

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

Foundation Standards for Universities factsheet

September 2026



Overview and timeline

Following the introduction of the **Foundation Standards** for **all services** in 2025, Baby Friendly has now introduced the Foundation Standards for Universities. These changes aim to enhance the implementation and integration of the Baby Friendly Initiative within participating Higher Education Institutions. The updates are informed by evidence-based practice, insight from university Gold assessments, experiences from Baby Friendly Lead Lecturers and leadership teams, and feedback from consultation via NIFN.

From **September 2026** to the end of **August 2028**, all universities undergoing assessment will be asked to present an action plan to the assessment team indicating their plans to work towards these standards if they are not already in place. In some cases, the actions will already be completed, in others they will be ongoing or starting.

Sample **action plans** have been developed with the Foundation Standards highlighted. You can present a complete action plan or a version with content relating to just these standards.

From **September 2028**, implementation of the standards will be required to achieve accreditation.

What are the Foundation Standards?

The table below lists the key areas to consider and guidance around what we are looking for.

Standard	Goal/guidance
A named Baby Friendly Lead	A lead lecturer/team is in post with the knowledge, skills and capacity (<i>protected hours</i>) to implement the standards.
A strategy group	A group meets regularly (at least quarterly), with relevant key staff present, including the Guardian, Head of Department, Lead Midwife for Education, and programme team leads. The group has TORs, agreed actions and notes. Alternatively, as a minimum, Baby Friendly is a standing agenda item at senior team meetings, with the Baby Friendly project lead present.
A Guardian	A Guardian with sufficient seniority within the university has access to the executive board and an interest in the Baby Friendly programme. They are a member of the Strategy Group so that they are aware of progress being made and challenges encountered. There can be more than one Guardian where appropriate, e.g. one from the department and one at senior departmental or research level.
Data and information sharing	Data, including audit results, student evaluation and other relevant key performance indicators, is shared internally at all relevant levels, including up to executive board level.

Collaboration with Practice Learning Partners	Good collaboration with practice areas including sharing and reporting of audit and assessment results. Ensure practice supervisors and assessors have received relevant orientation, training and updates relating to the programme and Baby Friendly university standards.
Training	Ensure relevant staff, lecturers and SLT have received relevant training (including audit) and there is a process for annual mandatory updates.
	Completion of staff self-assessment tools to support training and curriculum development.
Local population needs	Evidence that the university has considered student and staff needs, including when pregnant and/or breastfeeding. Consideration of the needs of the local population of families that students will be supporting in practice, e.g. • Ethnicity • Where English isn't a first language • LGBTQIA+ parents • Parents with additional needs • Perinatal mental health
Co-design of programme	Evidence of service user and lived experience involvement (e.g. people who use services and their carers groups, PUSC), e.g. • Curriculum and assessment design • Development of case studies • Participating in teaching, assessment, simulation • Recruitment and interview processes

Although some universities already have many of these requirements in place, we understand that for others, implementing the Foundation Standards may present some challenges, and we are committed to supporting you throughout the process.

As universities begin to implement the standards, we will share our learning to assist you. If you have implemented any of these standards effectively and would like to share your experiences, or if you have any concerns or questions, please contact us at

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