



# **RULES AND GUIDELINES ON THE SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATION OF PREGNANT STUDENTS**

**2023**

<b>Reference Number</b>	7Pr_7.3
<b>Accountable Executive Manager</b>	Executive Director: Student Life
<b>Document Owner</b>	Executive Director: Student Life
<b>Responsible division</b>	NWU Student Life
<b>Status</b>	Approved
<b>Approved by</b>	University Management Committee
<b>Date of approval</b>	21 September 2023
<b>Date of amendments</b>	-
<b>Review date</b>	2026

## Table of Contents

### Rules and Guidelines on the Support and Accommodation of Pregnant Students

1	Interpretation .....	1
2	Scope.....	1
3	Pregnancy .....	1
4	Principles .....	1
5	Purpose .....	2
6	Confidentiality.....	2
7	Disclosure of pregnancy .....	2
8	Case-by-case approach.....	2
9	Periods of support related to a pregnancy .....	3
10	Table of content.....	3
11	Roles and responsibilities of the Faculty .....	4
12	Reasonable academic support measures.....	4
13	University accommodation .....	5
14	University accommodation related support .....	5
15	Primary health care support .....	6
16	Psycho-social support .....	6
17	Academic programme .....	7
18	Co-curricular Programme .....	7
19	University accommodation .....	8
20	General considerations .....	8

## **RULES AND GUIDELINES ON THE SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATION OF PREGNANT STUDENTS**

### **1 Interpretation**

These Rules and Guidelines on the Support and Accommodation of Pregnant Students (hereafter referred to as *the rules and guidelines*) must be interpreted and applied in a manner that is consistent with the –

- 1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996);
- 1.2 Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997;
- 1.3 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 4 of 2000;
- 1.4 National Health Act, 61 of 2003;
- 1.5 Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, 92 of 1996;
- 1.6 Protection of Personal Information Act, 14 of 2013 (“POPIA”);
- 1.7 National Youth Policy (2020-2030);
- 1.8 Statute of the North-West University (2022);
- 1.9 General Academic Rules of the North-West University (2020);
- 1.10 Rules of the University Residences and Day Houses of the North-West University; and
- 1.11 Additional policies, rules and guidelines of the University which may be relevant.

### **2 Scope**

These rules and guidelines are the guidelines of the University Management Committee (UMC) and apply to a student who is, or becomes, pregnant whilst a student of the NWU.

### **3 Pregnancy**

Pregnancy refers to the gestational process comprising of the growth and development of an unborn foetus within the womb of a woman, with the period from conception through to birth lasting approximately 40 weeks.

### **4 Principles**

These rules and guidelines are informed by the following principles whereby the University:

- 4.1 Recognises the rights associated with a student’s personal choices regarding their pregnancy and personal health;
- 4.2 Ensures that no student is unjustifiably discriminated against based on their pregnancy;
- 4.3 Aims to create an enabling environment that reasonably supports and accommodates pregnant students, whilst maintaining their dignity and protecting their privacy;
- 4.4 Prioritizes the importance of the physical health and wellbeing of the student and their unborn child in a manner which is justifiable and reasonable;
- 4.5 Recognises that the personal circumstance, extent, and scope of support required by each student relating to their pregnancy may differ, with this requiring a case-by-case approach when considering the reasonable support and accommodation that can be provided to the student; and
- 4.6 Creates a reasonably healthy, safe and conducive living and learning environment for all students as it relates to their physical and psycho-social wellbeing.

## 5 Purpose

The purpose of the rules and guidelines is to:

- 5.1 Establish practical and effective measures that guide the reasonable support provided to pregnant students in managing the impact of their pregnancy on their access and participation in the academic and co-curricular programme.
- 5.2 Guide the manner in which pregnant students can reside in University-owned or controlled accommodation during their pregnancy and return after giving birth.
- 5.3 Mitigate possible risks that can arise during the student's pregnancy related to health and safety risks and hazards associated with their continued participation in the academic and co-curricular programme, and usage of University-owned and controlled facilities.
- 5.4 Create a framework of education and awareness related to sexual reproductive health, pregnancies, and associated rights and choices.
- 5.5 Define the primary health care and psycho-social support available to pregnant students.

