

Information on disadvantage compensation for pregnant students as well as new and breastfeeding mothers

Since January 1, 2018 the Maternity Protection Act (*Mutterschutzgesetz*) also applies to university students during pregnancy as well to new and breastfeeding mothers.

Due to family responsibilities as well as pregnancy and the protection of expecting and nursing mothers (*Mutterschutz*) students may experience disadvantages in their studies and during examinations. Disadvantage compensation aims to offset those disadvantages by adapting the conditions for coursework and examinations to the individual situation of the students affected, thus creating equal opportunities. However, disadvantage compensation is not a simplification of the content of an assessment or preferential treatment for this group of students. It is only a (formal) adaption of the conditions of courses and examinations to offset disadvantages caused by certain family responsibilities. Academic and content-related requirements remain unchanged.

Affected students have the option to apply for disadvantage compensation. However, they are not entitled to a certain measure to compensate for the disadvantage.

Examples for possible disadvantage compensation measures for examinations which are to take place during the student's pregnancy or maternity protection period (six weeks before the expected due date and eight weeks after giving birth) are:

- Bachelor's/Master's theses: Students have the option to withdraw from writing their thesis at any time. This will not count as a failed attempt.
- Internship semesters may be postponed or completed part-time over the period of one year.
- Submission deadlines for term papers or theses may be extended as defined in the respective program's examination regulations.
- Replacing internships or study semesters abroad by alternatives which also fulfil the objectives of the internship/stay abroad.
- Using the restroom more frequently during examinations.
- Extension of exam time for longer restroom breaks.
- Immobility or bed-rest during pregnancy: oral examination via Skype or term paper.
- Earlier or alternative exam dates, e.g. significantly before or after the expected due date.

Additionally, breastfeeding mothers can make use of the following option for disadvantage compensation:

- Extension of exam time for written exams to take breaks to breastfeed.

Students are to address their request for disadvantage compensation **in writing to the responsible examination board**.

You may use the form which is available for download on our website. The form is to be submitted to the examination board **as early as possible** before the respective exam. The same applies if it is to be expected that submission deadlines for term papers or theses cannot be met. The examination board, if necessary in consultation with the responsible lecturer, decides if and how disadvantage compensation will be implemented.

If you need advice on disadvantage compensation, the chairperson of the examination board will be able to provide information on academic and legal questions. For general information on studying as a parent, please get in touch with TH Köln's Familienservice.