

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

## **Policy on Supports for Student Parents, Student Carers and Students Experiencing Pregnancy**

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## **Policy on Supports for Student Parents, Student Carers and Students Experiencing Pregnancy**

### **Purpose and Statement of Intent**

At the heart of all the College's activities is our commitment to the intellectual and personal development of our students. (Strategic Plan 2009-14, 04 Student Experience) To this end College is committed to creating and sustaining equality of opportunity for an increasingly diverse student population. It is committed to a fully collegiate, student-centred environment that is conducive to work, study, extracurricular activity and self-development for all of its students. It is cognisant of the diverse demands on its students in their individual lives and with their families and dependents.

This student carer, parent and pregnancy policy lays down guidelines for good practice in the College's provision for and commitment to those students who become pregnant or who have parental or caring responsibilities or experience pregnancy at any point during their time in College. It details the roles and responsibilities of academic, administrative and support staff in advising and responding to the needs of pregnant students, students who are parents and students who are carers. In so doing it seeks to ensure that there should be no academic or financial penalty for a student taking maternity, paternity, adoptive, or carer's leave. It aims where possible to facilitate students in returning to their studies at the point they left rather than having to repeat the whole year.

### **The Student Parent, Carer and Pregnancy Policy sets out to achieve the following:**

To lay out for students and their advisors a clear set of protocols and a range of flexible accommodations that will assist students who are parents or carers or who are experiencing pregnancy.

To assist such students in balancing their responsibilities in the College and at home.

To identify where responsibility lies for the coordination of this assistance.

To ensure clear communication of the contents of this policy across the College community.

## **Student Parents and Carers**

College believes that being or becoming responsible for a child or dependent adult should not, in itself, be a barrier to a student succeeding in, or completing a programme of study. College is committed to being as flexible as possible, whilst, at the same time, making sure that any accommodations made for the student do not compromise academic standards. The special arrangements which can and should be made for a student in these circumstances will vary from Faculty to Faculty and, indeed, from programme to programme. However, the general approach to be taken in these circumstances is consistent across the College. College recognises that these responsibilities may change and can be unpredictable. College will support students by taking a flexible and reasonable approach to attendance and assignment deadlines, while ensuring academic standards are achieved.

Students who are carers and feel that their responsibilities outside College will impact on their studies should contact their personal tutor, supervisor, course co-ordinator, or postgraduate advisor. Together they should make a management plan in conjunction with the School, taking into account the demands of the course, the expected demands of the carers' responsibilities, and the achievement of academic standards. This plan should be revisited as necessary, but at least annually.

## **Attendance, Deadlines, and Timetables**

College will make reasonable efforts take into account the needs of student parents and carers and where feasible prioritise family-friendly timetables. This includes out-of-hours classes and recognition that school holidays may not align with College vacation periods or study weeks. Students should let College know as soon as possible after they accept a place of their additional caring responsibilities so that arrangements can be made. In special circumstances, reasonable accommodations will be made for student parents and carers to hand in assignments during the summer months if they have had cumulative issues relating to their caring responsibilities during the year. In these cases the supplemental marking period will be treated as a first attempt.

Student parents and carers will be given information about course content, assignment deadlines, and timetables well in advance of registration. Timetables will be made available between one and three months before the start of term to facilitate timely arrangements for caring.

Examination information should be made available as soon as possible during the year. Students with caring responsibilities should be available in order to fulfil their academic requirements and should take this into account when planning additional care.

### **Dependents' Illness and other special circumstances**

Students who are carers may need to provide certifications. This might take the form of certificates from medical professionals or, in certain circumstances, self-certification. College understands that although plans will have been made, there are occasions that when circumstances change suddenly. College will use reasonable endeavours to support and facilitate students in these circumstances. When there is a sudden change in circumstance students who are carers should contact their personal tutor, supervisor, course co-ordinator, or postgraduate advisor as soon as possible to assess the situation.