## 6 Confidentiality

The disclosure of student's pregnancy to the University and the related information and documentation forming part of such a disclosure, will be managed in accordance with the POPIA and relevant policies of the university guiding the management of personal information. Personal information disclosed by the student may only be shared with parties who have a legitimate interest in accessing and processing such information as part of the rendering of the necessary support and services provided by the University to the pregnant student.

## 7 Disclosure of pregnancy

- 7.1 It remains the responsibility of the student to voluntarily disclose their pregnancy to the University.
- 7.2 The University will only be able to determine the extent of and provide the reasonable assistance and support after the student's disclosure.
- 7.3 A pregnant student is encouraged to disclose their pregnancy, at the earliest possible opportunity, to the relevant Campus Health Care Centre (CHCC), or to a trusted staff member who in turn must assist the student in disclosing the pregnancy to the CHCC.
- 7.4 When disclosing their pregnancy, the student must provide the University with the relevant medical information provided by their medical practitioner relating to their pregnancy including confirmation of pregnancy, gestation period, expected due date, and possible health and safety risks associated with their pregnancy.
- 7.5 Upon disclosure of the pregnancy as indicated above, the coordination of reasonable support and assistance provided to the student is coordinated centrally through the office of the relevant Campus Director: Student Life, in consultation with relevant Faculty and Support Services representatives.

## 8 Case-by-case approach

- 8.1 To ensure that an informed, justifiable, and reasonable approach is taken in supporting a pregnant student the University applies a case-by-case approach for each pregnant student.
- 8.2 Upon disclosure of the pregnancy by a student, the relevant CHCC must complete an individual risk assessment based on the:
  - 8.2.1 medical information and reports provided by the student's medical practitioner; and
  - 8.2.2 identified risks associated with their continued participation in and access to the teaching-learning, programme, co-curricular programme, and/or residency in university accommodation.
- 8.3 Based on the outcome of the individual risk assessment, the CHCC in consultation with the student, Faculty and other relevant University stakeholders must identify the reasonable support measures that will enable the student's continued participation in and access to the teaching-learning, programme, co-curricular programme, and/or residency in University accommodation.
- 8.4 The reasonable support measures must be agreed upon between the student and the University, and confirmed in writing, clearly indicating the extent, nature, and duration of the support measures, as well as the roles and responsibilities of both the student and the University.

- 8.5 In the event that a student refuses to accept the reasonable support measures provided by the University -
- 8.5.1 The student may submit a request outlining the reasonable support measures desired to the Registrar, with the Registrar in turn reviewing the relevant information informing the matter and providing a final outcome on the reasonable support measures available to the student, including the:
- i. written request of the relevant student indicating the reasonable support they require;
  - ii. individual risk assessment conducted by the CHCC; and
  - iii. reasonable support measures identified by the Faculty and/or Support Services.
- 8.5.2 Should the student still be dissatisfied with the outcome of the process contemplated in paragraph 8.5.1 above and the University maintain its position in relation to the reasonable support measures available to the student, the University must inform the student in writing of the outcome of the processes, outlining the identified risks for both the student and the University related to the student's non-acceptance of the reasonable support measures available to them.

## 9 Periods of support related to a pregnancy

- 9.1 The following periods are provided as guidelines and may be considered by the University when determining the reasonable support measures provided to a pregnant student:
- 9.1.1 Prenatal support period: the period before the birth of a child, usually sixteen (16) weeks prior to the expected birth date, however this period can be extended if required due to medical reasons.
- 9.1.2 Postnatal support period: the period after the birth of the child and includes a period of roughly six (06) weeks after the birth of the child.
- 9.1.3 Miscarriage and abortion support period: the period after a student suffered a miscarriage or a pregnancy was terminated and includes a period of roughly two (02) weeks after the miscarriage or termination of pregnancy.

