



# Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Student Parent Guidance

**Scope:**

This guidance applies for all City St George's, University of London students irrespective of their personal circumstance, demographic information, school, mode or level of study.

The guidance will apply for partnership programmes unless equivalent arrangements have been specifically agreed between City St George's and the partner institution, in this instance, details will be set out in the student handbook.

**Senate Regulations:**

Senate Regulation 19 Assessment

**Summary:**

The purpose of this guidance is to sign-post staff and students to the relevant policies and procedures as well as to additional support available specific to maternity, paternity, adoption and student parents.

**Date approved/re-approved:**

June 2017

**Date for review:**

2021

**Effective from:**

September 2017

**To be read in conjunction with:**

Extenuating Circumstances Policy  
Interruption of Studies Policy

**Equality and Diversity Statement**

City St George's, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

## **1. Introduction**

City St George's recognises that all journeys into parenthood are unique and may occur at any point during the student journey, as such the information and support required by students will also be unique. City St George's strives to ensure that all students regardless of their background or situation, have access to support mechanisms and feel supported not only throughout their maternity, paternity, adoption or student parent experience but also throughout their student experience.

## **2. Legislation**

- The Equality Act 2010 (Appendix 1)
- Human Rights Act 1998 (Appendix 1)

## **3. Guidance and support for students through gestation**

### **3.1 Notifying the institution of Maternity**

You have the right to notify the institution whenever you feel comfortable, however City St George's requires that notification is made in writing at least 15 weeks before your baby is due. This is in line with government guidance, NHS guidance, and ECU guidance and will allow City St George's sufficient time to liaise with you, to develop and review a student support plan, make any necessary arrangements and ensure the effective communication of relevant information.

If you are currently on a placement you should notify City St George's at 12 weeks to ensure adequate time for plans/risk assessments to be executed and implemented.

City St George's recognises that it is important for you to feel comfortable when disclosing and discussing your pregnancy and as such the individual that this information is initially disclosed to will differ on a student by student basis, is not exhaustive, and may include, lecturer, personal tutor or member of support staff.

When notifying the selected member of staff, you should ensure that you include the following information:

- the date on which you intend to start maternity-related absence
- the length of maternity-related absence that you intend to take and the date on which you intend to return

The Guidance for Staff section of this guidance highlights the appropriate measure and processes that staff should use in supporting students throughout this process.

### **3.2 Informing staff and fellow students about pregnancy**

Information regarding your pregnancy will be treated sensitively and discreetly in line with your wishes. When and who informs staff and fellow students about the pregnancy will be agreed in writing with you. A form for completion is available in Appendix 2.

### **3.3 Students' decision**

Members of staff contacted by you should not attempt to influence your decisions or assume that the pregnancy is unwanted or unplanned. While some students who become pregnant during their studies may choose not to proceed with their pregnancy, there are many others who do so.

Assumptions will not be made about whether you intend to proceed with your pregnancy on the basis of your age, disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or stage of study or research.

If your pregnancy is unplanned and you seek advice from a member of staff on whether or not you should continue with the pregnancy, members of staff who are not suitably qualified to counsel regarding pregnancy will refer you to a qualified professional, and will not attempt to offer any advice. Staff should refer you to the City St George's Student Counselling and Mental Health Services, your GP, the Family Planning Association or any other applicable service.

If you are unsure about continuing with your pregnancy for reasons relating to your course or support in higher education or if you are considering leaving your course because of your pregnancy, or you plan to continue with your pregnancy, staff should also refer you to a member of staff within City St George's who has knowledge of the support available to pregnant students and student parents in higher education. This may be a member of the Student Support Services, a member of the Academic Services team, a member of staff within the Students' Union or any other relevant staff member. A staff member with knowledge of your course may also need to be involved in this meeting. The meeting should provide information on:

- financial implications and entitlements, including student loans, benefits and maternity pay (if any)
- Implications for course completion, including arrangements that could be made for assessments, catching up on missed seminars and lectures, course placements, time to attend healthcare appointments, maternity-related absence, etc.
- childcare facilities near campus or in the local community

### 3.4 Exams and assessments

If you are due to give birth near to or during assessment deadlines or the examination period and wish to complete your assessed work or sit your examinations, you should not be prevented from doing so however a risk assessment should be completed by the University support services.

