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Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy & Procedure

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Introduction

1. BIMM University is committed to providing high quality education and services to all students. This policy applies to all students (and prospective students who have accepted an offer to study) who are pregnant, who have given birth within the last 26 weeks (including still birth, miscarriage or termination), or who are breastfeeding. It also covers registered students whose partners are pregnant and those who become a parent, for example, through adoption.

2. The Policy is written to meet the requirements of the UK Equality Act 2010 which legally protects students from discrimination during pregnancy and maternity. It extends the protection that already exists for women in employment, to those in Higher Education.

3. In the context of students at the University's Berlin campus, the Policy also considers the requirements of the 2006 General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) and the Mutterschutzgesetz or MuSchG (Maternity Protection Act) which, since 2018, also applies to university students in Germany and aims to protect the health of the student and their child during the pregnancy, after childbirth and during the breastfeeding period. It also allows the student to continue their studies without risk to their health or that of their child and aim to reduce disadvantages during this period.

4. The relevant Irish legislation in the context of the University's Dublin campus is the Maternity Protection Act 1994 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018.

5. This Policy takes account of the guidance for supporting students through pregnancy and maternity in the UK as outlined by the Equality Challenge Unit in its document Student pregnancy and maternity: implications for higher education institutions.

The University's commitment in supporting students during pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption

6. The purpose of the policy is to communicate the University's commitment to supporting the continued engagement of students during periods of pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption. In doing so, the University expects staff and students to be guided by the following principles:
   - To avoid less favourable treatment of students who are pregnant or within the protected maternity period; any student whose partner is expecting a child, or those who have been matched for adoption
   - To think flexibly about supporting the continued engagement of students in teaching, learning and assessment
   - To be supportive and sensitive to the needs of students who are trying to balance the different needs of pregnancy and study
   - To support informed decision-making by students taking an open-minded and non-judgemental approach
   - To maintain student confidentiality in accordance with the BIMM student Privacy Notice.

Notification of pregnancy

7. In considering when to notify the University, students are advised to think about the health and safety implications of disclosing the pregnancy and the learning, teaching and assessment considerations associated with their programme of study (or prospective study).

8. In order for the University to support students in pregnancy and maternity, the University needs to be aware of the pregnancy. There is no legal obligation placed on students in terms of when to disclose a pregnancy. However, the student's choice should be an informed one, based upon their individual circumstances and students are encouraged to notify the University about their pregnancy at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. This will allow for a Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan to be discussed with the student at the point of disclosure (see Paragraphs 19-22 below).

9. However, when the programme of study includes activities that may pose heightened risk to the health and safety of a pregnant student and their unborn child (such as risk of physical injury), they are strongly advised to inform the University of their pregnancy as early as possible to ensure that appropriate support can be put in place.

10. When the student has taken the decision to disclose their pregnancy to the University, they are encouraged to make the disclosure to a Student Wellbeing Adviser in the first instance. In the event of the disclosure being made to another member of staff, they should seek consent from the student for the disclosure to be shared with the Student Wellbeing team.

11. Students should provide evidence of their pregnancy to be placed with their Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan. This would usually be in the form of a doctor’s note or a Maternity Certificate. (In the UK, a MAT B1; in Ireland and MB2 or MB3; and in Germany a Mutterschaftspass.)

12. Due to the sensitive nature of the information, only members of staff who need to be informed for valid reasons will be informed of the student's pregnancy and this will be done only with the student’s prior consent.

13. If an international student is pregnant upon enrolment or becomes pregnant whilst enrolled on a programme, they are still covered by this policy, however UKVI regulations must be taken into consideration. Students should contact the Immigration & Compliance team for advice about visa regulations and requirements.

14. Where a student has not disclosed a pregnancy, staff should not make assumptions that they are, and should not ask directly whether they are. Where a student has disclosed pregnancy but declines a Pregnancy Risk Assessment or support under this process, any concerns about the student’s fitness to study should be managed under the Fitness to Study Policy. If a student subsequently discloses pregnancy or agrees to be supported under the policy, the provisions in section 16-22 should be followed at this point.

