



QAHE Limited Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parent Policy for Students

Prepared by: Safeguarding and Student Welfare Manager

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1. Introduction

QAHE Limited (QA Higher Education) is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. We recognise that pregnancy, parenthood, and related circumstances can present unique challenges during a student's studies. This policy aims to outline the support, guidance, and resources available to students who are pregnant, have recently given birth, are becoming parents through adoption, fertility treatment, or surrogacy, or whose partner is expecting a child.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive appropriate pastoral and wellbeing support while balancing their academic commitments. It sets out the procedures for notifying QA Higher Education, planning for support, managing absences, and facilitating a smooth return to study, with the goal of promoting student wellbeing and academic success.

By clearly defining these processes, QA Higher Education seeks to create a safe, inclusive, and responsive environment where students can continue their education while navigating the demands of parenthood or pregnancy.

2. Policy Ownership

The Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Department at QA Higher Education holds overall responsibility for the development, implementation, and review of this policy. The Welfare Team is accountable for ensuring the procedures outlined are followed and that students receive the appropriate support and guidance in accordance with this policy.

The Academic Team and other relevant departments, including Attendance, Finance, and Student Advice & Support, are responsible for supporting the Welfare Team in implementing adjustments, monitoring attendance, and facilitating academic accommodations where required.

Policy ownership includes:

- Reviewing the policy on a regular basis to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practice.
- Updating procedures as necessary to reflect changes in student needs, legal requirements, or institutional processes.
- Providing training and guidance to staff involved in supporting students covered by this policy.
- Ensuring clear communication of the policy to all students and staff.

The Welfare Team serves as the primary point of contact for any queries regarding the policy and is responsible for coordinating support plans, risk assessments, and ongoing wellbeing assistance.



3. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled with QA Higher Education through any of its university partners. It covers students who:

- Are pregnant at any point during their course.
- Have given birth within six weeks prior to the start of their course.
- Are becoming parents through adoption, surrogacy, or fertility treatment.
- Have a partner who becomes pregnant during their course.

The policy outlines the support available for these students, including wellbeing guidance, academic accommodations, absence management, and procedures for returning to study. It also addresses related circumstances, such as miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal death, or termination of pregnancy.

This policy is intended to ensure that all students experiencing pregnancy or early parenthood have access to appropriate support and guidance while continuing their academic studies.

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms are defined as:

- **Student:** Any undergraduate or postgraduate individual enrolled with QA Higher Education through one of its university partners.
- **Pregnancy:** The state of carrying a developing embryo or foetus. This includes all stages of pregnancy, from conception to birth.
- **Parent / New Parent:** Any student who has given birth, adopted a child, is a surrogate parent, or whose partner has given birth during their course of study.
- **Fertility Treatment:** Medical interventions or procedures aimed at assisting a student in achieving pregnancy, including but not limited to in-vitro fertilization (IVF), intrauterine insemination (IUI), and related therapies.
- **Support Plan:** A tailored plan created in consultation with the Welfare Team to provide practical, emotional, and academic support for a student during pregnancy or early parenthood.
- **Risk Assessment:** A process carried out by the Welfare Team to identify potential health, safety, or wellbeing risks associated with a student's pregnancy or parenthood and to determine appropriate adjustments or support measures.
- **Leave of Absence:** A temporary break from study, approved by QA Higher Education, allowing a student to step away from their course due to pregnancy, parenthood, or other personal circumstances.
- **Fitness to Study:** An assessment conducted by a medical professional to confirm that a student is physically and/or mentally able to resume their academic studies safely.
- **Stillbirth / Neonatal Death / Miscarriage:**
 - **Miscarriage:** Loss of a pregnancy before 24 weeks gestation.
 - **Stillbirth:** Loss of a pregnancy after 24 weeks gestation.



- **Neonatal Death:** Death of a newborn within 28 days of birth.
- **Termination of Pregnancy:** The medical or surgical ending of a pregnancy, also known as abortion.
- **Breastfeeding / Milk Expression:** The feeding of a child with breast milk directly or expressing milk for later feeding.

5. Policy Statement

QA Higher Education is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for all students, including those who are pregnant, are new parents, or are becoming parents through adoption, surrogacy, or fertility treatment.