City St George's recognises that in examinations, pregnant students may require rest breaks and may need to visit the toilet more frequently than those who are not pregnant. They may also require a more comfortable and supportive chair. Consequently, you may need to sit the examination in a location separate from other students. Reasonable adjustments can be made through the Examinations Office and should be agreed in advance of any exams.

If you are concerned about sitting examinations or meeting assessed work deadlines or have a pregnancy-related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, you should seek advice from your midwife or doctor. If your midwife or doctor advises against sitting an examination or trying to meet the assessed work deadline, an alternative method of assessment may be explored. Each case will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

If you are unable to undertake an alternative method of assessment, or if you experience significant pregnancy-related problems in the course of an examination or when undertaking assessed work, an extenuating circumstances form should be completed. You should mention the specific symptoms/health issue when completing your extenuating circumstance form.

<https://studenthub.City St George's.ac.uk/help-and-support/extenuating-circumstances-complaints-appeals>

#### **4. Maternity leave from studies**

You have the right to take maternity-related absence following the birth of your child. How long you take will be determined by your personal circumstances and the structure and content of your course. City St George's does not automatically require you to interrupt your studies for a year, but will work with you to establish suitable postponement from and return-to-study dates.

Where course structure or content necessitates you return to study sooner than you would like to, the reason given will be justified in writing. In line with the Equality Act 2010 which protects from discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity, if such a case arises City St George's will endeavour to find a favourable solution with you (supported by justified reasoning) and explain the grounds upon which a decision that requested adjustments be reviewed is made.

While the length of maternity-related absence students prefer to take will vary, City St George's, in line with recommended practice recommends that, at a minimum, you are required to take two weeks' compulsory maternity-related absence, or four weeks if you are on placement in a factory. This is in line with statutory maternity leave in employment law and is to ensure the health and safety of the parent following birth. NHS Student Bursaries recommends a minimum of 12 weeks' maternity absence but allows students to return earlier if they have approval from their GP or health worker.

In cases where City St George's may have concerns regarding your health in relation to your proposed return date or your course requirements, you may be asked for your GP's or health worker's confirmation of your fitness to return to study.

For the purpose of maternity, you may take up to one year out of your studies. Where there is concern about knowledge of the field being affected by the length of time taken, your school, programme, division or department will liaise with you to take steps to ensure you are kept up to speed with developments in the field. For example, access to the Virtual Learning Environment should be ensured, lists of key reading and new research should be sent to you, and dates and transcripts of departmental lectures, and steps can be taken to ensure you can access key journals. The need for resources and level of support and accessibility to information will vary in line with the length of your leave.

City St George's recognises that in exceptional circumstances, you may need to extend the length of your maternity leave beyond the standard time allowed, for example premature birth, cases of postnatal depression, serious illness or loss of a baby. Each case of extended maternity will be dealt with on an individual basis at Programme level by the Dean's nominee in your School (advice may be sought from relevant City St George's departments).

Where possible, City St George's will take steps to enable you to complete the requirements of your course or module before you take maternity-related absence, for example if you are approaching an exam period or assessment deadline. In some cases, you may want to sit examinations or submit alternative forms of assessment during your maternity-related absence. If you are unable to complete your course or module before taking maternity-related absence, where possible you will be allowed to complete the course or module on your return.

When establishing duration of maternity leave from studies consideration should be given to Senate Regulation 19, Assessment Regulations, 4.18 Periods of Registration, which outlines the maximum period of registration for each study level. This guidance does not alter maximum periods of registration and does not count towards your maximum period of study. Any exceptions would be made in accordance with Senate regulations.

<https://www.City St George's.ac.uk/about/governance/constitution/senate-regulations>

#### 4.1 Starting maternity related absence

Where possible City St George's, places the emphasis on you to decide when you start your maternity-related absence in agreement with your Programme Director. If you wish to, you may study up to your due date, or, where practical, decide to start your maternity-related absence a full term or semester before your due date.

If you are close to your due date and unable to study as planned, your School may, in consultation with you, start your maternity-related absence earlier than planned or, if appropriate, explore alternative methods through which you can meet the course requirements.

