Pregnant Workers Risk Assessment (including students)
Policy ✓ Code of Practice… Guidance… Procedure…
Organisation-wide ✓ Local…
Approved by the University Health & Safety Committee
Chairperson - Lucy Shirodkar Date 15/October/2026 Review date 2029
The purpose of presenting this document to the University Health & Safety Committee Standard 3-year review ✓ Changes in practice and/or legislation… New policy document…

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1 Purpose

Brunel University London (Brunel) is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all staff and students. This includes taking appropriate measures to protect the health, safety and welfare of individuals who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, and to manage risks to their child, where applicable.

Employers have duties under health and safety legislation to assess and manage workplace risks. Consideration must be given to risks that may arise or change during pregnancy, following childbirth or while breastfeeding.

Some working conditions, processes, substances and environments may present risks to a pregnant worker, a worker who has recently given birth, a breastfeeding worker or their child. Such risks must be identified and appropriately controlled.

This Policy applies to all new and expectant workers at Brunel and provides a framework for carrying out individual risk assessments and implementing appropriate control measures. It also applies to individuals to whom the relevant health and safety requirements apply, including agency, temporary, casual and other workers where Brunel has responsibility for their health and safety.

Once a worker has notified Brunel in writing that they are pregnant, have given birth within the previous six months or are breastfeeding, Brunel will ensure that relevant health and safety risks are considered and, where appropriate, that an individual risk assessment is undertaken and suitable control measures are implemented.

Where Brunel engages agency, temporary, casual or other workers who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, relevant health and safety risks will be appropriately assessed and managed where Brunel has responsibility for their health and safety. Where another organisation also has legal responsibilities, Brunel will liaise with that organisation as appropriate.

This Policy also applies to undergraduate and postgraduate students who become pregnant during their studies. Although the statutory individual risk-assessment requirements applicable to workers do not apply to students in the same way, Brunel has a duty of care to identify and manage relevant health and safety risks associated with pregnancy, recent childbirth and breastfeeding.

Where a student's course, placement, laboratory work, clinical activity, fieldwork, sporting activity or other activity presents potential risks, appropriate arrangements should be made to protect the student and, where relevant, their unborn or breastfeeding child.

Brunel will assess and manage relevant health and safety risks to students and, where applicable, their unborn or breastfeeding child or children, taking account of the nature of the student's activities and any specific risks identified.

2 Scope

This Policy provides the framework through which Brunel will discharge its health and safety responsibilities towards:

- pregnant workers;
- workers who have given birth within the previous six months;
- breastfeeding workers;
- students who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding;
- agency, temporary or other workers where Brunel has relevant health and safety responsibilities.

The Policy applies across all Brunel activities, including office-based work, laboratories, workshops, clinical environments, teaching, research, fieldwork, placements, sporting activities and home or hybrid working where applicable.

The assessment and management of risks must take account of the individual's actual duties, activities, working environment and circumstances. The examples of hazards within this Policy are not exhaustive.

3 Policy details

The Health and Safety Executive require workplace risk assessments to specifically consider risks to the health and safety of a pregnant worker, a worker who has recently given birth or a breastfeeding worker.

Brunel will ensure that relevant risks are identified and appropriately controlled through its health and safety risk assessment arrangements.

An individual risk assessment should be undertaken where appropriate and should consider:

- the individual's duties and activities;
- the working environment;
- existing risk assessments and control measures;

- any specific hazards associated with the individual's work, course or activities;
- any concerns raised by the individual;
- how risks may change as pregnancy progresses or following childbirth;
- relevant advice from Occupational Health or a healthcare professional where provided by the individual; and
- any changes required to working activities or arrangements to control identified risks.

Where a risk is identified, appropriate measures should be taken to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Control measures should be considered in the following order, where reasonably practicable:

- eliminate the hazard;
- prevent or reduce exposure to the hazard;
- modify working conditions, working arrangements or activities;
- temporarily adjust duties or activities; and
- consider suitable alternative work activities where the identified health and safety risk cannot otherwise be adequately controlled.

Where a significant health and safety risk cannot be adequately controlled through reasonable changes to the individual's work or working environment, advice should be sought from the Health, Safety and Environment Team and Occupational Health, as appropriate.

