

LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT HANDBOOK

Chapter 25, Annex C: Student Pregnancy and Family Leave: PGR funding policy

Note: this chapter is also an annex to **PGR Handbook, Chapter 18 (Annex B)**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The following policy relates to the payment of studentship maintenance stipends during periods of maternity leave, adoption leave and other specific parental leave as defined by this policy, applied to postgraduate research students¹. All students are equally considered irrespective of fee status.
- 1.2. This policy is an appendix to the [TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 25: Student Pregnancy, and Family Leave Policy](#). Students should also refer to the interruption procedures specified in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5: Statement of Procedures: Periods of Registration and Changes to Registration Status for Graduate Research Students](#).

¹ For the full list of eligible programmes please refer to [Ordinance 7. Title of Degrees, sections 7.3 & 7.4.](#)

- 1.3. Throughout this policy, reference is made to the “Full stipend rate”. The full stipend rate is stipulated on the student’s offer or award letter, however, where a student has changed their registration status subsequent to this (e.g. changed from full-time to part-time registration) stipend payments under this policy will reflect the amount of stipend they were receiving in accordance with their registration status at the point at which an application for a period of interruption to cover a period of maternity, paternity or adoption leave is made, with the exception of students who have changed registration status (e.g. from part-time to full-time) within the 52 week period prior to the commencement of leave on these grounds for whom stipend payment will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. Students should consult the relevant Faculty’s Postgraduate Research Office to check the arrangements for their individual award.

2. Student eligibility criteria for receiving maternity or family leave stipend payments

- 2.1. Students in receipt of annual maintenance stipend funding from the following sources are eligible for receipt of stipend payments under this policy:
- 2.1.1 Students who receive Research Council funding.
 - 2.1.2 Students who receive University of Exeter funding.
 - 2.1.3 Students who are funded through funds allocated and administered by the University of Exeter.
 - 2.1.4 Students who are funded via a project funded by a research grant paid to the University of Exeter.
- 2.2. Students are eligible:
- 2.2.1. Whether registered on a full-time or part-time basis.
 - 2.2.2. From the point of initial registration on their programme.
 - 2.2.3. Where the first day of the period of leave falls within the funded period, or in the case of maternity leave where the expected date of confinement falls within the

funded period and for adoption leave where the expected date of adoption falls within the funded period.

2.2.4. To receive stipend payments under this policy on multiple occasions.

2.3. The following groups of students are **not** eligible for receipt of stipend payments under this policy:

2.3.1. Self-funded students.

2.3.2. Postgraduate research students who receive an externally funded stipend directly from an external organisation must follow the regulations of the funder. If the funder does not provide additional funds, the University is not liable to provide any payments under this policy. As such students are advised to carefully check the terms and conditions attached to their funding prior to accepting that funding, and to refer back to those terms and conditions as necessary.

2.3.3. Students in receipt of bursaries² or awards covering tuition fees only.

2.3.4. Students who have been in receipt of funding (as specified below), but who are or will be outside of their funding period at the point at which their period of leave would commence.

2.3.5. Students who are employees of the University or who undertake work paid via the claims payroll will not be eligible for receipt of stipend payments under this policy on those grounds. Employees may wish to refer to the University's staff [Parents and Carers webpages](#). Students who undertake work paid via the claims payroll may wish to consult the [‘Terms and conditions for individuals paid by claim’](#).

2.4. Students who fall into the categories above, and who have financial concerns about taking a period of maternity adoption or other parental leave are advised to contact the Students' Guild or the Students' Union for advice and support.

² A bursary is a single payment, normally made at the beginning of the degree, to help towards payment of tuition fees and/or living expenses.

- 2.5. Note that all maternity and parental leave payments under this policy are considered stipend payments and are therefore subject to the same tax conditions as described in your financial offer letter.

3. Types of leave

3.1. Paid maternity and adoption leave:

- 3.1.1. Up to 52 weeks of leave. The first 26 weeks will be paid at the full stipend rate, after which the following 13 weeks will be paid at a level commensurate with employee entitlements to statutory maternity pay.
- 3.1.2. for a further period of unpaid leave of up to 13 weeks. The paid and unpaid periods of leave **must** be taken consecutively.

3.2. Paid paternity/ adoption support/ parental support leave:

- 3.2.1. For up to 2 weeks of paid leave at the full stipend rate for the partner of the birth parent/primary adopter. These may be taken at any time during a partner's pregnancy or within three months following the birth/adoption date. Leave must be taken in one go. A week is the same amount of days that you normally work in a week – for example, a week is 3 days if you only work on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

3.3. Neonatal care leave:

- 3.3.1. For a period where a baby is receiving neonatal care in a hospital setting at the full stipend rate. This leave may be taken by both parents and can only be taken for the child who receives neonatal care. Leave can be taken in blocks of one week.
- 3.3.2. Neonatal care leave is not available for infants in receipt of paediatric care in a hospital setting and is available for a up to 12 weeks.

3.4. Unpaid parental leave:

- 3.4.1. Partners of students taking a period of maternity and adoption leave (as described in section 3.1 above) are entitled to an extended period of unpaid parental leave, up to a maximum of 50 weeks, with their studentship (and period of study) extended accordingly. Unpaid parental leave must be completed within

12 months of the birth of the child. This leave may be taken in up to three blocks of leave or all at once. This leave may be taken following a period of paid paternity/adoption support/parental support leave as described in section 3.2 above

3.5. Parental leave (leave to care for a child for whom they are parent/carer).

- 3.5.1. Students may take leave to provide care to a child for to whom they are a parent/carer of up to 1 month each year. Funding extensions are not available for periods of parental leave under this definition.
- 3.5.2. Students may take leave to provide care to a child for to whom they are a parent/carer of up to 1 month each year. Funding extensions are not available for periods of parental leave.
- 3.5.3. Students who take short term absences for parental leave (i.e., absences of less than 1 month where the student is not interrupting) will continue to receive stipend payments, but their funding will not be extended in accordance with these periods of absence. Students may request an unfunded programme extension through the cumulative absence policy.

3.6. Phased Return from a period of Maternity or Adoption Leave

- 3.6.1. Students returning from a period of maternity or adoption leave may request a phased return to study, where the stipend payments for the phased return will come from their maternity/adoption leave allowance.
- 3.6.2. Due to the way that maternity & adoption pay is calculated, the stipend payments during a phased return from maternity/adoption leave will depend on when during the maternity/adoption year the student returns. The examples below illustrate the potential differences in how a student may be paid during a phased return from maternity/adoption leave:

Example 1: Full time Student takes 23 weeks maternity leave and wants a 3-week phased return at 0.5FTE. Half of the stipend payment will come from

maternity leave (paid at 100% for the first 26 weeks of maternity leave) & the other half from the full-rate studentship payments.

Example 2: Full time student takes 34 weeks adoption leave and wants a 4-week phased return at 0.5FTE. Half of the stipend payment will come from adoption leave (paid at the statutory payment rate for months 6-9 of maternity/adoption leave) and the other half from the full-rate studentship payments.

Example 3: Full time student takes 50 weeks maternity leave and wants a 4-week phased return at 0.5FTE. The stipend payment will be paid at half of the full-rate studentship rate. Maternity & Adoption leave receive no payments for months 9-12, and therefore there will be no stipend payment made from the maternity leave allowance for this part of the phased return.

3.6.3. Students needing a phased return to study for more than 4 weeks should consider a temporary transfer to part time registration via the Changes to Modes of Attendance process (see [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5: Periods of registration and changes to registration status for graduate research students](#)).

4. Identification of eligibility

- 4.1. The terms and conditions specified in a student's offer or award letter **should** include reference to a student's eligibility to apply for University administered maternity, adoption or other parental leave stipend payments. Where there is a conflict between the eligibility criteria specified in this procedure, and the terms and conditions set out in a student's offer or award letter, the terms and conditions set out in the offer or award letter take precedence, unless there is a clear conflict with the eligibility criteria specified above, which would lead to a student being treated less advantageously than other students in receipt of comparable funding.
- 4.2. Where offer and award letters do not make specific reference to eligibility the criteria specified in this policy **should** determine whether a student is eligible for receipt of stipend payments under this policy.

