

PGR Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parent Toolkit

This toolkit provides [policy summaries](#) and links to all the relevant documents you will need if you will be interrupting your PGR studies for the purpose of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave and summarises some of the [other facilities/resources](#) available to both expectant PGR parents and PGR parents who have returned from leave.

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General Principles

The University's view is that becoming pregnant or adopting a child (or taking a period of maternity, adoption or parental leave) should not prevent a PGR from successfully completing their programme.

The University is committed to providing support and flexibility to students who become pregnant or the primary adopter of a child or whose partner become pregnant or the primary adopter.

Pregnant students' and new mothers' health and safety should be paramount at all times. If a PGR is acting as a surrogate, they will be supported in the same way as any other pregnant student.

PGR Pregnancy

Registered PGRs (or applicants) are not legally obliged to inform the University if they are pregnant or they become pregnant during their programme. However, PGRs and applicants are strongly encouraged to make the University aware of a pregnancy at the earliest available opportunity; this will help the University to be able to start putting in place appropriate support and arrangements.

Pregnant PGRs are advised to speak to their Supervisors, Advisors and Faculty Doctoral Academies who may seek the PGRs permission to share the information with other relevant members of staff on a need-to-know basis. If appropriate, the PGR should be made aware of additional areas of advice or support, either within the University or externally, e.g. the PGR's GP/doctor, a midwife, Student Services Centre or the Student Support Adviser or the Students' Union Advice Service.

PGRs undertaking research with potential high risks e.g. working with hazardous chemicals, etc. are particularly encouraged to disclose their pregnancy as soon as possible.

Health and Safety During Pregnancy / Following Birth

If a PGR is pregnant or has given birth within the previous six months, or is breastfeeding, they can face specific risks to their health and that of their unborn child or baby. For most new, expectant or breastfeeding mothers, normal health and safety measures are adequate. However, when participating in a University activity, the level of risk they're exposed to will depend on: -

- The requirements and nature of the event or activity
- Their individual circumstances, as there are physiological and psychological changes during pregnancy that may make them more vulnerable.

Some of the more common hazards might be: -

- Lifting, handling, carrying heavy loads
- Posture, travelling, mental and physical fatigue
- Workstations, working at height, or working alone
- Standing or sitting for long periods of time
- Exposure to biological agents, harmful or high-risk substances, or radioactive material
- Exposure to shocks, vibrations, excessive noise, or extreme heat.

In particular:

- The highest risk of damage to an unborn baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy
- When breastfeeding, there is a risk of passing certain chemicals or biological agents to the baby via breastmilk.

It is important that PGRs share with their Supervisors and/or their Faculty Doctoral Academies any advice they've received from a doctor or midwife (for example pregnancy-related medical conditions such as high blood pressure, a history of miscarriages) that could affect a risk assessment.

Further information on health and safety considerations regarding new and expectant mothers can also be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>.

Information about risk assessments can be found at:

- <https://www.healthandsafety.manchester.ac.uk/toolkits/ra/>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/employer/risk-assessment.htm>

An example of a risk assessment form for Pregnant Workers, New Mothers, and Breastfeeding Mothers (produced by the School of Social Sciences) can be found below. Schools may wish to use this as an example from which to produce a risk assessment for students:

- [Risk Assessment Form for Pregnant Workers, New Mothers, and Breastfeeding Mothers](#)

Absences, Appointments, Antenatal Care and Pre-Adoption Appointments

If a PGR is pregnant or if they need to attend pre-adoption appointments, they are entitled to reasonable time away to attend appointments. Wherever possible, appointments should always be made so as not to interfere with the requirements of their programme however, the University understands that this will not always be possible.

PGRs whose partners are pregnant will be permitted reasonable time away to enable them to accompany their partner to antenatal appointments prescribed by a doctor, midwife or other health professional.

If a PGR holds parental responsibility or are a legal guardian there may be times when they are required to take some time out to care for an ill child, breast feed, maternity, take parental leave due to settling a child into the home after surrogate birth or adoption etc. Any such circumstances should be discussed immediately with a PGR's Supervisor and/or Faculty Doctoral Academy in order to agree the best way forward and reduce the impact on a PGRs progression.