The individual should be involved in discussions about control measures, and the agreed measures should be recorded within the relevant risk assessment.

The risk assessment should not be treated as a one-off exercise. It should be reviewed regularly and whenever circumstances change.

Common risks to consider

Some of the most common risks arising from working conditions for pregnant workers and new mothers are outlined below. This is not a complete list and the specific hazards and control measures relevant to the individual's area of work or study must be considered.

Posture and position

Pregnant workers and new mothers may be more susceptible to injury, including injuries that may not become apparent until after birth. Postural problems can occur at different stages of pregnancy and on returning to work, depending on the individual and their working conditions.

Consideration should be given to activities involving:

- prolonged sitting or standing;
- lifting or carrying heavy loads;
- repetitive or physically demanding activities; and
- other activities involving postural or physical demands.

A DSE Assessment should be undertaken where applicable.

Working conditions

Long hours, shift work and night work can affect the health and wellbeing of pregnant workers, new mothers and their children. Workers may also be particularly vulnerable to work-related stress and other factors that can affect their health and wellbeing.

The effects of these working patterns will vary between individuals. However, mental and physical fatigue may increase during pregnancy and following childbirth.

The risks posed by the following should be considered:

- work-related stress;
- workload and fatigue;
- temperature; and
- noise.
- Risk of physical injury

Some work carries a risk of physical injury, and the consequences for pregnant workers and new mothers can be more serious. Consideration should be given to whether additional control measures are required, including where individuals are:

- working at height;
- working alone;
- at risk of work-related violence or aggression; or
- exposed to vibration.

Other relevant risks of physical injury should also be considered according to the individual's duties and activities.

Exposure to harmful substances

Many chemical and biological agents can cause harm to pregnant workers or new mothers. Some substances or agents may also present a risk to their child during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

These may include:

- lead;
- radioactive material;
- toxic chemicals such as mercury and pesticides;
- infectious diseases;
- biological agents;
- antimitotic (cytotoxic) drugs;
- reproductive toxins; and
- other hazardous laboratory or clinical materials.

Existing COSHH assessments and other relevant risk assessments should be considered alongside the individual pregnancy risk assessment.

Personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) may not always be designed to accommodate changes associated with pregnancy.

Brunel will ensure that PPE provided remains safe, effective, suitable, correctly fitting and comfortable for the individual, particularly as pregnancy progresses.

The suitability of PPE should be reviewed as the individual's circumstances change.

Where PPE is no longer suitable or cannot provide adequate protection, the work activity or PPE should be reviewed and changed as appropriate.

If adequate protection cannot be achieved, advice should be sought from the Health, Safety and Environment Team.

Rest and breastfeeding at work

Pregnant workers and breastfeeding workers may require additional or more frequent rest breaks depending on their individual circumstances and the nature of their work.

Appropriate arrangements should be agreed with the individual and reviewed where circumstances change.

Brunel will provide a suitable area where a pregnant or breastfeeding worker can rest, where required. The area should:

- include somewhere to lie down if necessary;
- be hygienic and private so that the individual can express milk if they choose to;
- not be a toilet; and
- include appropriate facilities for storing expressed milk, for example a suitable fridge.

Some work presents an additional risk for breastfeeding workers and their children. This includes working conditions that could expose them to organic mercury, radioactive material or lead.

These risks must be considered within the individual's risk assessment for as long as they wish to continue breastfeeding and remain exposed to the relevant occupational hazards.

Arrangements for rest and breastfeeding facilities should be reviewed if the individual's circumstances or working conditions change.

Monitoring

As part of the risk assessment, the individual and the assessment should be reviewed every four weeks as a minimum, where applicable, to ensure that control measures remain appropriate as the pregnancy progresses.

The assessment should also be reviewed sooner where:

- the individual's circumstances or health change;
- the pregnancy progresses and the nature or level of risk changes;
- working conditions, duties, equipment or location change;
- a new hazard is introduced;
- the individual raises a health and safety concern;
- Occupational Health or healthcare advice indicates that a review is appropriate; or
- the individual returns to work following childbirth and relevant health and safety risks remain.