This policy confirms QA Higher Education's commitment to:

- Ensuring the wellbeing, safety, and academic success of students affected by pregnancy or parenthood.
- Providing timely and tailored pastoral, emotional, and practical support through the Welfare Team and other relevant departments.
- Facilitating reasonable adjustments to academic study, attendance, and assessment where required, in line with agreed Support Plans and Risk Assessments.
- Supporting students in managing absences related to pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, or fertility treatment, while ensuring compliance with academic requirements.
- Promoting an inclusive environment free from discrimination, bullying, or harassment based on pregnancy, parenthood, or related circumstances.
- Encouraging open communication between students and QA Higher Education staff to ensure that all support needs are identified and met.

QA Higher Education recognises that each student's circumstances are unique and will take a flexible, student-centred approach to provide the necessary support while maintaining the integrity of academic study.

6. Responsibilities

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff and students in ensuring the effective implementation of this policy:

6.1. QA Higher Education – Safeguarding, Student Life & Wellbeing Department

- Overall responsibility for the development, implementation, and review of the policy.
- Ensuring staff are trained and aware of procedures to support students during pregnancy or parenthood.
- Coordinating Support Plans, Risk Assessments, and ongoing pastoral support for students.
- Acting as the primary point of contact for students seeking guidance or assistance.



6.2. Welfare Team

- Responding to student notifications of pregnancy or parenthood.
- Conducting Support Plan meetings and Risk Assessments.
- Providing practical and emotional support throughout pregnancy, early parenthood, or related circumstances.
- Assisting with absence reporting, mitigating circumstances, and referrals to other departments or specialist support where necessary.

6.3. Academic Team

- Considering requests for academic adjustments, extensions, or mitigating circumstances in line with approved Support Plans.
- Supporting students' continued engagement with their studies while balancing pregnancy or parenthood responsibilities.

6.4. Attendance Team

- Recording and monitoring student absences.
- Ensuring absences related to pregnancy or parenthood are logged appropriately.

6.5. Finance Team

- Providing guidance and support on financial matters, including SFE, grants, or childcare-related inquiries.

6.6. Students

- Informing the Welfare Team of pregnancy, parenthood, or related circumstances where they wish to access support.
- Providing appropriate evidence for medical appointments, absences, or fitness to study assessments as required.
- Engaging with Support Plans, Risk Assessments, and recommended wellbeing interventions.
- Maintaining communication with QA Higher Education staff regarding their academic progress and support needs.

6.7. All Staff

- Ensuring a non-discriminatory, inclusive, and supportive approach when interacting with students affected by pregnancy or parenthood.
- Escalating concerns about a student's wellbeing to the Welfare Team promptly.

7. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following QA Higher Education policies and procedures, which provide further guidance on supporting students and maintaining wellbeing:



- **Student Attendance Policy** – Guidance on reporting absences and attendance monitoring.
- **Mitigating and Extenuating Circumstances Policy** – Procedures for requesting extensions or consideration for assessments affected by personal circumstances.
- **Leave of Absence Policy** – Guidance for students seeking a temporary break from their studies.
- **Fitness to Study Policy** – Procedures for assessing a student’s ability to safely continue their studies following medical or wellbeing concerns.
- **Safeguarding Policy** – Procedures for protecting students’ welfare and ensuring a safe learning environment.
- **Complaints Policy** – Guidance on raising concerns regarding discrimination, bullying, harassment, or unsatisfactory support.
- **Mental Health Support Policy** – Information on accessing specialist mental health support for pre- and post-natal care, stress, or related challenges.
- **Equality and Diversity Policy** – Guidance on promoting inclusive practices and preventing discrimination.

Students and staff are encouraged to refer to these policies for further detail where required, to ensure a consistent and supportive approach to student wellbeing and academic success.

8. Implementation Procedures

The procedures below outline how QA Higher Education implements support for students who are pregnant, new parents, or becoming parents through adoption, surrogacy, or fertility treatment:

8.1. Notification

- Students are encouraged, though not legally required, to notify the Welfare Team of their pregnancy, adoption, or parenthood.
- Notification can be made via email, phone, or in-person meeting with the Welfare Team.

8.2. Support Plan & Risk Assessment

- Once notified, the student will be allocated a Welfare Advisor.
- An initial meeting will be arranged to discuss the student’s needs, complete a Support Plan, and conduct a Risk Assessment.
- The student will review and sign the plan to confirm agreed adjustments and support measures.

8.3. Absence Management

- Students should, where possible, schedule medical appointments outside of academic commitments.
- If an absence is necessary, students must notify the Attendance Team in writing and provide evidence where possible.



- Supported absences for childbirth, adoption, or medical intervention will be managed according to the policy's guidance on maternity, paternity, and parental leave.

