

Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students



Policy owner UCD Student
Advisory Service

Approval date and body UMT,
18 June 2024

1. Purpose

1.1 University College Dublin (UCD) is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive educational environment where all students have an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students who become pregnant or need to take pregnancy-related leave during their studies at the University are provided with appropriate guidance and accommodations to support their academic progression and overall well-being.

1.2 The objectives of this policy are to

- a) Uphold UCD's values of inclusivity, equity and diversity, and align with the University's commitment to provide an inclusive educational experience for all students.
- b) Outline the principles that shape and direct the University's approach to supporting pregnant students.
- c) Foster a culture in which students can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about pregnancy and pregnancy-related leave.
- d) Provide guidance to students and staff on the support mechanisms that are available to enable students to continue their academic journey during and after pregnancy.

2. Definitions

2.1 Pregnancy Supports: Refers to a range of accommodations, provisions and resources provided to students who are pregnant or on pregnancy-related leave which enable them to effectively engage in their academic studies.

2.2 Pregnancy-related Leave: Any absence from any part of an academic programme that directly relates to pregnancy, childbirth or postnatal care.

3. Scope

3.1 The policy applies to all students. The policy covers both planned and unplanned pregnancies and encompasses the periods of pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal recovery.

4. Principles

4.1 UCD fosters a culture that embraces equality, diversity and inclusion for all individuals in our community. As such, the principle of equality shall be applied in the interpretation of this policy to ensure that all UCD students are supported and treated equally before, during and after their pregnancy-related leave(s). The University recognises that it has an important role in supporting students during pregnancy.

4.2 The policy on pregnancy supports for students is based on the following principles:

4.2.1 Pregnant students and those on pregnancy-related leave must have equal access to educational opportunities and resources that are afforded to them under academic policies of the University without facing discrimination or barriers.

4.2.2 Pregnant students and those impacted by pregnancy should have access to a single point of information on their relevant rights, options and support services. Similarly, staff should have access to a single point of information on procedures for assisting a pregnant student and those impacted by pregnancy.

4.2.3 Students will be treated with sensitivity, understanding and empathy.

4.2.4 Students can expect that UCD will treat information they disclose about pregnancy confidentially. All information provided in relation to a student's pregnancy will be treated in strictest confidence and in accordance with the principles of GDPR. Such information will be limited to the personnel directly involved in administering and providing support and/or guidance, and the student will be told who the information is being shared with and the reasons for sharing this information.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Those who are pregnant may need specific types of accommodations. It is important that Colleges, Schools and other units are informed and supportive.

5.1. Students' responsibilities include:

- a) Communicating in a timely fashion with relevant academic and administrative units where their programme requirements may impact the health of the student and that of their unborn child.
- b) Communicating in a timely fashion with relevant academic and administrative units where they will be availing of pregnancy-related leave or any necessary accommodations.
- c) Engaging actively in discussions regarding necessary accommodations and academic adjustments.
- d) Seeking guidance from UCD Global on any implications for their visa and Irish residency permissions if they are an international student and if this is applicable.
- e) Talking to their Principal Supervisor if they are a Graduate Research student should they be planning on taking pregnancy-related leave from their programme.
- f) Following the advice and guidance of their Programme or Academic Director, Placement Manager, Module Coordinator and/or Placement Provider if they are on placement or going on placement, noting that there may be specific health and safety requirements on different placements.

5.2. Heads of Schools or Units responsibilities include:

- a) Assessing any risks arising from academic activities and ensuring that any required actions to protect the health of the student and that of their unborn child are completed.

5.3. Governing Boards' responsibilities include:

- a) Ensuring that accommodations are provided to students to enable them to complete their programme in the most appropriate time frame possible. These accommodations may include taking pregnancy-related leave, the provision of extensions for coursework, or the extension of a student's registration period.

5.4. University staff members' responsibilities include:

- a) Communicating to students about the supports, procedures and responsibilities of all stakeholders.
- b) Providing a supportive academic environment.
- c) Providing information regarding the possible implications of taking pregnancy-related leave.

5.5. UCD SIRC's responsibilities include:

- a) Offering guidance and support to staff regarding health and safety guidelines and/or risk assessment.

6. Related Documents

- UCD Extenuating Circumstances Policy: Provides a framework for managing unforeseen circumstances affecting students' academic responsibilities.
- UCD Leave of Absence Policy: Offers guidelines for students requiring temporary leave from their academic pursuits.
- UCD Late Submission of Coursework Policy: Provides a framework for managing flexibility in deadlines for coursework.
- UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students - Guidelines for Students.
- UCD Policy on Pregnancy Supports for Students - Guidelines for Staff.

7. Version History

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