

Guidelines for Accommodation of Pregnant/Breastfeeding Students in Labs

McGill University makes every reasonable effort to provide safe and suitable conditions for learning and study but acknowledges the particular challenges facing students who are pregnant or breastfeeding, especially where they carry out academic activities in laboratories. Wishing to provide an environment in which these students may be able to continue in their program of study and fulfil their academic commitments, these guidelines aim to set out how a student should inform the University and request academic accommodation and support.

- 1) All Principal Investigators (PI's) in labs using materials where there are reproductive risks or hazards need to inform members of the lab about those when they join. [Environmental Health & Safety \(EHS\)](#), along with the Lab Supervisor, can make a risk assessment, provide recommendations, develop and maintain an ongoing accommodation plan, and follow-up with the student to ensure they are comfortable with measures put in place.
- 2) Where a student (as defined in the [Charter of Students' Rights](#)) is or suspects they're pregnant, or where a student is breastfeeding, after consultation with a doctor they should reach out to EHS about safety precautions/risks. Information disclosed will be treated as confidential and will not be shared without the consent of the student or only on a need to know basis if there is an immediate risk to health and safety. If there are visiting fellows or people with other status (who are not employees) in labs that are not students, these guidelines won't explicitly apply to them, but reasonableness would dictate that the University make the same processes available to them.
- 3) There is no legal obligation for the student to disclose that they are pregnant or breastfeeding, but the University can only make provision for the student if it is aware of their pregnancy or breastfeeding status. In the case of restrictions or discomfort with 2) above, if an individual is in the lab as a student, then disclosures may be made potentially through the local wellness advisor or an academic advisor, who will in turn communicate with the Lab Supervisor and EHS. If they are in the lab as an employee, then the matter should be overseen by an HR advisor and may include a preventative leave. Advisors will reliably make the necessary communications to EHS and the Lab Supervisor.
- 4) EHS can advise stopping certain laboratory activities but cannot prevent such activities from being performed unless there is an imminent danger or a serious violation of health and safety regulations. If the student wishes to continue some activities deemed to be risky to them, their fetus or, in the case of breastfeeding, their child, this needs to be formally documented (with PI, Lab Supervisor, HR, Student Affairs Office as appropriate) and EHS will provide advice regarding the necessary accommodations to minimize risks.