



Code: **QA603**
Title: **Policy on Supports for Students Experiencing Pregnancy, Maternity and Paternity**
Date: 18/02/2019
Approval: Academic Council

1.0 Introduction

NUI Galway is committed to equality of opportunity for students irrespective of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, nationality or ethnic or national origin, or membership of the Traveller community.

2.0 Purpose

This Policy aims to inform all students of the supports available to them during pregnancy, maternity and paternity to ensure that pregnancy, maternity and paternity does not negatively impact on their academic experience and to enable students make informed choices. It details the roles and responsibilities of academic and support staff in advising and responding to the needs of pregnant students and student parents. In so doing it seeks to ensure that there should be no academic or financial penalty for a student who chooses to take a leave of absence for maternity, paternity or adoptive purposes. It aims where possible to facilitate students in returning to their studies at the point they left rather than having to repeat the whole year.

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all Undergraduate and Postgraduate students of NUI Galway with the exception of First Year Undergraduate Students who wish to defer their 1st year before taking Semester 2. First Year Undergraduate Students who wish to defer their 1st year before taking Semester 1 are out of scope of this policy and must refer to QA258-Approved Leave in Special Circumstances.

4.0 Description

NUI Galway is committed to being as flexible as possible to support students experiencing pregnancy, maternity and paternity complete their programme of study whilst, at the same time, making sure that academic standards are not compromised. The special arrangements which can and should be made for a student in these circumstances will vary from College to College and, indeed, from programme to programme. However, the general approach to be taken in these circumstances is consistent across the university. NUI Galway recognises that these responsibilities may change and can be unpredictable however the University will support students by taking a flexible and reasonable approach to attendance and assignment deadlines, while ensuring academic standards are achieved.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught students should inform their Programme Coordinator as early as possible of their pregnancy. The Programme Coordinator will discuss the implications for course completion, including arrangements that could be made for assessments, catching up on missed lectures, placements, time to attend antenatal care and maternity-related leave of absence.

Research graduate students should inform their primary supervisor in the first instance who will also discuss the implications for degree completion, including arrangements for maternity-related leave of absence.

The Programme Coordinator/Primary Supervisor also will refer the student to the Student Services Team to ensure that the student is made aware of the supports available to enable her to make informed choices. The Student Services Team will provide, where possible, information on:

- Student Health Unit
- Financial implications and entitlements, including access to the financial aid fund
- Childcare facilities including breastfeeding and resting on campus

Health & Safety

There are health and safety considerations that arise during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and the risks to which students could be exposed will be assessed. The highest risk of damage to the unborn baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. As such the student is strongly encouraged to inform the Programme Coordinator/Primary Supervisor of their pregnancy as early as possible particularly if their course work includes the following:

- Physical activity, including lifting and carrying
- The use of chemicals or other laboratory reagents, including paints and pesticides
- Exposure to radiation
- Working in compressed air environments
- Where exposure to infectious diseases is a possibility, including laboratory work, healthcare provision, and looking after animals or dealing with animal products

The Programme Coordinator/Primary Supervisor will organise for a health and safety assessment to be conducted. Where risks are identified during a health and safety assessment, the student and, if necessary, their GP will be consulted on ways to alleviate or minimise the identified risk.

If a student is required to undertake a placement as part of their course, the Programme Coordinator will liaise with the placement provider to ensure a health and safety assessment is conducted. If fieldwork is a requirement of the course, this will be considered within the health and safety assessment.

Assessment and Examinations

NUI Galway will endeavour to support any student who is due to give birth near to or during assessment deadlines or the examination period, and wishes to complete their assessed work or sit their examinations. In examinations, pregnant students may require rest breaks and/or 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, the student may need to sit the examination in a venue separate from other students.

If a student is concerned about sitting examinations or meeting assessed work deadlines, or if they have a pregnancy-related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, they should seek advice from their midwife or GP. If their midwife or GP advises against sitting an examination or trying to meet the assessed work deadline, an alternative method of assessment will be explored. If an alternative method of assessment is not feasible or if the student experiences significant pregnancy-related problems in the course of an examination or when undertaking assessed work, the Programme Coordinator will make arrangements for them to resit the examination at the earliest possible opportunity or agree an extension for resubmitting coursework. Resits of examinations will be considered as the student's first attempt.

Maternity-related Leave of Absence

All students will be facilitated to take maternity-related leave of absence following the birth of their child. The duration of leave will be determined by the student's personal circumstances and the structure and content of their course.

Students may opt to stay at university up to two weeks before the end of the week in which the baby's birth is expected. Normally, students following the birth of their child can return to their programme after a minimum of 4 weeks. However, a student may wish to interrupt their study for a semester or an academic year. To ensure appropriate arrangements can be made, students should notify their Programme Coordinator/Primary Supervisor as soon as possible or at least 15 weeks before the expected birth of their baby.

For Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught students, leave of absence is granted by the Dean of the relevant College or their designated office. The Dean, or designated office will consult with the relevant Programme Co-ordinator when approving a maternity-related leave of absence. Academic considerations are critical in considering any application for Leave of Absence. This policy is not definitive about the Leave of Absence period overall though typically, the amount of leave granted will not exceed one academic year. Should a student require a longer period of leave, they should apply to their College Office for an extension of the leave prior to its expiry. It may not be possible to carry over previously passed modules as exemptions as programmes may change and students will be required to take modules currently on offer upon their return to their programme. The College Office will advise students on module selection.

