. If students do want to take extended paternity-related absence in line with the new entitlements for employees, consideration will need to be given to the support provided to the student, and it may be appropriate to develop a support plan in line with the plan recommended in Appendix 3.

#### **For students about to become parents (e.g. through adoption)**

28. Students about to become parents (e.g. through adoption) should inform the Registrar of their circumstances as soon as possible. Arrangements can be made to allow time out of study. This may vary depending on the age of the child, the course of study, and the point in the academic session at which the event takes place.

#### **Perinatal Loss**

29. Students will be encouraged to seek support from Student Wellbeing and inform their Head of Department if they suffer a perinatal loss which may include undergoing a termination of pregnancy for fetal abnormality. This is to ensure they are signposted to appropriate advice and support.
30. The [still birth and neonatal death charity SANDS](#) provides support to anyone affected by the loss of a baby and conducts research into the causes of perinatal loss and neonatal death.

#### **Further External Sources of Support**

- 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](#)
- [The Family Planning Association](#) contains impartial advice on pregnancy, abortion and adoption, and also contains a list of useful organisations. Helpline: 0845 122 8690
- The [National Health Service](#) provides information relating to pregnancy, abortion, health in pregnancy and maternity, and services provided by the NHS
- [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 -
- [The 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
- [Antenatal Results and Choices](#) is the only national charity that provides non-directive support and information to expectant and bereaved parents throughout and after the antenatal screening and testing process
- [The Unicef/ Baby Friendly Initiative](#) provides information and advice on a range of issues around caring for babies and families which includes support, safe formula feeding and breastfeeding



- [La Leche League International](#) provides information about expressing and storing breastmilk
- [The Breastfeeding Network](#) is another useful resource for expressing and storing of breastmilk
- [The Citizens Advice Bureau](#) provides information about parental rights
- [The NHS – Breastfeeding and Going back to work](#)

**Appendix 2 Student Risk Assessment Form - New and Expectant Mothers**

<b>Name:</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Date baby due/was born:</b>	
<b>Things to check</b>	<b>Action taken – risk elimination or reduction</b>	
<b>Does the programme of study involve any of the following:</b>	<b>Risk identified:</b>	<b>Action taken:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Working patterns, especially if they involve night work</li> <li>b) manual handling</li> <li>c) working in workshop areas</li> <li>d) any work liable to cause fatigue, physical or mental</li> <li>e) work on slippery or wet surface</li> <li>f) any work in which the taking of rest breaks and/or distance to rest room or toilets may be a problem</li> <li>g) working with chemicals including paint or glue</li> <li>h) any other work which could pose a hazard to a pregnant or new mother</li> </ul>		
<b>To be completed if applicable.</b>		
<p>This is to confirm that I am a new mother, having given birth on: (this applies to new students who have given birth within the last 6 months)</p> <p>This is to confirm that I am a new mother, and am breast-feeding my baby</p>		

Signed:.....

Date:.....

HOD/Safety Advisor (as appropriate)

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Student

### Appendix 3 Individual plan form

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 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 performance reviews and study trips). If the student's circumstances change, the plan will also need to be reviewed. There may be circumstances that arise that are peculiar to the course of study and to the individual student which are not covered below.

<b>Contact details</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Student's details</b>
	Name
	Address
	Telephone
	Email address
	Student number
<b>2</b>	<b>Emergency contact's details</b>
	Relationship to student
	Telephone
<b>3</b>	<b>Course details</b>
	Course title
	Departmental contact
	Year of course
<b>4</b>	<b>Details of the student's first point of contact at NFTS</b>
	Name
	Title

Location	
Telephone	

Email	
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Key dates (to be reviewed and added to over the course of pregnancy and maternity)

<b>5</b>	What is the student's due date?	
<b>6</b>	How many weeks pregnant was the student when they notified NFTS?	

Communication with the student

<b>7</b>	What is the student's preferred method of communication:	
	during pregnancy?	
	during maternity-related absence?	
	on return to study?	

Informing other staff and students

<b>8</b>	Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed?		
	<b>Name and title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action taken</b>

Health and safety assessment (attach copy to this form)

<b>9</b>	Has an assessment been conducted that covers (where relevant):
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	the student's course?	
	course placements?	
	examinations or other assessments?	
	study trips?	
	Return from maternity-related absence?	
	breastfeeding?	
<b>10</b>	Where changes are required to alleviate or minimise risks, who is responsible for ensuring they are implemented?	
Rest facilities		

<b>11</b>	Has the student been informed about rest facilities on campus for use by pregnant students? (Admin Block)	
Pregnancy-related absence		
<b>12</b>	Will the dates or times of antenatal appointments affect the student's study?	
<b>13</b>	Have you discussed any pregnancy-related illness that has affected the student's ability to undertake their course?	
<b>14</b>	If yes to either of the above questions, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to catch up?	
Assessments		
<b>15</b>	Is the student unable to complete any assessments due to their pregnancy or maternity?	
<b>16</b>	What alternative arrangements have been made for any outstanding or incomplete assessments?	

Maternity-related absence (students should provide information in writing at least 15 weeks before their due date)

<b>17</b>	How much maternity-related absence does the student intend to take?	
<b>18</b>	When does the student intend to start maternity-related absence?	
<b>19</b>	When does the student intend to return from maternity-related absence?	
<b>20</b>	Will the dates of maternity-related absence affect the student's ability to complete any course module requirements?	
<b>21</b>	If so, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module?	
<b>22</b>	What information will the student require during maternity-related absence to keep up to date on course developments?	
<b>23</b>	Who will be responsible for providing the information to the student?	

Financial support

<b>24</b>	Has the student been informed about sources of financial support or been referred to an external organisation that can do so?	
<b>25</b>	Specify any follow-up required:	

Baby feeding

<b>26</b>	Does the student intend to feed their baby on site on their return to study?	
<b>27</b>	Does the student intend to breastfeed? If so, see health and safety section above.	
<b>28</b>	Has the student been informed about the facilities available?	

Childcare

<b>29</b>	Has the student been signposted to childcare facilities in the local community?	
<b>International students (Student visa holders)</b>		
<b>30</b>	Have international students been informed about:	
	possible airline restrictions?	
	the need to check visa implications of interrupting their studies and returning home	
<b>Extenuating circumstances</b>		
<b>31</b>	Has the student been informed about the extenuating circumstances policy in the event that something unexpected occurs during their pregnancy or maternity which affects examinations and assessments?	
<b>Return to study</b>		
<b>32</b>	What support will be provided to the student on their return to study? (e.g. meetings with key staff, etc.)	
<b>Further information</b>		
<b>33</b>	Any other information or comments	
<b>Signatures</b>		
Plan to be reviewed on		
<b>Agreed by staff member</b>		
Name		
Title		
Signature		
Date		
<b>Agreed by student</b>		



Name	
Signature	
Date	

Although every effort is made to ensure the information contained within this document is accurate and up to date, National Film and Television School cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions. The information is not a substitute for legal advice, and should you require more specific advice you should consult an appropriately qualified professional adviser.

This document was produced using information contained in the Equality Challenge Unit's (ECU) guide entitled, Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions.