



New and Expectant Mother's Policy (Student)

LOCAL POLICY

Version 3

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Policy Compliance details:-

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PLEASE NOTE: Policies must be equality screened before being submitted to SLT and Trade Unions:-

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2.0	Learner Success	Review Amendment Schedule extended to 3 years	September 2021
3.0	Learner Success	4.1 – minor typing amendments 4.2 – paragraph themes clarified 4.3 – Removal of reference to International Office + minor typing amendments 4.5 – minor typing amendments 4.6 – minor typing amendments 4.7 – numbering added to paragraph on Quality Assurance. Reference to review period amended to bring it into line with 3-year stipulation in V2 Appendix B – new link added	September 2024

Table setting out the version history of this Policy - what changes were made, when and by whom

Distribution

This document has been distributed as follows:

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Table setting out policy details

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1. Policy Aim

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the provision of a safe learning environment with safe systems for new or expectant mothers (including when on placement), in accordance with the following frameworks:

- The Colleges general Health and Safety Policy and its commitment to taking all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, students and other persons who may be affected by its activities.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 which require all employers to carry out a risk assessment where women of childbearing age, expectant or new mothers may be at risk from a work process, working conditions or physical, chemical or biological agent.
- The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976, where if the College fails to protect the health and safety of its pregnant workers (including a failure to conduct general workplace risk assessment under health and safety regulations) it is automatically considered unlawful sex discrimination.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students who are (or in the future could be) new or expectant mothers (including through adoption).

3. Definitions

A 'new or expectant mother' is defined as a woman who is pregnant, who has given birth within the previous six months or who is breastfeeding. The term 'given birth' means a woman who has delivered a living child or, after 24 weeks of pregnancy, a stillborn child. As stated, the policy also applies to a mother through adoption.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Notification

Female students are not under any obligation to inform the college about their pregnancy. However, for health and safety purposes and to enable support it is recommended that the student advises their course coordinator at the earliest opportunity. This information may need to be shared with other members of staff for health and safety reasons and to facilitate help or support for the student during their course. It may also need to be shared with an external placement provider if applicable or to manage the risk to the mother and baby

depending on the nature of the course. Therefore, for their own and their child's protection, it is recommended that the student inform the course team as soon as possible. The student must provide written consent for the sharing of this information to the course co-ordinator. The document should also state the names of those with whom we need to be in contact and must be held securely on the student file. The College will be unable to take supportive action until notified formally by the student.

4.2 Continuation of study

Being pregnant or a new mother does not prevent a student from continuing a course. The College will be as supportive as possible to ensure that no student is disadvantaged and that academic standards are not compromised. The health and safety of a pregnant student is of paramount importance, and course teams will deal with all students covered by this policy in a sensitive, non-judgemental, and confidential manner, providing context and advice to students to enable informed student choices.

Areas to be considered by the College to help the student to continue with study are: -

Health and Safety: - There may be aspects of a course that could present a health and safety risk to a pregnant student and/or the child. A curriculum area can only arrange appropriate risk assessments and implement risk management procedures when notified of the pregnancy.

Attendance: The curriculum team will work with the student to help minimise the impact of any pregnancy-related absences (for example, for antenatal appointments). The curriculum area will only be able to take account of the reasons for the absence if they are notified of these.

As mentioned, in some cases, a student's pregnancy and/or pregnancy-related absence might need to be discussed with other organisations, e.g., placement providers.

In some circumstances the absence of a student could also adversely affect the work of other students, for example within a group/team project. Notification of pregnancy and absences can help staff minimise the impact.

4.3 Risk Assessment

The College will regularly review its general workplace risk assessments which include consideration of any risks to female employees/students of childbearing age who could become pregnant and any risks to new and expectant mothers (e.g., from a two process, conditions, or the use of physical, chemical or biological agents).

Until the College receives written notification of pregnancy, it is not obliged to take any action other than those resulting from the general workplace risk assessments.

Since conditions generally considered acceptable may no longer be so during pregnancy and while breastfeeding, the College will conduct a specific, separate risk assessment (See Appendix A and B) and put appropriate measures in place to protect new and expectant mothers' health and that of their unborn child(ren). The College will follow the steps set out in HSE guidance for assessing risks to new and expectant mothers.

Once officially notified of a student pregnancy, the course co-ordinator will carry out a specific, separate risk assessment (Appendix B) and put appropriate measures in place to protect the woman's health and that of her unborn child(ren). The student will be asked to help with this, and it is important that she provides any advice received from her doctor or midwife that could impact on the assessment. (Appendix A).

