

POLICY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Student Pregnancy Policy

POLICY

Policy Number	Version 01
Date of Approval	September 2024
Policy Sponsor	Dean of Student Affairs
Next Review Date	September 2027
Approver	Council
Department/Unit	Student Counselling

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to:

1.1.1. celebrate diversity, avoid gender discrimination and acknowledge legal protection of pregnant students;

1.1.2. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that promotes unfair treatment or coercive contexts for unfair treatment and outcomes of pregnant students;

1.1.3. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic (such as pregnancy, maternity or paternity) and people who do not share it; and

1.1.4. foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic as defined in the Constitution of South Africa (such as pregnancy, maternity or paternity) and people who do not share it.

2. Scope

2.1. Institutional Scope

2.1.1. This policy applies to the entire university.

2.2. Individual Scope

2.2.1. This policy applies to CPUT registered students for formal programmes of study and is inclusive of staff who are also registered students at CPUT.

2.2.2. This policy applies to pregnant students and those with maternity and paternity interests.

3. Objectives

3.1. This policy is developed to promote responsible and safe conduct and/or contexts during the pregnancy of any CPUT student, and at any level of vulnerability.

3.2. This policy is developed to promote and support students in a manner that:

3.2.1. promotes fair treatment;

3.2.2. takes a flexible approach;

- 3.2.3. demonstrates a non-judgmental approach;
- 3.2.4. enables informed choices;
- 3.2.5. encourages early notification of pregnancy;
- 3.2.6. clearly outlines the responsibilities of the university, faculties, departments, support departments, staff members and students.

4. Policy Principles

4.1. First Point of Contact

- 4.1.1. If a student decides to inform the university of their pregnancy, then the Campus Health Clinic or Department Student Counselling should be informed first (refer to 4.2 and 4.3. for alternative points of contact).
- 4.1.2. The Campus Health Clinic will conduct a medical assessment and, thereafter, refer the student to Student Counselling to draft a support plan. Referral to a community health medical practitioner will be made by either the Campus Health Clinic or Student Counselling should concerns regarding risk (see 4.4.) be noted. Should a medical emergency arise on campus or in university leased or owned accommodation, the provisions according to the emergency medical fund will apply with regard to medical transport.
- 4.1.3. Student Counselling will inform the student of the support options available and will co-ordinate the arrangements for that support. The support plan will include due consideration for continuation of academic studies, and this is done in conjunction with the academic department.
- 4.1.4. The student will have the opportunity to name those members of university staff whom the student wishes to inform about the pregnancy. The student should give Student Counselling written consent for those persons to be informed. The university will not inform anyone of the pregnancy without the express permission of the student, unless there are concerns for the health and safety of the student and baby.

4.2. Informing an Alternative

- 4.2.1. It is up to the student to decide who should be informed of the pregnancy and they may therefore choose not to inform the Campus Health Clinic or Student Counselling.

4.2.2. Should a student inform a staff member, written consent should be obtained by the staff member before they can go ahead and inform the Head of the Academic Department and before they can refer the student to the Campus Health Clinic and Student Counselling.

4.3. Informing the University

4.3.1. It is advised that a student inform their academic department of pregnancy and this information will be treated as confidential. A medical certificate with the expected date of delivery and recommendation regarding the student's fitness to attend classes should be provided to the Head of the Academic Department.

4.3.2. Pregnant students who study programmes that present a higher-than-normal risk (refer to paragraph 4.4.2) are compelled to inform their academic department immediately. This is to avoid possible risk to the unborn child and mother.

4.3.3. A student is not obligated to notify the university of the pregnancy, except as stated in 4.4.2. The university will be unable to provide the student with individualised support unless the university is informed. However, a student at 32 weeks gestation is required to cease class attendance, cease formal on-campus assessments, and vacate their residence, should they be based in residence. For this reason, they are compelled to inform the Head of the Academic Department and Residence Coordinator of the pregnancy.

4.3.4. During and after pregnancy, students must adhere to the General Handbook's rules and regulations regarding absence, learning, teaching and assessments.