Where the individual is breastfeeding and remains exposed to relevant occupational hazards, the assessment should continue to be reviewed for as long as those risks remain relevant.

Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that agreed control measures are implemented and remain effective.

Any concerns identified during the monitoring period should be reported to the Health, Safety and Environment Team and, where appropriate, Occupational Health and/or Student Services for advice and guidance.

4 Responsibilities

Staff and students should be encouraged to notify Brunel as early as they feel comfortable doing so of their pregnancy, recent childbirth or breastfeeding, particularly where there may be hazards associated with their work or course.

This will enable Brunel to identify and manage any relevant health and safety risks and put appropriate control measures in place.

Staff

Staff are encouraged to notify their line manager and/or Human Resources as soon as they feel comfortable doing so, so that Brunel can provide appropriate support and assess any relevant health and safety risks.

Where an individual risk assessment is required, notification should be made in writing.

Staff should:

- participate in the health and safety risk assessment process;
- provide relevant information about their work and working environment;
- raise any health and safety concerns with their line manager or supervisor;
- inform their manager if their circumstances or working conditions change;
- inform their manager if agreed control measures are no longer effective or appropriate; and
- participate in reviews of the risk assessment.

Staff are not required to disclose their pregnancy to colleagues or other members of the University community.

Line Managers/Supervisors

Information relating to pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding will be treated sensitively and confidentially. Information should only be shared with those who need to know in order to undertake the risk assessment, implement agreed control measures or provide appropriate support, unless the individual has agreed to wider disclosure or disclosure is otherwise required by law.

Managers should discuss with the individual who needs to be informed and what information can be shared. Care should be taken where the individual has not yet informed colleagues, students or other members of the University community.

Line managers and/or supervisors shall arrange for the pregnancy risk assessment to be carried out in discussion with the individual, and if required HR, the Health, Safety and Environment Team and/or Occupational Health.

Students / Academic Supervisor / Tutor / Student Services

1. It is the responsibility of students to alert Brunel to the fact of their pregnancy, recent childbirth or breastfeeding as soon as possible, particularly if there may be hazards associated with their course or activities.

This is most likely to be an issue for students in areas such as Engineering and Design, Health and Social Sciences and Sport and Education where there may be chemical or physical hazards – though not exclusively. Students should seek advice from the Student Services Team where appropriate.

Students should alert either their personal tutor and/or supervisor, who must then ensure that an appropriate health and safety risk assessment is carried out, in discussion with the individual, and where relevant/necessary Student Services and/or the Health, Safety and Environment Team.

The assessment should consider the student's normal activities and any specific hazards associated with their course, research, laboratory work, clinical activities, fieldwork, placement, sporting activities or other activities.

Academic Registry, Student Services and Student Living may need to be notified where health and safety considerations affect arrangements for sitting exams, attendance or Halls tenancy agreements.

In addition, the Professional Development Centre should be notified regarding Work Placements where necessary to ensure suitable and sufficient health and safety arrangements are made to protect the individual and, where applicable, their unborn or breastfeeding child.

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Competent Health & Safety Support

Brunel's Health, Safety & Environment Team (HSET) provide specialist advice, support, and training. They facilitate risk assessment guidance, promote best practice, help interpret legislation, and support organisational compliance activities. Managers and staff should seek specialist input where needed.

5 Legal and other requirements

Protecting pregnant workers and new mothers - HSE

Carers, parents and flexible working guide (brunel.ac.uk)

6 Appendix -)

Pregnancy Risk Assessment Form

To be completed by the Individual with either the Line Manager/ Personal Tutor or Supervisor and the returned to Human Resources or Student Services as appropriate

College, Institute or Professional Service

Employee and/or students Name: Date of Birth:

Job title/Course:

