QA98 Pregnancy, Adoption & Family Leave Policy

Classification – *Public*

JUNE 2026

1. Purpose

1.1. Arden University is committed to providing an inclusive environment to which all students, regardless of background, can achieve their full potential. Arden University is committed to creating and sustaining its legal duty, as outlined in the Equality Act, 2010, to protect students during periods of pregnancy and maternity. The university is also committed to supporting students whose partner may be expecting a child, students who are adopting, students who are expecting a child through surrogacy, students who terminate a pregnancy and/or students who experience a miscarriage, still birth or neo-natal death.

1.2 This Policy provides advice and guidance to applicants/students who are pregnant before enrolment or who become pregnant during their studies. The policy also aims to provide advice and guidance to their partners, and to those who have recently become parents (including through adoption and surrogacy). The primary aim of the policy is to provide information on study-related support; however, other sources of information and advice will also be included.

1.3 The policy is a point of reference for staff who have a responsibility to support students within the groups outlined above.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 The policy applies to all applicants/students who fall within the following categories:

- Students/applicants who are or become pregnant, students/applicants who have had a termination, experienced a miscarriage, still birth or neonatal death, those who have become parents through surrogacy, and those who are expecting a child into their family through adoption/fostering.

- Students/applicants whose partner is expecting a child or are co-parenting and/or who have been affected by a termination, miscarriage, still birth or neonatal death; whether they are or are not in a relationship with the parent involved.

2.2. The personal circumstances of students within these categories will be treated confidentially. Where consent is given, personal information will be shared with the purpose of health and safety and to ensure students and applicants are supported regarding their academic progression.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 The University believes that becoming pregnant or caring for a child should not detract from the student's experience or their ability to succeed in their studies. Arden University is committed to making reasonable adjustments; making sure no student's experience is compromised whilst ensuring academic standards are not hindered.

3.2 Reasonable adjustments available may vary between courses, this may be due to timetabling constraints, course availability and external accreditation boards.

3.3 The institution will deal with all students covered by this policy in a sensitive, non-judgemental, and confidential manner.

3.4 As outlined in section 2.2, only members of staff who need to be informed for valid reasons will be advised of a student's circumstances and this will be done only with the student's prior consent.

3.5 The health, safety and wellbeing of a student/applicant affected by this policy will always take priority.

4. Rights and Responsibilities

4.1 Student/Applicants responsibilities:

- There is no legal requirement for a student/ applicant to inform the university if they are pregnant or become pregnant whilst studying on a course.

- There is also no legal requirement for students/applicants, who come into the other groups identified in 2.1, to disclose personal information.

- Students/applicants affected by this policy are encouraged to contact their GP/local healthcare professional to seek appropriate guidance and support where appropriate. Arden

- Arden university does encourage students/applicants to disclose pregnancy at the earliest opportunity, with a preference of at least 15 weeks before a baby's due date, for reasonable adjustments to be put in place.

- Students/applicants wishing to disclose their circumstances should complete the Pregnancy, adoption, and family leave support Plan, found on Wellbeing Services portal here: Pregnancy, Adoption and New Parent support plan. Wellbeing team will action appropriate reasonable adjustments and pass to the Student Hub team who will arrange a supportive conversation and complete a risk assessment here.

- Students/applicants whose partners are pregnant, has had a termination, experienced a miscarriage, still birth, or neonatal death, or is adopting/fostering a child are advised to complete the Pregnancy, adoption, and family leave support Plan, as above.

- It is the student's/applicant's responsibility to ensure they are aware of any financial implications that may occur if they are to request certain reasonable adjustments.

- Students who decided to take a break in learning may be eligible for a Pregnancy, adoption, and family leave bursary. Terms & Conditions can be found here.

4.2 Academic Staff are responsible for:

- Providing a flexible and inclusive environment for students affected by this policy by agreeing to and implementing any reasonable adjustments set out in the student/applicants the Pregnancy, adoption and family leave support Plan and or risk assessment.

- Providing a flexible and inclusive environment for students affected by this policy by being aware of the relevant Pregnancy and related Absence's support plan, specific to the student in question.

4.3 Wellbeing services and Student Hub team are responsible for:

- Providing support and guidance to students who have completed the Pregnancy, adoption and family leave support Plan affected by this policy.

- Complete the risk assessment.

- Arrange appropriate reasonable adjustments.

- Share the Pregnancy, adoption and family leave support Plan and risk assessment with relevant departments.

5. Pregnancy, adoption, and family leave support Plan

5.1 Completion of the plan will trigger an appointment offer with a Wellbeing adviser. The Pregnancy, adoption and family leave support Plan is not limited to, but includes the following:

- Agreed communication channels with the student/applicant.
- Arrangements for interruption to study and reasonable adjustments
- Health, Safety, and wellbeing
- Return to Study

6. Reasonable Adjustments

Following completion of the Pregnancy, Adoption and Family Leve Support plan, and after discussion with a Wellbeing Advisor and/or the Student Hub team, Arden will consider the following reasonable adjustments. All decisions will be made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, which protects students from unfavourable treatment related to pregnancy, maternity, adoption, surrogacy, or associated parental responsibilities. Adjustments will be applied fairly, consistently and without discrimination.

