

Postgraduate Researchers: Guidance about maternity and adoption and partner leave arrangements

Doctoral Academy – September 2023

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Guidance about maternity and adoption and partner leave arrangements for postgraduate research candidates

1. Introduction

The arrangements within this guidance were agreed by the Doctoral Academy Sub Committee at its meeting of January 2023. The guidance complies with the [University's Student pregnancy, maternity and adoption policy \(PDF\)](#) November 2022 and must be read in conjunction with that policy. For UWE Bristol funded PGR candidates the guidance also aligns, where possible, to the arrangements within the [UKRI Training Grant terms and conditions](#) for paid maternity, adoption and parental leave.

The University is committed to the following principles in its treatment of pregnancy, maternity, and adoption as it relates to students including postgraduate research degree candidates:

- Students will be supported throughout the period of pregnancy and maternity or adoption and, wherever practicable, will not be unreasonably prevented from applying for, registering upon, or successfully completing a programme of study.
- All reasonable steps will be taken to avoid less favourable treatment of pregnant students and students in a period of maternity or adoption. The degree of flexibility shown is likely to vary between programmes of study because of their differing requirements.
- The health and wellbeing of students will be always considered of paramount importance.

2. Notification of pregnancy, health and safety, support plan

There is no legal requirement for applicants or students to inform the University if they are pregnant or become pregnant whilst registered on a programme of study, including whilst on placement.

PGRs are asked to let the University know of pregnancy at the earliest opportunity (and preferably at least 15 weeks before the baby is due) so the University can put in place appropriate support measures (known as "Reasonable Adjustments"). Early notification is especially relevant for PGRs whose programme of research study may involve potentially high risks to themselves and /or the child. For late notifications we will endeavour to do everything we can to make sure the PGR student has the right support.

PGR candidates should refer to the [University policy for student pregnancy, maternity and adoption \(PDF\)](#), as they are eligible for the same support arrangements as for all students.

Where the University policy refers to a programme leader's health and safety risk assessment, this will be the responsibility of the PGR's Director of Studies for MPhil, PhD and DPhil awards.

3. PGR maternity, adoption and partner leave

All PGRs (full time and part time)

(If you are a UK National or otherwise qualify for [UK home student fees](#)):

- Up to 52 weeks maternity or primary adopter leave if the expected week of childbirth or placement of the child will occur during the period of registration on the award. The earliest maternity leave can commence is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.
- Where eligible, up to 50 weeks **unpaid** parental leave to be completed within 12 months of the birth or placement of the child, to be taken in up to three blocks or all at once. Eligible PGRs are those who are the second parent/will share primary responsibility for the child with its birth mother, or with the primary adopter.
- In all cases maximum active study end date to be extended by the number of weeks taken.
- An individual PGR may take one only of maternity/primary adopter leave, or unpaid extended parental leave per birth/placement of a child.
- PGRs who are the partner of the birth mother or primary adopter, will be entitled to up to two weeks leave to be completed within 56 days of the birth or placement (formerly known as paternity leave). Their next progression milestone will be extended by two weeks, and correspondingly two weeks will be added to their maximum active study end date.

International PGRs with student visas (tier 4)

International students with student visas who become pregnant during their studies are advised that they must seek up-to-date immigration advice promptly from a [UWE Bristol Immigration Adviser](#). Students cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity, and the maximum period of approved authorised absence will be considered on an individual basis in line with UK Visa and Immigration Authority (UKVI) regulations. In all cases, the University's legal responsibilities in relation to the sponsorship of international students under the points-based immigration system will have to take precedence.

4. Maternity or primary adopter pay, and ordinary paternity/partner pay.

- UKRI funded PGRs eligible as per the current arrangements in the [UKRI training grant standard terms and conditions](#) (Maternity and Primary adopter: 26 weeks at full bursary, 13 weeks commensurate with SMP, 13 weeks unpaid. Ordinary paternity/partner two weeks paid).
- UWE Bristol Bursary funded PGRs - arrangements will mirror current UKRI arrangements with regard to maternity/primary adopter pay, and ordinary paternity/partner pay (two weeks paid).
- Note: UWE Bristol Bursary funded PGRs who have received their bursary in full by the start of their maternity/adopter leave are not eligible for maternity pay.
- Self-funded PGRs – are not eligible for maternity/adopter pay from UWE Bristol but are eligible for unpaid leave as at section 3 above.
- PGRs sponsored by their employer or other organisation but not in receipt of a UWE Bristol or UKRI bursary studentship – are not eligible maternity/adopter pay from UWE Bristol, PGRs should contact sponsor/employer about their intended leave and any possible pay.

Note: Shared **paid** parental leave is not available for funded UWE Bristol Bursary funded PGRs. This mirrors UKRI arrangements. However, unpaid parental leave is available for eligible PGRs as at section 3 above.

5. Applying for Maternity, adoption, and parental leave

- During 2023/24 the Doctoral Academy will make a specific maternity, adoption, and parental leave form available for completion on its webpages.
- In the meantime, all PGRs should complete and submit the personal circumstances form ensuring that they state their anticipated start date for maternity/adoption leave and indicate whether they are in receipt of a UWE Bristol funded or UKRI funded studentship bursary. Appropriate evidence should be attached e.g., MATB1 or other document showing your expected week of childbirth, or evidence showing the expected date of adoption placement.
- All personal information will be treated confidentially and shared only with designated staff within the Doctoral Academy or other relevant professional service, and the Personal Circumstances panel as strictly necessary in order to approve the leave.
- Please make sure that you apply for this leave in good time wherever possible, as this will ensure that appropriate adjustments can be made to your research project plan.
- If you need to begin your maternity or adoption leave earlier than anticipated please let the Doctoral Academy know so that your student record can be amended appropriately, and any maternity or adoption leave payments can be initiated.

- If you suffer a stillbirth or miscarriage after the 24th week of pregnancy, you will still be entitled to the maternity leave and any maternity pay that you qualify for. If a stillbirth or a miscarriage happens before the 24th week of pregnancy, there is no entitlement to maternity leave or pay. However, you may wish to consider suspending your registration during this difficult time, and all such requests will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and sensitivity. Please get in touch with the Doctoral Academy.