Those students who are parents may have to stay at home with sick dependents. It is understood that though a dependent may not be ill enough for a doctor, caring facilities have regulations about admittance of ill children and dependent adults to professional care facilities.

In the case where a dependent is ill self-certification is permitted for the first three days of the dependent's illness.

After three days certification from a GP is required.

College will accept the certification in the same manner as if it were the students in relation to assignments, attendance, and examinations.

## **Facilities for Students with Young Children**

College has a student parent group which meets during term time.

There are crèche and day nursery facilities on campus that students can apply to.

## **Breastfeeding on Campus**

Though the campus is a breastfeeding friendly campus and mothers are welcome to feed their children throughout the campus, there are currently no specific breastfeeding, expressing, or storage facilities on campus.

## **Students who are pregnant**

Some students will find themselves in a situation where they and /or their partner is experiencing a crisis pregnancy. Students should be treated without judgement and with compassion. They should be told about all the supports available to them in College and encouraged to use them if they feel the need. Students should also be directed to reputable supports available to outside of College if they feel they need them.

## **Undergraduate students who are pregnant**

Students who are pregnant should first of all confirm their pregnancy with their GP, family planning clinic, or the College Health Centre.

Students are under no obligation to disclose their pregnancy UNLESS their course of study puts them or their pregnancy at risk, in which case they must disclose or opt to go offbooks. These regulations can be found in section H of the College Calendar.

<https://www.tcd.ie/calendar/assets/pdf/archive/2012-2013/tcd-calendar-h-regulations.pdf>

If and when students decide to disclose their pregnancy they should speak with their personal tutor or the Students' Union Welfare officer.

The person to whom the student discloses should make the student aware of all the College supports available.

Issues concerning the health, safety, and well-being of the mother and baby must be considered. A safety assessment of the learning environment should be made and any necessary precautions put into place in consultation with the course coordinator.

The student, personal tutor and course coordinator should draw up a management plan and circulate it to all relevant areas of College, taking into account the student's right to privacy. This plan should be reviewed and amended as necessary in consultation with all the relevant people. Flexibility, where practicable, should be made for pregnant students to attend any appointments they require for their health and well-being (e.g. counselling, ante-natal, medical).

Students will not experience disadvantage for being absent from tutorials, lectures, labs, practicals, or examinations, however students must fulfil all academic requirements in order to rise with their year.

### **Postgraduate students who are pregnant**

Students who are pregnant should first of all confirm their pregnancy with their GP, family planning clinic, or the College Health Centre.

Students are under no obligation to disclose their pregnancy UNLESS their course of study puts them or their pregnancy at risk, in which case they must disclose or opt to go off-books. The regulations relating to this can be found in section H of the College Calendar. <https://www.tcd.ie/calendar/assets/pdf/archive/2012-2013/tcd-calendar-h-regulations.pdf>

If and when students decide to disclose their pregnancy they should speak with their supervisor, the postgraduate advisory service or the vice-president of the Graduate Students' Union.

The person to whom the student discloses should make the student aware of all the College supports available.

Issues concerning the health, safety, and well-being of the mother and baby must be considered.

A safety assessment of the learning environment should be made and any necessary precautions put into place in consultation with the supervisor.

The student, postgraduate advisory service and supervisor should draw up a management plan and circulate it to all relevant areas of College, taking into account the student's right to privacy. This plan should be reviewed and amended as necessary in consultation with all the relevant people.

Flexibility, where practicable, should be made for pregnant students to attend any appointments they require for their health and well-being (e.g. counselling, ante-natal, medical).

Students will not experience disadvantage for necessary absence from tutorials, lectures, labs, practicals, or examinations, however students must fulfil all academic requirements in order to rise with their year.

### **Undergraduate students seeking maternity, paternity, and adoptive leave**

Undergraduate students choosing to avail of maternity leave should inform College through their personal tutor as soon as practicable but not later than four weeks before the commencement of maternity leave. Additionally, not later than the time of the above notification, she is obliged to supply the tutor with a medical certificate confirming the pregnancy and specifying the expected date of birth. Maternity leave must commence not later than two weeks before the expected date of birth and end not earlier than four weeks after the expected date of birth.