15. The University will ensure that if a student chooses to undertake an academic assessment whilst pregnant or in the maternity period, that they are able to do so, as

long as the activity poses no heightened risk to the health and safety of the student or their unborn child. If students choose to undertake assessment and are then affected by sudden and unexpected personal issues, either related or unrelated to their pregnancy, then the student can apply to request an Uncapped Retrieval through the University's Mitigation Process. Depending on the length of time required to complete the assessment safely, a mitigated intermission may be considered under this policy.

Risk Assessment

16. There is a requirement for students who are pregnant, who have given birth within the previous six months, or who are breastfeeding to have a risk assessment (Appendix 4). The risk assessment should be completed as soon as possible and within 10 days of the original disclosure being made.

17. The risk assessment considers any health and safety implications and appropriate measures to mitigate or reduce any risks identified. It is recognised that the risk assessment will require regular review as the pregnancy progresses.

18. The risk assessment will be completed by the Student Wellbeing Adviser, in consultation with the student and (with the consent of the student) other relevant members of staff (eg Course Leader and Health & Safety Officer.)

Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan

19. A Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan (Appendix 5) is the mechanism by which the student's needs are document and monitored. This should be completed by a Student Wellbeing Adviser in consultation with the student, although it is likely to require input from other members of staff (including the Course Leader and Academic Administration, with the student's consent).

20. These staff members should work with the student throughout their pregnancy to monitor and review the support agreed upon at key academic points. Students should disclose any changes in their circumstances that might mean the form should be reviewed.

21. The Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan ensures the student's needs are met during the pregnancy and contains references to:

    - Communicating with the student
    - Information for other staff and students
    - Risk assessment check
    - Pregnancy related absence
    - Financial information
    - International students
    - Mitigating circumstances
    - Assessment adaptations
    - Childcare

22. There should also be a discussion with the student (or applicant) in relation to their plans for leave and /or study following the birth of the child. An initial plan for this may be developed in line with the section below on Leave Arrangements. However, the student may wish to change their plans following the birth of a child and the University should respond flexibly in this situation.

Leave Arrangements

23. For students at UK campuses, the University strongly advises students who have recently given birth to take a minimum of two weeks maternity related absence before returning to study. This is to secure the wellbeing of both the student and baby.

24. A maternity related absence of up to two weeks would be considered an 'authorised absence'. Slightly longer periods of authorised absence may be agreed on an individual basis between a student and their Course leader where this is practical. Advice must be sought from the Immigration & Compliance Team when considering a longer period of authorised absence for a student on a Student Route Visa.

25. For students at the Berlin campus, the University has to meet the requirements of the 'Mutterschutzgesetz or MuSchG' (Maternity Protection Act). Under this act, the University must not allow students to study unless they expressly request to do so during the following 'protection periods':
    - in the last six weeks before the estimated due date to continue their studies. The estimated date of childbirth as stated in a medical certificate or certificate issued by a midwife determines the protection period before childbirth. If the birth does not take place on that date, the protection period is reduced or extended accordingly.
    - for a period of eight weeks after childbirth.
    - the protection period after children is extended to twelve weeks in the case of premature births; multiple birth and if a doctor determines the child has a disability within eight weeks after the birth.

26. Deferral or intermission will usually be suggested for students who wish to take a longer period of absence following childbirth. Information about both can be found in the Student Registration and Enrolment Policy.

27. Deferral or intermission will usually be for a maximum period of twelve months. However, the University will consider carefully, on a case-by case basis, any requests for an extension and will show flexibility where a student makes such a request and where continuity of study without disadvantage can be assured.