#### 4.2 Returning from maternity-related absence

The date when you intend to return from maternity-related absence should be discussed and agreed with you prior to commencing the period of absence (see above). However, this date may change during the course of the absence, and you are encouraged to notify your School as soon as possible of any change in your expected return date. Your support plan will be reviewed and a new return date will be agreed with you and confirmed in writing. Before you return from a period of maternity-related absence, consideration should be given to your requirements on return. Your study options and the continued support provided by City St George's should be discussed with you in developing your support plan, and can be confirmed with you prior to your return; examples include the following.

- Varying the mode of study – Students may request to resume their course on a part-time or distance-learning basis where these options are available on their programme of study. If a student requests to study part-time rather than full-time, the request should not be declined unless it can be justified, and the justification should be provided in writing. All cases will be considered and handled on a case by case basis and may utilise Special Schemes of Study. Students are advised to speak to a member of staff to discuss a Special Scheme of Study
- Ensure a smooth return – Formal welcome-back meetings can be organised with key staff, for example the personal tutor, programme director, course officer or placement staff
- Continued contact – The student's key contact if they encounter any difficulties should be made clear.

*\*City St George's's arrangements for maternity-related absence apply equally to live births and still births after 24 weeks.*

### **5. International students and those on placement or studying abroad**

#### 5.1 Travel

This section of the guidance highlights key information for those students that may be completing study which requires travel and may include but are not limited to, an Erasmus year, study abroad, placement or long distance study and as such are required to travel.

Unless advised not to do so by their doctor or midwife, you should be able to travel during pregnancy. However, there are some considerations:

- 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. You will need to check individual airline policies before travelling, and be aware that airlines will ask you for proof that it is safe

for you to travel.

- UK students who are on placement or studying abroad will need to check their visa terms and conditions as they may need to extend their stay or return to the country at a later date.
- As pregnancy is considered a pre-existing condition by insurance companies, students who are pregnant prior to commencing a field trip or their placement or study abroad will need to check whether your insurance covers you for pre-existing conditions.

## 5.2 UK student visas

For information regarding immigration matters for City St George's students studying in the UK on a tier 4 visa and City St George's students with babies born in the UK to a Tier 4 student and their Tier 4 dependant partner please contact the International Student Advice team by visiting: <http://www.City St George's.ac.uk/international/visa-immigration-advice>

When considering the actions you need to take as a Tier 4 student your maternity or paternity leave plan and the point of which you are in your studies should be considered in line with the relevant UKVI tier 4 information.

Given visa restrictions, in exceptional circumstances and in consideration of health and safety, City St George's may be flexible when requesting that international students take a minimum of two weeks' maternity- related absence, however each circumstance will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

## 5.3 Liaison with study abroad or placement provider

If you are studying or on a placement abroad during your pregnancy or maternity, City St George's will need to liaise with the host institution or placement provider to ensure, where possible, that your needs are met. In addition, City St George's will share with the host institution or placement provider their guidance on supporting students during pregnancy and maternity.

If you do not feel comfortable directly notifying a host institution or placement provider, then following a request to do so, an allocated member of staff may do this for you.

## 6. Paternity

If you want to take paternity related absence, you should inform your Programme Director, Personal Tutor or Course Officer of your partner's pregnancy as soon as possible and preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. Early notification should be encouraged as partners may need to attend antenatal appointments. Tutors of students who are on paternity related absence should provide materials from seminars and lectures missed.

### 6.1 Paternity-related absence

If you are fulfilling or about to fulfil a paternity role and are unable to meet a coursework deadline or other requirement of your programme because of your partner's pregnancy you should in the first instance discuss this with your School possibly through your personal tutor or course officer. Following this you may wish to refer to the extenuating circumstances policy.

<https://studenthub.City St George's.ac.uk/help-and-support/extenuating-circumstances-complaints-appeals>

Flexibility will be shown to students that want to attend their partner's antenatal appointments. In addition, students may need to take time off if their partner has complications with their pregnancy or a serious pregnancy-related illness.

If you choose to sit an exam while your partner is in labour or during your paternity related absence,

you should be made aware of City St George's extenuating circumstances policy. If you are unable to sit an exam or submit coursework on time because of your partner's pregnancy or labour you should contact your School in order to explore options such as extensions to submission deadlines, deferrals and resits. Such arrangements may also be appropriate if your partner has a serious pregnancy related illness.

