

POLICY ON MATERNITY, ADOPTION, PATERNITY/PARTNER AND PARENTAL LEAVE FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS

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POLICY ON MATERNITY, ADOPTION, PATERNITY/PARTNER AND PARENTAL LEAVE FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS

1. General Statements

- 1.1 This policy is designed to ensure that research students who are becoming parents are treated fairly and consistently, and are not treated less favourably than other students as a result of their parental responsibilities.
- 1.2 Eligible research students can take maternity, adoption, paternity/partner or parental leave from their studies, as appropriate, in relation to the birth or placement of a child.
- 1.3 This policy is informed by the legal protection afforded to students under the Equality Act 2010, and is informed by the policies and guidance of the UK Government in relation to employees and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI; formerly Research Councils UK) in relation to those research students they fund.
- 1.4 Students should also refer to the University's Policy and guidance on Support for Pregnant Students and Students who become parents, and Interruption of Study Policy (Research Students).

2. Taking Leave from your Studies

- 2.1 As a research student, you are expected to take breaks and holidays, and the University defines the number of annual leave days you should expect to have if you are studying full-time. If you are becoming a parent, you are entitled to take additional leave days (to attend antenatal appointments, for example), as defined in this policy. You should inform your supervisor of the additional leave you are taking. Taking additional leave days for this purpose will not alter the duration of your programme, your time limit for completion or any funding arrangements.
- 2.2 If you are studying on a part-time basis, the University recognises that you will be managing your studies in one of a variety of engagement patterns to complement working and other commitments. Depending on your agreed pattern of engagement, you may not be expected to discuss taking brief periods away from your studies with your supervisors. If you intend to take any period of maternity, adoption, paternity/partner or parental leave, however, this policy applies.
- 2.3 If you intend to suspend your research studies for a period of more than 4 weeks (28 days), to take maternity leave, for example, you will need to apply for an Interruption of Study, in accordance with the Interruption of Study Policy (Research Students). Your programme dates will be adjusted and your time limit for completion will be extended for a commensurate period.
- 2.4 If you take leave from your studies for a period of 28 days or less, the University does not define this as an Interruption of Study, but as an

absence that is managed by your School. The University will permit you to take the period of leave, as defined in this policy, but with the exception of Paternity/Partner Leave (see 5.3), this will not alter the duration of your programme or your time limit for completion, as research students are expected to make up brief period(s) of time spent away from their research during the overall course of their programme.

3. Maternity Leave

- 3.1 Maternity leave is defined as a period of up to 52 weeks of leave that may be taken in relation to the birth of a child.
- 3.2 In line with UK employment legislation, the earliest you can start your period of maternity leave is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. Maternity leave will also start automatically the day after the birth if your baby is early, or if you need to stop your research degree studies because of a pregnancy-related illness in the 4 weeks before the week that your baby is due. The latest date you can start your period of maternity leave is the actual date of birth of your baby.
- 3.3 You may take up to a total of 52 weeks as an Interruption of Study for maternity leave. You are not required to take the full 52 weeks maternity leave and you may opt for a shorter period. In line with legislation for employees, however, you should take at least 2 weeks' leave following the birth of a child.
- 3.4 If you are a funded student you should check the terms and conditions of your studentship, and the period of suspension that is permitted by your sponsor, before deciding on the period of interruption to request.
- 3.5 You are also permitted automatically to take additional leave days to attend antenatal appointments, and your child's health and development checks if you are not on maternity leave at that time.
- 3.6 If you are a surrogate, the definition of maternity leave and its entitlements equally apply.

4. Adoption Leave

- 4.1 Adoption leave is a period of up to 52 weeks of leave that may be taken following the placement of a child with an adoptive parent. Adoption leave may be taken by only one of the adoptive parents, usually referred to as the primary adopter. (See section below on parental leave.)
- 4.2 Adoption leave can start up to 14 days before the date the child starts living with you. The latest date you can start your period of adoption leave is the date of placement of the child, or the date of the baby's birth in the case of a surrogacy arrangement.
- 4.3 You may take up to a total of 52 weeks as an Interruption of Study for adoption leave.

4.4 If you are a funded student you should check the terms and conditions of your studentship, and the period of suspension that is permitted by your sponsor, before deciding on the period of interruption to request.

4.5 You are also permitted automatically to take additional leave days to attend adoption appointments, and your child's health and development checks, where applicable, if you are not on adoption leave at that time.

5. Keeping in Touch (KiT) Days

5.1 You may wish to participate in activities relating to your research or doctoral training while on maternity or adoption Leave, such as attending a conference or workshop, or meeting with your supervisor or members of your research lab. This should be agreed in advance with your supervisor(s) and not amount to more than 10 days across the total period of leave.

5.2 If you are funded by a Research Council, you will receive stipend payment for these days at the basic daily rate, less the amount of maternity/adoption pay that you are receiving.

