



**RCSI**

# RCSI Student Maternity Policy

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

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## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to offer advice and guidance on issues related to study, health and safety and leave of absence to students who become pregnant during their studies or to student's whose partner becomes pregnant during their studies.

RCSI is committed to supporting a student who becomes pregnant by demonstrating as much flexibility as possible to facilitate the student's study, with a view to ensuring as much as possible that no student is disadvantaged whilst also ensuring as much as possible that academic standards are maintained. The degree of flexibility offered will be dependent on the stage and programme the student is attending. Each student's circumstances and needs are different and therefore individual conditions (leave and support) will be determined for each individual student in accordance with the advice and guidance provided in this document.

The health and safety of the student and her unborn child will be of primary importance at all times and all issues will be dealt with in a confidential and non-judgmental manner. Only members of staff who need to be informed will be notified of the student's pregnancy with the student's prior consent.

## **2. Responsibilities for Students who become Pregnant during their Studies**

### **2.1. Confirming the Pregnancy**

A student who suspects a pregnancy should have her pregnancy confirmed as soon as she can by attending her medical practitioner. Upon confirmation of pregnancy, arrangements should be made for ante-natal care. A student may consult Pregnancy Advice Services or the RCSI Counsellors to assist her in making personal care decisions. The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme advises women to visit the Positive Options website ([positiveoptions.ie](http://positiveoptions.ie)) for a list of free, State-funded crisis pregnancy services.

### **2.2. Contact the School**

A student must contact an appropriate RCSI staff member, as soon as her pregnancy is confirmed (e.g. Personal Tutor, Student Welfare Officer, Research Supervisor or Head of School (Undergraduate or Postgraduate as appropriate). Undergraduate students should note that the Head of Student Development will be informed so that, in the event of an examination or other compulsory component being missed, they can explain the student's absence while maintaining her confidentiality if so wished. (The Head of the School of Postgraduate Studies will be informed for postgraduate students).

### **2.3. Health and Safety**

Health and Safety measures may be required in order to protect the student and her unborn child (e.g. risk from exposure to chemicals, radiation, manual lifting, human tissues etc.). Once the student has informed RCSI of her pregnancy a risk assessment must be completed by the student in consultation with a relevant member of college staff (Cycle Director, Student Welfare Officer or Head of School (undergraduate or Postgraduate), Health and Safety Officer (Appendix 1). This assessment will identify any risks to the student and her unborn child's health and will inform the steps to be taken by the student and RCSI to manage such risks. The student will be asked to discuss this risk assessment with her medical practitioner to obtain additional advice that may be required by that individual student.



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A written plan, detailing (a) any special arrangements made to manage the pregnancy while the student continues to attend the course and (b) the time scale for expected leave and return to study, will be agreed by the student and Registry Services, Head of School (or nominee). This plan should be reviewed during the pregnancy and amended, if necessary, to suit the student's personal health and social circumstances.

### **3. Interruption to Studies**

#### **3.1. Medical Appointments**

It is acknowledged that a student will be required to attend medical appointments throughout her pregnancy. Where possible, students are asked to make these appointments outside teaching hours, but appointments will be facilitated as much as possible. Complications may arise for some pregnancies and all absences on health grounds should be supported by medical certification.

#### **3.2. Maternity Leave**

RCSI will allow students attend RCSI up to the birth of the child with the written approval of their treating medical practitioners and will allow students to return to study two weeks after the birth, again only with the written approval of their treating medical practitioners. A student who has given birth must not return to study within two weeks of giving birth for health and safety reasons. This is mandatory leave. The student should only return to RCSI when she and the baby are medically fit and ready. Any additional leave requirements should be discussed by contacting Registry Services/CoMPPAS Team, Head of School (or nominee) and may require a leave of absence application form to be submitted (See RCSI Student Leave of Absence Policy available on Moodle).