Form Completed by: Line Manager and/or Tutor/Supervisors

Hazard	**Risk** **Yes** **No**		**Possible solution** *(Please edit according to your specific situation – the items in green are merely suggestions)*
1.Does the work or study involve: Reaching? Stretching? Repetitive Twisting? Lifting/carrying loads?			*Can a mechanical aid be used?* *Can the task be adapted or automated?* *Avoid this part of the job or reduce the length of time spent doing it.* *Can colleagues offer help with loads? Consider redeployment*
2. Does the work or study involve: Standing for long periods? Static Postures?			*Rotate the individual into other tasks and roles.* *Can the individual alternate between standing and sitting to perform the task?* *Can the frequency of breaks be increased?* *Reduce the length of time spent undertaking the task.* *Consider redeployment*
3. Is Non - ionising radiation or Ionising radiation present in any of the work or study processes that the worker may be exposed to?			*Unless a local procedure document specifies guidance:* *Avoid and/or redeploy the worker away from the process*
4. Do the work or study processes involve working with/in extremes of temperature? (i.e. Hot environments			*Avoid prolonged exposure to extremes of temperature* *Offer additional warm clothing for cold temperatures, Provide rest facilities and*

Cold environments)			*access to refreshments, and (warm) meals. Consider redeployment*
5. Is the worker or student exposed to high volumes of noise e.g. 85dB (A) or more?			*Avoid prolonged exposure to noise, use PPE and noise reduction methods as recommended by Noise at Work Regulations.* *Provide quiet rest facilities.* *It is best to avoid noise exposure in pregnant staff completely, therefore consider temporary redeployment as best option.*
6. Is the worker or student exposed to shocks and vibration? Low frequency vibration Whole body vibration Single shocks (e.g. blow to stomach from attack or assault)			*A separate risk assessment should be undertaken for staff/ students at risk from assault.* *Avoid exposure to shocks and vibration.* *Consider redeployment as best option.*
7. Is the employee or student working at heights/ confined spaces			*Avoid working/ studying at heights/confined spaces in later stages of pregnancy i.e.5 months onwards or before if the employee feels unable.* *Consider redeployment as best option.*
8. Is the employee or student working with Chemical Agents? e.g. Carbon Monoxide ; Lead and it's derivatives; Mercury and it's derivatives; Substances labelled R40, 45,46,49,61,63,64 (this list is not exhaustive) **Please name the agents (and possible route of entry to the body), that the individual is exposed to during work.**			*Refer to local guidance and COSHH Assessments.* *It is best to eliminate the hazard all together, for the benefit of all workers/ students. Where this is not possible each substance is subject to risk assessment. The control measure will depend on the risk assessment recommendations. Consider reducing the length of exposure, redeployment, and mechanical processes to reduce human exposure/ adapting the task.* *If in doubt avoid exposure.* ***Chemicals used by the worker:***

Hazard	Risk Yes No	Possible solution

9. Is the employee or student working with biological agents? e.g. Micro-organisms Bacteria and Viruses **Please name the agents (and possible route of entry to the body) that the individual is exposed to during work.**			*Refer to local guidance and COSHH Assessments.* *Each substance is subject to risk assessment. The control measure will depend on the risk assessment recommendations.* *If in doubt avoid exposure* *Consider reducing the length of exposure, personal protective equipment, redeployment and mechanical processes to reduce human exposure/ adapting the task for pregnant.* **Biological agents used by the worker:**
10. Does the employee or student work/studying hours that are causing fatigued?			*Adjust working / study hours temporarily. Adjust/alter shift patterns Increase frequency of rest breaks. Avoid night shifts (however staff will prefer to continue working at nights).*
11. Does the worker/student feel isolated or distressed by work or study			*Encourage the employee /student to discuss the issues with their line manager / tutor to find resolution.*
12. Does the employee or student undertake travelling or driving for large parts of the working or studying day?			*Adjust working hours temporarily or review study pattern. Adjust/alter shift patterns Increase frequency of rest breaks. Avoid night shifts. Encourage the employee to discuss the issues with their line manager to find aresolution.*

Outline any recommendations made by the employee / student Doctor and/or Midwife including gestation period: -
What risk assessments are already in place (e.g. DSE assessment)?
Can rest and refreshment breaks be taken as required, and does the employee have access to welfare facilities?
Is a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) required?

Hazards noted	**Recommendation for Action**	**Date for Review**

This section completed by:

Managers and/or Academic Supervisor/Tutor Signature:

Name: Date:

Position:

Employee/Students signature: Date:

For Occupational Use and/or Medical Centre (If appropriate):

Date received: