



London
School
of Jewish
Studies

*Student Pregnancy, Maternity,
Paternity, Adoption, Fostering Policy*

President

Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis

Deputy President

Rabbi Joseph Dweck

Chair of Directors

Bill Benjamin

Chief Executive

Joanne Greenaway

**Dean & Rabbi Sacks Chair
of Modern Jewish Thought**

Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum

1. Introduction & policy statement

Policy statement

This document provides practical information for students about the London School of Jewish Studies' (LSJS) approach to supporting students who become pregnant during their studies, prospective students and students who have given birth within the previous 26 weeks (the 26 weeks post birth is covered by the Equality Act 2010), their partners (where applicable) and those who have recently become parents (e.g. through adoption). The policy also includes students who may be pregnant through a surrogacy arrangement. In addition, this policy serves as guidance to LSJS staff on advising students who may come to them seeking support. LSJS is committed to promoting equality in all its activities and aims to provide a work, learning, research and teaching environment free from discrimination and unfair treatment.

Terminology and definitions

The term 'Birth Parent/Mother' will be used throughout the policy. The term 'Partner' will be used throughout, where applicable. It will be noted that the terms 'maternity' and 'paternity' are used here in line with language used across the NHS and Government. LSJS actively seeks to develop best practice in discharging its legal responsibility under The Equality Act.

Guidelines

LSJS follows Middlesex University guidelines which take on board recommendations from the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) Guidance (2010), in that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) develop policies and procedures *"to ensure that students are not discriminated against, that they receive appropriate information on the support provided by their HEI in relation to pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption, and that policies are visible to help to encourage early notification of pregnancy."*

Middlesex University Guidelines are available here:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/media/middlesex-university/about-us-pdfs/Student-Pregnancy-Maternity-Paternity-Adoption-Fostering-Policy-V6-02.10.pdf>

2. Scope of policy

LSJS Ethos

LSJS believes that becoming pregnant or caring for a child should not prevent any student from succeeding in their studies. LSJS is committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to facilitate students' success, making sure no student is disadvantaged whilst ensuring academic standards are not compromised. The degree of flexibility that can be offered will vary with each individual student and programme of study. The health and safety of a pregnant student will always be of paramount importance, and staff will engage with all students covered by this policy in a sensitive, non-judgemental and confidential manner. Only members of staff who need to be informed for valid reasons will be informed of a student's circumstances and this will be done only with the student's prior consent (unless there is immediate risk of harm, in line with the LSJS Safeguarding Policy).

This policy covers:

- Any student who becomes pregnant during their studies
- Prospective students who are already pregnant when they commence study
- Any student who has given birth within the previous 26 weeks
- Any student who is about to become a parent because their partner is pregnant, and/or who expects to be responsible for a child
- Any student who has or will become a parent through adoption or fostering

This policy also applies to trainees on LSJS Teacher Training programmes.

3. Guidance for staff on supporting students

COVID implications

The global COVID-19 pandemic has led to many changes and adjustments for students. While there is no evidence at present to suggest that pregnant women are more likely to get seriously ill from Covid-19, they have been included in the list of people at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution.

For that reason, students who are pregnant and concerned about their health when returning to campus can carry out the self-risk-assessment in Appendix 2 of the Middlesex University Guidelines Policy link above as well as always adhering to COVID-secure behaviours.

4. Confirming the pregnancy

A student who suspects they are pregnant will see their General Practitioner (GP) to have the pregnancy confirmed as soon as they can and to seek health advice and guidance. Absence from LSJS required as a result will be classed as 'sick leave' but there is no need to give the specific reason, also if the student decides to terminate the pregnancy, or they miscarry, this need not be disclosed to LSJS. However, if the student (and their partner, if applicable) have upcoming assessments or deadlines which may be impacted, they will contact their Programme Leader or their personal tutor for guidance and support as they may wish to apply for Extenuating Circumstances.

LSJS encourages any students who are pregnant at the time they will commence their studies, irrespective of whether they were pregnant when they accepted the place or during their studies or who becomes pregnant during their studies, to disclose this information to us confidentially, as we can only make provision for the student if we have been made aware of these circumstances. The greatest risk to an unborn baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy and so it is important that the student informs us as early as possible – where appropriate.

The student can choose to disclose their pregnancy to whichever member of staff the student feels most comfortable with, however, the student will note that the Programme Leader will be required to be informed so that support arrangements, risk assessments and other concerns can be discussed. If a student has not informed a member of staff of their pregnancy, generally, they will not be approached regarding a potential pregnancy. If there are particular health and safety concerns which mean that it is important to establish if the student is pregnant, the matter will be handled sensitively, on a one-to-one basis between the student and their tutor/Programme Leader. The tutor/Programme Leader will only take this step if they are concerned for the student's health and safety as per the Safeguarding Policy.

Students are required to inform their Programme Leader of the date on which they intend to start maternity-related absence at least 15 weeks before the baby is due, though they will endeavour to inform their Programme Leader as early as possible.