It will be the responsibility of each student remaining in her programme to ensure that all course content missed because of the student's time away from RCSI (appointments, medical complications, maternity leave), is covered. This can be achieved in consultation with the relevant Cycle Directors, Head of School and Clinical Teaching coordinator. Students should be made aware that they may not be allowed to sit some clinical exams if they have not attended clinical rotations.

Where maternity leave coincides with an assessment / exam period, students will be allowed to take the next possible assessment/ examination. Please note: an undergraduate student who is unable to sit a semester's exams (First sitting and/or supplemental) will be required to repeat the entire semester. Specifically, this means that they will be required to participate fully in all courses and to sit all examinations relevant to those courses before progressing to the next academic year (as detailed in the Marks & Standards).



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## **4. Preparations to Consider**

### **4.1. Financial Considerations**

An international student may decide to return home for the birth of her child. Students must note that most airlines will not carry passengers who are pregnant beyond the 7th month, and therefore arrangements must be made in sufficient time. An international student will also need to check the status of her student visa should she take leave from the programme as appropriate.

Students will need to take into consideration the financial implications of taking leave and for providing for care of their children when they resume their programmes.

RCSI policy will be to charge fees for the semester (or part of semester) attended by the student. Fees will be deferred for subsequent leave until the student recommences the programme. Please contact the Student Fees office for further advice. (Postgraduate students should refer to their Head of School or nominee regarding fees due).

Students may need to suspend loans and/or liaise with their sponsoring/ grant body as soon as arrangements have been made to leave the programme.

Students who have given birth may be eligible for some social welfare benefits. Please consult the Department of Social Protection at <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Pages/AParent.aspx>

Vaccinations: Pregnant students should consult the Mercer Medical Centre with regard to their vaccination programme in accordance with Infectious Diseases and General Health Policy.

### **4.2. Childcare Considerations**

The academic environment is not suitable for children and children should not normally be present on campus. Breast-feeding mothers should seek advice to make arrangements for expressing milk and for providing care for their child (contact Student Services). It is advisable for parents to make arrangements for childcare as soon as the pregnancy is confirmed. The college has a Childcare Agreement with The Giraffe Child Care Agency (details available from Student Services). Changes to your home accommodation may also need to be considered. It is advised that a student should prepare a good support network of friends and family (where possible).

### **4.3. Students whose Partner becomes Pregnant during their Studies**

A student whose partner is pregnant may request time out of study to attend medical appointments with his/her partner and may apply for one week's leave at the time of birth of the child. If the birth is likely to affect assessments / exams then he must notify their Faculty Coordinator, Registry Services and Head of School in advance. Students should refer to the Exceptional Circumstances policy available on Moodle.



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## 5. References

We gratefully acknowledge permissions given to review and use information from the following source documents:

University of Glasgow,[webpage] Student Maternity, Maternity support and Adoption Policy, [accessed 19.08.2011] Available from: [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_128109\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_128109_en.pdf)

The University of Birmingham, [webpage], Student Maternity Guidelines, [accessed 19.08.2011] Available from: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/public/conditions/support-maternity-a2.pdf>

Canterbury Christchurch University, [webpage], Pregnancy and your studies, [accessed 19.08.2011]  
Citizens Information, [webpage], Maternity Benefit, [accessed 19.08.2011], Available from: ([www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social\\_welfare/social\\_welfare\\_payments/social\\_welfare\\_payments\\_to\\_families\\_and\\_children/maternity\\_benefit.html](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/social_welfare_payments_to_families_and_children/maternity_benefit.html))

RCSI Employee Maternity Leave Policy

RCSI Pregnant Employee Risk Assessment



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**Appendix 1**



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**PREGNANT STUDENT RISK ASSEMENT FORM**

**Issue Date: 19/08/2011**

**Revision No: 1**

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOTES:** This form is to be completed and signed off by the Student in conjunction with one of the following: Cycle Director, Head of School (Undergraduate or Postgraduate as appropriate), Student Welfare Officer or Registry Services. Where necessary consult medical practitioner when further advice is required or if adjustments to study conditions are proposed. It may be necessary to complete a further assessment if study conditions, student health or the risk assessment changes at any stage during the pregnancy or post pregnancy period. When fully completed send this form to Registry Services or Head of School (Undergraduate or Postgraduate as appropriate).