Maternity/Paternity/Adoption/Parental Leave Policy Overviews

Please note that for all interruptions to programme (including maternity, adoption and unpaid parental leave) PGRs on a Student (including Tier 4 visa) should refer to the PGR [Immigration Team](#) for advice regarding any potential immigration / visa implications.

Maternity Leave

The University permits PGRs to interrupt their degree for the purpose of maternity leave at any time from the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth until the date of childbirth for a maximum period of 12 months where the individual is the primary carer. The period of leave must be taken in one consecutive block.

Once the interruption period dates have been agreed, PGRs must submit the relevant interruption/change of circumstances application form to the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office no later than the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

PGRs who received an annual maintenance stipend funded by the University of Manchester (i.e. from a School, Faculty or central department) and/or from Research Council funding are entitled to up to 26 weeks of **paid** maternity/adoption leave without the normal value of their maintenance stipend being reduced, followed by 13 weeks at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay, with the remaining 13 weeks unpaid.

For full details see the [Interruptions Procedure](#).

Adoption Leave

A PGR may interrupt their degree for the purposes of adoption leave for a maximum period of 12 months subject to approval from the relevant School or Faculty. Adoption leave is available to individuals who adopt or one member of a couple where a couple adopt jointly.

Adoption leave can be taken either from the date of child placement OR no more than 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) prior to the date of child placement.

Once the interruption period dates have been agreed, PGRs must submit the relevant interruption/change of circumstances application form to the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office.

For full details see section 6 of the [Interruptions Procedure](#).

Shared Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave is no longer available to UKRI funded PGRs. Both SPL and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) are defined in law and operated by HMRC. For a parent to benefit from either SPL or ShPP they must meet the legal eligibility criteria.

This includes a requirement that they are an employee. Doctoral PGRs funded by UKRI are not employees and so are not able to give HMRC the information required to process an application. Shared Parental Leave will therefore be removed from the UoM Interruptions Procedure.

[The full UKRI statement](#).

Unpaid Parental Leave

The PGR parent partner who is not in receipt of parental leave is entitled to apply for an interruption for up to 50 weeks for the period of time following the birth/adoption of their child as unpaid parental leave. This leave must be completed within 12 months of the birth/adoption of the child.

The PGR must formally apply for the interruption. See section 8 of the [Interruptions Procedure](#).

Paternity Leave

A total of 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) of paternity leave may be taken. For UKRI / UoM funded PGRs a funded 2 week extension of programme can be applied. Other PGRs should refer to the specific terms and conditions of their funder.

In the case of adoption leave, a total of 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) leave may be taken to support the primary carer.

Paternity leave cannot start before and must be completed within 56 days (including weekends and public holidays) of the child's birth / placement. The 14 days of paternity leave must be taken in one block.

For full details please refer to section 10.2 of the [Change of Circumstances for Postgraduate Research Students Policy](#).

In all cases further advice and the relevant interruption/change of circumstances form are available from your [Faculty Doctoral Academy](#).

Part-time Study Options

PGR parents on a full-time programme who find that they require more flexibility in order to continue their research may have the option to apply to switch to part-time study (either for the remainder of their programme or for a block of time).

Part-time study is offered at a minimum of 50% FTE. However, it should be noted that some sponsors do not permit part-time study so PGRs considering switching to part-time study should refer to their funder T&Cs.

International PGRs are not permitted to study part-time according to the conditions of the Student Visa. Some PGR programmes cannot be set up to operate on a part-time basis due to discipline-specific requirement.

Annual / Special Leave

PGRs may, with the prior agreement of their supervisor, take up to [eight weeks' holiday](#) in each year (pro rata for parts of year), inclusive of weekends and public holidays. All holiday allowance taken should first be discussed with and approved by the supervisor. PGRs receiving sponsorship are expected to bear in mind their obligations to the sponsor and consult the policy of their sponsor when planning leave.

With Supervisor agreement PGRs are eligible to take up to [5 days special leave](#) (in addition to their holiday leave entitlement) per academic year. PGRs would be eligible for this leave due to unforeseen breakdown of care arrangements for a person for whom the PGR has primary responsibility (please refer to the [PGR Carers' Policy](#)), the serious illness of a domestic partner, child or other person, whether related or not who plays a significant part in the life of the PGR and the death of a close relative, which would normally include a 3 spouse or significant partner, parent, brother, sister, in-law, grandparent or grandchild.

Flexible Working

The University of Manchester recognises that research is often done through “flexible” working that some PGRs may need to make changes to their working arrangements/patterns without necessarily changing their mode of study from full time to part time.

All PGRs should discuss and agree with their supervisors the working patterns and arrangements that best suit their personal circumstances. Supervisors should be sympathetic to the individual circumstances of each PGR and, giving consideration to the ability of the PGR to complete within their funded period, should be open to flexible arrangements e.g. a compressed working week, flexitime or staggered hours.

Council Tax whilst on Interruption for Parental Leave

If you take an interruption or leave of absence from your studies but are expected to return to the same course within 12 months then you should remain exempt from Council Tax. Further advice can be sought from the Faculty contacts listed above or from the Student Services Centre ssc@manchester.ac.uk.

University Accommodation

PGRs living in University managed accommodation should contact the Accommodation Office to discuss arrangements for withdrawing from, or continuing with, their accommodation contract during a period of maternity-related absence. There are a small number of accommodation units specifically for those with partners and families but there is no guarantee that suitable accommodation will be available at that time.

Support is available to PGRs to help them find suitable privately rented housing. Some private accommodation will be unsuitable for children, or may, in some circumstances, be difficult for a PGR in the later stages of pregnancy to access. PGRs can seek advice on options for family accommodation via the Manchester Student Homes service. Where a PGR is in private accommodation, the University may be able to provide support and advice on terminating the contract through the Manchester Student Homes service.

Potential Financial Support

If you are struggling financially due to becoming a parent you could be eligible for support via the Universities [Living Cost Support Fund](#).

If pregnant / or a parent you may also be eligible for the additional sources of Government support [detailed in this document](#). You could also visit the Manchester City Council website to see if you qualify for up to 30 hours of [free childcare](#) a week.

The University also offers a [Nursery Subsidy](#) grant for qualifying PGRs at the 2 on-campus nurseries (see below)

Facilities / Resources for PGR Parents

PGR Parents Group

The [PGR Parents Group](#) is open to all PGR parents, parents-to-be and carers at the University. The group meets once a month.

These informal sessions provide the opportunity to:

- discuss issues related to returning to your programme after parental leave;
- share experiences of balancing research and caring responsibilities in a safe environment;
- hear about what has worked for others;

- offer peer support.

If you have any questions about the peer support group, please contact:

julie.fiwka@manchester.ac.uk

Breast Feeding Rooms

Young children will not normally be expected on the campus (please see the Safeguarding Children Policy and Guidance) but in instances where bringing children onto campus is required/unavoidable, PGRs should be aware of the need for close supervision of their children at all times. There are a number of places around the campus, for example the Jean McFarlane Building has some rooms on the ground floor that can be used for breast feeding or expressing milk. PGRs should ask at the Reception Desk if they wish to use a breastfeeding room. There is a fridge in the room behind Reception that can be used for storing milk.

In addition, other buildings may also have provisions for breastfeeding and expressing milk, please check with your building reception to find out about available facilities in your building.

Baby Changing Facilities

Students' Union	Ground floor toilet under stairs, 1st Floor disabled toilet
Manchester Museum	Basement adapted toilet by the lift
Christie's Building	Ground floor accessible toilet
Martin Harris Building (Centre for Music and Drama)	Ground floor accessible toilet
Main Library	Blue ground floor toilet
Michael Smith Building	Adapted toilet by reception
University Place	Level 0 adapted toilet
Humanities Bridgeford Street	Basement toilet
John Ryland's Library	Accessible toilets in basement of the entrance wing

Yammer Parents Support Group

Sign up here:

https://www.yammer.com/live.manchester.ac.uk/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=18331402240

Student parents' guide from Students' Union

[Student Parents @ University of Manchester Students' Union](#)

Facebook group

[University of Manchester Student Parents and Carers | Facebook](#)

Researchers Parents, Carers and Guardian Network

Sign up here: <https://listserv.manchester.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=being-a-pgr-parent&A=1>

Campus Nurseries

There are two nurseries available for use by PGRs. The nurseries provide care for children from six months to five years and are staffed with trained and experienced personnel in accordance with the local authority's requirements.

- Dryden Street Nursery, Dryden Street, Manchester M13 9SY Telephone: 0161 272 7121
- Echoes Day Nursery, Echo Street, Off Granby Row Manchester M60 1QD Tel: 0161 306 4979