

Document Name and Version	Parental Support Framework Version 1.0
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Policies that Interact with Policy	3.6a Coursework Extension Policy 3.7a Extenuating Circumstances Policy 4.1a Policy Deferral and Temporary Suspension of Studies 5.6a Reasonable Accommodations Policy 7.5 The Readiness for Clinical Practice Policy
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IICP College Parental Support Framework

1. Purpose and Intent

- (1) This document serves to outline how IICP College supports learners who become parents, are expecting a child, or take on new parental and/or guardianship responsibilities during their programme of study.
- (2) To ensure learners are supported to make informed decisions about their studies, rather than being directed toward a particular outcome.
- (3) To promote equity of access and participation, recognising parenting and caring responsibilities as a normal part of learners' lives.
- (4) This framework is intended to guide conversations and decision-making. It does not create automatic entitlements or alter existing academic standards, nor does it replace any existing policies or procedures.

2. Scope

- (5) Applies to registered learners at IICP College only. Learners are those engaged in a programme of study with the College for the purposes of achieving either a validated or other award. Learners are therefore not employees of IICP College.
- (6) Applies equally to:
 - a. the learner giving birth
 - b. the other parent
 - c. learners assuming primary or shared parental and/or guardianship responsibilities (including but not limited to adoption or surrogacy arrangements)
- (7) This document is not applicable to staff of IICP College as existing staff HR policies apply in these circumstances.
- (8) This Framework is not applicable to care of the elderly.

3. Principles Underpinning Support

- (9) Learner-centred decision-making: Support focuses on helping the learner understand options and implications.
- (10) Equity and inclusion: Parenting and caring responsibilities should not, in themselves, disadvantage a learner.
- (11) Consistency: Decisions should be made transparently across programmes.
- (12) Integrity of Academic Standards: Decisions should be made with reference to the validated and approved programme and its curriculum, such that academic standards are maintained.

- (13) Integrity of Professional Standards: Decisions should be made with regard to the professional or statutory body, if appropriate, and in accordance with the associated code of standards, or equivalent, that governs learners and/or programmes leading to professional registration and/or recognition.
- (14) Integrity of Regulatory Standards: Decisions should be made with regard for College responsibilities to the statutory regulator, QQI, or any other legal or regulatory body which oversees and governs the provision of programmes.
- (15) Prompted support, not assumptions: Pregnancy or parenthood does not automatically require a change to study status.
- (16) Advice provided by a medical practitioner or professional should be adhered to.

4. Relationship to Existing IICP College Policies

- (17) This framework should be read alongside, and implemented through, existing IICP College policies, including but not limited to:
 - a. Temporary Suspension of Studies and Deferral Policy
 - b. Academic Progression Policy
 - c. Extenuating Circumstances Policy
 - d. Reasonable Accommodation Policy
 - e. Extension Policy
 - f. Policy and Procedure on Learner Welfare and Wellbeing
 - g. The Readiness for Clinical Practice Policy
- (18) This framework does not replace existing policies; it provides a lens through which they are applied.
- (19) Learners should also refer to their programme specific rules that govern their own particular programme of study.

5. Nature of Support Available

- (20) Support may include, where appropriate:
 - a. Early, confidential discussion with a Faculty member, Programme Director, Student Support Officer, or the Registrar
 - b. Clarification of:
 - i. academic demands
 - ii. attendance requirements
 - iii. assessment timelines
 - iv. placement obligations
 - v. Professional requirements
 - vi. Regulatory requirements
 - c. Signposting to existing IICP College learner supports (academic, wellbeing, pastoral)
- (21) Support is individualised, recognising that:
 - a. programmes differ
 - b. stages of study matter

- c. learners' circumstances vary
 - d. Medical circumstances vary
- (22) Following the provision of advice, the College encourages students to check in with a relevant member of staff at regular intervals. These check ins will be initiated by the student. Check-ins provide an opportunity to:
- a. review the learner's circumstances and support needs
 - b. assess whether existing arrangements remain appropriate
 - c. prompt discussion of any emerging academic, placement, or wellbeing considerations
- (23) This approach applies both during the period of parental support and on the learner's return to active study, recognising that needs may change over time.
- (24) Check-ins following initial contact with the college are intended to support reflection and informed decision-making; they do not oblige the learner to take any particular course of action.

6. Deferral and Suspension of Studies

- (25) IICP College operates an absolute model of deferral or suspension of studies. Deferral or suspension of studies are absolute. It is not normally possible for learners to defer or suspend individual elements of study while taking part in others.
- (26) Learners cannot normally defer or suspend discrete elements (e.g. individual modules, assessments, work based learning or other placements, including Gaeltacht placements).
- (27) Any decision to apply to defer or suspend studies rests with the learner and is made following discussion of implications with College staff.
- (28) Any decision to grant a deferral or suspension, rests with the College, and is governed by the existing Deferral and Suspension of Studies Policy
- (29) The role of IICP College is to ensure the learner understands the academic, financial, and progression implications of any decision to defer or suspend studies.
- (30) Additional supportive measures will be discussed with students upon return to studies.

7. Placement-Related Considerations

- (31) IICP College is not the learner's employer and does not control similar frameworks in place at placement sites.
- (32) Learners undertaking placements may be subject to the health and safety requirements, policies, and procedures of the placement provider, which is a workplace, including any local risk assessments carried out by that provider, or medical direction received by a medical practitioner and/or professional.
- (33) Where a learner discloses pregnancy or caring responsibilities:
- a. the Registrar, Programme Director, and Student Support Officer should consider the implications of the pregnancy or new parental and/or guardianship responsibilities for the programme of study

- b. any appropriate risk assessment(s) are identified and facilitated in line with placement and health and safety policies
- (34) Placement providers, which are workplaces, may have additional requirements, which learners must meet independently. Under current legal guidance applicable to many workplace-based placement settings, a pregnant individual is required to not attend placement activity from two weeks prior to the expected due date and for four weeks following the due date (Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004). This timeframe is independent of the deferral window, if appropriate.
- (35) Return to placement is at placement providers discretion and may be subject to placement providers own insurance and/or local health and safety rules.
- (36) Where such requirements apply, IICP College will support the learner to understand the academic and progression implications and the available options under existing College policies.

8. Equality of Access and Participation

- (37) IICP College recognises new parental and/or guardianship responsibilities as important equality considerations.
- (38) Support should be applied consistently to:
 - a. all parents
 - b. all genders
 - c. all family arrangements, including adoption/surrogacy etc.
- (39) No learner should be discouraged from continuing their studies solely on the basis of pregnancy or parenthood.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

- (40) Learner: Informs the College of their needs, provides relevant supporting documentation, decides whether and when to disclose relevant circumstances, engages in discussions to understand available supports and implications, to allow for the timely implementation of same.
- (41) Student Support Officer: provides first-line advice and pastoral guidance
- (42) Programme Director/Course Leader, or nominee: considers programme-specific, professional, and placement-related implications
- (43) Registrar, or nominee: ensures consistency, appropriate application of IICP College policy and procedure, upholds academic, professional and regulatory integrity
- (44) Where additional IICP College policies and procedures are triggered, roles and responsibilities as described within these will apply.

