BAKU
SLAVIC
UNIVERSITY



MATERNITY POLICY

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SECTION 1.

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Baku Slavic University (BSU) is committed to advancing gender equality, safeguarding women's rights in higher education, and promoting an inclusive, equitable and sustainable institutional environment. BSU recognises maternity as a critical part of women's health, well-being and socio-economic participation, and affirms that pregnancy and motherhood must never limit a woman's access to education, employment, leadership or equal pay.

The purpose of this policy is to set out, in one place, the rights, support measures and procedures available to pregnant, postpartum and parenting women at BSU, and the responsibilities of the University units that deliver them. The policy supports UN SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

1.2. INSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

Supporting women during pregnancy and early motherhood requires more than compliance with national legislation; it requires proactive institutional mechanisms. In applying this policy, BSU is guided by the following principles:

- **Non-discrimination** – no student or employee is disadvantaged because of pregnancy, maternity leave or parenting responsibilities.
- **Health first** – the health and safety of the mother and child take priority over academic or work requirements.
- **Continuity** – academic and professional progress is protected during and after maternity.
- **Confidentiality** – information about pregnancy and health is shared only with those who need it and only with the person's consent.
- **Individual approach** – support is agreed with each person according to her needs.

1.3. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy is implemented in accordance with, and does not limit any rights provided by, the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including:

- the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- the Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in particular the provisions on pregnancy, maternity and child-care leave (Articles 125–127) and the labour rights of women;
- the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Guarantees of Gender (Men and Women) Equality";
- the legislation on social insurance, which governs the payment of maternity benefits;

- the regulations of the Ministry of Science and Education governing academic leave and the study process for students.

Where national legislation provides a more favourable entitlement than this policy, the legislation applies. Where this policy provides more favourable support, BSU applies this policy.

1.4. DEFINITIONS

Term	Meaning in this policy
Maternity leave	Paid pregnancy and childbirth leave provided under the Labour Code.
Child-care leave	Partially paid social leave that a parent may take after maternity leave until the child reaches three years of age, as provided by the Labour Code.
Student mother	A woman student who is pregnant, has recently given birth, or is caring for a young child.
Reasonable adjustment	A change to work or study arrangements that removes a disadvantage linked to pregnancy or maternity without lowering academic or professional standards.

SECTION 2.

2.1. POLICY COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY AND SDGS

This policy directly supports BSU's commitment to gender equality, inclusive education and institutional sustainability. It integrates the SDG framework into University governance and provides measurable evidence of support for women staff and students.

2.2. POLICY SCOPE

The policy applies to:

- all female employees – academic staff and administrative personnel – regardless of position, seniority, or type or length of contract;
- all women students at every level of study (bachelor's, master's and doctoral) who are pregnant, postpartum or parenting;
- employees and students who adopt a child, to the extent provided by the Labour Code and the relevant study regulations;
- all faculties, departments, institutes and administrative units of BSU.

By covering the entire University community, the policy ensures that no woman experiences disadvantage or discrimination because of pregnancy, maternity leave or parenting responsibilities.

SECTION 3.

3.1. MATERNITY LEAVE AND JOB PROTECTION

All female employees are entitled to paid maternity leave in accordance with the Labour Code:

Situation	Leave entitlement
Normal birth	126 calendar days: 70 days before and 56 days after childbirth
Complicated or multiple birth	Postnatal leave is extended to 70 calendar days
Adoption	Leave as provided by the Labour Code for women adopting a child
After maternity leave	Partially paid child-care leave until the child reaches three years of age, at the employee's request

If the child is born later than the expected date, the prenatal portion of leave is extended without reducing the postnatal leave. Maternity benefits are paid through the state social insurance system; the Human Resources Department assists employees with the required documents.

During maternity and child-care leave, BSU protects the employee's position, salary grade, accrued benefits and career progression. The employee returns to the same or an equivalent position on terms no less favourable than before her leave. Pregnant employees and employees with young children are protected from dismissal in accordance with the Labour Code.

3.2. NOTIFICATION AND LEAVE PLANNING

- The employee informs her line manager and the Human Resources Department of her pregnancy as early as she feels comfortable, and submits the medical certificate required for maternity leave.
- Within 10 working days of notification, HR arranges a confidential planning meeting to agree leave dates, any health and safety adjustments (see Section 5) and the handover of duties.
- During leave, the employee may agree optional "keeping in touch" contact with her manager. She is never required to work during leave.
- Before returning, the employee and her manager agree a return-to-work plan.

3.3. FLEXIBLE WORK, REINTEGRATION AND CHILDCARE FACILITIES

On returning to work, employees may request, and BSU will consider favourably:

- flexible scheduling of working hours and teaching timetables;
- hybrid or remote working where the role allows;

- a gradual return to full duties;
- reduced or part-time working arrangements as provided by the Labour Code.

Employees with a child under one and a half years of age are entitled to additional breaks for breastfeeding. These breaks count as paid working time and, at the employee's request, may be combined with other breaks or taken at the start or end of the working day. BSU provides a private, hygienic space for breastfeeding and expressing milk, and supports access to childcare information and facilities.

