

Family Leave Policy for Research Students

The procedures outlined here have been developed to ensure that family leave is dealt with fairly and effectively. Guidance on this policy is available from the Doctoral College Office (Academic Registry).

Applicable to all students with effect from 1 July 2024.

Arrangements for Leave of Absence for Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental and Adoption Leave.

Up to 52 weeks of maternity leave may be taken by research students registered at the University. The leave of absence period is approved by the student's supervisors and School's Director of Doctoral Programmes. There is no qualifying period for maternity, paternity, adoption, or shared parental leave.

1. Applying for Maternity Leave

Students must discuss their forthcoming maternity leave with their supervisor/s and notify the Doctoral College Office (Registry) as early as possible. The start date of the maternity leave must be confirmed no later than the 15th week before the date on which the baby is due.

Maternity leave can be postponed or brought forward to a chosen start date by informing the supervisor/s and the Doctoral College at least 28 days (or as soon as possible thereafter) before the leave is due to start.

A student may choose when to start maternity leave, subject to the following constraints:

- The maternity leave period cannot start before the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth.
- The maternity leave period will be automatically triggered if a student is absent from their programme wholly or partly because of pregnancy after the beginning of the 4th week before the expected week of childbirth.

The student will apply for a leave of absence from study in the normal way. However, all applications should be supported with a MATB1 form. A MATB1 form is not normally issued until 15 weeks before the expected week of birth (and is normally provided by a midwife). The Doctoral College Office will confirm in writing the terms of the maternity leave and when the student should return to study.

Students who are self-funded, funded directly by a third party e.g., an international sponsor, or in receipt of tuition fee only awards or fee bursaries, are entitled to the periods of leave detailed within this policy, but will not be eligible for any financial support from the University. Students who are funded by third parties must be aware of any terms and conditions that form part of their private funding arrangements.

Students who are sponsored on a student visa by the University and are considering a leave of absence from their study on the grounds of maternity or adoption leave should seek advice from the [Student Advice and Support Service](#).

2. Funding Arrangements Applicable to those in Receipt of Maintenance Funding

Any full-time postgraduate research student still in receipt of University maintenance funding, granted a period of leave of absence on the grounds of maternity leave, will be eligible for 26 weeks payment of their normal University funded stipend during this leave. This includes all University funded students, i.e., those funded by the University, but also those funded through external and UKRI Training Grants administered by the University and paid to the student on behalf of those organisations.

After the first 26 weeks, the following 13 weeks will be paid at a level commensurate with employee entitlements to statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks are unpaid.

A student's expected date of confinement must occur within the studentship award period to be eligible for maternity leave funding.

Students who are registered on a part-time basis or who are receiving less than a full stipend award will receive their standard pro rata stipend payments for the same periods on the same basis as above.

3. Paternity Leave and Stipend Payments

Recipients of University stipend funding, as outlined above, may also take paternity leave.

All research students registered at the University are eligible for Ordinary Paternity Leave, if they are responsible for the upbringing of the child e.g. be the biological father or adopter of the child, or the partner, civil partner or husband of the child's mother. They do not have to be named on the birth certificate. Paternity leave permits the individual to take up to 10 working days leave on full stipend where the funding is administered through the University. Ordinary Paternity Leave must be taken in blocks of not less than 1 week, cannot start before the birth of the child, and must end within 56 days of the birth.

4. Shared Parental Leave and Stipend Payments

Shared Parental Leave is a mechanism through which the entitlement to maternity/adoption leave may be shared, and is available to those in receipt of stipend funding and who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- To qualify for shared parental leave you must share the care of the child with either: your husband, wife, civil partner, adopter, the child's other parent or your partner;
- They must be taking the leave to look after the child;
- They must have qualified for statutory maternity leave or pay; or statutory adoption leave or pay or maternity allowance, or have qualified for the payment of a stipend during maternity leave under a policy such as this, (e.g., if they are also a Research Student);
- They must have returned to work and must no longer be in receipt of maternity/adoption pay or allowance, or must have returned to their research/studies if they are also a Research Student, (the start and end dates of their partner's leave must be provided);

- They must have some entitlement to maternity leave remaining;
- The terms and conditions of their grant must not specifically exclude the taking of such leave.

The number of weeks that may be taken as shared parental leave will depend on how many of the 52 weeks of maternity/ adoption leave remains, but will in any event be capped at a maximum entitlement of 50 weeks. Shared Parental Leave must be taken as a continuous block and may not end later than the child's first birthday, or one calendar year from the date when the child began living with you.

Note that some funding administered by the University may be subject to additional terms and conditions e.g., UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions. These terms and conditions may not support the funding of shared parental leave.

Students who are self-funded (and those entitled to tuition fee only awards), are entitled to the periods of leave detailed within this policy but will not be eligible for any financial support from the University. Students who are funded by third parties must be aware of any terms and conditions that form part of their private funding arrangements.

Students who are sponsored by the University on a student visa are advised to seek advice from the [Student Advice and Support Service](#) when considering a leave of absence from your study on the grounds of parental leave.

The student will apply for a leave of absence in the normal way. A form is available for this purpose.

5. Adoption Leave

Equal entitlements will be granted for new adoptive parents; students should contact the Doctoral College Office in the first instance for confirmation of the process.

6. Extension of Studentship End Date

The studentship end date and expected submission date will normally be extended by a period equal to the period of maternity or adoption or shared parental leave taken.

7. Repayment of Stipend following Maternity/Paternity Leave /Shared Paternal Leave/Adoption Leave

Students are expected to return to study for a minimum of 12 consecutive weeks after their leave period. If a student does not return for 12 weeks, then the University will claim back the 26 weeks full stipend payment.

A student who has been studying full-time but who indicates they wish to return to study on a part-time basis following maternity leave or shared parental leave, and has no visa restrictions, will receive sympathetic consideration of their request, and will be accommodated wherever possible.

Student mothers must not resume their studies for a minimum of 2 weeks following the birth of their child.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to hold a return to studies meeting at the earliest opportunity to discuss the students study arrangements.

8. Health and Safety

The School in which a pregnant student works is responsible for risk assessments in relation to their work and environment.

Any health and safety concerns should be raised immediately within the appropriate School or Doctoral College Office. Occupational Health may be consulted for confidential advice and guidance.

Careful consideration will need to be made as to whether the student can undertake field work, placements or laboratory work, or study abroad, whilst pregnant.

Where necessary, health and safety and/or medical advice should be sought.

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