



Pregnancy (Maternity) policy

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1. Introduction

This policy applies to those expecting a baby on or after 30th March 2025.

The Maternity Policy explains both statutory and contractual maternity benefits and provides links to related benefits such as Shared Parental Leave.

2. Scope of policy

The policy applies to all employees, across all grades and groups including academic and professional services, fixed term and Associate Lecturers, part time and full time, permanent and temporary.

It does not apply to workers, contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.

This policy does not form part of any employees' contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

3. Responsibilities

3.1. Employee

- Comply with the requirements of the Maternity Policy
- Ensure that any application for maternity leave and/or pay is made in accordance with this policy and any statutory requirements
- Cooperate with management in the execution of their duties and responsibilities in relation to this policy
- In the case of a pregnant employee, to carry out risk assessments as appropriate and in order to safeguard health, safety and welfare of yourself and your unborn child at all times

3.2. Line Manager

- Understand the Maternity policy, and related procedures, attending appropriate training as required
- Ensure that employees are aware of the Maternity policy
- Treat pregnant employees consistently and with respect, understanding and sensitivity
- Manage any requests received in accordance with the requirements of the policy
- Complete a comprehensive risk assessment with the employee as early as possible once you have been made aware of the pregnancy and revisit the risk assessment as appropriate

- Remain in regular and reasonable contact with the employee for the duration of the pregnancy and maternity leave period. Advice and support on maintaining contact during the maternity leave period will be given by HR

3.3. Human Resources

- Ensure that the Maternity policy is kept up to date and in particular reflects any changes to entitlement
- Provide training, coaching, advice, guidance and support as appropriate
- Acknowledge, process and administer any request received and made in accordance with this scheme

4. Maternity rights

All pregnant employees regardless of hours worked and length of service have the following rights:

- Up to 52 weeks Maternity Leave subject to meeting notification criteria. Employees can choose how much Maternity Leave they wish to take, however they must take at least two weeks of compulsory maternity leave immediately after the child is born.
- Return to work to the same job and the same terms and conditions or if that is not reasonably practicable (e.g. the job no longer exists) to a suitable alternative position.
- Protection against dismissal for reasons wholly or partly relating to pregnancy.
- Maternity leave does not count as a break in service. The employee, whilst on maternity leave, is entitled to full contractual benefits, excluding remuneration.
- Paid time off for antenatal care.

5. Notification of Pregnancy (maternity) - employee obligations

An employee wishing to exercise their rights under the Pregnancy (maternity) policy needs to inform the Human Resources Department no later than the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) of:

- Their pregnancy
- Their expected week of childbirth. In order to receive SMP the employee must produce a certificate (normally a MAT B1 form) from a registered medical practitioner or a registered midwife confirming the EWC
- The date on which they intend to start their Maternity Leave. This must be in writing using the below forms, and cannot commence earlier than the Sunday at the beginning of the 11th week before the EWC

A Pregnancy (Maternity) Leave application form should be completed and submitted their line manager.

An employee may change the date on which they intend to start their maternity leave provided that they notify the University no later than 28 days before either the original start date or the new date on which they intend their maternity leave to start, whichever is the earliest.

In order to preserve their rights to maternity leave and pay, an employee absent from work as a result of a pregnancy related illness on or after the first day of the beginning of the fourth week before the expected week of childbirth must notify Human Resources of the reason for their absence as soon as it is reasonably practicable. Maternity leave and pay will commence automatically on the day after the first day of maternity related absence.

Ideally, an employee will notify their line manager as soon as they feel comfortable that they are pregnant so that they may take paid time off to attend their antenatal appointments. This will also help the University to ensure that we are able to address any health and safety concerns in a timely manner.

6. Time off for antenatal care

An employee is entitled to take reasonable paid time off during normal working hours to receive antenatal care. Antenatal care includes appointments with their GP, hospital clinics and any other appointments (for example relaxation classes) made on the advice of a doctor, midwife or health visitor.

An employee should give their line manager as much notice as possible of times when they will be absent from work and may be asked to produce relevant appointment cards.

Any individual who has a qualifying relationship (which includes the employee spouse, civil partner and the father of the expected child) with the employee taking Maternity leave, has a statutory right to unpaid time off to accompany the employee to up to two antenatal appointments. They would need to contact their employer to request time off in these circumstances.

7. Risk assessments and action plans

The university has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of pregnant employees.