## 10 Table of content

- Part 1:** Guidelines on the reasonable support for the teaching-learning and research programme
- Part 2:** Guidelines on the accommodation of pregnant students in University-owned and controlled accommodation
- Part 3:** Framework on support related to primary health care and psycho-social support
- Part 4:** General advice for consideration by a pregnant student

---

## **GUIDELINES ON THE REASONABLE SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING-LEARNING AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

### **11 Roles and responsibilities of the Faculty**

- 11.1 The relevant Executive Dean, or appointed delegate, is responsible for determining the reasonable academic support measures that are provided to the pregnant student.
- 11.2 The reasonable academic support measures provided to the student must be based on the individual risk-assessment completed by the CHCC, following a case-by-case approach for each pregnant student's unique circumstances.
- 11.3 The type of academic support provided to a pregnant student must be:
  - 11.3.1 Of a reasonable and practical nature in comparison to the expectations and requirements of the academic programme.
  - 11.3.2 Should not be detrimental to the student's ability to reasonably continue participating and accessing the academic programme.
  - 11.3.3 Permissible within the context of the General Academic Rules of the University and the relevant Faculty Rulebook.
  - 11.3.4 Relevant within the context of the stage of the pregnancy.
- 11.4 Where relevant, the risks associated with practical work, laboratory work, work-integrated learning, and/or in-service training conducted both on and off NWU premises and/or facilities must be included as part of the individual risk assessment.

### **12 Reasonable academic support measures**

The following guidelines are provided for the reasonable academic support measures that can be provided by the Faculty informed by the requirements of the relevant student's academic programme:

- 12.1 In an instance where an absence due to pregnancy would be detrimental to the student's ability to successfully complete the academic programme, the Faculty may advise the student to temporarily suspend their studies, without such a temporary suspension contributing towards the maximum number of years allowed for the relevant programme.
- 12.2 Where reasonably possible, consideration should be given to the presentation of the programme in a blended teaching-learning and research model, that would reasonably allow for the participation of the pregnant student in the academic programme, without creating a disproportionate burden on the University in providing such a blended model or diminishing the quality of teaching-learning and research received by the student.
- 12.3 The creation of additional and/or alternative assessments and academic engagements and/or opportunities should be considered that would reasonably enable the pregnant student to participate in and complete the academic programme, in a manner that does not diminish the quality of teaching-learning and research, and does not unduly result in the creation of unrealistic expectations on the part of the student or the University.
- 12.4 The necessary flexibility should be applied in reasonably accommodating changes in circumstances, risks, and physical health of the student during their pregnancy, that might require amendments in terms of the type of reasonable support and assistance provided to the student.

---

## **GUIDELINES ON THE ACCOMMODATION OF PREGNANT STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY-OWNED AND CONTROLLED ACCOMMODATION**

These guidelines are applicable to students who reside in premises owned or controlled by University for the purposes of providing accommodation to students, hereafter referred to as *University accommodation*, that specifically includes University Residences but excludes private accredited and non-accredited accommodation.