28. Where a student wishes to keep in touch with their studies during a period of intermission or deferral following childbirth, continued access to the University's Virtual Learning Environment, and other learning facilities will be permitted, although the student will not normally be permitted to attend scheduled learning and teaching activities or submit assessments during the period of intermission or deferral (some exceptions may be made where assessments are due early in the period of intermission for modules studied prior to the period of intermission).

29. Where a student does not wish to take a deferral or intermission, the University will seek to show flexibility in accommodating the student's preferred pattern of engagement. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and set out in the Pregnancy and Maternity Student Support Plan, taking into account the needs of the student and the programme of study and may include adjusted assessment deadlines. A student will not need to request extensions or submit a claim for Mitigating Circumstances in relation to deferred assessments where such arrangements are set out in a Pregnancy and Maternity Student Support Plan. The standard extension would be 7 calendar days.

30. International students on a Student Route Visa need to consider the implications of taking a period of intermission and should seek advice from the Immigration and Compliance team.

31. All students must discuss and agree the period of maternity absence with the University. The date of commencement and the date of intended return should be noted in writing in the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan.

32. Students should be advised to seek advice on the financial implications of taking a period of intermission or extending their period of study from the University's Student Wellbeing Team.

Returning to study after Maternity-related absence

33. Where a student has pregnancy-related illness such as postnatal depression, serious illness, or loss of a baby, it may be necessary to review the date of return to study so that is appropriate for the student's condition and individual circumstances.

34. Prior to the student's return following a period of maternity-related absence, the continued support to be provided by the University will be discussed and confirmed in order to ensure a smooth return. It is expected that welcome-back meetings will be organised with key staff, for example the Course Leader, and Student Wellbeing Adviser, and that ongoing support will be offered to mitigate the impact of any difficulties on the student's return.

Paternity / students whose partner is pregnant

35. Any student whose partner is expecting a child or who expects to be involved in co-parenting a child will be entitled to request leave. This is likely to include time off for medical appointments prior to, and after the birth, as well as a period of parental support leave immediately following the birth. A student in this situation should seek advice from a Student Wellbeing Adviser as to whether an authorised absence, deferral or intermission would be most appropriate. Students must discuss and agree the period of paternity absence with the University, and this should be confirmed in writing.

Adoption

36. Students who have been matched for adoption should seek advice from a Student Wellbeing Adviser as to whether an authorised absence, deferral or intermission would be most appropriate. Students must discuss and agree the period of paternity absence with the University, and this should be confirmed in writing.

Feeding and Expressing milk on campus

37. The Equality Act 2010 explicitly protects students from less favourable treatment because of breastfeeding. It gives explicit protection to people who breastfeed in public places, and it is unlawful to ask students not to breastfeed in public places.

38. Although BIMM University campuses are not designed for, nor do they take specific account of the needs of babies, students who are breastfeeding a baby under 26 weeks old may request to do so on campus and this will be considered on a case-by-case basis, via the Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan. For this to be permitted, the baby must always be supervised, and any health and safety risks identified need to be resolved. It should be noted that babies should not be taken into any teaching areas such as teaching rooms or studios and it is particularly important that they are not taken into areas where there is a possible risk to health and safety.

39. Any student who would like to express milk whilst on campus should speak to their Student Wellbeing Adviser who will advise on suitable locations. Students should be advised as to the availability of a suitable refrigerator for storage or to bring a small cooler bag with icepacks for the safe storage of their expressed breast milk.

Termination of pregnancy

40. A student may decide to have an abortion. This does not need to be disclosed to the University, but we can offer support if the student would like it. The Student Wellbeing team can talk through support mechanisms at the University and appropriate external services. Students may need time off from studying for tests before, and to recover after, an abortion.
41. The charity Antenatal Results and Choices (www.arc-uk.org) provides specific advice to those who are considering an abortion for reasons relating to antenatal test results.
42. The British Pregnancy Advisory Service (www.bpas.org) provides clear and detailed information regarding the abortion process, aftercare, and how to access services in the UK.

Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Neonatal death

43. Students are encouraged to inform their campus Student Wellbeing team in the event of a miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death so that support can be put in place, including access to counselling where required.

44. A student who has had a stillbirth or whose baby dies shortly after birth will be entitled to the same length of maternity-related absence, and financial and wellbeing support, as a student whose baby is not stillborn.

45. A student whose partner has had a miscarriage, or a stillbirth can access support from Student Wellbeing.

46. The Miscarriage Association can offer support for those who have experienced baby loss (www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

47. SANDS offers support to bereaved parents (www.uk-sands.org)

Implementation

48. This policy will be shared with Student Wellbeing, Academic Administration teams and Course Leaders. It will be hosted on the University's website and on individual campus Student Wellbeing Sharepoint sites.

Monitoring and Review

49. The implementation of the policy will be reviewed after one year to ensure its effectiveness. Thereafter, the policy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis.

Appendix 1 – External Support

Support Organisations which provide information and advice about pregnancy, maternity, and family life.

UK

Brook

Free and confidential sexual health and wellbeing information.
www.brook.org.uk/

MSI Reproductive Choices
The leading independent provider of sexual and reproductive health services in the UK.
03453008090
www.msichoices.org.uk

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.
https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting

National Health Service
The NHS website provides information relating to pregnancy, abortion, health in pregnancy and maternity, and services provided by the NHS. See the NHS website.
www.nhs.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

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

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

The Miscarriage Association
Offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy.
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

SANDS

The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death charity provides support to anyone affected by the loss of a baby and conducts research into the causes of stillbirth and neonatal death.
www.uk-sands.org

Fertility Network UK Fertility
Provides free and impartial support, advice, information, and understanding for anyone affected by fertility issues.
https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/

Gingerbread
Gingerbread is a leading national charity working with single parent families, providing expert advice, practical support, and campaigns for single mums and dads.
https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/

NCT
The UK's leading charity for parents is NCT, for your First 1000 Days, right through your pregnancy, birth, and beyond.
https://www.nct.org.uk/

Family Lives
Provides targeted early intervention and crisis support for families.
https://www.familylives.org.uk/

Further reading
The Equality Challenge Unit has produced guidance for pregnant students and staff supporting them. This contains information about maternity leave, maternity pay, and sources of funding support for students during maternity.
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/student-pregnancy-and-maternity

Ireland

HSE Unplanned pregnancy support services
Help and advice if you have an unplanned pregnancy, including a freephone helpline. Provides information and support, including judgement-free counselling, on all options including continued pregnancy support and abortion services.
https://www2.hse.ie/services/unplanned-pregnancy/support-services/

Social welfare benefits available to families and children
Families and children (citizensinformation.ie)

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland
Offers support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy.
http://miscarriage.ie

Cuidiú
Parent-to-parent support, especially focused on breastfeeding support
Home | cuidiu.com | Cuidiú

Parentline
Confidential helpline for parents and guardians offering support, guidance and information on all aspects of being a parent.
Home - Parentline - Helpline for Parents.

Treoir
Provides a free, confidential, specialist information service for parents not married to each other, living together or apart.
Home - Treoir

One Family
Support and information for single-parent families.
One Family Ireland

Postnatal Depression Ireland
Proves support and friendship to those suffering from postnatal depression
Home | Post Natal Depression Ireland (pnd.ie)

Irish Family Planning Association
Provides contraception, specialist pregnancy counselling, abortion care, sexual and reproductive health services.
Irish Family Planning Association – Sexuality, Information, Reproductive Health & Rights (ifpa.ie)

Germany

Profemina
Provides consultation, counselling and support for anyone facing an unplanned pregnancy.
Profemina | Consultation for Unintended Pregnancies

KOBRA
Offer support with parents needing support around navigating German parental leave system – changing hours/careers.
KOBRA - Berufsberatung für Frauen in Berlin (kobra-berlin.de)

