

# UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students



## Guidelines for Staff

### 1. Introduction

UCD strives to be a university of influence, impact and excitement, making a clear positive difference to the lives of our students, to Ireland and to the wider world. UCD is committed to creating an environment where diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated fairly regardless of gender, age, race, disability, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, or membership of the Travelling community.

These Guidelines for Staff have been developed with a view to creating a supportive environment for students who are navigating pregnancy and pregnancy-related leave while pursuing their academic goals.

### 2. Important Steps

Staff members play an important role in supporting students who are preparing for and returning from pregnancy-related leave.

Students are advised to conduct an initial safety self-assessment when they become pregnant or when breastfeeding in order to identify if they are being exposed to hazards as part of their course of study that would constitute a risk to them or their unborn or breastfeeding child. There are two possible outcomes from this initial self-assessment:

*(i) No further action is required:*

This will be the outcome for students who are not exposed to any hazards that may be exacerbated by their pregnancy.

*(ii) A formal risk assessment is required:*

For students whose course of study exposes them to potential pregnancy-related hazards, a formal risk assessment may be required. If a student falls into this category, they are advised to discuss their pregnancy with their School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor, and to arrange for a formal risk assessment to be carried out as soon as possible. Whilst awaiting the completion of a formal risk assessment, the student may need to be temporarily removed from exposure to the hazards in question. The purpose of any formal risk assessment will be to assess

the risks posed to both the student and their unborn or breastfeeding child's safety, and to identify what additional risk control measures are required to keep them both safe.

Please note that formal Risk Assessments must be arranged by the School in question. Schools should contact [sirc@ucd.ie](mailto:sirc@ucd.ie) to arrange for the formal risk assessment to be completed by an external consultant.

Note that if the student is involved in a work placement / internship then the statutory responsibility for undertaking a risk assessment rests with the host. If students are on placement then they should be advised to inform their host about their pregnancy either directly or via a member of UCD staff.

## 2.1 Initial Disclosure

Staff members may:

- a) Encourage an open and supportive environment for students to disclose a pregnancy.
- b) Respect the student's privacy and confidentiality regarding the disclosure.
- c) Actively listen to the student's concerns and needs relating to the pregnancy.
- d) Together with the student, assess the potential impact of the pregnancy on the student's academic studies.
- e) Support the student with any concerns they may have about the impact of the pregnancy on their health and wellbeing.

## 2.2 Provide Information

Staff members may:

- a) Signpost to available supports, including [UCD Student Advisory Service](#), [UCD Student Health](#) and [UCD Student Counselling](#).
- b) Signpost to possible options for [academic accommodations and other resources](#).
- c) Advise the student to complete the self-assessment risk template (see the checklist template in Appendix 1) and to seek further GP guidance for higher-risk activities and/or higher-risk pregnancies.
- d) Give basic supporting guidance to students regarding safety during pregnancy. For those students engaged in higher-risk activities or experiencing a higher-risk pregnancy, the Head of School or Unit (or their nominee) will request a formal risk assessment to ensure that academic activities do not pose health risks to pregnant students or their unborn children.
- e) Inform the student about their rights and options regarding pregnancy-related leave (including taking a [leave of absence](#)) and academic considerations (including [late submission of coursework](#) and [extenuating circumstances](#)).
- f) Encourage students on graduate research programmes to speak to their Principal Supervisor in the first instance should they be planning on taking pregnancy-related leave from their programme. They should also consult the appropriate policies related to taking leave from their programme to ensure that they are compliant with the relevant academic regulations. They should seek information regarding their funding and fees by discussing the situation with their Principal Supervisor and [UCD Registry](#).
- g) Encourage international students to seek guidance from [UCD Global](#) on any implications for their visa and Irish residency permissions, if applicable.

- h) Offer contact information for external support organisations or agencies, if appropriate.

## 2.3 Discuss Options

Staff members may:

- a) Discuss the various options available to the student, such as [taking a leave of absence](#), adjusting their course load, or exploring flexible study arrangements.
- b) Provide guidance on how to navigate academic requirements and deadlines during the pregnancy.

## 2.4 Prepare for Leave

Staff members may:

- a) Assist the student in understanding the process of taking pregnancy-related leave, including the completion of necessary documentation.
- b) Support the student to coordinate with relevant University departments to facilitate a smooth transition for the student.

## 2.5 Returning From Leave

Staff members may:

- a) Assist the student in planning their return to academic studies after pregnancy-related leave. Where practicable the return should coincide with the start of a trimester.
- b) Before returning from pregnancy-related leave, inform the student about any updates or changes relevant to their academic programme.
- c) Provide information on any academic adjustments or accommodations available to the student upon their return.
- d) Provide information on breastfeeding facilities in UCD. UCD provides designated breastfeeding spaces on campus. These private facilities are available for students who need to breastfeed or express milk, and students can access them during university hours. Students who are breastfeeding will also be provided with flexible academic arrangements, including scheduled breaks, in order to accommodate their needs. [UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) will be able to advise on the [breastfeeding spaces available to students and staff around campus](#).

