



Oklahoma Christian University

Policy and Procedures Addressing Pregnant and Parenting Students

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Effective: August 1, 2023

Revised: February 1, 2024

I. Preamble

Oklahoma Christian University (OC) is committed to providing a supportive learning environment for students who are pregnant, who were recently pregnant, persons with pregnancy-related conditions, and new parents (including through adoption or fostering). It is the University's policy to provide appropriate and reasonable accommodations to educational programs and activities, allowing students to continue their education at Oklahoma Christian University.

II. Overview

Under the Department of Education's (DOE) Title IX regulations, an institution that receives federal funding "shall not discriminate against any student, or exclude any student from its education program or activity, including any class or extracurricular activity, on the basis of such student's pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery there from." According to the DOE, appropriate treatment of a student who is pregnant includes granting the student leave "for so long a period of time as is deemed medically necessary by the student's physician," and reinstating the student to the same status as was held when the leave began.

This generally means that students who are pregnant should be treated by the University the same way as someone who has a temporary disability, and will be given an opportunity to make up missed work if possible. Extended deadlines, make-up assignments (e.g., papers, quizzes, tests, and presentations), tutoring, independent study, online course completion options, and incomplete grades that can be completed at a later date are options faculty can employ, in addition to any other ergonomic and assistive supports typically provided by the University and the Accessibility Resources Office.

In situations such as clinical rotations, performances, labs, and group work, the University will work with the student to devise an alternative path to completion, whenever possible. In cohort-model programs, medically-necessary leaves are sufficient cause to permit the student to shift course order, substitute similar courses, or join a subsequent cohort when returning from leave.

Students are encouraged to work with their instructors and the University's support systems, such as the Accessibility Resources Office and Financial Services, to devise a plan for how best to address any limiting conditions as pregnancy progresses, anticipate the need for leaves, minimize the academic impact of their absence, and get back on track as efficiently as possible.

The Title IX Coordinator will assist with plan development and facilitate implementation as needed. **Nothing in this policy requires modification to the essential elements or learning outcomes of any academic program.**

The Title IX Coordinator has the authority, if needed, to: (1) determine that such accommodations are necessary and appropriate; and (2) inform faculty members of the need to adjust the program and/or course parameters accordingly but will partner with the Accessibility Resources Office for all accommodations not handled directly by a student's instructor or academic program.

Administrative responsibility for accommodations overseen by the Accessibility Resources Office lies with that office while ensuring access to the Title IX Coordinator as needed. Administrative responsibility of other accommodations not overseen by that office, e.g., instructor provided, will be maintained by the Title IX Coordinator. Instructors or other OC employees who provide pregnant or parenting students accommodations are required to inform the Title IX Coordinator of those accommodations so required documentation is centrally maintained.

III. Definitions (in regards to this policy)

1. **Accessibility Resources Office:** works with the faculty and the student to mitigate institutional barriers and equip students to have equal educational access.
2. **Medical Necessity:** a determination made by a licensed health care provider (of the student's choosing) that a certain course of action is in the best interest of the patient's health.
3. **Parenting:** the raising of a child or attending to the child's medical needs by the child's parents in the reasonably immediate postpartum period.
4. **Partner:** refers to the non-birthing parent.
5. **Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Conditions:** includes (but not limited to) pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, conditions arising in connection with pregnancy, and recovery from any of these conditions.
6. **Pregnancy Discrimination:** includes treating a student affected by pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition less favorably than similar individuals not so affected, and includes a failure to provide legally mandated leave or accommodations.
7. **Pregnant Student/Birth Parent:** a student who is or was pregnant.
8. **Reasonable Accommodations:** changes in the academic environment or typical operations that enable pregnant or parenting students, or students with pregnancy-related conditions to continue pursuing their studies at the University.

IV. Obtaining Supportive Measures and Privacy

While pregnancy disclosure is entirely voluntary, in order to receive medically necessary accommodations, or to determine if alternative academic adjustments are needed, it is the student's responsibility to inform their instructors, the Accessibility Resources Office, and/or the

Title IX Coordinator. As a student's needs change over time, their individual plan may be adjusted.

The Accessibility Resources Office can provide the required documentation for a short-term disability leave, if needed, and will inform the instructors and the Title IX Coordinator of all accommodations formulated through that office for the student.

Information about a pregnant student's request for accommodations will be shared with OC employees only to the extent necessary in order to provide reasonable accommodations. OC employees will regard all information associated with such requests as private and will not disclose this information unless it is necessary.

Accessibility Resources Office

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Title IX Coordinator

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V. Reasonable Accommodations

1. The University and its faculty and staff will not require students to limit their studies as the result of pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions.
2. The benefits and services provided to students affected by pregnancy will be no less than those provided to students with temporary medical conditions.
3. Students with pregnancy-related disabilities, like any student with a short-term or temporary disability, are entitled to reasonable accommodations so that they will not be disadvantaged in their courses of study and may seek assistance from the Title IX office and/or the Accessibility Resources Office.
4. Pregnant or parenting students who must take a medical short-term disability leave of absence shall be allowed to return to their course of studies with the same academic and extracurricular status as before the leave began.
5. At their sole discretion, the student may decide to withdraw from the University, either permanently or for a period of time, due to the pregnancy or conditions associated with the pregnancy. The University's withdrawal and/or readmission procedures will apply.
6. No artificial deadlines or time limitations will be imposed on requests for accommodations however, accommodations cannot be implemented retroactively.
7. Pregnant and/or parenting students have the right to participate in, and finish internships related to, their academic work. If health concerns related to pregnancy impact the completion of an internship, students are encouraged to contact their supervisor and/or the Title IX Coordinator.
8. Students receiving financial assistance or scholarships from the University will not be negatively impacted by pregnancy or any pregnancy-related condition. However, the financial aid received by a student who decides to temporarily withdraw from the University for non-medical reasons related to the pregnancy could be impacted. Students are strongly encouraged to speak with their financial aid counselor if considering this option.
9. Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Requests by a pregnant student to protect the health and safety of the student and or the pregnancy (such as allowing the student to maintain a safe distance from hazardous substances).
 - b. Making modifications to the physical environment (such as accessible seating).
 - c. Allowing for additional restroom breaks.