There may need to be an interruption of studies or a deferral of the start of study, depending on when the baby is due. The student, together with the Programme Leader, will decide whether an interruption of programme or deferral of assessment(s) is needed and in the case of an interruption of study, the time period this needs to cover. This decision also needs to take into account the academic requirements of the student's programme. The student wishes to make use of the Extenuating Circumstances processes.

Time off might be needed for medical appointments. This may also be the case if the student is going through fertility treatment and trying to become pregnant. It will be noted that fertility treatment can be stressful and can in and of itself cause wide-ranging physical and psychological difficulty, and a flexible approach will be taken to time off required. The student will endeavour to schedule appointments outside of their LSJS hours, however, where this is not possible, they will give as much notice as possible to their academic tutors who will support them to remain up to date, for example by sending them lecture slides and recommended reading.

Employees in an organisation have a right to 2 weeks' statutory bereavement leave if they experience a stillbirth or bereavement of their child under the age of 18. As an institution, we are aware that in the tragic event of a stillbirth or bereavement of a child, the Mother/Birth Parent, and their partner if applicable, may require this as a minimum, along with additional support, and staff will endeavour to signpost them to support. Though not usually classed as 'employees', LSJS will work to accommodate the student and their partner (if applicable) to be as flexible as possible with their physical, mental and emotional health needs.

Some programmes will have specific guidance in place for return to study and processes to ensure that the student and baby's health is prioritised. This may especially be the case for programmes with placement elements. Students will refer to the individual guidance for these programmes.

For further information and support, visit: <https://www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement/stillbirth-or-miscarriage>

5. Parental leave

While the length of maternity-related absence students may prefer to take will vary, the Equality Challenge Unit (2010) recommends that, at a minimum, Mothers/Birth Parents are required to take two weeks' compulsory maternity-related absence. This is in line with employment law and is to ensure the health and safety of the Mother/Birth Parent following birth. Students may need a longer period of maternity-related absence. For students who have had a caesarean section, it is usually recommended that students take 6 weeks off.

If a Programme Leader or representative from another LSJS team is concerned about how soon the student wishes to return to study including practice, the student may be asked to liaise with their GP or health worker(s) and to provide medical support in evidence of their fitness to return to study. There may also be need for an updated risk assessment. Where there is concern about knowledge of the field being affected by the length of maternity related absence, the Programme Team will take steps to ensure the student is kept up to speed with developments in the field for example by sending lists of key reading. Students will indicate the date on which they intend to start maternity related absence as well as the length of maternity related absence that they intend to take.

The student must inform their Programme Leader when they are ready to return to study. The Programme Leader will notify the Academic Registrar of their return to study to ensure that their record is updated to indicate that they are back on their programme of study.

We would encourage students to contact Paul Gould, LSJS Chief Operating Officer, on paul.gould@lsjs.ac.uk, as soon as possible if they are considering interruptions to study and the implications this may have financially.

LSJS recognises that any kind of parental responsibility, whether biological birth, adoption or fostering, will have an impact not only on the Mother/Birth Parent but also the Partner (where applicable). The possible impact on study will be different, however, if a student and their partner (if applicable) are fostering a child on a temporary basis versus having given birth to a child and/or adopting a child. When you adopt a child, you become their legal parent. This is permanent and the child has exactly the same legal status in your family as any other family member, which continues throughout their lifetime. In either case, we strongly encourage the Mother/Birth Parent and their partner (if applicable) to let LSJS know about their circumstances by speaking with their Programme Leader.

LSJS will also try to support those students who need time off to accompany their partners at medical, adoption or fostering appointments (although it is preferred that these are arranged outside study hours wherever possible). If partners wish to take paternity-related or parental absence they will notify their Programme Leader in writing at least 15 weeks prior to their partner's due date, fostering or adoption date. However, early notification is always preferable, particularly if the period of leave coincides with any planned assessment or key stages of study or research.

The start date and length of paternity-related or parental absence will be agreed in discussion with LSJS. We will endeavour to accommodate and support partners in taking paternity leave (including shared parental leave and adoption leave) that is in line with the entitlements of employees under current employment law. For example, under UK employment law, partners are entitled to up to 10 days paid Ordinary Paternity Leave; therefore, LSJS will, wherever possible, allow partners to take the equivalent maternity support (paternity) absence from their studies.

6. Equality duty

At all times, staff must ensure those students are not treated less favourably than any other student on the basis of their circumstances. In line with legal obligations, flexibility will be shown where possible to ensure continued learning is facilitated. Information given by students will be treated confidentially (unless there is a safeguarding concern) and with sensitivity. Staff will not attempt to influence any student's decision but will provide impartial advice. If a staff member does not feel that they can give impartial advice due to religious, cultural or other beliefs, they will immediately seek to find an alternative member of staff to support the student and will under no circumstances try to influence the student's decision.

When a student contacts a member of staff to discuss any circumstances covered by this policy, wherever possible a response will be made within three working days so as to provide students with support and to keep the student and baby safe.

Signed on behalf of the LSJS Senior Leadership Team by Paul Gould, Chief Operating Officer

Date created: August 2023

Date revised: August 2025

Date to be reviewed: August 2027