

Pregnancy and Parenting Policy

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Contents

1.1 Purpose and Scope	2
1.2 General principles	2
1.3 Responsibilities	2
1.4 Parental leave entitlement	3
Section 2: Procedure	4
2.1 Notifying Frontline of a pregnancy	4
2.2 Notification of two weeks' maternity leave	5
2.3 Requesting extended time away from studies (up to 52 weeks)	5
2.4 Returning from time away	6
Section 3: Other information for parents and carers	9
3.1 Summer Institute	9
3.2 Recall Days	9
Section 4: Relevant references	9
Frontline policies and documents	9



Section 1: Overview

1.1 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1.1 This policy aims to provide advice and guidance to participants who become parents during the programme and includes information on time away from studies related to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, and adoption.
- 1.1.2 The policy provides Frontline staff with a point of reference where they have a role in advising participants around pregnancy and parenting during the programme.
- 1.1.3 This policy applies to participants across both years of the programme. However, year 2 participants should refer to their employer's policies on pregnancy, maternity, paternity, shared parental leave and adoption for further information on their entitlements.

1.2 General principles

- 1.2.1 Frontline believes that becoming pregnant, becoming a parent, or caring for a child should not prevent a participant from succeeding on the programme.
- 1.2.2 Frontline aims to provide an environment that is supportive to parents and carers and will advise participants of the different options available to them via this policy.
- 1.2.3 Frontline has a duty to ensure that where participants take time away from study, they are fit and ready to return to the programme. Consequently, participants who take extended leave during the programme will have some conditions to meet upon their return (see [section 2.4](#) for further information), In addition, participants may be required to undertake further checks where changes in their health or circumstances are disclosed.
- 1.2.4 Parental leave does not count towards a participant's eligibility for an intercalation during the programme. Participants who have taken a period of parental leave and who have not already taken a period of intercalation can apply for an intercalation in line with the [intercalation policy](#). This can be applied for immediately following the period of parental leave, but the usual process for requesting an intercalation must be followed.

1.3 Responsibilities

- 1.3.1 This policy is owned by the Chief Social Worker, who is responsible for its implementation.



- 1.3.2 During year 1, Consultant Social Workers (CSWs) and Practice Tutors will be expected to implement this policy. During year 2, participants should liaise with their dissertation supervisor and their local authority employer.
- 1.3.3 Where necessary, Principal Practice Tutors (PPT) and/or Heads of Delivery will support staff with the implementation of this policy.
- 1.3.3 Frontline's academic registry team will record all time away from studies and will notify Lancaster University of changes in student status.
- 1.3.4 The role of the suitability team is to support with processing and review of health and conduct checks from intercalations. They will also review participants' self-declaration form responses, and where changes in conduct and health are confirmed since time away, will invoke any additional checks as necessary. A representative from the suitability team will normally be a member of the return to study panel.

1.4 Parental leave entitlement

1.4.1 Year 1 participants are entitled to the following pregnancy and parenting leave:

- **Participants who have given birth:** must take two weeks maternity leave from the date of the birth. This includes leave from all academic teaching and their practice learning experience.
- **Additional maternity leave:** participants who are the main carer are entitled and encouraged to take up to 52 weeks maternity leave (inclusive of the two weeks maternity leave that must be taken).
- **Paternity leave:** participants who are fathers or partners of the mother or primary carer (including same sex relationships) and expect to be responsible for raising the child are entitled to take up to two weeks of paternity leave either at the time of or within three months of the birth. They may also choose to have up to 52 weeks off from the child's birth if they wish to share parental leave with their partner.
- **Adoption leave:** participants about to become parents through adoption are entitled to leave mirroring that of maternity and paternity leave above.

1.4.2 Year 2 participants are local authority employees and should refer to their employer's policies on pregnancy, maternity, paternity, shared parental leave and adoption for leave entitlements in relation to their employment.

1.4.3 In relation to the academic programme and all academic teaching, Year 2 participants are entitled to the following pregnancy and parenting leave:



- **Participants who have given birth:** must take two weeks maternity leave from the date of the birth. This includes leave from all academic teaching and their practice learning experience.
- **Additional maternity leave:** participants who are the main carer are entitled and encouraged to take up to 52 weeks maternity leave (inclusive of the two weeks maternity leave that must be taken)
- **Paternity leave:** participants who are fathers or partners of the mother or primary carer (including same sex relationships) and expect to be responsible for raising the child are entitled to take up to two weeks of paternity leave either at the time of or within three months of the birth. They may also choose to have up to 52 weeks off from the child's birth if they wish to share parental leave with their partner.
- **Adoption leave:** participants about to become parents through adoption are entitled to leave mirroring that of maternity and paternity leave above.