The tutor must then immediately forward her request for leave to the academic registry. This is likely to mean applying to the Senior Lecturer to go off-books, unless the majority of the time falls with a vacation period.

Paternity leave for undergraduate students is available by application to Senior Lecturer on *ad misericordiam* grounds relating to the pregnancy of their partner for a maximum of four weeks only. Students requiring more extended periods must apply to go "off-books".

Adoptive leave of 16 weeks duration is available to one adoptive parent from the time the child is placed with the parents.

This is likely to mean applying to the Senior Lecturer to go off-books, unless the majority of the time falls with a vacation period.

Adoptive partners may also apply for adoptive leave of 4 weeks' duration. Students must notify their personal tutor in writing as soon as reasonably practicable, but normally not later than four weeks before the commencement of adoptive leave, of her/his intention to take adoptive leave.

Undergraduates who seek and are granted maternity or adoptive leave will be placed off-books for that course, being allowed to return to it at the first available opportunity (normally either in a year's time for full-time courses or in two years' time for part-time courses), unless the majority of that time falls during a vacation period.

Those who do not wish to take maternity leave but whose babies are due to be delivered before the end of the academic year need to draw up a reasonable and flexible plan in conjunction with their School and personal tutor. As programmes vary from School to School and Faculty to Faculty agreements will vary. However, examinations and assignment deadlines will be taken into consideration.

### **Postgraduate students seeking maternity, paternity and adoptive leave**

Full-time female graduate students undertaking a thesis/dissertation who are pregnant may seek and be granted 26 consecutive weeks' maternity leave subject to the following conditions:

a) the maternity leave must commence not later than two weeks before the expected date of birth and end not earlier than four weeks after the expected date of birth.

b) the graduate student must notify her Supervisor/Course Co-ordinator in writing as soon as reasonably practicable, but not later than four weeks before the commencement of maternity leave, of her intention to take maternity leave. Additionally, not later than the time of the above notification, she is obliged to supply the Supervisor/Course Co-ordinator with a medical certificate confirming the pregnancy and specifying the expected date of birth. The Supervisor/Course Coordinator must then immediately forward her request for leave to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

A graduate student undertaking a thesis/dissertation may, if she chooses, take up to four consecutive weeks additional maternity leave immediately after her maternity leave subject to the following condition: she should give reasonable notice to her Supervisor/Course Co-ordinator of her intention to do so at the same time as she gives notification of her intention to take maternity leave, but not later than four weeks before the date on which the Maternity Leave is due to terminate.

The Supervisor/Course Coordinator must inform the Dean of Graduate Studies of the graduate student's intention.

Graduate students on maternity leave will be considered “off-books” and appropriate adjustments will be made in relation to their submission dates and completion times. Paternity leave for students on the postgraduate register is available by application to the Dean of Graduate Studies on *ad misericordiam* grounds relating to the pregnancy of their partner for a maximum of four weeks only. Students requiring more extended periods must apply to go “off-books”.

Adoptive leave of 16 weeks duration is available to one adoptive parent from the time the child is placed with the parents.

Adoptive partners may also apply for adoptive leave of 4 weeks’ duration. Students must notify their supervisor, course co-ordinator, or postgraduate advisor in writing as soon as reasonably practicable, but normally not later than four weeks before the commencement of adoptive leave, of her/his intention to take adoptive leave.

The Supervisor/Course Co-ordinator must then immediately forward her/his request for leave to the Dean of Graduate Studies for postgraduate students.

Postgraduate students undertaking a taught course or an obligatory taught element of another class of degree and who seek and are granted maternity or adoptive leave will be placed off-books for that course, being allowed to return to it at the first available opportunity (normally either in a year's time for full-time courses or in two years' time for part-time courses).

Such students must inform their personal tutor, supervisor, course co-ordinator, or postgraduate advisor of their pregnancy who must, in turn, immediately forward the request for leave to the Dean of Graduate Studies for postgraduate students and Senior Lecturer's Office for undergraduate students.