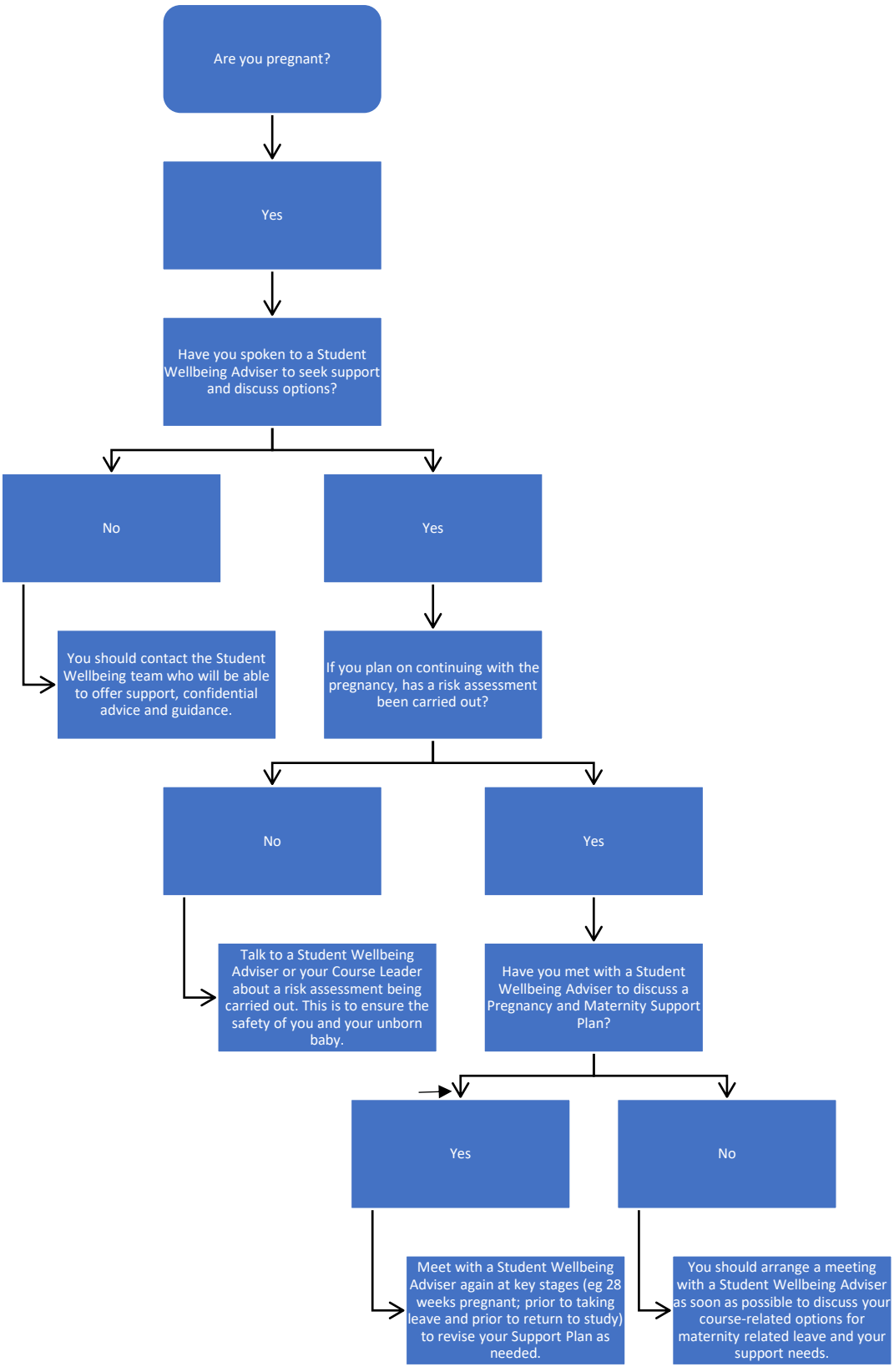
Feministische Innenpolitik
An LGBTQIA focused organisation.
Feministische Innenpolitik – Für Gerechtigkeit & Diversität (feministische-innenpolitik.de)