- 4.3. In any instance where a student's eligibility is not clear the relevant Faculty's Postgraduate Research Office **should** be consulted in the first instance.

5. Process for application for a period of funded leave

5.1. Maternity and adoption leave:

5.1.1. Stipend funding to cover a period of maternity or adoption leave will be released to cover a period of interruption for maternity or adoption leave. As such the student must have a period of interruption (see [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5 Statement of Procedures: Periods of Registration and Changes to Registration Status for Graduate Research Students](#)) of the relevant length approved in order for the funding to be extended commensurately.

5.1.2. Students may be required to supply evidence to support the request for continued stipend funding under this policy. A MAT-B1, birth certificate or equivalent medical document confirming the birth of the baby is required at the time of application for this leave. Other sources of evidence will normally be those set out under the [equivalent staff Maternity, Adoption or Parental leave procedures](#), however specific advice as to what information must be supplied will be provided to the student at the time, upon request.

5.1.3. Students may also be required to provide sufficient notice of their intention to take a period of interruption on these grounds. It is recommended that students give notice at least 8 weeks prior to the period of interruption, and as such students should discuss their intentions with staff as early as possible (see the [LTS Handbook, Chapter 25, 'Student Pregnancy and Family Leave Policy'](#)).

5.2. Paternity/ Adoption Support/ Parental Support Leave: Students will not have this period recorded as an interruption. A manual adjustment to this date will be made by the Faculty, and a commensurate extension to the funded period will be made. To be eligible for this extension of funding a student **must** have disclosed their intention to take a period of Paternity/Adoption Support/Parental Support Leave ahead of the period of leave (see [LTS handbook, Chapter 25, section 7 the 'Student Pregnancy and Family](#)

[Leave Policy](#)'). A MAT-B1, birth certificate or equivalent medical document confirming the birth of the baby is required at the time of application for this leave.

6. Process for application for a period of unfunded leave

- 6.1. Unpaid parental leave: Students should request their period of unpaid parental leave at the earliest opportunity. Students who would like an unpaid extension to their paternity/adoption support/parental support leave must inform their PGR Support Team before the end of the paternity/adoption support/parental support leave, so that their student record may be adjusted correctly. A MAT-B1, birth certificate or equivalent medical document confirming the birth of the baby is required at the time of application for this leave. See the [LTS handbook, Chapter 25, 'Student Pregnancy and Family Leave Policy'](#) for further details.

7. Co-Parental Leave

- 7.1. The University provides Co-Parental Leave to eligible PGRs, to provide as much parity to employees as possible. There are limitations as to what the university can provide. Full details are available in the [TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 25, Annexe E1: Co-Parental leave for PGRs](#) and [Annex E2: Co-Parental Leave Request Form for Postgraduate Research Students](#).
- 7.2. PGRs who are considering Co-Parental Leave must discuss with their [PGR Support Team](#) in the first instance.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. Students should note that every effort will be made to respect the confidential nature of any disclosure of information on these grounds (see [LTS handbook, Chapter 25, 'Student Pregnancy and Family Leave Policy'](#)). However, in order to manage financial arrangements with regard to stipend payments during a period of leave the University may need to disclose to external funders that the student has notified the University of their intention of applying for a period of interruption or extension, which would result in continued stipend payments under this policy, where the external funder has responsibility for provision of funding.

9. Returning from a period of funded leave

- 9.1. If a student receives stipend payments from the University under this policy, the University may reclaim all or part of the payment if the student fails to return to study for either a period of at least three months following the period of leave (or a pro-rata period of time for students transferring to part-time status upon their return), or, if a student is returning at the end of their period of study, does not complete their programme of study within the three month period (or a pro-rata period of time for students transferring to part-time status upon their return).

10. Death of a birth parent/primary adopter during the maternity/adoption period

- 10.1. The student partner is eligible for leave on the same basis as the birth parent or main adopter if the birth parent or main adopter dies during or shortly before the period of maternity or adoption leave.
- 10.2. Funded PGRs in this position are advised to contact their [PGR Support Team](#) or the [DC Quality Development Manager](#) in the first instance to discuss their individual circumstances and funding options.