Section 2: Procedure

2.1 Notifying Frontline of a pregnancy

- 2.1.1 Participants should confirm any suspected pregnancy with their GP and are encouraged to notify Frontline at least 15 weeks before their due date. Year 1 participants should notify their CSW and practice tutor, and year 2 participants should notify their local authority employer and their dissertation supervisor or head of delivery (where participants have withdrawn from the year 2 academic component).
- 2.1.2 Frontline will only share information about a participant's pregnancy on a need-to-know basis.
- 2.1.3 Frontline will allow participants time off from the programme to attend medical appointments related to their pregnancy or their partner's pregnancy. Participants will need to meet the attendance and engagement requirements of the programme and therefore will be expected to catch up on missed studies. For further information on this, please refer to the [Attendance and Engagement policy](#).
- 2.1.4 Frontline will work with placement providers to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out for year 1 participants during their pregnancy. This should include any contrasting learning experience placement(s). Where there are additional or specific health needs Frontline may, in consultation with the participant, also refer them for an occupational health assessment.
- 2.1.5 During year 2 of the programme the participant's employer should carry out a risk assessment in line with their responsibilities as an employer.



2.2 Notification of two weeks' maternity leave

- 2.2.1 Participants who have given birth and who choose not to take a longer period of maternity leave **must** take two weeks maternity leave immediately following the arrival of their child via an authorised absence.
- 2.2.2 Participants in year 1 will need to communicate their taking of two weeks maternity leave to their Practice Tutor and CSW). In year 2, participants should contact their local authority employer and their dissertation supervisor or head of delivery (where participants have withdrawn from the year 2 academic component). This should be in advance of the date (where possible).
- 2.2.3 Taking the required two weeks maternity leave during Year 1 will likely mean that an extension to the end of a participant's placement is required. This will be considered in accordance with Frontline's [attendance and engagement policy](#).

2.3 Requesting extended time away from studies (up to 52 weeks)

- 2.3.1 A participant who wishes to take an extended period of parental leave, which is longer than can be accommodated by other means, should submit a parental leave request via Frontline's [time away from study request form](#), along with any additional evidence to support the request.
- 2.3.2 Once submitted, relevant Frontline staff (Practice Tutor/Dissertation Supervisor, Principal Practice Tutor, Partnerships and Placement Manager, Academic Registry) will receive notification of the request.
- 2.3.3 Participants are advised to meet with their Practice Tutor or Principal Practice Tutor to discuss impact and details of the requested leave on their studies. Practice Tutors/Dissertation Supervisors are also the recommended point-of-contact for discussion of related concerns in the period preceding leave e.g., around medical appointments, extensions to assessment deadlines, etc.
- 2.3.4 All participants taking an extended period of parental leave will normally be required to meet the following conditions upon their return to the programme:
1. Undergo a new **enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check**;
 2. Complete a **self-declaration form**, where participants will be asked to confirm whether there have been any changes since their time away e.g., to their health, where they live;
 3. Write and submit a **short reflective account** (normally between 500 and 1000 words) in which they indicate how they have kept up to date with social work practice during their leave and reflect upon their time off. A template will be provided for this;
 4. Any other conditions that are deemed necessary.



- 2.3.5 The Principal Practice Tutor will normally review the standardised return conditions to determine whether any additional conditions are required and will confirm alongside this additional return information (e.g., planned date of departure, intended return date etc.).
- 2.3.6 Participants are entitled to up to 52 weeks of time away from studies due to extended parental leave. The length of time off will be determined by a participant's personal circumstances and preference, alongside the structure of the programme of study. Where the duration of a participant's parental leave means that they are unable to return at an appropriate programme point (i.e., they have missed a point of return that would enable them to complete outstanding elements of their programme year), participants may be required to immediately intercalate following on from their parental leave, as outlined in [clause 1.2.4](#).
- 2.3.7 Once the above steps are complete, information pertaining to the participant's parental leave will be submitted on Frontline's record system for the Head of Delivery to review.
- 2.3.8 Following approval of a period of extended time away from studies, the participant will be sent written confirmation of the details of their time away and the conditions of return. This will contain relevant information, including:
- The standardised conditions of return the participant is required to meet in advance of their planned date of return;
 - Where relevant, any additional conditions of return that have been set;
 - Intended date of return;
 - Information surrounding the format of the return to study panel that will review whether the conditions of return have been met (this is done prior to the intended date of return);
 - Bursary start/end date (year 1 only);
 - Additional steps that will need to be taken where information is disclosed upon a participant's return (e.g., where there is has been a change in health or conduct);
 - The participant's academic record at the point of departure.
- 2.3.9 Frontline would normally expect participants to return to their previous local authority. However, it cannot guarantee that participants returning will be able to do this.
- 2.3.10 If a participant cannot return to their previous local authority because this placement is no longer available, Frontline will make reasonable efforts to place the participant into another local authority upon their return. However, placements are provided at the discretion of local authorities and, therefore, Frontline cannot guarantee it will be able to find such a placement.

2.4 Returning from time away

- 2.4.1 Typically three months before a participant's intended date of return, Frontline will ask the participant to confirm whether they intend to return to programme.