Evas Arche
Support for struggling families and also particularly younger parents
Evas Arche (evas-arche.de)

Appendix 2 – Terminology

- Miscarriage - The loss of a pregnancy during the first 23 weeks
- Stillbirth - When a baby dies before or during birth at or after 24 weeks of pregnancy
- Neonatal death - When a baby dies within 28 days of birth

Appendix 3 – Student Pregnancy Guide



Appendix 4

Student Pregnancy / New Parent Risk Assessment

(Keep one copy on file and give a copy to the student)

Name:	
Student ID number:	
Course:	
Year:	
Date of initial meeting:	
Date of next Risk Assessment review:	
Due date:	
Expected date of return:	

Does your course involve any of the following?	**Yes**	**No**
Physical activity		
Manual handling		
Sitting / standing for long periods or being in restricted spaces		
Off campus activities		
Do you have any medical conditions that may affect your pregnancy?		
Working at height		
Exposure to loud or excessive noise		
Use of biological agents / hazardous substances		
Other (please specify)		

Risk	**Advice**	**Action(s)**
Manual handling (involves carrying,	• No heavy, awkward or repetitive lifting by pregnant student.	

pushing, pulling, lifting)	It may be possible to alter the nature of the task undertaken to reduce the risk of injury for all people involved. **Or** It may be necessary to reduce the amount of manual handling (or use aids to reduce the risks) for the specific student involved.	
Movements and postures • Sitting • Standing • Physical demands • Restricted spaces	Control the hours, volume, and pace of activities. Adjust how the activity is organised or change the type of activity if necessary. • Ensure seating is available, where appropriate, and take longer or more frequent rest breaks to avoid or reduce fatigue. • Adjust workstations or task procedures where this will minimise postural problems and the risk of accidents or ill health. Continue to review the situation as pregnancy progresses.	
Personal Protective Equipment	• Equipment that is generally suitable for staff / students may be unsuitable for a pregnant student, particularly as their pregnancy progresses. • Provide suitable alternative equipment to allow the task / activity to be conducted safely and without risk to health.	
Placements / fieldwork /other off-campus activities	• Each placement or trip should be separately risk assessed. • Consider reducing travel time where possible.	
Work at height	• Work at height should be avoided. • A risk assessment should consider any additional risks	

	due to work at height (eg working on ladders)	
Use of biological agents / hazardous substances	• Review COSHH assessments associated with the course of study for students who are pregnant, have recently given birth, or are breastfeeding. • Prevention of exposure is the top priority. Substitution of harmful agents if possible; if not, then control by combination of technical measures, good practice, and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (the latter only as a last resort and in combination with the other control measures). • Discuss any concerns with the campus Health and Safety Officer.	
Mental and Physical fatigue	• Consider a temporary adjustment to timetabled hours as well as other conditions, including the timing and frequency of rest breaks. • Speak to campus Student Wellbeing team about the availability of respite facilities.	
Loud or excessive noise?		
Other course specific or individual risk areas		

Appendix 5

Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Plan

This plan is based on the University's Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy and will help to coordinate support and ensure students' needs are met during pregnancy, following the birth, and on the student's return to their course. The plan should be completed and agreed with the student by a Student Wellbeing Adviser.

It is not intended that the form should be completed at a first meeting as, initially, a student will be unable – and should not be expected – to respond to all of the issues covered.

Responses to some questions may require input from others (the Course Leader, Immigration & Compliance team etc).

Copies of the completed plan should be given to the student and the relevant Course Leader (if the student gives consent).

The plan should be reviewed at key stages (eg 16 weeks pregnant, 24 weeks pregnant, and prior to return to study); or at key points of the academic year (eg prior to assessments). If the student's circumstances change, the plan will also need to be reviewed.

