Policy for Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave for Postgraduate Research Students

Maternity Leave

1. What you need to do

   Step 1 - You must tell the University that you are pregnant no later than 15 weeks before your baby is due.
   Step 2 - Decide on the date you want to start your maternity leave.
   Step 3 - Complete and return the Interruption of Studies form.

2. Who you need to tell that you are pregnant

Following confirmation of pregnancy, you should advise your supervisory team as soon as possible for health and safety reasons. The information can be kept confidential if wanted at that point.

The University is required to protect the Health and Safety at work of all research students and others, including new and expectant mothers. When assessing risks in the workplace, the University will pay particular attention to risks that could affect the health and safety of new and expectant mothers and their babies.

In consultation with your supervisory team, all reasonably practicable measures should be taken to prevent exposure to risks through removal of hazards or implementation of controls. If a risk remains which could damage the health and safety of new or expectant mothers or their babies, the supervisory team will take appropriate measures to make sure they are not exposed to that risk. This may include making appropriate adjustments to your research project.


You can also access the Government's guidelines for health and safety for new and expectant mothers at http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/.

If you have any queries regarding pregnant research students and actions necessary to protect the health of the new/expectant mother and unborn child please contact Occupational Health on ext. 7344.

Further information can be found on the Occupational Health website: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/occupationalhealth/help/advice.php

Approved on behalf of PGR Sub-committee of ULTSEC – October 2012
3. Policy and Procedure for all research students

i. All postgraduate research students will be entitled to a period of up to 52 weeks Maternity Leave.

ii. You must notify the Research Student Support Team/Graduate School of your intention to take maternity leave as soon as practicable, but no later than 15 weeks before your baby is due (you may change your mind about the date you want to start your maternity leave). Notification of intended leave of up to 4 weeks duration can be made via the notice of absence form: www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/information/Attendance/. All intended Maternity leave beyond 4 weeks should be by means of the application for an interruption to research degree form available at: www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/pg-research/PGRchangecirc.htm

You should attach the medical certificate MATB1, issued by your midwife, confirming the date your baby is due.

iii. The earliest you can start maternity leave is 11 weeks before your baby is due.

iv. Your maternity leave period will automatically begin if you are unable to continue your studies due to a pregnancy related illness within the 4-week period before your baby is due.

v. Students should not return to study within 2 weeks of giving birth for health and safety reasons. If you do want to return to your studies before your planned return date please notify the Research Student Support Team/Graduate School at least 2 weeks before your new return date.

vi. The period of maternity leave cannot be broken by other types of absences. If you become ill during the maternity period, the absence is treated as part of the maternity leave up to the end of that maternity leave period.

vii. All students in receipt of a studentship/Sponsorship from an external funding body (e.g. Research Councils, Wellcome Trust, Charities and Government/Embassies) should refer to the terms and conditions of their funding for details of what periods of leave and funding support you may be entitled to for maternity leave.

viii. All students in receipt of a studentship award receiving a maintenance stipend, paid through a studentship awarded by the University should refer to the additional policy and procedure below.

4. Additional Policy and Procedure for students in receipt of a studentship award receiving a maintenance stipend, paid through a studentship awarded by the University

i. All students in receipt of a studentship award receiving a maintenance stipend, paid through a studentship awarded by the University, will be entitled to continue to receive their stipend support at the standard rate during the first 6 month period of maternity leave.

ii. A further 6 months of unpaid maternity leave may also be taken. Your studentship will be held in abeyance during the period of the maternity leave. Studentships and postgraduate studies should not normally be held in abeyance for more than 12 months.

iii. You must notify the Research Student Support Team if you are not able to return to study by the end of your maternity leave. Students who do not return to complete their studies following a period of maternity leave will be required to repay the stipend they have received during their maternity leave.

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iv. The above is consistent with RCUK Terms and Conditions of Research Council Training Grants which states:

All Research Council funded students are entitled to take 6 months of maternity leave on full stipend and a further 6 months of unpaid maternity leave.‘

5. Paternity Leave

i. Paternity leave is granted to students whose relationship with the mother and the child is one of the following:

- They are the baby’s biological father
- They are married to the mother
- They are the mother’s partner (A partner is someone who lives with the mother of the baby in an enduring family relationship but is not an immediate relative. This also includes a female partner in a same sex couple).

ii. Up to two weeks paternity leave may be taken at any time during a partner’s pregnancy or within three months following the birth. This will be additional leave to the normal annual leave entitlement and should be approved by your supervisor and reported to the Research Student Support Team.

iii. If you need to take leave of more than 4 weeks you must notify the Research Student Support Team of your intention to take an interruption of studies for an extended period of paternity leave. Notification should be by means of the application for an interruption to research degree form available at: www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/pg-research/PGRchangeirc.htm

You should attach medical documentary evidence of your partner’s pregnancy or a copy of your child’s birth certificate / medical certificate.

For students in receipt of a studentship award receiving a maintenance stipend, paid through a studentship awarded by the University, this extended period of paternity leave will be unpaid and your studentship will be held in abeyance during this period. Studentships and postgraduate studies should not normally be held in abeyance for more than 12 months.

iv. All students in receipt of a studentship/Sponsorship from an external funding body (e.g. Research Councils, Wellcome Trust, Charities and Government/Embassies) should refer to the terms and conditions of their funding for details of what periods of leave and funding support you may be entitled to for paternity leave.

6. Adoption leave

Adoption leave is available to individuals who adopt a child, or one member of a couple where a couple adopt a child jointly (the couple may choose which partner takes the adoption leave) and has the same policy and procedures as maternity leave (please see above). The partner of an individual who adopts, or the other member of a couple who are adopting jointly, may be entitled to paternity leave (please see above). Any interruption of studies application must be supported by official documentation.