In other compulsory elements of courses such as field trips or work placements, City St George's will consider the feasibility of you undertaking them at an alternative time.

There is not currently an established national paternity leave for students, however City St George's feels that it is appropriate to allow for two consecutive weeks paternity within 56 days of the child being born, in line with current employment law and paternity leave legislation. This should be managed by the School and all appropriate support as highlighted elsewhere in this document should be made available. Consideration should also be given to students with shared maternity/paternity arrangements.

If both parents are students at City St George's, then City St George's will work with the parents to establish an appropriate circumstance and support this, may include establishing a plan for managing the parents absence from studies, for example the parent in the maternal role may choose to return to their studies as soon as possible, whilst the partner takes a leave of absence.

## **7. Adoption**

If you have been matched for adoption you should inform your programme director, personal tutor, supervisor or a member of the student services team. If you are the primary adopter, a plan should be developed in line with the guidance under **Finding out about a student's pregnancy**. If your partner is the primary adopter, upon formal adoption of the child, you should be allowed time off from studies in line with the advice in the sections above on paternity-related absence.

## **8. Information for pregnant/expecting applicants**

The University welcomes applications from all eligible potential students. Being pregnant or your partner expecting a child, should not and will not have a bearing on your suitability to study at City St George's. Should you meet the required grades for your chosen course, then the university will ensure that you are treated in line with its admissions processes and regulations.

## **9. Accommodation**

Students should liaise directly with their accommodation providers. For more information regarding accommodation please contact [accomm@City St George's.ac.uk](mailto:accomm@City St George's.ac.uk)

## **10. Access to university services and facilities**

### **10.1 Breastfeeding Facilities**

Details of breastfeeding facilities on all our campuses can be found [Student Parents and Carers | Student Hub | City St George's, University of London](#)

## **11. Maternity pay**

If you are employed or have recently left employment, you may be entitled to statutory maternity pay, additional maternity pay or a maternity allowance. Further information can be found at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

Students who receive a stipend, NHS bursary or research council funding are often entitled to maternity leave and maternity pay from their sponsor. Students who are entitled to a stipend or grant will need to discuss with the appropriate City St George's contact whether City St George's needs to inform the sponsor of their pregnancy, and should familiarise themselves with their sponsor's maternity

leave and pay policy.

### **12.1 NHS Bursary Scheme Maternity Award**

Students enrolled on NHS pre-registration courses who are in receipt of the maintenance grant element of the NHS Bursary will receive their normal monthly bursary payments, including any dependant's allowances, during their maternity leave/absence. For further information see:

[Can I receive an NHS Bursary during maternity or adoption leave? · Customer Self-Service](#)

### 12.2 Funded Research Students

Funded Research Students should refer to the City St George's, University of London, [PGR Parental Leave Policy for Researchers Holding Studentships](#).

## **12. Further support available**

This section focuses on sources of support for UK home students. EU and international students should contact their home government and sponsor for information on pregnancy and maternity entitlements. Regulations on student financial support in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland contain provisions for discretion when determining if all or part of a student's **grant or loan** is payable when a student is absent from their course for reasons other than illness. When deciding whether it would be appropriate to pay all or part of the grant or loan, consideration is given to:

- the reasons for the student's absence
- the length of the absence
- the financial hardship caused by not paying all or part of the loan or grant

You may require support from City St George's if you want to continue receiving your grant or loan when you take maternity-related absence. Further information should be sought on the process for continuing payments from the grant or loan administrator.

### 13.1 City St George's Hardship Fund

You may be eligible to receive support through the Hardship Fund. The Hardship Fund is funded by City St George's, University of London and the City St George's Future Fund and provides discretionary financial assistance for students who are in financial hardship or who face an unexpected financial emergency whilst they are studying.

[The City Hardship Fund • City St George's, University of London](#)

## **13. Abortion or termination of pregnancy**

A student may decide to have an abortion for many reasons – City St George's recognises that this is the choice of the student and neither the institution nor its employees will attempt to influence the student's decision.

If you are considering an abortion you should utilise counselling by the NHS or a private abortion clinic and may also make use of the Student Health Services.