6. Paternity/Partner Leave

6.1 Paternity/partner leave is defined as a period of leave that may be taken by the partner of the person giving birth, the partner of the primary adopter or an intended parent (for those having a baby through a surrogacy agreement). Paternity/partner leave is available to partners of either sex who live with the mother or primary adopter, and who has or expects to have responsibility for the child's upbringing.

6.2 In line with UK employment legislation and Research Council studentship terms (which waive any qualifying period), you are entitled to take up to 2 weeks for paternity/partner leave. This cannot be taken before the birth or placement of the child, and must end within 56 days of the birth/placement. It must be taken in one go.

6.3 You should inform your School ahead of your planned absence for paternity/partner leave. As Interruptions of Study apply only where a student requires to suspend engagement with their programme for more than 28 days, paternity/partner leave is not an eligible ground for an Interruption of Study application. Your time limit for completion will, however, still be extended by a commensurate period.

6.4 The University recognises that you may wish to accompany your partner to attend antenatal or adoption appointments. You are permitted automatically to take additional leave days for those purposes.

7. Parental Leave

7.1 A parent who is not the child's mother or primary adopter may take up to a total of 50 weeks as an Interruption of Study for parental leave. This may be taken in 1 or more blocks but may not end later than the child's first birthday.

- 7.2 If you wish to take less than 4 weeks (28 days), this will not constitute an Interruption of Study but will be granted as a Leave of Absence.
- 7.3 Parental leave may be shared with the child's mother/primary adopter ('shared parental leave'), such that the leave is taken when the other parent has returned to work/study and you are looking after the child as its primary carer for that period, or it may be taken at the same time as the other parent's leave.
- 7.4 As in the case of paternity/partner leave, you are permitted automatically to take additional leave days to attend antenatal or adoption appointments.

8. Shared Parental Leave in touch (SPLIT) Days

- 8.1 If you are sharing parental leave with the child's mother/primary adopter ('shared parental leave'), you may still wish to participate in research or training activities. This should be agreed in advance with your supervisor(s) and not amount to more than 20 days across the total period of leave.

9. Taking Leave for Extenuating Circumstances

- 9.1 The permitted periods of leave and Interruption of Study are specified by this policy to ensure that research students who are becoming parents are supported in a fair and consistent manner.
- 9.2 Becoming a parent is not regarded to be an extenuating circumstance, such as ill health, and applications for an Interruption of Study for the purpose of maternity, adoption, paternity/partner or parental leave are generally straightforward.
- 9.3 If other circumstances arise, such as illness of a partner or child following the birth, you may apply for an Interruption of Study on additional or different grounds and for a longer period than is defined in this policy. The application should be made on compassionate grounds, be appropriately evidenced, and follow the guidance that accompanies the Extenuating Circumstances Policy (Research Students).

10. Payment and Repayment of Student Stipends

- 10.1 Students who are funded by a Research Council will be entitled to receive stipend payments for maternity, adoption and paternity/partner leave as outlined in the Terms and Conditions of Research Council Training Grants:
- .1 the first 26 weeks of maternity or adoption leave is paid at the full stipend rate; the following 13 weeks is at a reduced rate; the final 13 weeks are not paid;

.2 paternity/partner leave allows for up to 2 weeks leave to be taken on full stipend.¹

- 10.2 You should return to your studies at the University in a full- or part-time capacity, for at least 3 months following maternity or adoption leave. If you choose not to return to your studies following a period of interruption, the Research Councils expect the University to recover from you, on their behalf, the value of any payments that have been made to you for maternity or adoption leave. This requirement may be waived in exceptional circumstances, which would be approved on a case-by-case basis, by the relevant College Postgraduate Dean.
- 10.3 Up to 50 weeks may be taken as Unpaid Parental Leave, with the studentship extended accordingly.
- 10.4 If you are funded by a different sponsor, you should consult with your funder to determine whether payments can be made during periods of adoption, paternity and shared parental leave.

11. Student Route (previously Tier 4) Visas

- 11.1 If you are sponsored by the University under a Student Route (previously Tier 4) visa, an Interruption of Study of more than 60 days will require the University to withdraw sponsorship and for you to return to your home country for the duration of your leave. In such cases, you will need to apply to the University for a new CAS number to apply for a new visa to resume your studies.
- 11.2 All requests for leave that are more than 60 days must be made in good time to allow time for approval of the request and to ensure travel home can be made following the report of the interruption to the UKVI.
- 11.3 Advice should be sought from International Student Support as early as possible to ensure compliance with the visa can be maintained.

¹ A week is defined as the same number of days that you would normally study in a week. A week would be 2 days, for example, if you are part-time and study only on a Monday and Tuesday.

Appendix: Alignment with the Expectations and Core Practices of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education

This policy aligns with the following relevant Expectations and Core Practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

Expectations for standards	Expectations for quality
	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Core practices for standards	Core practices for quality
	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
Common practices for standards	Common practices for quality
	The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.
	The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.