The NUI Galway "Student Leave of Absence Policy" (QA287) should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Postgraduate Research students can apply for maternity related leave of absence on form GS 080 – Application Form for Leave of Absence (Postgraduate Research Students). The application should be signed by the student and primary supervisor and submitted for recommendation and signature to the Head of School and sent to the relevant College Office. The College Office will confirm approval for maternity-related leave of absence to the student and will be responsible for informing the Academic Administration and Registration Office, Graduate Studies Office, the Fees Office, and Research Accounts Office of the approved leave of absence to facilitate formally updating the student's record. If a postgraduate research student wishes to extend their leave of absence beyond one year, they should re-apply for another period of leave. A student may not normally be on leave for more than two years throughout the period of their degree programme.

During a maternity-related leave of absence, the student's participation in their research programme is suspended. Fees are not payable by the student for leave approved for an academic year. For maternity-related leave of absence less than one year, the student is liable for fees in that academic year but will be granted the appropriate time credit at the end of their research degree programme. The primary supervisor will discuss the implications of their maternity-related leave of absence for joint research projects, publications, laboratories, teaching contribution etc. with the student and may consult the Head of Discipline and/or members of their Graduate Research Committee if necessary and as appropriate.

Full-time research students may consider the option of changing to part-time status for an agreed period of time as appropriate within the circumstances of their programme.

A student who is externally funded should consult firstly with their supervisor who then consults with the funding agency regarding the leave of absence. Students should be aware of any implications a leave of absence will have on their funding. International students should also consider possible implications for their visas.

On return to formal studies in the University, research graduate students are responsible for notifying Academic Records and Registration to update their registration status following the end of their maternity-related leave of absence.

The utmost discretion will be exercised when considering applications for maternity-related leave of absence. Applications will be dealt with in a sensitive manner and only staff members who need to be consulted in connection with an application will be involved in the application process. Notification to other relevant Academic Staff or University Offices of Leave of Absence granted will not detail the reasons for the granting of leave.

The "*University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes*" (QA245) regarding Leave of Absence guidelines for their programmes should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Childcare Facilities on Campus University Crèche

The University Crèche facility is located at 50 Upper Newcastle Road, Galway and is available to children of staff and students of NUI Galway. Parents of children who are interested in enrolling children in the Crèche should contact spraoinuig@gmail.com.

For a tour of the centre or more information, please contact Crèche Manager on 091 493739.

Baby Changing facilities and **Nursing Mothers' rooms** are available at various locations on campus. Please refer to the NUI Galway campus map for the location of facilities - http://www.nuigalway.ie/media/buildingsoffice/files/maps/M12122_Family-Friendly-Facilities-Map-151118.pdf.

Communication during absence

The students and Programme Co-ordinator/Primary Supervisor will agree what information needs to be communicated to the student during their maternity leave. This agreement will include the preferred method of communication and details of who the student should contact to discuss their return date, if they have any concerns or their circumstances change.

Students whose Partner is Pregnant or Adopting

Students who are partners or co-parent of a pregnant student and new mothers (including same sex partners) will be entitled to request time out of study. This may include time off for antenatal appointments as well as a period of maternity support/shared parental leave. A student wishing to take maternity/paternity related absence should inform their Programme Co-ordinator/Primary Supervisor of their partner's pregnancy as early as possible in order to agree arrangements for assessments, catching up on missed lectures, placements, time to attend antenatal care and maternity-related leave of absence.

Leave of absence may be granted for periods of not less than one month and up to one year.

For international students, specific advice should be sought from International Affairs Office in relation to visa constraints before making any arrangements for time out of study.

PGT students should contact fees office to confirm if there will be fee implications if they apply for a leave of absence.

Miscarriage, still births and neonatal death

NUI Galway is mindful that students will require support if they miscarry or have a still birth, or if their baby dies shortly after it is born. If this happens, students are encouraged to inform their Programme Co-ordinator/Primary Supervisor who will refer them to the Student Services Team to establish the support they are receiving from their healthcare provider and the support available from the University.

Miscarriage

Miscarriage is a common occurrence, and one in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage. Miscarriage is most likely to occur in the first three months of pregnancy. If a student miscarries, they are likely to need time off study for tests and to recover. Consideration should be given to the impact of a miscarriage on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations.

The Miscarriage Association provides support, help and information for women and their families who have had, or are having a miscarriage and feel the need for help - <http://www.miscarriage.ie/>.

Still birth and neonatal death

A student who has a still birth or whose baby dies shortly after birth will be afforded the same length of maternity-related leave of absence and financial and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn.

5.0 Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
Director of Student Services	Policy Owner
Student	Notify Programme Coordinator/Primary Supervisor as early as possible
Programme Coordinator/Primary Supervisor	Comply with the Policy on Supports for Students Experiencing Pregnancy and Maternity. Advise student of support services available including the Counselling Service, Health centre, SU Welfare Officer

6.0 Related Documents

- [Risk Assessment Form](#)
- [Maternity Benefit Form](#)

Further Information and Relevant Policies:

- [Adoption Leave](#)
- [Flexible Working Policy](#)
- [Parental Leave](#)
- [Paternity Leave](#)
- [University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Student Leave of Absence](#)

Websites:

- http://www.nuigalway.ie/health_unit/
- <http://www.nuigalway.ie/counsellors/>
- <http://www.equality.ie>
- <http://www.welfare.ie>
- <http://aimsireland.ie/>
- <http://www.miscarriage.ie/>