Once a student has made contact to inform the College about her pregnancy, or nursing requirements adoption circumstances, an identified staff contact will arrange a meeting with the student, normally within 5 working days of the date of notification. The meeting will discuss/identify potential options for study support; and, for new and expectant mothers (i.e. a student who is pregnant, has given birth within the previous six months or is breast feeding), it will include the development of a risk assessment. Please check the Health and Safety section of the staff intranet for the forms required for this or contact the Health and Safety Manager in Estates ([Joe McNeill](#)) for further advice.

Students should be given as much support as possible and be advised by the Course Coordinator of the services provided by the Student Wellbeing Service. Where necessary alternative study options should be proposed, while taking account of financial and health and safety considerations.

Students should meet regularly with the designated member of staff to review progress, supports and risk assessments. As the pregnancy develops these arrangements may need to be reviewed and revised. Where necessary, further adjustments can be considered.

Some options to consider are outlined below; however, all must be discussed and agreed within the School and/or the Awarding Body.

- Arrangements for periods of absence and for the student to catch-up on lectures/tutorials missed for pregnancy/birth related reasons, to ensure the student is not at an academic disadvantage.
- Adjusting timescales/deadlines for assessed coursework if the pregnancy or birth prevents completion.

- Seeking approval, as appropriate, from the School for alternative means of assessment for the student (for example, a written assessment instead of a physical performance if the awarding body permits this) if the pregnancy or birth prevents the normal methods of assessment.
- Allowing the student first attempt re-sits at future examination periods, for example in a situation in which the pregnancy or birth prevents the student from taking an examination at the normal time for the programme of study.
- Adjustments in response to the risk assessments (e.g. for students participating in field trips/study trips, work placements, working with chemicals or equipment which may pose a danger to the health of a pregnant student or foetus; or taking programmes which involve high levels of physical activity).

There may be particular considerations required for international students, who should discuss arrangements in the first instance with the Course Coordinator.

4.4 Controlling Risk

Students will be advised (directly or through Health and Safety representatives) of identified risks and preventative and protective measures implemented to reduce, remove or control them.

If a significant health and safety risk is identified for a new or expectant mother which goes beyond the normal level of risk found outside the College, action will be taken to reduce, remove or control the risk. If measures required by other health and safety legislation are needed to control the risks identified, the College undertakes to alter the student's conditions and/or hours of study.

The College will regularly monitor and review specific, separate risk assessments to take into account possible risks that may occur at different stages of the pregnancy. This will be done at least every 2 months or earlier should any substantial changes occur in the workplace, working practices, or the individual's medical condition.

4.5 Return to work

A student can be welcomed back to College as early as two weeks after the birth of their child if pronounced medically fit for any practical environment. Should a student wish to return less than three months following the birth of their child they should get a letter from their G.P. which advises the college of their fitness to study. Staff should link with the College Health and Safety Manager for advice as a risk assessment may need to be undertaken.

4.6 Breastfeeding/ Expressing

The College will provide students with the flexibility to take lactation breaks during the day. These can be negotiated between the student and their Course Coordinator / Personal Tutor

Some mothers choose to continue breastfeeding after they return to college. If a student intends to breastfeed or express during normal college hours, she must inform the Course Coordinator well in advance of her return to College to allow plenty of time for arrangements to be put in place for her return. The Course Coordinator can contact Learner Success for further guidance. Breastfeeding in the College can encompass a number of different arrangements and the College must consider each situation on an individual basis, paying close attention to what the student has requested.

A private room (not a toilet) shall be available for students to breastfeed or express milk. The room will be private, lockable and clean, located near a sink with running water for washing hands and rinsing out breast pump parts, and have an electrical outlet. Expressed milk should be stored in sealed container in a personal cool bag and if available the cool bag can be placed in a designated refrigerator. The Course Co-ordinator can provide specific information on this following advice from Learner Success.

Titanic Quarter Campus

Student Wellbeing Office TQ 1- 046 has two private break-off rooms integrated within the office with equivalent facilities - booking arrangements are through your School's allocated Student Wellbeing Officer.

Millfield Campus

The Student Support Hub in Building 1 has facilities which can be used for this purpose. Booking arrangements are through your School's allocated Student Wellbeing Officer.

Castlereagh Campus

The Student Support Hub has facilities can be used for this purpose. Booking arrangement are through your School's allocated Student Wellbeing Officer.

E3 Campus

Suitable facilities will be sourced by your Student Wellbeing Officer as required.

4.7 Quality Assurance

The following processes must be followed to monitor and review this document:

- It will be monitored on an ongoing basis and subject to a full review at least every three years.
- It may also be updated if changes or improvements in processes or procedures are identified.

- In monitoring and reviewing the document, the following will be taken into consideration:
 - feedback regarding the content and format of the document;
 - uptake and usage;
 - comments or complaints regarding the document;
 - Equality information and monitoring data.