4.3.5. The university will only enquire about a student's pregnancy if there are good grounds to believe that the student is pregnant and that there are legitimate concerns about the student's health and safety.

4.4. Attendance at University

4.4.1. The pregnant student does not necessarily need to leave the programme or suspend their studies. However, there may be risks associated with continuing with their studies at certain stages of the pregnancy. Possible risks will depend on the requirements and nature of the programme, and medical considerations related to the pregnancy.

4.4.2. Students are compelled to inform the university if they are enrolled for programmes that present a higher-than-normal risk to the baby and mother. These can be programmes that include:

4.4.2.1. Physical activity, including lifting and carrying;

4.4.2.2. The use of chemicals, including paints and pesticides;

4.4.2.3 Medical and biohazardous material and waste;

4.4.2.4. Working in hot/cold or pressurised environments;

4.4.2.5 Possibility of exposure to infectious disease, including laboratory work and healthcare provision, and looking after animals or dealing with animal products.

4.4.2.6 Exposure to ionising radiation.

4.4.3. Where risks are identified a medical professional will be consulted on ways to minimise the identified risks, where possible. If risks cannot be mitigated, and learning and teaching cannot be adjusted to make reasonable accommodations, the student may be advised to defer their studies. This will be recommended, but the Academic Head of the Department will make the final decision.

4.5. Leave of Absence

4.5.1. A minimum period of six weeks should be granted as leave of absence following the birth of a child in line with entitlements from labour law. A student may return sooner but must provide a letter from a medical practitioner declaring that the student is fit to return. A student may choose to take a leave of absence from their studies for up to a year.

4.5.2. If a student decides to take time off from their studies due to pregnancy, the student must inform the Head of the Academic Department of the date when maternity-related absence will be taken, the length of the maternity-related absence, and intended date of return. This should be done in writing at least 12 weeks before the student's expected delivery date.

4.5.3. Giving 12 weeks' notice should allow sufficient time for the student and the university to liaise regarding the student's personal support plan and make any necessary arrangement, and ensure information is communicated as required.

4.5.4. Students can choose to take maternity-related absence before and after the birth. The length of time is dependent on the personal circumstances of the student and the structure and content of the programme. The academic department will work with the student to agree on a suitable return-to-study date. Consideration should be given to the application, registration and cancellation dates of the institution and the financial implications thereof. If the structure or content of the programme requires a student to return sooner than the student would like to, then the student will be informed of these requirements in writing.

4.5.5. The academic department and the student should discuss the impact of the leave of absence on the student's learning, teaching and assessment together. Agreement should be reached on how the leave of absence will be managed and a feasible catch-up plan should be identified. The nature of the programme or the duration of the leave of absence may be such that continuation of studies and return may not be feasible, and thus deferred studies may be recommended.

4.5.6. Should consensus not be reached, the case will be referred to the Head of the Academic Department, and thereafter to the Dean of the Faculty for final deliberation. If the university is concerned about the health of the student in relation to the proposed programme requirements and return date, the student may be asked for a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner confirming the student's fitness to remain or return to study.

4.6. Assessments and Examinations

4.6.1. Students should submit a medical certificate indicating expected date of delivery. Students at 32 weeks gestation or those presenting with high-risk pregnancies are not permitted to sit for formal assessments as stipulated in 4.3.3.

4.6.2. The university will make reasonable accommodations with regard to the use of the restroom during examinations, comfortable seating and the use of separate examination locations, to enable the student to complete the examinations and assessments during pregnancy.

4.6.3. If the student is concerned about sitting for examinations or meeting assessed work deadlines, or if the student has a pregnancy-related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, the student should consult with a medical practitioner or similar suitably qualified medical professional. If they advise the student against sitting for the examination or trying to meet the assessed work deadline, a medical certificate should be provided and alternative methods of assessment may be explored.

4.6.4 Should the student miss an assessment, the student may qualify for reassessment as per the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy or an alternate form of assessment may be considered.