- 2.4.2 Where a participant confirms that they do not wish to return to the programme, relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.4.3 Where a participant does not adequately respond to communication from Frontline in relation to their return to study they will be deemed withdrawn. Relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.4.4 If a participant wishes to complete the programme but cannot return on the date that was initially agreed, they may request a further period of leave via Frontline's [intercalation policy](#).
- 2.4.5 Where the participant intends to return, conditions of return checks will commence, and the participant will be invited to attend a return to study panel normally six weeks in advance of their intended return date.
- 2.4.6 Typically, for the completion of return checks, the participant will liaise with Frontline's Suitability Team, who will support the participant in processing their suitability-related checks.
- 2.4.7 If new information is disclosed when completing the above conditions that indicate additional information is required (e.g., an occupational health assessment), the participant will be notified of what is required and the date by which the information must be provided.
- 2.4.8 The participant is responsible for independently completing their reflective account.
- 2.4.9 Even where conditions of return are met, the participant's return to programme is always subject to the availability of a local authority placement.

The return to study panel

- 2.4.10 Participants will receive confirmation of the time and date of their return to study panel at least 10 working days in advance of it. If the participant cannot attend, the panel can sit in their absence.
- 2.4.11 The return to study panel will normally consist of a member of the suitability team and a Head of Delivery, or nominee. Other relevant Frontline staff may be asked to review the conditions of return submission where the panel deem this necessary.
- 2.4.12 Where required, the Partnerships and Placement Manager (PPM) may also be in attendance.
- 2.4.13 The return to study panel will review the participant's submission and supporting documentation against the conditions of return to establish whether the conditions of return have been met and the participant is approved to return to the programme, subject to the availability of a local authority placement. For those who are permitted to return any ongoing support needs will be identified and support mechanisms put in place.



- 2.4.14 In advance of the panel, PPMs will have confirmed whether a placement at the local authority in which the participant was originally placed, remains available for their return, and if not, will have explored alternatives.
- 2.1.15 If it is confirmed that the participant has met the conditions of return to study, and the local authority placement is still available, or another suitable placement has been found, the participant will be notified of their return to programme.
- 2.1.16 If it is confirmed that the participant has met the conditions of return to study and a reasonable alternative placement has been found but the participant does not wish to take up the placement, the participant will be deemed withdrawn. Relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.1.17 If it is confirmed that the participant has met the conditions of return to study and a placement cannot be found, the participant will be given the option of one further intercalation and Frontline will attempt to secure a placement during this intercalation. Once intercalated, the [intercalation policy](#) then applies.
- 2.1.18 If the participant does not wish to take this intercalation the participant will be deemed withdrawn. Relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.1.19 If the return to study panel determines that a participant has not met the conditions of return to study, the participant will be required to leave the programme, and will be excluded. Exclusion of a participant must be ratified by a Lancaster University examination board.

Ratification of an exclusion by the examination board

- 2.1.20 Frontline's registry will inform Lancaster University that a participant is to be excluded so that this decision can be ratified by an examination board.
- 2.1.21 The examination board will consider the recommendation of the return to study panel together with minutes of the panel and details of the case. The role of the exam board is to consider and ratify the recommendation made in respect of the participant. The exam board must also confirm, to its satisfaction, that due process has been followed at the hearing and that all relevant information has been fully considered.
- 2.1.22 The examination board will either:
- Ratify the recommendation of the Frontline return to study panel that the participant should be excluded; or
 - Fail to ratify the recommendation of the Frontline return to study panel request that the return to study panel is reconvened.



- 2.1.23 A participant whose exclusion is ratified by the examination board will be notified of their exclusion and will be given the opportunity to appeal the decision. Information about the appeals process can be found in the Academic Appeals chapter of Lancaster University's Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures.
- 2.1.24 Ratification and appeal processes may not be complete by the date originally scheduled for a participant's return. In cases where appeals are upheld, return to study may be delayed.

Section 3: Other information for parents and carers

3.1 Summer Institute

- 3.1.1 The summer institute is a high-intensity five-week programme, where private weekend study and some mandatory evening events are likely.
- 3.1.2 Frontline does not provide childcare facilities at the summer institute. However, there may be some limited childcare opportunities available and family rooms at the summer institute through our summer institute provider. Please note that these childcare options and family rooms are not guaranteed and are at the cost of the participant.

3.2 Recall Days

- 3.2.1 Frontline does not provide childcare facilities for recall days.
- 3.2.2 We ensure that recall days do not fall on national bank holidays and try where possible to ensure that recall days do not fall on key religious dates. Although we endeavour to avoid other key dates that can impact participants, such as school holidays, we cannot always avoid these due to the frequency of recall days across year 1 and 2, along with the fact that school holidays vary across England and by school type.

Section 4: Relevant references

[Frontline policies and documents](#)

- 4.1.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:
- Attendance and engagement policy
 - Intercalation policy
 - Bursary & financial policy
 - Transfer policy
 - Withdrawal policy