Those who do not wish to take maternity leave but whose babies are due to be delivered before the end of the academic year need to draw up a reasonable and flexible plan in conjunction with their School, tutor, supervisor, or postgraduate advisor. As courses programmes vary from School to School and Faculty to Faculty it is not possible to outline the scenarios below. However, examinations and assignment deadlines should be taken into consideration.

## **First Response Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Tutors, Supervisors, Course Co-ordinators, and Postgraduate Advisory Service**

Tutors and the Postgraduate Advisory Service are often the first people a student approaches with a problem. Thus they are in a particularly important position to advise and guide students. This role includes:

Responding sensitively, non-judgmentally and promptly to any student who is facing a particular challenge with pregnancy, parental or caring responsibilities.

Seeking advice from the Senior Tutor's Office, or the Postgraduate Advisory Service.

Familiarising themselves with this policy.

Ensuring students are treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Providing referrals e.g. the Student Counselling Service, College Health Centre.

Approaching the Head of School or supervisor on the student's behalf with the student's permission to discuss academic impact and formulate a management plan.

**The College will make reasonable endeavours to ensure that:**

Sufficient information is provided about the essential requirements of a programme of study for a prospective student to make an informed decision about whether the programme is realistic for him/her in the light of his/her caring responsibilities.

Any student who has responsibility for the care of one or more children or dependent adults before or during a period of study at the College is accommodated as far as practicable to allow him/her to complete his/her programme of study, providing academic standards are upheld.

Relevant staff are made aware of the terms of this policy and their responsibilities arising under it.

Staff in the Equality Service are available to discuss with staff the best way to support the continuing study of such a student to ensure s/he is able to complete his/her programme of study.

Appropriate support is available to students through various support services.

The policy is kept under review and updated as necessary.

**Schools must ensure that:**

The policy is widely publicised and available to staff and students.

Wherever practicable, reasonable accommodations are made to ensure that students are able to complete their programme of study.

Students are given information on other sources of advice/support.

### Individual staff members

All individual staff members are **advised to**:

Familiarise themselves with this policy and the College's responsibilities towards students who disclose caring responsibilities.

Individual staff members to whom caring responsibilities are disclosed are *responsible for*:  
Reading the policy and, in particular, becoming familiar with the procedure for supporting pregnant students and students with dependants.

Treating any disclosure of caring responsibilities seriously and making students aware of appropriate sources of support.

Discussing with the student how the pregnancy and/or the caring responsibilities might impact on their programme of study. This may be particularly important on programmes leading to professional registration.

Respecting students' rights to confidentiality and verifying that students have no objections to their situation being discussed with others .

Ensuring accurate information is given to prospective students regarding the availability of support for students with dependants.

Seeking advice from colleagues or College support services.

### Students

Students who wish to avail of reasonable accommodation laid out in this policy are **responsible for**:

Disclosing their situation to a trusted member of the Students' Union or Graduate Students' Union or a member of staff (usually their personal tutor, supervisor, course co-ordinator, or postgraduate advisor) including giving an indication of the anticipated impact on their studies. It should be noted that disclosure to the GSU and SU is not disclosure to the

College, as the GSU and SU are separate legal entities.

Ensuring the safe supervision of any child or adult dependent they may bring onto campus.