6.1 Flexibility around attendance:

Absence Following Childbirth

Following the birth of a baby, students are permitted to a period of approved absence; Arden university strongly recommends that students **do not return to study within the first two weeks following childbirth,** to support health, safety and wellbeing.

Where there are concerns about a students intended return date whether earlier or later than expected, the university may request **fitness to study medical evidence.**

Short Term Absences for Parental Reasons

Students may require short intermittent absences for reasons including, but not limited to:

a) postnatal recovery
b) medical appointments
c) adoption or fostering settling-in periods
d) early childcare arrangements
e) pregnancy- related illness or urgent family needs

To ensure consistency with the University's Attendance & Engagement Policy:

- **All short-term parental-related absences must be logged via the Arden Engage App.** Please note that attendance interventions may still be actioned where attendance was below expectations prior to the commencement of parental leave.

- Absences recorded for legitimate parental reasons will not adversely affect engagement monitoring or academic standing.

- Staff will respond sensitively, recognising that parental needs may arise unpredictably.

Students covered by this policy, including those who are adopting, becoming parents through surrogacy, partners of those giving birth, or those who have experienced pregnancy loss, will also be granted appropriate flexibility in attendance.

6.2 Interruption to study (Break in Learning):

Where a student requires a longer period away from study for

pregnancy, adoption or parental reasons, they may apply for a **Break in Learning**;

- Breaks in learning may be approved for a minimum of one semester and upto a maximum of 12 months.
- Approval will consider the academic structure and requirements of the students course, including assessment cycles and professional accreditation constraints where relevant.
- Students will not be disadvantaged for requesting a Break in Learning due to pregnancy, maternity, adoption, surrogacy or parental responsibilities. Requests will be considered and managed in line with the Break in Learning policy, including applicable academic and regulatory requirements.
- All international students who hold UKVI Tier 4 Visas and are affected by this policy should seek additional support through Student Hub team to establish their options.

6.3 Other Adjustments

- Where students or applicants do not wish to take a Break in Learning, the University will aim to provide flexibility to their preferred style of engagement. This may include creating a study plan to help manage workload, or support to apply for Extenuating Circumstances without the need to provide further evidence than that provided in Pregnancy, adoption and family leave support Plan.
- In some cases, students/applicants who study on Blended Learning courses may request for a module to be released as Distance Learning. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with the relevant department. If students do request this,

it is the student's responsibility to abide by attendance regulations for the remainder of their academic year to avoid financial implications to their maintenance loan (where appropriate). Please contact Arden Student Finance team or Student Finance England to discuss this option and any implications short term study via Distance Learning may have on your funding entitlements.

6.4 **Resuming studies.**

Students/applicants who are affected by this policy are encouraged to keep in regular contact with Student Hub team. 'Keep in Touch Days' will be suggested and agreed, where appropriate, between the student/applicant and Student Hub team. The aim of these points of contact is for the student to provide any updates on their personal circumstances that may impact their Return to Study date.

Upon returning from a short-term absence or a Break in Learning, students will be supported to re-engage with their course, with reasonable adjustments made where necessary to ensure smooth transition.

7. Wellbeing & Welfare support

7.1 Students/applicants should seek advice on the financial implications of any reasonable adjustments relating to this policy. Students can contact Arden's finance team by emailing studentfinance@arden.ac.uk and can contact Student Finance England directly, if appropriate:

0300 100 0607
Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm Saturday, 9am to 4pm

The funding situation for a student/applicant will depend on their individual circumstances e.g., whether they are studying full or part-

time, has a partner or is single etc. Students can find further information on Arden's financial support funds here

7.2 Students/applicants who fall within all groups covered by this policy, who may experience challenges with their mental health and wellbeing can also access support through Wellbeing Services

7.3 Students/applicants who may be affected by termination, miscarriage, still birth and/or neonatal death can access signposting support via the Wellbeing Services Portal, Pregnancy**.**

7.4 UK based students, whether they are Blended, or Distance Learning students can access 1:1 mental health and wellbeing support as well as fully funded counselling support through Arden's Wellbeing services. Students should email wellbeing@arden.ac.uk to request this.

8. Babies/Children on Campus

Babies and young children must be always accompanied by a responsible adult whilst at an Arden campus; babies and young children are not permitted to attend taught sessions on campus. All students and staff must comply with protocol and procedure outlined in the Safeguarding Policy.

9. Breastfeeding

Students/applicants should contact their campus to see what facilities are available for private breastfeeding, expressing and milk storage; provision may vary across different campus.

Student can find details for their relevant campus here.

10. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with, amongst others:

- QA57 Safeguarding & Prevent Policy
- QA75 Break in Learning Policy
- QA41 Extenuating Circumstances Policy

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