## 2.6 Follow-up Support

Staff members may:

- a) Offer ongoing support and resources where appropriate to help the student readjust to academic life after returning from pregnancy-related leave.
- b) Encourage the student to reach out for assistance if they encounter any challenges or need further support.

## 3. Useful Links

UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students

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All policies and policy related documents and forms are subject to amendment. Please refer to the UCD Governance Document Library website for the official, most recent version.

## UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students – Guidelines for Students

[UCD Leave of Absence Policy](#)

[UCD Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)

[UCD Late Submission of Coursework Policy](#)

[UCD Student Advisers](#)

[UCD Student Advisers Pregnancy Guide](#)

[Mental health and other supports available to all UCD students](#)

[National mental health supports](#)

[UCD Colleges and Schools](#)

[UCD Student Desk](#)

[UCD Graduate Studies](#)

[UCD Global](#)

[UCD Students' Union](#)

[UCD Directory](#)

### 4. Version History

Version	Approval Date	Summary of Changes	Approved By
1	18 June 2024	First Version	UMT

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## Appendix 1 | Initial Self-assessment Document for Students

### Introduction

During pregnancy you may be more susceptible to certain types of hazards. Similarly, your unborn or breastfeeding child may be at risk from some hazards that would not normally constitute a risk to you.

If your doctor has informed you that you are undergoing a high risk pregnancy then you should follow any medical advice that you are given in relation to your pregnancy.

As a student, if you become pregnant or are breastfeeding you are advised to use the information below to self-assess your status.

If you answer No to all of the questions below then a formal risk assessment is not required and you should manage your pregnancy in line with medical advice.

If you answer Yes to any of the questions below, then a formal risk assessment is required. You are advised to discuss your pregnancy with your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor and to arrange for a formal risk assessment to be carried out as soon as possible. You may also wish to seek additional advice from your doctor. Whilst you are awaiting the completion of a formal risk assessment you may need to temporarily remove yourself from exposure to the hazards in question.

You may wish to seek assistance from a suitable person such as a School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor when completing the following self-assessment template.

If you are involved in a work placement / internship then you are strongly advised to inform your host about your pregnancy either directly or via a member of UCD staff. Your host will need to risk assess your placement with them,

### Self-Assessment

Physical Hazards			
No	Hazard	Yes	No
1	During your course of study (including work placements, fieldwork, classroom based learning, etc) are you exposed to shocks, vibration or movement: including sudden severe blow to the body, low frequency whole body vibration, e.g. kicks from an animal, driving in off road vehicles?		
2	Are you required to manipulate or handle loads?		
3	Are you required to climb steps, ladders or access heights?		

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4	Are you exposed to loud noise?		
5	Are you exposed to ionising radiation?		
6	Are you exposed to non-ionising radiation or electromagnetic radiation? e.g. ultraviolet (UV), visible and infrared and electromagnetic fields (power frequencies, microwaves and radiofrequencies)		
7	Are you exposed to extremes of cold or heat?		
8	Are you required to enter into tight fitting workspaces which could present comfort difficulties due to your pregnancy?		
9	Will you have any excessive difficulty in evacuating any areas you are likely to be present in an emergency due to lack of speed and movement or the nature of the area?		
10	Is there a potential exposure to physical assault and/or excessive and/or unpredictable physical activity from patients (animal/human)?		
11	Will you be in close proximity for any length of time to persons working with physical agents of the type outlined above?		

Biological Agents			
No	Hazard	Yes	No
1	Will you be exposure to Group 2, Group 3 or Group 4 biological agents		
2	Will you be exposed to Measles, HIV or Rubella, Toxoplasma?		
3	Will you be working with animals including farm animals?		
4	Will you be in close proximity for any length of time to persons working with biological agents, e.g. in the same laboratory?		

Chemical Agents			
No	Hazard	Yes	No
1	Will you be working with chemicals <u>of any sort</u> in a teaching or research setting? These include lab chemicals, drugs, disinfectants, aesthetic gases, cleaning agents, etc.?		
2	Will you be exposed to mercury, lead or any nanoparticles?		
3	Will you be in close proximity for any length of time to persons working with chemicals agents, e.g. in the same laboratory?		

PPE			
No	Hazard	Yes	No
1	Are you required to wear PPE at any time?		

Night work			
No	Hazard	Yes	No
1	Are you required to work between the hours of 11pm and 6am?		

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Lone Working			
No	Hazard	Yes	No
1	Are you required to be alone and out of earshot of others?		

Display Screen Equipment	
No	Hazard
1	If you are required to utilise a computer for extended period ensure that you have an appropriate set up – see <a href="https://www.ucd.ie/sirc/healthsafety/workplacesafety/officesafety/workstationassessmentsandeyetests/">https://www.ucd.ie/sirc/healthsafety/workplacesafety/officesafety/workstationassessmentsandeyetests/</a>