- d. Extending deadlines and/or allowing the student to make up tests or assignments missed for pregnancy-related absences.
- e. Opportunities to make up work missed during absences related to a pregnancy.
- f. If attendance is graded, an alternative way of making up missed attendance points must be provided.
- g. Offering remote learning options.
- h. Excusing medically-necessary absences
 - i. This must be granted, irrespective of classroom attendance requirements set by a faculty member, division, or program.
 - ii. Upon their return, the student will be reinstated to the extent possible to the same status held prior to the absence.
 - iii. Documentation from a doctor can only be required if it is required for other medically related absences.
- i. Implementing incomplete grades for classes that will be resumed at a future date.
- j. Allowing breastfeeding students reasonable time and space to pump breast milk in a location that is private, clean, and reasonably accessible. A student can contact the Title IX Coordinator to determine a location within a specific campus building.

VI. Modified Academic Responsibilities for Parenting Students (as defined in Sec. III)

Students who wish to remain engaged in their coursework but need to adjust their academic responsibilities for a period of time because of: (1) the birth of a child; (2) the adoption of a child; or (3) the placement of a foster child, may request an academic modification for a time period determined in partnership with the Accessibility Resources Office, the student, and with the student's agreement, their advisor. The Title IX Coordinator will be notified of this agreement and can facilitate the agreement if needed.

1. During the modification period, the student's academic requirements will be adjusted and deadlines postponed as appropriate, in collaboration with the appropriate academic programs, the student's academic advisor, the Accessibility Resources Office, and/or the Title IX Coordinator.
2. Students seeking a period of modified academic responsibilities may consult with their academic advisor, the Accessibility Resources Office, or the Title IX Coordinator to determine appropriate academic accommodations requests. The Accessibility Resources Office or the Title IX Coordinator will communicate all requests under this policy to the student's academic advisor and coordinate accommodation-related efforts with the advisor unless the student specifically requests that their advisor be excluded.
3. Students are encouraged to work with their advisors and instructors to reschedule course assignments, lab hours, examinations, or other requirements, and/or to reduce their overall course load, as appropriate. The Accessibility Resources Office in conjunction with the Title IX Coordinator, if needed, can help facilitate needed accommodations and modifications.
4. If, for any reason, parenting students are not able to work directly with their Instructors to obtain appropriate modifications, students should alert the Title IX Coordinator as soon as possible, and the Coordinator will help facilitate needed accommodations in partnership with the Accessibility Resources Office.
5. Students can request modified academic responsibilities under this policy regardless of whether they elect to take a leave of absence.
6. While receiving academic modifications, students will remain registered and retain benefits accordingly unless there are legal requirements regarding benefits based on a reduction of hours to a part-time status.

VII. Leave of Absence

1. As long as a student can maintain appropriate academic progress, the University's faculty and/or staff will not require the student to take a leave of absence or withdraw from or limit their studies as the result of pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions. It is important to remember that nothing in this policy requires modification of the essential elements or learning objectives of any course or academic program.
2. Enrolled students may elect to take a leave of absence because of pregnancy, birth of a child, adoption, or foster placement of a child. The leave of absence is initiated through the Accessibility Resources Office, under Federal guidelines, and may be extended in the case of extenuating circumstances or medical necessity.
3. To the extent possible, the University will take reasonable steps to ensure that upon return from leave, students will be reinstated to their academic program with the same academic status as when the leave began. Students will not be negatively impacted by or forfeit their future eligibility for their University scholarship/s or similar University-supported funding by exercising their rights of a leave of absence under this policy.
4. Students who re-enroll at OC after earning more than 15 hours at another institution will be treated as a transfer student and University transfer scholarship awarding policies will apply.
5. Students should contact Financial Services with any questions they have regarding tuition and financial aid.
6. The Title IX Coordinator can be an advocate for students with respect to financial aid in the event that a medical leave of absence places their eligibility into question.

VIII. Retaliation and Harassment

1. Harassment, based on pregnancy or parental status, by any member of the University community is prohibited.
2. University employees are prohibited from interfering with a student's right to take leave, seek reasonable accommodations, or otherwise exercise their rights under this policy.
3. University employees are prohibited from retaliating against students for exercising the rights articulated by this policy, including imposing, or threatening to impose, negative educational consequences because students request leave or accommodations, file a complaint, or otherwise exercise their rights under this policy.

IX. Reporting

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for overseeing complaints of discrimination involving pregnant and parenting students. If a student is experiencing harassment, discrimination, or retaliation due to pregnancy or a related condition, the University will address all complaints through the appropriate policy and provide supportive measures.

Submit complaints to the Title IX Coordinator, through the University's Student Online Complaint form at <https://services.oc.edu/Forms/StudentComplaint> or with the Department of Education.

Title IX Coordinator

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