

UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students



Guidelines for Students

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 Students have been developed with the aim to create a supportive and understanding environment for those students navigating pregnancy and pregnancy-related leave while pursuing their academic goals.

Students may find it difficult to discuss pregnancy with their School or ask for the support or adjustments that they may need. For students experiencing pregnancy, it can be a difficult and stressful time as well as being a sensitive and personal matter. For the University, pregnancy can be a health and wellbeing concern. There may also be safety issues to be addressed for students whose course of study may expose them or their unborn or breastfeeding child to risks.

The University wishes to foster an environment where pregnancy interacts with a student's educational life in the same way that we have come to expect it interacts with a staff member's working life, i.e. it is a normal life event that is supported in a reasonable and well-defined fashion.

2. Implications of Taking Pregnancy-related Leave

There are a number of possible implications of taking pregnancy-related leave. The University is responsible for providing information regarding possible implications, and students are advised to access the variety of support systems within UCD for advice before taking pregnancy-related leave. [An up-to-date list of supports available to students](#) can be found at this link.

- International students are advised to seek guidance from [UCD Global](#) on any implications for their visa and Irish residency permissions, if applicable.
- Students on graduate research programmes are advised to talk to their Principal Supervisor in the first instance should they be planning on taking pregnancy-related leave from their programme.
- Students who are on placement or going on placement must follow the advice and guidance of their Programme or Academic Director / Placement Manager / Module Coordinator / and/or Placement Provider, noting that there may be specific health and safety requirements on different placements.

- Possible implications of taking pregnancy-related leave are outlined in the [UCD Leave of Absence Policy and guide](#).

3. Who Should I Speak to if I Become Pregnant?

It is important that you inform your School as soon as possible to ensure that any accommodations you may need can be put in place in good time.

You should speak to someone in the University who you feel comfortable talking to. Following that initial conversation, it is also best to speak to someone such as your [UCD Student Adviser](#); a member of [UCD Student Health](#) or [UCD Student Counselling](#); a member of the [UCD Students' Union](#); your [Programme Director](#); your [Principal Supervisor](#); or a [member of faculty](#). You could also, if you wish, give permission for the person you spoke to initially to pass on the appropriate information to your UCD Student Adviser / School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor.

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,

If you need to take time away from your studies, you are advised to inform your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor that you will be away for pregnancy-related reasons. At any stage and if for any reason you would like some support, please contact your [UCD Student Adviser](#), [UCD Student Health](#) or [UCD Student Counselling](#). They can offer support and advice on academic and personal matters, including pregnancy.

4. Managing Your Studies

You will be able to discuss with your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor how the pregnancy is likely to impact on your studies and how best to manage this prior to taking any pregnancy-related leave.

5. Health and Safety

Pregnancy can be a time of increased risk for the pregnant student and their unborn or breastfeeding child. Depending on your course of study, you or your unborn or breastfeeding child may be exposed to hazards that would not normally constitute a risk to your safety.

Any student who becomes pregnant or is breastfeeding is advised to carry out an initial safety self-assessment using the checklist template in Appendix 1. There are two 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 you fall into this category, 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. The purpose of any formal risk assessment will be to assess the risks posed by your course of study to both you and your unborn or breastfeeding child's safety, and to identify what additional risk control measures are required to keep you both safe. In some cases you may need to be removed from certain hazards where the risk that they pose to your safety is deemed to be high. In other cases, accommodations / changes in how you are exposed to the hazards may be necessary,

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,

6. Maternity-related Absence

All students should be permitted to take a period of maternity-related absence following the birth of their child. If you do not want to take time out of your programme as a result of pregnancy and/or maternity, there is no requirement for you to do so, but it is strongly recommended that new mothers do not return earlier than six weeks after the birth. After discussions with your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor, you will need to decide whether a period of leave from your studies is required, the impact this may have on your studies, and how long this period may be. The exact length of the time you may wish to take leave for should be determined by a number of factors, including when the baby is due and the requirements of your programme.

International students who choose to take a period of leave from their studies should be aware that there may be implications for your visa and Irish residency permissions. You must ensure that all relevant parties, including your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor / Sponsor / and/or [UCD Global](#) are informed of your intention to apply to take a period of pregnancy-related leave.

6. Additional information for Graduate Research Students

Graduate Research students can seek to take a period of pregnancy-related leave. Students are responsible for consulting the appropriate policies related to taking leave from their programme to ensure that they are compliant with the relevant academic regulations.

Graduate Research students who are self-funded or who receive funding through other bodies should consult with [UCD Registry](#) for information regarding their fees. If you are in receipt of external funding, you or your Principal Supervisor should engage with your funding agency to establish any necessary specific, funding-agency-related steps that are separate to those required for your registration, for example, in relation to stipends.

It is important that students discuss with their Principal Supervisor the implications of taking a period of leave from their programme, particularly any impact on fees, stipends, funding, etc.

7. Returning to Study

Prior to starting your pregnancy-related leave, the date that you intend to return should be discussed with your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor. This date may change during your pregnancy-related leave and, where practicable, should coincide with the start of a trimester. You should maintain contact with your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor and communicate any anticipated changes to

your return date as soon as possible. You are advised to meet with your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor prior to your return to discuss whether you will require any changes in the way that you study, additional support, and any other considerations.

8. Students With Babies and Young Children

UCD provides designated breastfeeding spaces on campus. These private facilities are available for students who need to breastfeed or express milk, and you can access them during university hours. If you are breastfeeding, you will also be provided with flexible academic arrangements, including scheduled breaks, in order to accommodate your needs. [UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) will be able to advise you on the [breastfeeding spaces available to students and staff around campus](#).

There is a crèche in UCD Belfield. Information on the [University's childcare facilities can be found at this link](#).

9. Students Who Are Fathers or Partners (Including Same-sex)

If your partner is pregnant, you can request absence from your studies to attend medical appointments, as well as a period of paternity leave following the birth. You should discuss this with your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor as soon as practicable.

If you are an international student who decides to take pregnancy-related leave to support your partner, you should be aware that there may be implications for your visa and Irish residency permissions. Please seek further advice from [UCD Global](#).

If you are a student receiving funding from a research body or council, then you must check on the terms and conditions of your funding as to whether or not you are permitted a period of pregnancy-related leave to support your partner. You should contact [UCD Registry](#) for any fees or funding queries or for more information.

10. Adoptive Parents

If you have been matched for adoption, you should inform your School or Programme Manager / Programme or Academic Director / Principal Supervisor as soon as possible. If you are a student who adopts a child, you may request to [take a leave of absence](#).

If you are an international student who decides to take adoption-related leave, you should be aware that there may be implications for your visa and Irish residency permissions. Please seek further advice from [UCD Global](#).

If you are a student receiving funding from a research body or council, then you must check on the terms and conditions of your funding as to whether or not you are permitted a period of adoption-related leave. You should contact [UCD Registry](#) for any fees or funding queries or for more information.

11. Useful Links

UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students

UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students – Guidelines for Staff

[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](#)

12. Version History

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

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

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

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