5. Links to other Documents

Internal Documents:

[Health & Safety Policy](#)

[Covid-19 Guidance](#)

[Student Fitness, Attendance and Punctuality Policy](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

External Documents

[HSE New and Expectant Mothers](#)

6. Complaints

It is hoped that we will be able to resolve any complaint through the [complaints procedure](#). If the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome they have the right to raise the matter with the Northern Ireland Ombudsman's Office (in his/her role as Commissioner for Complaints).

The customer can complain to the Ombudsman; however, the Ombudsman will normally only consider a complaint after it has been managed in accordance with the College's Customer Complaints Policy.

Contact details for the Ombudsman are:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Appendix A - Identification of Possible Risks

While it is a legal obligation for employers to regularly review general workplace risks, there is no legal requirement to conduct a specific, separate risk assessment for new and expectant mothers. However, the College wishes to complete an assessment to identify any specific risks and decide if additional action is required.

Specific Risks or Possible risks may include any of those set out in the table below.

Physical Agents	Chemical Agents	Biological Agents	Working Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movements and postures • Manual handling • Shocks and vibrations • Noise • Radiation (ionising and non-ionising) • Compressed air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic chemicals • Mercury • Pesticides • Carbon monoxide • Lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infectious diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities (including rest rooms) • Mental and physical fatigue, working hours • Stress (including post-natal depression) • Passive smoking • Temperature • Working with visual display units (VDUs) • Working alone • Working at height

Physical Agents <i>Table showing Specific Risks or Possible Risks</i>	Chemical Agents	Biological Agents	Working Conditions
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelling • Violence • Personal protective equipment

Once
officially
notified of
a staff

pregnancy, the appropriate Line Manager will carry out a specific, separate risk assessment. The sample assessment below can be used as a guide to assist completion.

Sample Risk Assessment

Staff Name:		Date of Assessment:		
Assessment Completed by:	Line Manager	Due Date:		
Hazards to Consider	Current Controls?	Further Controls Required?	Responsibility	Complete?
1). Does work involve lifting, carrying, moving heavy items or any significant physical activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foldable trolley provided for transporting of teaching materials No hazardous handling identified during the assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have all staff received manual handling awareness training? 	Health & Safety Coordinator	
2). Does work involve frequent walking or use of college stairs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College lifts provided if required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If occupying stairs please use hand rails provided Take extra caution for potential spillages 	Expectant Mother	On-going good practice
3). Do tasks involve working at height (WAH)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only authorised personnel to work at height 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further controls 	N/A	N/A

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate risk assessment conducted for WAH tasks 			
4). Are you standing for long periods?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seating provided within classroom environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further controls 	N/A	N/A
5). Have you significant distance to travel in the event of an emergency?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in close proximity to fire exit route and aware of college procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further controls 	N/A	N/A
6). Does work involve confined, narrow access or lone working?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No exposure to confined spaces or lone working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further controls 	N/A	N/A
7). Does work involve remote locations or involve travel?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No exposure to remote locations or further travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further controls 	N/A	N/A
8). Are you classified as a home worker?		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9). Have you significant distance to toilet facilities?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close proximity to toilet facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further controls 	N/A	N/A
10). Have you any concerns regarding		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows can be opened with oil heating provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further controls 	N/A	N/A

workplace temperature?					
11). Are you a 'computer user' i.e. frequent daily use of one hour or more?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional DSE assessment required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact josephmcneill@belfastmet.ac.uk 	Health & Safety Coordinator	
12). Have you a requirement to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laboratory requirements include overalls, gloves and eye protection. All available during the assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further controls 	N/A	N/A
13). Do you work with substances deemed hazardous to health?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COSHH assessments in place Substances that may cause harm to the unborn child have been identified & avoided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure substances that may cause harm to the unborn child are adequately stored & secured 	Line Manager	
14). Is anyone likely to be exposed to cigarette smoke whilst at college?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated smoking shelter onsite No smoking signs positioned at exit doors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further controls 		
15). Are you aware of campus first aid provision and relevant resting facilities?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First aiders can be contacted via reception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further controls 		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resting facilities provided within staff and student social areas. Filtered water provided on all sites 			
16). Are you aware of 'Inspire Workplaces'?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free, confidential and immediate support available to all staff & students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further controls 		
Review Date	Details of any change?	Further Controls Required?	Action by who & when?	Completed (Yes/No)	

Table showing Sample Risk Assessment

Appendix B: Health and Safety - Expectant Mothers' Risk Assessment

[Click here to link to the New and Expectant Mother's Risk Assessment on the Staff Intranet](#)