### **13 University accommodation**

- 13.1 Informed by the student's risk assessment conducted by the CHCC, the student may continue to reside within the University accommodation until the 26<sup>th</sup> week of their pregnancy, provided that:
  - i. Minimal risk is identified by the student's medical practitioner relating to their continued stay in the relevant University accommodation.
  - ii. Minimal risk is identified in the student's continued participation in the academic and co-curricular programme that would require them to continue residing in the University accommodation.
- 13.2 The relevant identified risk factors and mitigating measures identified through the student's risk assessment must be communicated to department of Residence and Catering Services,
- 13.3 Residence and Catering Services must inform the relevant staff members who are required to assist in providing reasonable support to the student, including the relevant House Parent and Residence Officer.
- 13.4 The University is not required to allocate a single room to a pregnant student but may do so if the pregnant student requests such and provided that an additional room is available.
- 13.5 Considering possible risks associated with the access points of University Residences and the use of stairs, ramps and elevators, the University may if reasonably possible reallocate the pregnant student to a room that requires minimal use of stairs, ramps, and elevators to access the University Residence and the relevant room.
- 13.6 A pregnant student who leaves their University accommodation after their maximum period of stay in accordance with paragraphs 13.1 above, must vacate their room upon departure.
- 13.7 It remains the responsibility of the pregnant student to vacate their room(s) and ensure the transportation and/or storage of their belongings, at their own cost.
- 13.8 The University has no obligation to assist the student with the evacuation of their room(s), and/or the storage and/or transportation of their belongings.
- 13.9 In accordance with the Financial Rules and Minimum Fees Payable Booklet, a pro-rata calculation may be made by the University that will result in the reduction of University Residence and accommodation fees, for the period during which the student will not reside in the University accommodation, or if the student cancels their University Residence accommodation.

### **14 University accommodation related support**

- 14.1 A student who has not cancelled their University accommodation and returns to the University accommodation in the same year that they left the accommodation in accordance with paragraph 13, will reside within the same university accommodation they initially left.
- 14.2 In the event that a student returns to University accommodation in the following year after their pregnancy, they will be subject to the existing process, criteria and requirements associated with an application and placement of students in University accommodation.
- 14.3 No accommodation will be provided for the child, family, or other relations of a student before, during and after their pregnancy.

---

## FRAMEWORK ON SUPPORT RELATED TO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT

### 15 Primary health care support

- 15.1 Pregnant students may make use of the primary health care services and advice available through the Campus Health Care Centres (CHCCs).
- 15.2 The CHCC provides limited primary health care services related to antenatal care.
- 15.3 The CHCC does not provide health care services related to elective deliveries and post-natal care.
- 15.4 In the event of an emergency delivery occurring, the relevant external emergency services will be dispatched by the CHCC to assist the pregnant student.
- 15.5 At the request of the pregnant student, the CHCC may make the necessary referrals to external medical practitioners and specialists and provide health care advice related to planning and preparation for the birth.
- 15.6 In the event that the required antenatal care of a pregnant student extends beyond the scope of services rendered by the CHCC, the CHCC will make the necessary referrals to external medical practitioners and specialists.
- 15.7 Primary health care services are not provided to the baby, family, or relations of a pregnant student.
- 15.8 The CHCC will facilitate education and awareness programmes related to sexual reproductive health of students.

### 16 Psycho-social support

- 16.1 Pregnant students may make use of the psycho-social support services available through Student Counselling and Development (SCD).
- 16.2 Such services are voluntary in nature.
- 16.3 If requested by the student, SCD may make the necessary referrals to external psycho-social therapists, counsellors, and specialists.



---

## GENERAL ADVICE FOR CONSIDERATION BY A PREGNANT STUDENT

The purpose of the following section is to provide a general indication of matters that a pregnant student should consider relating to her pregnancy and the impact thereof on her participation in the academic and co-curricular programme, and University accommodation.