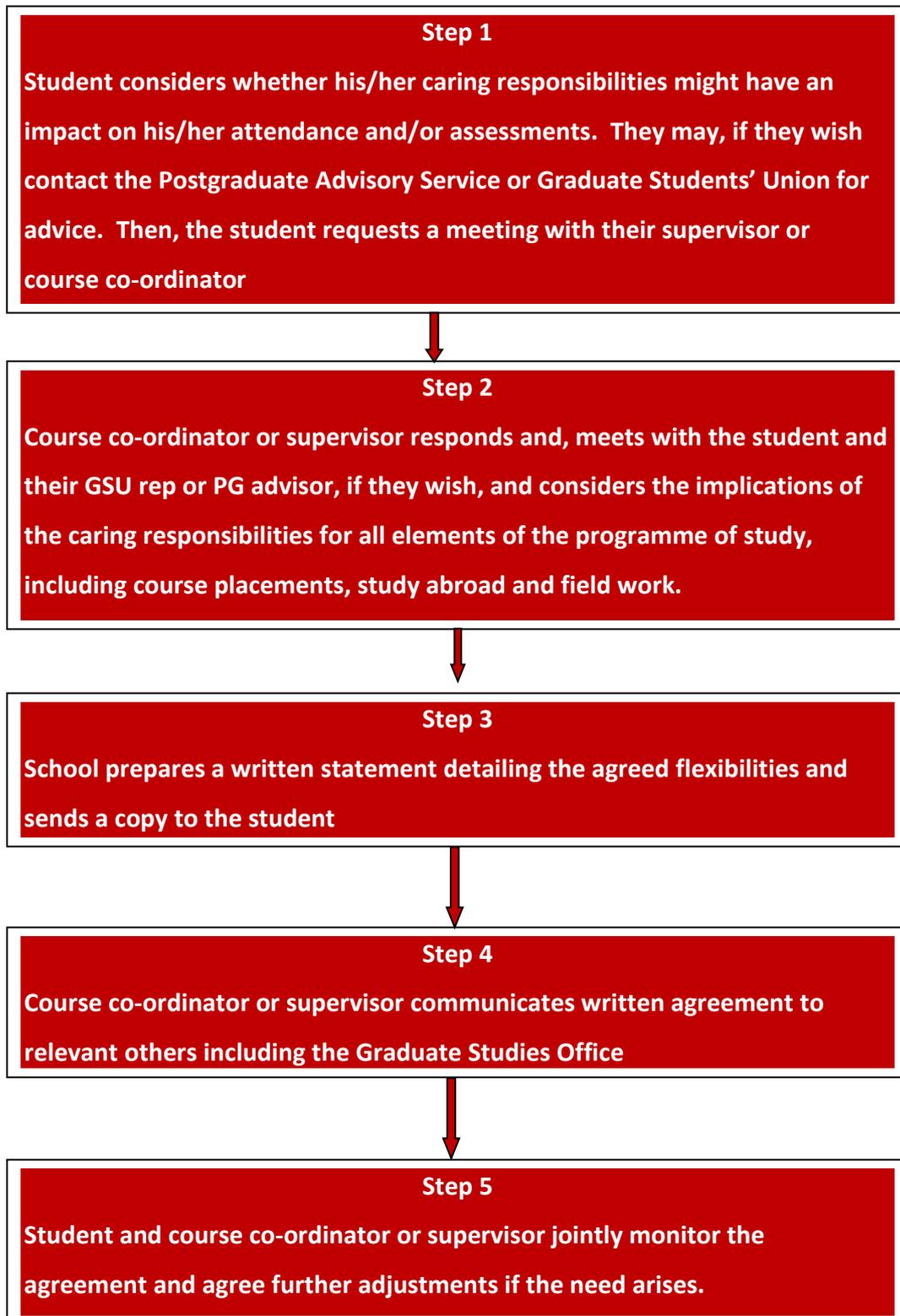
Students covered by this policy are ***advised to***:

Read the policy in order to understand the College's approach to supporting students with dependants.