4.7. Placements for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

4.7.1. If students are due to undertake a work placement as part of their programme, the university will, with the permission and agreement of the student in accordance with POPIA, liaise with the placement provider to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out. If the programme requires

fieldwork to be done, the academic department must consider this requirement within the risk assessment they conduct. Due consideration must be given to the student's delivery date, the placement provider's policies, conditions of placement, and contractual obligations regarding pregnancy. All of the aforementioned should be consulted in conjunction with section D and E of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy.

4.7.2. If a student has already commenced with placement and the programme or the duration of the leave of absence is of such a nature that continuation of placement and return may not be feasible the student's studies might need to be suspended for the year and Work-Integrated Learning might have to be completed in the following year. Provision 4.5.5 and 4.5.6 should be consulted if the student is advised to defer WIL placement.

4.7.3. If a student is studying abroad or is abroad on work placement, it is their responsibility to ensure that they meet visa terms and conditions as well as the conditions of their insurance and travel.

4.8. Service Learning

4.8.1. If students are due to undertake a service-learning project as part of their programme, the university will, with the permission and agreement of the student, liaise with the relevant project participants to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out. If the programme requires community site visits and implementation off site, this will need to be considered within a risk assessment. Due consideration must be given to the student's delivery date in order to ascertain whether service learning could be undertaken or whether alternative projects should be considered.

4.9. Returning to Studies

4.9.1. A student will normally be required to take a minimum of six weeks' compulsory maternity-related absence, but they may require a longer absence due to the type of delivery or any significant health and safety risks. If a student wishes to return earlier than six weeks after delivery, they should submit a medical certificate confirming their fitness to return. This is to ensure the health and safety of the student after giving birth.

4.9.2. A student may be allowed to take up to one year's leave from their studies, with due consideration for application, registration and cancellation dates. It is the responsibility of the student to plan for academic catch up where this is possible, but the department should assist with information on academic due dates and deadlines.

4.9.3. In exceptional circumstances, a student may need to extend the length of maternity leave beyond the standard time allowed, for example in cases of postnatal depression, serious illness,

loss of the baby, or where there is no available childcare. The university will take reasonable steps to enable the student to complete the requirements of the programme or module before the maternity-related absence. If the student is unable to complete the programme or module before taking maternity-related absence, the student will, if possible, be allowed to complete the programme or module upon their return to the university.

4.9.4. If the student is close to their due date and unable to study as planned, the student may commence their maternity-related absence earlier than planned. Where appropriate, a student may engage the university regarding alternative methods of meeting the programme requirements.

4.9.5. The student may wish to resume the programme on a part-time or distance-learning basis if the programme is offered in this format. If so, the university would normally agree to this unless there are justifiable reasons for not doing so. In such a case, the reasons for not doing so will be communicated to the student in writing.

4.9.6. Babies and children under the age of 18 are not permitted in university classrooms, learning spaces or laboratories.

4.10. University Owned or Leased Accommodation

4.10.1. The student will not be asked to leave their university accommodation because of pregnancy. However, once the student has reached 32 weeks gestation, the accommodation should be vacated in accordance with the General Handbook.

4.10.2. Given the demand for student accommodation, it is advised that accommodation requirements are considered in the early stages of the pregnancy. At least 12 weeks before the student expects to give birth, a letter from the treating medical practitioner must be provided. The letter must confirm their expected date of delivery and their fitness to continue their studies until that date.

4.10.3. Contracts for university owned and university managed accommodation will allow students to end their contracts early due to pregnancy or maternity without penalty. If a student resides in private accommodation, the contractual obligations of the accommodation provider should be consulted.

4.10.4. Following the birth, the student will be unable to live with their baby in university managed accommodation. Children under the age of 18 are not permitted in university owned or university managed accommodation.

4.11. International Students

4.11.1. International students studying at CPUT or students travelling abroad as part of CPUT's learning and teaching activities, bear the responsibility of making the necessary medical and travel arrangements. This must be done in accordance with South African regulations pertaining to health care provision, airlines and other modes of transport.

4.11.2. International students who are pregnant while studying at CPUT should obtain the latest information regarding visa implications of taking maternity-related absence, returning home, and having a dependent to support in South Africa.