### 17 Academic programme

- 17.1 Depending on the nature of the academic programme, specific risks may arise related to the type of academic work that the programme will require, and can include:
  - 17.1.1 Exposure to harmful chemicals, substances, organic matters, etc.
  - 17.1.2 Completion of possible strenuous activities, movements and/or exercises.
  - 17.1.3 Interacting with animals, insects, amphibians, etc., that can result in possible injury.
  - 17.1.4 Traveling related to in-service training and work integrated learning.
  - 17.1.5 Visits and completion of work at industrial, chemical, and medical sites and/or facilities.
  - 17.1.6 Interaction with patients and/or clients that can increase the risk for exposure to disease and/or injury.
- 17.2 Depending on personal circumstance and health, the pregnancy may inhibit the ability of the pregnant student to participate fully in the academic programme and activities and may require additional hours or rest and personal care to ensure that the pregnant student remains healthy and safe.
- 17.3 The time of year when the student becomes pregnant and is expected to give birth will have an impact on the possible support and assistance that can be provided, which would be to the benefit of the student, their child, and the University.
- 17.4 The support and assistance requested by the student should be of a realistic, practicable, and executable nature, without placing undue burden on either the student or the University.
- 17.5 Limitations exist pertaining to the type of support and assistance that the University can provide in terms of the academic programme, and the student must discuss this with the relevant Faculty to ensure that a mutual understanding is reached in terms of the available and desired support and assistance.

### 18 Co-curricular Programme

- 18.1 Due to the nature of certain co-curricular programmes, the full participation of a pregnant student in the co-curricular programme may be limited.
- 18.2 Consequently, the extent to which a pregnant student could participate in co-curricular activities may be temporarily limited, with this including co-curricular activities related to sports, arts, culture, student leadership, community engagement, etc.
- 18.3 The pregnant student should realistically consider the possible impact that continued participation in co-curricular activities, such as sports and community engagement, could have on their personal health and safety and that their unborn child.
- 18.4 Where a pregnant student is a bursary recipient as a result of their involvement in a co-curricular activity, it is important that the pregnant student consults with the relevant support staff member to determine the possible implication of their pregnancy on their ability to fully participate in the co-curricular activities and the retainment of the bursary (where possible).
- 18.5 The pregnant student should seek the advice of primary healthcare professionals to determine at what stage continued participation in co-curricular activities should be reduced or temporarily ceased to limit possible risk to the student's personal health and safety.

## 19 University accommodation

- 19.1 During the course of their pregnancy, the pregnant student may experience some physical limitations in terms of mobility and movement, that can hamper their ability to climb stairs, use elevators, and move in communal and outdoor spaces.
- 19.2 A pregnant student should further consider their fellow roommates and University Residence members, decide whether the environment would be conducive for the duration of their permissible stay whilst being pregnant.
- 19.3 The arrangements and logistics pertaining to their period of confinement before, during and after the birth of the child, remains the responsibility of the student, and the University cannot provide assistance to the student in this regard.
- 19.4 A pregnant student should further consider possible risks associated with an early delivery of the child, and that this can occur within University accommodation which is not equipped to accommodate deliveries in a healthy and safe manner.
- 19.5 Matters relating to personal privacy and dignity cannot always be assured in a communal living space, with the University accommodation not *per se* being a conducive environment to live when pregnant.
- 19.6 Should the student give birth whilst staying in University accommodation, certain limitations and/or restrictions can arise that hamper her traveling abilities and options, as well as non-university accommodation arrangements, therefore a pregnant student should plan well in advance to ensure that they are situated in a conducive and safe space before their expected due date.

## 20 General considerations

- 20.1 A pregnant student should prioritise their personal health and safety and that of their unborn child.
- 20.2 Specific limitations exist pertaining to traveling whilst pregnant that include the following:
  - 20.2.1. Domestic air travel whilst pregnant is only permitted up to 36 weeks.
  - 20.2.2 International air travel whilst pregnant is only permitted up to 35 weeks.
  - 20.2.3 Pregnant women beyond 28 weeks' gestation period are usually required to provide a letter to the airline from a medical practitioner indicating the term of pregnancy, the woman's fitness to travel, possible health and safety risks, etc.
- 20.3 Pregnant students are encouraged to seek advice from the CHCC on their pregnancy as soon as possible, as this will further enable the University to provide the appropriate reasonable support.

---

Original details: (11664754) C:\Users\11664754\OneDrive - North-West University\7. StudentAdmin\Rules and Guidelines on the Support and Accommodation of Pregnant Students.docm  
22 September 2023

File reference: 7Pr\_7.3