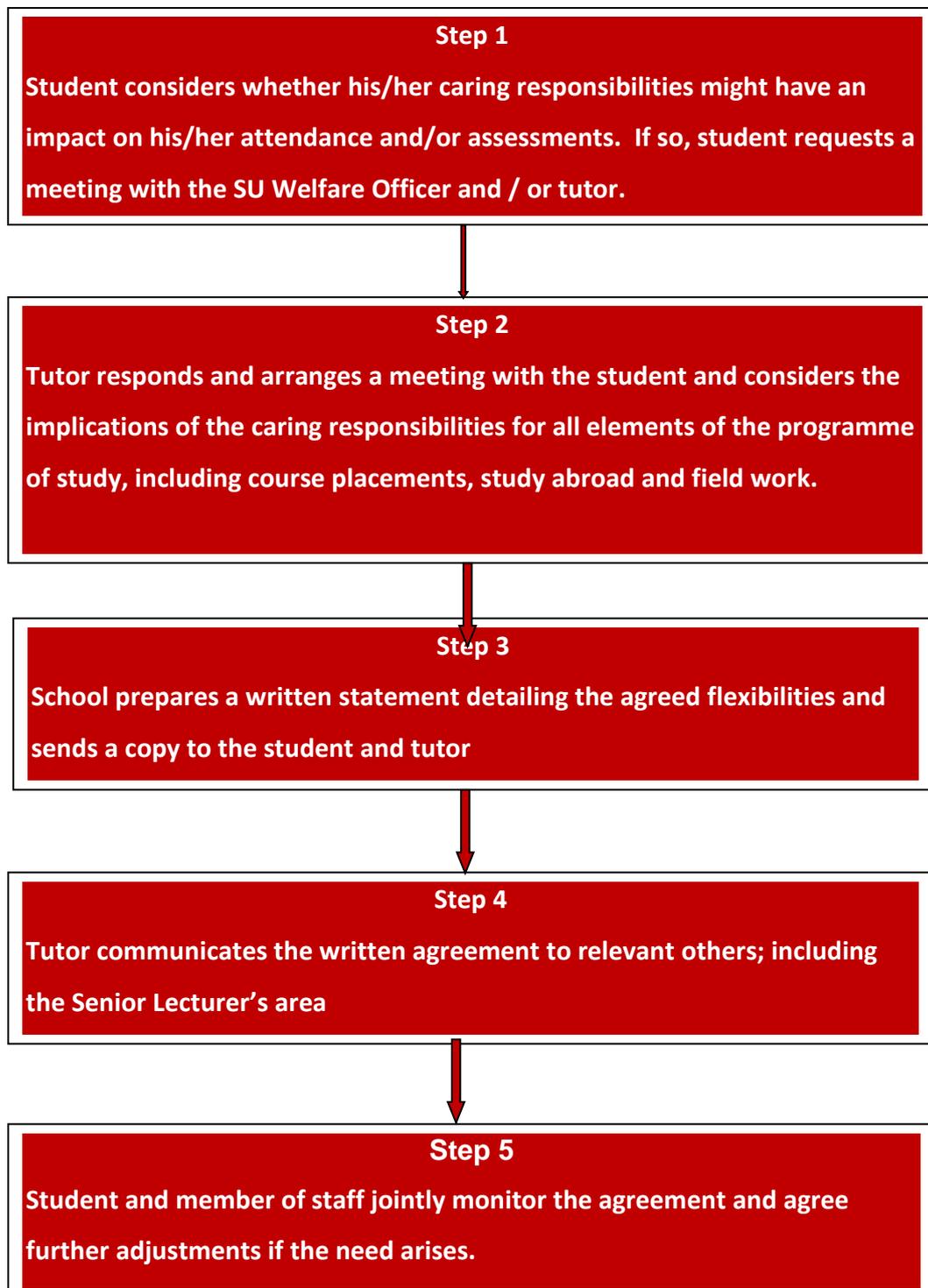
Ensure that they have a clear idea of what will be expected of them on their course of study in order to understand the potential impact of any absences resulting from their caring responsibilities.