The line manager will carry out an individual Maternity risk assessment as soon as they receive written notice that an employee is pregnant, has given birth in the last six months or is breastfeeding. The risk assessment will be used to identify possible risks to the employee and their unborn child, including:

- Lifting or carrying heavy loads
- Standing or sitting for long periods
- Exposure to toxic substances
- Long working hours
- Stress risk factors

Where a risk is identified, the university must either remove the risk or remove the employee from being exposed to it (for example, by offering suitable alternative work). If neither of these is possible, the employee may be suspended from work on full pay.

A general guide on how to undertake risk [assessments](#) can be found on the [Health and Safety section on new mothers](#). Further advice and guidance can be obtained from the SHE office.

8. Pregnancy (maternity) leave entitlement

Subject to meeting the notification criteria detailed in our policy scope, all pregnant employees are entitled to up to 52 weeks maternity leave regardless of length of service.

Subject to both parents meeting the eligibility criteria, the mother of the child may take a combination of maternity and shared parental leave provided that the total amount of leave does not exceed 52 weeks. For further information and guidance please refer to the [Shared Parental Leave Policy](#) on the HR web pages.

9. Pregnancy (maternity) pay

In order to qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) an employee must:

- have been continuously employed by the University for a minimum of 26 weeks at the 15th week before the EWC and;
- be employed during that week, i.e. has not resigned or been dismissed before the beginning of that week; and
- have been earning no less than the lower earnings limit for National Insurance (for current rates [click here](#)).

An employee who does not qualify for SMP may be entitled to claim Maternity Allowance (MA) from the Department for Work and Pensions/Jobcentre Plus Office. If this is the case, the university will provide the employee with an SMP1 form so that they are able to pursue a claim for maternity allowance.

Where an employee does not qualify for either SMP or MA they may be able to claim a [Sure Start Maternity Grant](#) instead.

9.1. Pregnancy (maternity package)

This package covers all employees who have been continuously employed for a period of not less than 26 weeks at the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC).

The employee is entitled to receive 26 weeks at 100% of full pay (made up of normal pay plus SMP, or maternity allowance if eligible – adjusted to ensure the employee does not exceed full pay).

The following 13 weeks will be paid at the standard rate of Statutory Maternity Pay per week or 90% of average earnings whichever is lower.

The final 13 weeks (totalling 52 weeks) will be unpaid.

Please check the Government website for the current [SMP rate](#).

Weeks	Employee with over 26 weeks continuous service at the 15th week before EWC, and entitled to SMP	Employee with over 26 weeks continuous service at the 15th week before EWC, and entitled to Maternity Allowance (MA)	Employee with under 26 weeks service at the 15th week before EWC and not eligible for SMP or MA
1 – 26	Full pay (incorporating 6 weeks higher rate SMP + 20 weeks lower rate SMP)	Full pay (less 26 weeks maternity allowance)	Unpaid

27 – 39	Lower rate SMP	Maternity Allowance	Unpaid
40 – 52	Unpaid	Unpaid	Unpaid

9.2 Statutory maternity pay - general principles

Early Births: If the baby is born early but after the employee has started to receive SMP it will continue to be paid. If the employee had not yet started to receive SMP, it will become payable from the day the baby is born.

Late Births: If the baby is born after the EWC, SMP is not affected.

Still Births: In the unfortunate and tragic event of a stillbirth the employee is entitled to SMP if the child is born after week 24 of the pregnancy.

Sickness in the last 4 weeks before EWC: Statutory maternity leave and pay will commence automatically on the day following the first day of absence from work because of pregnancy after the beginning of the fourth week before the expected week of childbirth. See the [Absence Management Policy](#).

9.3 Circumstances under which SMP is lost

If during the period the employee is paid SMP does any of the following the entitlement to SMP will cease:

- Is taken into legal custody
- Starts work for another employer
- Returns to work (excluding the permitted 10 Keeping in Touch days).

10. Pension

Employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) will continue to pay contributions on all maternity pay at their normal rate. Members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) will continue to make contributions whilst receiving at least half pay or receiving statutory Maternity Pay. Any periods of leave that are not subject to pension contributions will be classed as unpaid absence.

Members of the LGPS can elect to pay Additional Pension Contributions (APCs) to purchase the pension benefit lost during the period of unpaid absence. If the employee wishes to make up the amount of lost pension, they need to make the election within 30 days of returning to work to benefit from sharing the cost with the University. Applications received after 30 days will be for the employee only to fund. The Payroll Team will provide details of this process on their return to work. Further information is available on the [Avon Pension Fund website](#).

Members of the TPS may be able to buy additional pension, for further information on individual circumstances, further information can be found on the [Teachers' Pensions website](#).

11. Keeping in touch (KIT) days

An employee can agree with the University to attend work for up to 10 occasions during the statutory leave period (not including the 2 weeks compulsory leave immediately following the

date of the birth) without bringing that statutory period to an end. Each full or part day worked will be counted as one of the 10 occasions; however, claims can only be made for the actual number of hours worked. For the purposes of this provision, attendance will be paid at the employee's normal hourly rate of pay (or the standard rate for Associate Lecturing staff). The reasons for undertaking work during the period of maternity leave could include maintaining confidence and skill levels and staying informed of students' progress. KIT days may also include training, meetings or any other activity that assists the employee in keeping up to date with the workplace. Any days' work undertaken will not extend the statutory maternity leave period.

A KIT Day is considered a normal working day; therefore, appropriate childcare will need to be in place.

In order to generate a payment for any KIT days used, the employee's line manager will need to notify Human Resources of the day(s) attended and number of hours worked, within 7 working days. Due to payroll cut off dates, notification received after the 10th of the month may not be paid until the following month. There is no obligation for either the employee or the University to make use of the 10 KIT occasions/days.

12. Contact with the employee

Both the University and the employee are entitled to make reasonable contact with each other from time to time during the maternity leave period. For example, to discuss the employee's return to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease the return to work, or to update the employee on developments at work during their absence.

13. Flexible entitlements - shared parental leave (SPL)

Shared Parental Leave has been designed to provide greater flexibility and to allow both parents to share in the care of a new-born during the child's first 12 months. This flexibility means that both parents can be off at the same time, or on alternate leave, allowing either parent to return to work for both periods in between 'blocks' of leave. It is even possible for just one parent to use the SPL, provided both parents are eligible, to take advantage of the greater flexibility it offers.

Employees can choose to simply take maternity leave or they can take a combination of maternity leave and shared parental leave. For further information please visit the Shared Parental Leave webpages or contact the relevant HR Business Partner for advice.

14. Returning to work

Employees returning from maternity leave will usually return to the same job on the same terms and conditions of employment as if they had not been absent, unless a redundancy situation has arisen, in which case they are entitled to be offered a suitable alternative vacancy where one is available. If there is a reason other than redundancy which means that it is not reasonably practicable to return to their original job, they will be offered a similar job on equitable terms and conditions not less favourable than their original job.

Where an employee is unable to attend work at the end of their maternity leave due to sickness, normal contractual arrangements for sickness absence will apply.

If industrial action or any other interruption of work makes it unreasonable for the employee to return to work on the date which they have specified, they may instead return when work resumes.

15. Returning to work early

We will assume that employees on Maternity Leave will return to work at the end of their maximum maternity leave entitlement. If they wish to return before the end of their maximum maternity leave entitlement, they must complete the Return to Work Early form giving us at least 8 weeks' notice.

If the employee changes their mind about the return to work early date, they must give notice in writing to their line manager at least eight weeks before the date on which they intend to return or the date on which they had previously given notice to return, whichever is earlier.

If an employee intends to take both maternity and shared parental leave, they will need to follow the guidance for giving notice as detailed in the Shared Parental Leave policy. Normally such notice will be considered 'binding' and may be given prior to commencing maternity leave. The employee will need to complete and submit the Application for Shared Parental Leave and Pay, indicating that they wish to end their maternity leave early.

16. General points

Maternity leave is not treated as sick leave and is not therefore taken into account when calculating any period of sick leave entitlement.

Annual Leave does accrue whilst the employee is on ordinary and additional maternity leave. Any leave that is accumulated should be taken at the end of the maternity period wherever possible i.e. before returning to work.

If, in the early months of pregnancy, an employee is advised by an approved medical practitioner to be absent from work because of the risk of rubella, they will be entitled to leave with full pay.

Employees on Maternity Leave are entitled to be made aware of job vacancies at the University. The University recruitment web pages are updated daily and, unless otherwise notified, it is assumed that employees are checking vacancies regularly.

If an employee decides not to return to work following maternity leave, they should give written notice as per their contract before they are due to return to work. Unless otherwise agreed the leaving date will be the date on which the notice period ends, or in circumstances where notice is not given, the date on which the resignation is received by the University. Where the leaving date falls before the end of the 39-week statutory maternity pay period, any remaining entitlement to statutory maternity pay will be paid as a single lump sum. However, the employee must notify the University immediately of any circumstance(s) which will result in the statutory obligation to pay SMP transferring or ceasing (e.g. starting work for another employer).

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