4.11.3. If a CPUT student is studying abroad or is fulfilling a work placement abroad during the pregnancy or maternity, the university will liaise with the host institution or placement provider to ensure, where possible, that adequate support is provided to the student.

4.12. Student Partners

4.12.1. The university will allow students who are partners of new mothers to take leave of absence.

4.12.2. The university will be flexible in allowing a student to attend their partner's antenatal appointments, and proof of appointments should be provided to the academic department. In addition, a student may need to take time off if their partner has complications with the pregnancy or a serious pregnancy-related illness.

4.12.3. If a student wants to take a leave of absence, they should inform their academic department of their partner's pregnancy at least 12 weeks before the expected delivery date along with supporting documentation.

4.12.4. Students should give due consideration to the academic rules as per the General Handbook with regard to any leave of absence. It remains the responsibility of the student to plan for academic catch up.

4.12.5. The university will allow students paternity-related absence in line with the entitlements for paternity leave from labour law. At present, a maximum leave period of two consecutive working weeks (ten working days) may be granted.

4.12.6. If students who are partners want to take an extended leave of absence, consideration will need to be given to the level of support required by their partner, and what impact such absence

and support will have on the student's academics. It may be appropriate to develop a student support plan.

4.12.7. If a student is unable to complete coursework, assessments or examinations because of their partner's pregnancy or labour, they should be allowed to sit for the examination or assessment at the earliest possible opportunity or they should be given an extension where possible. The guidelines on deferred assessments in the General Handbook should be consulted. Such arrangements may also be appropriate if the student's partner has a serious pregnancy-related illness.

4.12.8. In other compulsory elements of the programme, such as field trips or work placements, the university can consider the feasibility of students undertaking it at an alternative time. Where this is not possible, the reasons for not allowing such arrangements will be provided to the student in writing.

4.13. Miscarriage

4.13.1. If the student should have a miscarriage or still birth, or if the baby dies shortly after birth, the university can make on-campus counselling support available to the student. However, it is the student's choice to inform the university or not. The points of contact stipulated in this policy should be considered if the student decides to do so.

4.13.2. If the student makes use of on-campus counselling services, the counsellor will be able to provide support and advice on other sources of support that the student may wish to use.

4.13.3. If the student chooses not to inform the university of their loss, the university will be limited in the support that they can provide.

4.13.4. The student who has a miscarriage may need to take leave of absence from study for medical tests and to recover, which may impact on the student's ability to meet assessment deadlines and sit for examinations. The General Handbook and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy should be consulted for guidelines regarding medical certificates and any leave of absence.

4.13.5. If the student has a still birth or if the baby dies shortly after birth, the student is still entitled to six weeks maternity-related absence.

4.14. Termination of Pregnancy

4.14.1. A student who is considering termination or a student who is medically required to undergo termination of the pregnancy is encouraged to attend counselling to receive the necessary support and guidance on the decision to terminate the pregnancy. Counselling can be obtained at CPUT or externally.

4.14.2. Students may need to take a leave of absence from study for tests before termination of the pregnancy and afterwards, to recover. A medical certificate should stipulate the length of the leave of absence that is required. Such a leave of absence will be treated in line with the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy.

5. Commonly Used Terms & Definitions

5.1. Pregnancy is the period in which an implanted human embryo or foetus develops in the uterus over a period of 40 weeks gestation, which is deemed a full-term pregnancy.

5.2. Maternity is the period during pregnancy and shortly after childbirth.

5.3. Paternity-related leave of absence is the period shortly before or after the birth of a child taken by a father, partner or a parent for the purpose of caregiving.

5.4. Miscarriage is the loss of pregnancy before 20 weeks of gestation.

5.5. Stillbirth is the death of a baby before or during delivery.

5.6. Termination of pregnancy is when the pregnancy is ended through a medical procedure, so that it does not result in the birth of a baby.

5.7. Student refers to any person registered with the University for any form of study or who has taken part in any university activity with the intention to register.