8.4. Academic Adjustments

- The Welfare Team will work with the Academic Team to implement reasonable adjustments, including extensions, mitigating circumstances, or alternative assessment arrangements.
- Students may request additional support in line with the Mitigating and Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

8.5. Return to Study

- Upon discharge from hospital or completion of a relevant period of absence, students should provide any required documentation to the Welfare Team.
- A Return to Study meeting will be arranged to review wellbeing and confirm any ongoing support needs.
- Fitness to Study confirmation may be requested from a medical professional where appropriate.

8.6. Ongoing Support

- The Welfare Team will provide continuous pastoral support throughout pregnancy, parenthood, or related circumstances.
- Mental health practitioners are available for additional emotional or psychological support.
- Specialist external support services may be recommended for students experiencing miscarriage, neonatal loss, or other complex circumstances.

8.7. Monitoring and Review

- The Welfare Team will monitor the effectiveness of support measures and liaise with academic and attendance teams to ensure students remain engaged with their studies.
- Any concerns regarding the implementation of the policy should be reported to the Safeguarding, Student Life & Wellbeing Department.

9. Monitoring and Compliance

QA Higher Education monitors the implementation of this policy to ensure effective support for students and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. This includes:

- Reviewing Support Plans, Risk Assessments, and academic adjustments.
- Tracking notifications, absences, and related student feedback.
- Ensuring staff are trained and aware of their responsibilities.

All staff and students must follow the procedures outlined in this policy. Staff are responsible for providing support fairly and inclusively, while students must engage with the Welfare Team and provide required documentation.



Non-compliance may result in a review of support measures, escalation through QA Higher Education procedures, or investigation of any breaches of equality, safeguarding, or attendance requirements.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

Purpose: To assess the potential impact of this policy on students with protected characteristics and ensure it promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Assessment:

- This policy supports students who are pregnant, new parents, or becoming parents through adoption, surrogacy, or fertility treatment, ensuring fair access to academic support, adjustments, and wellbeing resources.
- The policy applies equally to all students, regardless of gender, age, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or marital status.
- By providing tailored support and flexible arrangements, the policy reduces the risk of disadvantage or discrimination.
- Monitoring and feedback mechanisms are in place to identify any unintended negative impacts and address them promptly.

Conclusion:

The policy promotes equality of opportunity and inclusivity for all students affected by pregnancy or parenthood and supports QA Higher Education's commitment to an inclusive, non-discriminatory learning environment.

11. Data Protection

QA Higher Education is committed to handling all personal data in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

- Any information collected as part of this policy, including details of pregnancy, parenthood, medical records, and support plans, will be treated as confidential and stored securely.
- Access to personal data is limited to staff who require it to provide support or implement agreed adjustments.
- Students' data will only be shared with relevant parties with their consent, or where legally required, for safeguarding or academic purposes.
- Personal information will be retained only for as long as necessary to provide support and comply with legal obligations, after which it will be securely deleted or anonymised.

Students have the right to access, correct, or request deletion of their personal data in line with QA Higher Education's Data Protection Policy.



12. Further Information

For additional guidance, support, or queries related to this policy, students and staff can contact the following:

- **Welfare Team** – Emotional and practical support, support plans, and risk assessments.
Email: qahe.welfare@qa.com | Phone: 0203 921 0163
 - **Mental Health Practitioners** – Support for mental health, including pre- and post-natal wellbeing.
Email: qahe.mentalhealthsupport@qa.com | Phone: 0203 921 0163
 - **Attendance Team** – Absence notifications and attendance queries.
Email: qahe.attendance@qa.com
 - **Finance Team** – Queries on SFE, grants, or financial support.
Email: qahe.financesupport@qa.com
 - **Get Back on Track** – Guidance on breaks or leave of absence.
Email: qahe.getbackontrack@qa.com
- Further information and guidance can also be found via QA Higher Education's Student Advice & Support Centre and partner university resources.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current, effective, and compliant with legal and regulatory requirements.

- **Frequency:** The policy will be formally reviewed every 3 years or sooner if there are changes to legislation, QA Higher Education procedures, or student needs.
- **Responsibility:** The Safeguarding, Student Life & Wellbeing Department is responsible for conducting the review and updating the policy.
- **Consultation:** Reviews will include consultation with relevant staff, students, and partner universities to ensure the policy continues to provide effective and inclusive support.
- **Communication:** Any updates or changes will be communicated to students and staff through appropriate channels, including email, the QA Higher Education website, and internal staff briefings.