Contact details		
1	**Student contact details**	
	Name	
	Telephone	
	Email address	
	Student ID number	
2	**Emergency contact details**	
	Name	
	Relationship to student	
	Telephone	
3	**Course details**	
	Course title	
	Campus	
	School	

	Year of course	
	Course Leader	
4	**Details of the student's named Student Wellbeing Adviser**	
	Name	
	Telephone	
	Email	
Communication with the student		
5	What is the student's preferred method of communication during their absence?	
	Email:	
	Phone:	
Informing other staff and students		
6	Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed (e.g. Course Leader)?	
	Name and title	Date to be informed
Evidence of pregnancy		
7	Has the student provided a copy of their Maternity Certificate (Form MAT B1) or other evidence of pregnancy? (Attach copy to the form)	
Key dates (to be reviewed and added to over the course of pregnancy and maternity)		
8	What is the student's due date?	
9	How many weeks pregnant was the student when they notified the School of pregnancy?	
Health and Safety risk assessment		

10	Has a Health and Safety risk assessment been completed which identifies any risk to the student or applicant, and the unborn child? If so, please attach a copy to this form.	
Policy		
11	Has the student received a copy of the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy and Procedure?	
Pregnancy-related absence		
12	Are there any pregnancy-related illnesses that will / may affect the student's ability to undertake their course?	
13	Will the dates or times of antenatal appointments affect the student's study?	
14	If yes to either of the above questions, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to catch up?	
Maternity-related absence		
15	How much maternity-related absence does the student intend to take?	
16	Will this be via an authorised absence; intermission or deferral?	
17	When does the student intend to start maternity-related absence?	
18	When does the student intend to return from maternity-related absence?	
19	If the student is studying at the Berlin campus, have the requirements of the Maternity Protection Act been considered regarding the 'protection period'. If the student intends to study during this period, have they provided written confirmation that they wish to do so?	
Course arrangements		

20	Will the dates of maternity-related absence (see 15 and 16 above) affect the student's ability to complete any course module requirements?	
21	If so, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module?	
22	What information will the student require during maternity-related absence to keep up to date on course developments?	
23	Who will be responsible for providing the information to the student?	
Assessment arrangements		
24	Is the student unable to complete any assessments due to their pregnancy or maternity?	
25	If so, provide details:	
26	Does the student require any adaptations to assessments so they can complete them safely?	
27	What alternative arrangements have been made for any outstanding or incomplete assessments?	
Mitigating Circumstances		
28	Has the student been informed about the University's Mitigating Circumstances policy in the event that their pregnancy or maternity affects assessments?	
Financial Arrangements		
29	Is the student aware of any financial implications if they take a period of intermission?	
30	Has the student been informed about any sources of financial support?	
Rest facilities		
31	Has the student been informed about rest facilities on campus that can be used during their pregnancy?	

Childcare		
32	Has the student been signposted to childcare information?	
33	Is the (UK) student aware that their mode of study will affect their childcare funding entitlements?	
International students		
34	Is the student an international student?	
35	If yes, have they consulted with the Immigration & Compliance team regarding any visa implications?	
36	Have they been informed about possible airline restrictions on travelling whilst pregnant?	
Return to study		
37	What support will be provided to the student on their return to study? (eg meetings with key staff etc)	
Breasting / Expressing milk on campus		
38	Does the student wish to breastfeed / express milk on campus and, if so, can this be accommodated? (This will need to be discussed with the Health and Safety Officer.)	
Further information		
39	Any other information or comments?	

Consent to share with the Course Leader		
40	Does the student consent to this form being shared with their Course Leader?	
Signatures		
Agreed by Student Wellbeing Adviser		
Name		
Title		
Signature		
Date		
Plan to be reviewed on:		
Agreed by student		
Name		
Signature		
Date		