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PREGNANT STUDENT RISK ASSEMENT FORM  
Issue Date: 19/08/2011  
Revision No: 1

<b>Student Name:</b>	<b>Year:</b>	<b>Status:</b> Pregnant
<b>Programme:</b>	<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

Section 2.0 Risk Assessment

HAZARD	RISK ASSESSMENT (Detail exposure source, frequency, hazard control measures)		
	Detail source/level of exposure	Detail frequency of exposure	Detail control measures to reduce/eliminate exposure (Consult physician where necessary for further advice)
Physical hazard			
HIGH NOISE <input type="checkbox"/>			
SHOCKS, VIBRATION, EXCESSIVE MOVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/>			
NON-IONISING RADIATION <input type="checkbox"/>			
EXTREMES OF COLD OR HEAT <input type="checkbox"/>			
LONG PERIODS OF STANDING <input type="checkbox"/>			
MANUAL HANDLING OF LOADS <input type="checkbox"/>			
CONSTRAINTS OF POSTURE <input type="checkbox"/>			
RISK OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE <input type="checkbox"/>			
REQUIREMENT TO TRAVEL <input type="checkbox"/>			
Physical hazard	Detail source/level of exposure	Detail frequency of exposure	Detail control measures to reduce/eliminate exposure (Consult physician where



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			necessary for further advice)
LONG HOURS/SHIFT WORK <input type="checkbox"/>			
NIGHT WORK <input type="checkbox"/>			
PHYSICALLY DEMANDING OR STRESSFUL WORK <input type="checkbox"/>			
COMPUTER WORK <input type="checkbox"/>			
CHEMICAL HAZARDS <input type="checkbox"/>			
CARCINOGENS <input type="checkbox"/>			
MERCURY <input type="checkbox"/>			
CYTOTOXIC DRUGS <input type="checkbox"/>			
CARBON MONOXIDE <input type="checkbox"/>			
CHEMICALS LABELLED: R40, R45, R46, R61, R63 & R46 <input type="checkbox"/>			
ANAESTHETIC <input type="checkbox"/>			
SUBSTANCES WHICH CAN BE ABSORBED THROUGH SKIN <input type="checkbox"/>			
LEAD <input type="checkbox"/>			
BIOLOGICAL AGENTS <input type="checkbox"/>			
BIOLOGICAL AGENTS OF RISK GROUP 2-5 <input type="checkbox"/>			
TOXOPLASMA; RUBELLA VIRUS <input type="checkbox"/>			<b>NOTE: MUST NOT PERFORM DUTIES WITH SPECIFIED AGENTS</b>



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## Section 3.0 Action Summary

Action (please tick)	Give brief details of action to be taken (Full details to be submitted in a letter to the Student)
No adjustments necessary <input type="checkbox"/>	
Temporary adjustment of study conditions <input type="checkbox"/>	
Temporary adjustment of study hours <input type="checkbox"/>	
Suitable alternative conditions offered <input type="checkbox"/>	
Leave of Absence subject to medical approval to return to study <input type="checkbox"/>	

## Section 4.0 College Representative Declaration

**This form has been completed in consultation with the Student named above and I have reviewed the information contained within.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



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## Policy/Regulation History

Document Title		RCSI Student Maternity Policy				
Rev	Status	Author(s)	Reviewed by	Approved by	Origin	Issue Date
1	Draft	Dr Orna Tighe	*Student Affairs		Vice Dean for Student Affairs	2011
1	Draft		Ms S O'Mally, Legal Affairs; Academic Council; Student Union			2012
1	Final			Medicine & Health Sciences Board		29 March 2012
2	Final		RCSI Registry	Medicine & Health Sciences Board		26 August 2019

\*Student Affairs: Dr Orna Tighe, Ms Judith Gilroy, Dr Judith Strawbridge, Dr Marc Devocelle