## Flow Charts

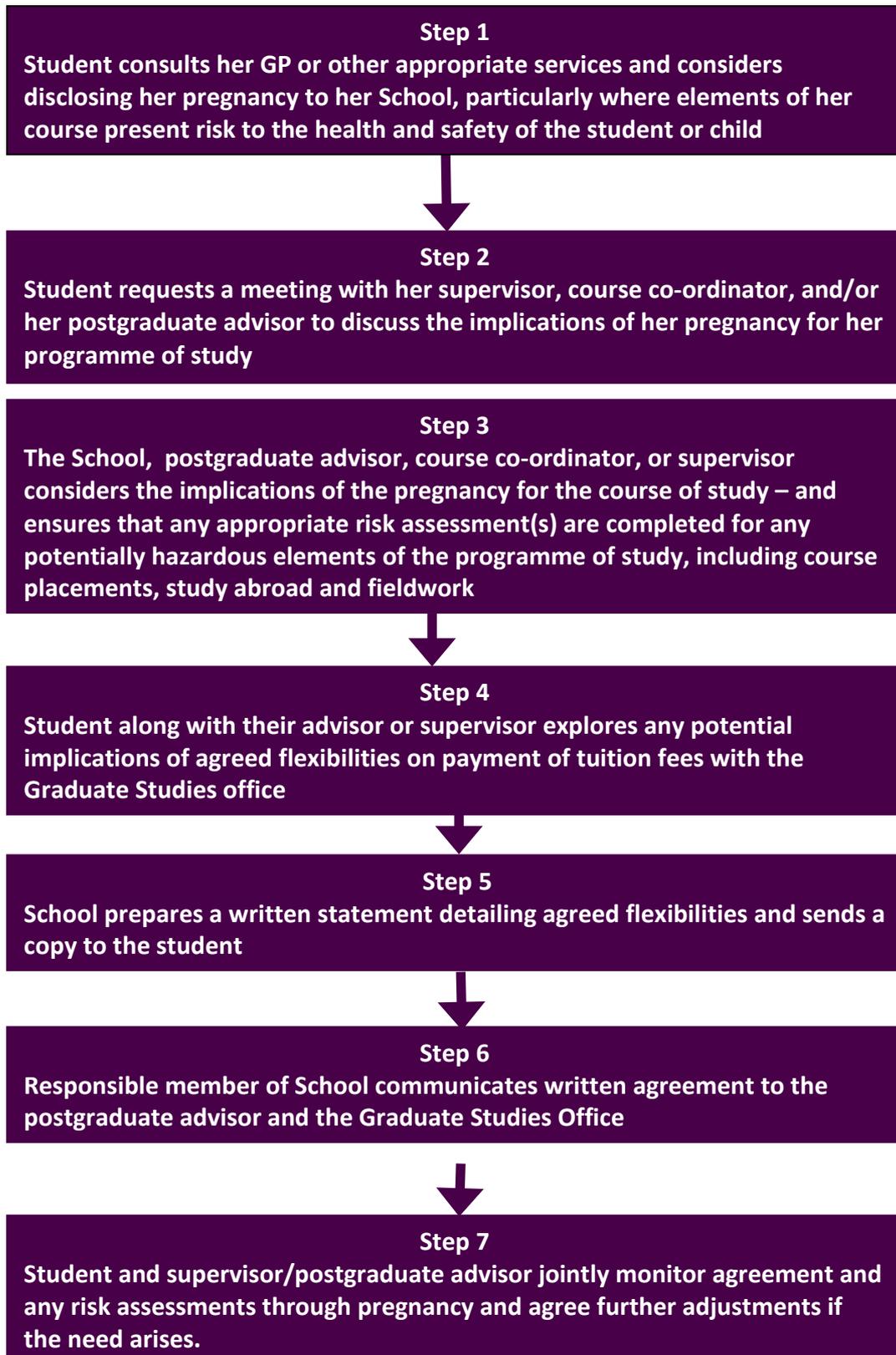
This flowchart summarises steps that can usefully be taken to support a **postgraduate** student who is responsible for caring for a child or dependent adult.



This flowchart summarises steps that can usefully be taken to support an undergraduate student who is responsible for caring for a child or dependent adult.



This flowchart summarises the steps that could most usefully be taken when a **postgraduate** student discloses a pregnancy.



This flowchart summarises the steps that could most usefully be taken when an **undergraduate** student discloses a pregnancy.

