



Pregnancy and Expectant Parents Policy

September 2023

**Version 1.0
Approved by the Board of Governors**

Introduction

This policy is designed to ensure the Vantage College (“Vantage” or “College”) provides clear guidance on the implications of pregnancy on a student’s period of study and reasonable adjustments for the continued safety and learning of a pregnant student or parent of a very young child.

Legal Basis

The Equality Act 2010 significantly strengthens legal protection for students (including applicants to higher education) during pregnancy and the maternity period.

Under the Act pregnancy and maternity needs are protected characteristics and discrimination on these grounds is prohibited. Discrimination can occur against a student because of her pregnancy or because she has given birth if:

- the student is treated unfavourably because of her pregnancy,
- within 26 weeks of the day of giving birth the student is treated unfavourably because she has given birth – this also applies in cases of miscarriage, still birth and neonatal death provided more than 24 weeks of the pregnancy has elapsed,
- the student is treated unfavourably because she is breastfeeding, and the child is less than 26 weeks old – if the child is more than 26 weeks old, unfavourable treatment because of breastfeeding is likely to constitute sex discrimination.

Students who are pregnant, expecting a baby or have very young children while studying with Vantage, can expect to be fully supported.

Expectant Parents

Students who think they may be pregnant, can seek confidential advice from the Student Support Services and should also seek health services support . Students who are pregnant and or expecting a baby should inform the College via Student Support Services as soon as possible; whilst a student is under no obligation to do so, Vantage cannot provide the support to which student are entitled if we are not made aware. Where Students wish to inform the College their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), or Student Support Team can provide individual help and support.

Academic Support

Student Support Teams or the students Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) can offer individual help and guidance to Students who are pregnant or expecting a baby. Students are encouraged to speak to these services as soon as possible so reasonable adjustment can be made so that the student is not subjected to academic disadvantage.

While pregnancy is not an illness, Vantage recognises the potential vulnerability associated with pregnancy. Students can apply for special considerations or request an assignment extension if the pregnancy is affecting their studies in any way, such as examinations or any other form of assessment.

Student Support Teams

Students Support Teams can offer independent and confidential support and advice on a range of issues pregnant or expectant students may face such as, funding, money management, study arrangements, welfare benefits and employment rights. Students who are struggling during pregnancy or as new parents are welcome to speak to Student Support, who will be able to supply guidance and signpost to external agencies. Student Support can support students to explore and understand their options about their studies and the implications of pregnancy, adoption, and responsibility for a child. Continuing of studies will be dependent on many factors including, but not limited to:

- on the programme of study
- the timing during the academic year

Student Support Teams will provide the advice in a sensitive non-judgemental manner and liaise with the course team and other members of staff as appropriate.

Implications for funding

Should a student wish or need to interrupt their studies then funding, including course fees and maintenance loan will usually stop when the interruption of study begins. Funding will not stop at once; students taking the tuition fee loan will be liable for the term in which they leave (interrupt, suspend or withdraw) Student Finance England (SFE) will be able to advise on potential future eligibility.

Health and Safety During Pregnancy

Pregnant women and new mothers are protected from harm by law and should not be subject to and risks that could harm them or their unborn child. The main risks are associated with physical activity or exposure to some chemicals, radiation, and biological agents. It is important that as soon as a student is pregnant a full risk assessment be undertaken by the Health and Safety Officer or another nominated member of the Student Support Team.

Adoption leave

Students about to become parents through adoption, should inform a member of the course team and the College Registrar (via student support) of their circumstances as soon as possible. This way Vantage can help time out of study. This may vary depending on the age of the child, the programme of study being undertaken, and the point in the academic session at which the adoption takes place.

Parental leave for those who hold responsibility to child rearing (including same sex couples)

Currently the maximum parental leave is two weeks. This must be taken within 56 days of the child/children being born/adopted. We would expect you to take parental leave immediately after the birth.

If you want to take parental leave, you must inform your Course Leader, Academic Mentor or a member of the Student Support and Wellbeing Team. Usually, you must give at least 12 weeks' notice of the date you wish to start parental leave. We appreciate that emergency situations may arise – under these circumstances notice of parental leave must be given as soon as possible.

Potential implications of parental leave on completion of assessments, examinations, placements or work-based learning and group work should be discussed with the Course Leader, Academic Mentor or Student.

Formal interruptions of study will be for twelve months due to the nature of the taught programmes. The possibility of other fee liability with annual fee increases should be considered. If students wish to take up to two weeks of parental leave during term time, PAT and Course Leaders may be able to advise them on ways to catch up on missed studies.

Bringing very young children onto Campus

Vantage does not expect students to routinely bring their children to lectures or seminars for extended periods of time nor to other activities closely related to study i.e., field trips or organised visits. Bringing children an academic activity is not a suitable alternative to formal childcare on a regular basis and can pose risk to both the child and others and disrupt the learning environment for other students.

The College understands that there may be occasional unforeseen circumstances in which it will be necessary for a child to be brought to an academic space. In these circumstances, permission must be granted by the Operations Manager and Campus Dean. When a child is brought on campus, the child is the sole responsibility of the student and should not be placed in the care of others. Although the College undertakes to provide as minimal risk environment as possible, the Campuses are not designed with the needs of children in mind and as such, risks which would be considered low for a more mature visitor may be more significant for a child.

Students are allowed to bring their children onto campus for brief informal visits such as delivering or collecting items i.e., library books or essays, or to show a new baby to their peers. In these circumstances, children should be under the close and continuous supervision of their parent or guardian.

Breastfeeding mothers

Vantage supports breast feeding and under the Equality Act 2010 the college has a legal duty to provide suitable rest facilities for breastfeeding mothers. We can supply a room for nursing mothers on each of campus. They are equipped with a chair where you can breastfeed or express milk, and a fridge which is solely for the storage of expressed milk.

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