No employee shall experience delayed promotion or reduced leadership opportunities because of maternity absence.

3.4. GENDER PAY EQUITY SAFEGUARDS

To ensure that motherhood does not affect salary progression or performance evaluation, BSU applies the following safeguards:

- salary increases, allowances and grade progression awarded during the leave period are applied to the employee in the same way as to other staff;
- maternity and child-care leave are not counted against the employee in performance evaluation, attestation or promotion decisions;
- research and publication expectations for academic staff are adjusted in proportion to the time on leave;
- deadlines linked to contract renewal or academic promotion are extended by the period of leave, at the employee's request.

These measures reinforce BSU's commitment to equal pay for equal work.

SECTION 4.

4.1. ACADEMIC FLEXIBILITY FOR STUDENT MOTHERS

A pregnant student or student mother may contact her Dean's Office or the Student Affairs Department at any time. Disclosure is voluntary and confidential. On request, an individual study plan is agreed, which may include:

- adjusted attendance requirements, with no penalty for absences related to pregnancy, childbirth, medical appointments or a child's illness;
- deferred or rescheduled examinations and assessments;
- extended deadlines for assignments, theses and dissertations;
- remote or recorded access to classes where available;
- academic leave in accordance with the applicable regulations, with a guaranteed right to resume studies on the same programme.

Doctoral students may request an extension of their study period equal to the time lost through pregnancy and maternity. BSU will help students understand how leave affects scholarships and other financial support, and will seek to maintain that support where regulations allow.

4.2. COUNSELLING, ADVISING AND WELL-BEING SUPPORT

BSU provides academic advising, psychological counselling and guidance on balancing study and childcare. Each student who requests support is assigned a named contact person in her faculty who coordinates adjustments and checks in at agreed intervals, including before and after any leave.

SECTION 5.

5.1. HEALTH, SAFETY AND MATERNAL PROTECTION MEASURES

Once a pregnancy is disclosed, the line manager (for staff) or the faculty (for students), with support from HR or Student Affairs, carries out an individual risk assessment of the work or study environment. This covers, for example, laboratory and chemical exposure, physical strain, long periods of standing and travel.

- Any requirement that could endanger maternal or child health is adjusted or removed immediately, without loss of pay or academic penalty.
- The restrictions of the Labour Code on night work, overtime and business travel for pregnant women and women with young children are strictly observed.
- Employees and students are given time to attend prenatal medical examinations.
- The risk assessment is reviewed as the pregnancy progresses and on return from leave.

SECTION 6.

6.1. CONFIDENTIALITY, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Any employee or student who believes she has been treated unfairly because of pregnancy, maternity or parenting may raise the matter with the Human Resources Department, the Student Affairs Department or the Gender Equality and Inclusion Committee. Concerns are handled confidentially and promptly. Retaliation against anyone who raises a concern in good faith is prohibited and is treated as a disciplinary matter.

SECTION 7.

7.1. MONITORING OF PAY EQUITY AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

BSU conducts an annual gender-disaggregated analysis of:

- pay equity, including the pay of employees returning from maternity leave;
- workload distribution;
- promotion trajectories;
- the return-to-work rate and the retention rate 12 months after return;
- the number of requests for adjustments made under this policy and the number granted;
- progression and completion rates of pregnant and parenting students.

Personal data are anonymised in all reporting. Findings are used to identify and remove structural barriers.

SECTION 8.

8.1. IMPLEMENTATION AND GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Unit	Responsibilities
Human Resources Department	Leave administration, benefit documentation, return-to-work planning, pay and promotion safeguards for staff.
Student Affairs Department and Dean's Offices	Individual study plans, academic leave, named contact persons and well-being support for students.
Gender Equality and Inclusion Committee	Overall oversight, handling of concerns, annual monitoring and SDG 5 reporting.
Line managers and heads of department	Risk assessments, practical adjustments and fair treatment within their units.
Strategy and Quality Assurance Team	Ownership of this policy, coordination of reviews and publication.

8.2. TRAINING, AWARENESS AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Annual training is provided to managers, supervisors, Dean's Office staff and HR personnel on maternity rights, gender equality, inclusive leadership and safe campus environments. This policy is published on the University website and included in staff and student induction. Awareness campaigns reinforce a culture of respect and empowerment.

SECTION 9.

9.1. POLICY REVIEW AND SDG 5 REPORTING

This policy is reviewed every three years, or earlier if there are changes in legislation or if monitoring identifies a need. The next scheduled review is in **November 2029**. Evaluation findings are included in the Annual SDG 5 Gender Equality Progress Report and used to strengthen gender-responsive policy implementation.

9.2. CONCLUSION

Through this Maternity Policy, BSU reaffirms its commitment to gender equality, inclusive education and social sustainability. Maternity is recognised as a valued stage of life that enriches the academic community. BSU ensures that all women – staff and students – can thrive academically, professionally and personally, strengthening the University's contribution to the UN SDGs and its standing as a responsible, ethical and future-oriented institution.

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