5.8. A medical practitioner is a person registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa as a general medical practitioner, obstetrician and/or gynaecologist.

5.9. Higher-than-normal risk is defined as student's exposure to risk related to:

5.9.1. physical activity, including lifting and carrying;

5.9.2. austere environments;

5.9.3. the use of chemicals, including paints and pesticides;

5.9.4. medical and biohazardous material or waste;

5.9.5. working in hot/cold or pressurised environments;

5.9.6. where exposure to infectious disease is a possibility: including laboratory work, healthcare provision, and looking after animals or dealing with animal products.

5.9.7. exposure to ionising radiation.


5.10. Student partner is a person who is- or was in a supportive or personal relationship with the expectant mother who is deemed to be a parent and caregiver of the unborn baby.

6. Responsibility

Accountability and Authority:	
Implementation:	Dean of Student Affairs
Compliance:	Compliance Management Function
Monitoring and Evaluation:	HOD Student Counselling
Development/Review:	HOD Student Counselling
Approval Authority:	Council
Interpretation and Advice:	Division of Student Affairs and Compliance Management Function

Policy Development Framework				
Policy Type(s):	A: Administrative Policy			
Policy Group(s): Delete categories that are not relevant	A: Governance and Administration			
Type:	Policy	√	Guideline	Manual
Tick document category	Procedure		Regulation	Plan
CPUT Statute and/or Regulation Reference no. and date:	Cape Peninsula University of Technology Statute, May 2022			

Relevant Legislation and/or Policy, Codes of practice, Professional authorities:	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996 Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997 Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993 Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995
Relevant Institutional Policies/ documents/manuals/ handbooks	CPUT General Handbook: Academic and Student Rules and Regulations Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, 2021 Procedures and Rules for Learning, Teaching and Assessments, 2022 Emergency Management Fund, 2010 CPUT Strategic Plan: Vision 2030 CPUT Ethics Framework This policy replaces: Policy on Student Pregnancy 2013 STU/PREG/VI/13
Policy Reference and Version no.:	
Consultation Process To be verified and signed off before approval	The review of the 2013 Student Pregnancy Policy took place in October 2018. The review process and establishment of the working group were spear-headed by the Centre for Community Engagement and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) and Emergency Medical Services. From the Newsflash distribution and the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC) presentation, it was evident that the 2013 policy required extensive changes, and hence the process of drafting a new policy commenced in 2019. Various stakeholders were consulted and included in the working group: Civic Learning, Campus Health Clinic, Student Counselling, Faculties, Legal Services, and Student Representatives. Various national and international policies and laws were benchmarked in the drafting of the policy. The new draft policy served at Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC) in 2019. In 2020, the policy sponsor changed from CEWIL to Division Student Affairs. The draft policy that served at SLTC had undergone a second review process in 2023 by the policy working group led by Division Student Affairs, which included members from the 2019 review and new members. Invited stakeholders included Student Counselling, Student Health Clinic, HIV Unit, Residences, WIL Faculty Representatives, Quality Management Directorate, Compliance Office, Centre of Diversity Inclusivity and Social Change, Student Representative Council, Local Student Representatives, and Faculties: Health and Wellness, Informatics and Design, Business and Management Sciences, Education, Applied Science, and Engineering and the Built Environment.
Policy Owner/Sponsor	Dean of the Division of Student Affairs
Compliance Officers	Compliance Owners

Certification of Due process: To be verified and signed once approved by the relevant authority	<div> Vice Chancellor</div> <div>30.10.2024 Date</div>				
Approval Date		Commencement Date		Review Date	

REVISION HISTORY: Only applicable to amended or reviewed Policies. Record details of amendments/revision.					
Version No.	Approved/ Rescinded	Date	Approving Authority	Resolution Number/ (Minute number)	Date for next review (start date for review process)
01			Council		

For office use only	
Policy Group (Broad Policy field)	A: Governance and Administration
Subject (Policy sub-field)	Policies
Reference Number	
Version Number	01
Key Words:	Student pregnancy, leave of absence, miscarriage, termination of pregnancy