Students may need time off from study for tests before, and to recover after, an abortion. Confidential help and support is available through Student Support Services. The service can also assist students

in, dealing with the impact of an abortion on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations, complete extenuating circumstances forms.

<https://studenthub.City St George's.ac.uk/help-and-support/extenuating-circumstances-complaints-appeals>

The charity Antenatal Results and Choices ([www.arc-uk.org](http://www.arc-uk.org)) provides specific advice to students who are considering an abortion for reasons relating to antenatal test results.

#### **14. Miscarriage, still births and neonatal death**

City St George's is mindful of the support students will need if they miscarry or have a still birth, or if your baby dies shortly after birth. If this unfortunately happens you are encouraged to inform a member of staff whom you feel comfortable with, and if appropriate a meeting will be organised with you to establish the support you are receiving from your healthcare provider and the support available at City St George's.

Confidential help and support is available through Student Support Services. The service can also assist students in, dealing with the impact of an abortion on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations, complete extenuating circumstances forms.

If you choose not to inform City St George's of your situation as is your prerogative, City St George's will be limited in the support it can provide.

##### **15.1 Miscarriage**

Consideration should be given to the impact of a miscarriage on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations.

The Miscarriage Association offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy, and publishes a leaflet on supporting people who have miscarried.  
<http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/>

##### **15.2 Still birth and neonatal death**

A student who has a still birth or whose baby dies shortly after birth is entitled to the same length of maternity-related absence and financial and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn. SANDS offers a range of information and guidance [Sands | Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.](#)

#### **16. Guidance for staff**

Staff members approached by a student in a maternity, paternity, adoption or student parent context should endeavour to provide the support and signposting highlighted throughout this document.

The length of a student's, maternity, paternity, adoption or student parent related, absence will determine the level of support required. For example a student that is absent for 100 days will need more support and resources for continued learning provided when compared to a student that is absent for 1 day.

Staff should be flexible in the support that they offer and recognise the uniqueness of each student's circumstance. Specialist knowledge and guidance should be sought from relevant City St George's departments such as the Student Health Service and Student Counselling and Mental Health Service.

16.1 Accountabilities for interruption of studies arrangements are laid out in the Interruption of Studies policy: [Interruption-of-Studies-and-Withdrawal-Student-Guidance.pdf](#)

Accountabilities for special arrangements for exams are available here: <https://studenthub.City St George's.ac.uk/timetabling-term-dates-exams/exams/exam-adjustments>

Accountabilities for maximum periods of registration are laid out in [Senate-Regulation-19-Assessment-Regulations-2024-25v2.pdf](#)

Accountabilities for students with ongoing health-related conditions or disabilities are laid out in Senate Regulation 19. Assessment Regulations [Senate-Regulation-19-Assessment-Regulations-2024-25v2.pdf](#)

Additional accountabilities supporting this guidance are as follows:

<b>Executive Dean's nominee</b>	Approval of interruption of studies and return to studies arrangements
<b>Programme Director</b>	Oversight of interruption of studies and return to studies arrangements in line with programme requirements
<b>Personal Tutor</b>	Signposting the student to support and information and overall academic support
<b>Key contact</b>	The key contact is selected in consultation with the student and will normally be the student's personal tutor or course officer
<b>Student</b>	Completion of the interruption of studies application, on-going contact via key contact (including notification if circumstances change)

## 17. Further information

### 17.1 Internal resources

**Student Health Service** - <https://studenthub.City St George's.ac.uk/help-and-support/your-health>

**Counselling and Mental Health Support** - <https://studenthub.City St George's.ac.uk/help-and-support/mental-health-counselling>

**City St George's, University of London Students' Union, Union Support Service** – (in relation to academic support only) <https://www.City St George'sstudents.co.uk/advice/academic/>

### 17.2 General organisations

**Direct Gov**- 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/childcare>).

**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** - 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. [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, and has a range of resources for parents. [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. [Sands | Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.](http://Sands | Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.)

**Rape Crisis** - Rape Crisis England & Wales is a feminist organisation that exists to promote the needs and rights of women and girls who have experienced sexual violence, to improve services to them and to work towards the elimination of sexual violence. <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/>

## Appendixes

### Equality Act 2010

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

### Human Rights Act 1998

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>