



University
of Exeter

Academic Framework

The University is committed to supporting all employees to fulfil their potential and develop their academic career at Exeter - this additional guidance provides a framework for Faculties to support parents and carers taking a period of leave, ensuring that consideration is given to actions which may be necessary before, during and after the leave. Faculties and departments may develop more detailed arrangements to implement these guidelines in their areas.

Introduction

These guidelines have been agreed by the University of Exeter as part of our commitment to gender equality. The guidance covers all academic staff in the Education and Research, Education and Scholarship and the Research job families. Managers are encouraged to read the relevant managers' guide for maternity/adoption/shared parental leave. Staff are encouraged to notify their department at the earliest opportunity so that discussions start in good time before leave commences.

Principles and purpose

- The University is committed to supporting all employees to fulfil their potential and develop their academic career at Exeter - this additional guidance provides a framework for Faculties to support parents and carers taking a period of leave, ensuring that consideration is given to actions which may be necessary before, during and after the leave. Faculties and departments may develop more detailed arrangements to implement these guidelines in their areas.
- The guidance will be followed for all academic staff, regardless of contractual status (fixed term or open ended, full-time or part-time) or grade or department within a Faculty - subject to funder's requirements. The support offered will be appropriate to the length of leave taken.
- Staff and managers should start discussions at an early stage about what support is appropriate and should be flexible in the options they consider with a view to reaching mutually agreeable solutions which work for all parties. The support which it is appropriate to provide in each case will be informed by individual circumstances and the timing of their leave.

March 2018

Nomenclature amended 2023 to Faculties/Departments

Support for parents going on leave

Support for staff going on leave Managers will make efforts to ensure that no additional work (above existing scheduled workload) is allocated to the employee taking leave, either as a consequence of her/his impending period of absence, or for other reasons.

- Upon receiving written notification of pregnancy, the manager will carry out a risk assessment. (It is essential that new and expectant mothers are fully aware of the potential risks to themselves and their unborn baby within their working environment.) The risk assessment should be updated regularly, taking into account the changes that may occur during the pregnancy. (It is recommended that the risk assessment is reviewed and updated in each trimester of pregnancy, or more frequently if required by the employee, and upon return to work.) Managers should agree dates for review, supply the expectant mother with a copy and send a copy to HR for the employee's HR record. Updates/Reviews can be recorded on the original assessment form or on a new form. For more information, see the Health and Safety Standards for new and expectant mothers.
- Staff on research grants that are interrupted by leave should explore options with the relevant Principal Investigator whether project work can be covered by others, paid for by the grant, or carried forward/deferred for their return (subject to the requirements of the funding body/grant).

Cover for staff going on leave

Where appropriate, the employee taking leave should be given reasonable time to hand over duties to colleagues who will cover work in their absence. This means that cover may start before the maternity/adoption leave commences. Planning for cover should commence in good time before the maternity/adoption leave commences so that the employee has a reasonable period to handover (although it is recognised that late changes may be necessary).

The decision on how the leave will be covered in each case will be made by managers in the Department/Faculty, taking account of the employee's circumstances and the workload allocations of colleagues. Normally, dependent on length of absence, additional support will be provided to cover teaching and administrative responsibilities (plus handover time) but in some circumstances it may be appropriate for teaching and administrative duties to be covered by existing staff undertaking additional work (such as when another member of staff has capacity in their workload allocation).

Support for staff returning from leave

Managers should ensure that the employee taking leave is made aware of possible options for changing their working patterns well in advance of the allocation of teaching on their return to work.

An employee returning from leave will normally be expected to undertake the same teaching, research and administrative work agreed before going on leave provided that there have been no significant changes to teaching programmes or other areas of responsibility.

The teaching, research and administrative work the employee will be allocated on their return to work should be confirmed to them in a meeting with their manager at the earliest opportunity – ideally on a KIT Day or immediately on their return to work.

Managers should provide an appropriate ‘return to work’ support arrangement, taking account of Departmental/Faculty guidance to ensure arrangements are applied fairly and consistently. The support will be appropriate to the individual’s circumstances and the timing of their leave.

As a minimum, staff in the Education and Research job family should not be expected to resume teaching duties immediately on their return to work to enable them to re-establish their research contacts and expertise, regain academic confidence that may have been interrupted by their leave and establish new work-life arrangements etc. The period of relief from teaching duties will be agreed following discussion with the employee, taking account of their individual circumstances, including the length of absence and timing of the employee’s return.

Similarly, managers should discuss with staff in the Education and Scholarship job family what support may be necessary on their return from work.

If modules, lectures, administrative roles, and/or research work have significantly changed in her/his absence, the employee should be given adequate preparation time (in SWARM) to modify/update previous notes and practices and prepare new material.

- Unless the employee opts to immediately resume such activities (and dependent on the length of absence), they will not normally be expected to accompany residential field courses or other related work activities which require a residential element for the first 12 months following their return. Exceptionally, if there is an unavoidable requirement in this area, the employee may be required to participate but appropriate notification will be given and support provided to facilitate attendance.

The University regards it as best practice to offer a risk assessment to all returning mothers.

Normally annual leave is taken immediately before or after maternity/adoption/shared parental leave, but the employee may request to plan a phased return to work by taking it in blocks of time, or by taking one or two days per week as leave for a period of time. Employees are requested to discuss and agree with their manager at the earliest opportunity.

The employee will be entitled to take emergency leave for situations such as child illness, in accordance with the University procedures.

Nursing employees will be able to use the Nurture and Nursing Rooms available on the University campuses. Staff on the Streatham and Penryn Campuses can also contact Technical Services, who may be able to identify alternative rooms in Faculty buildings that

are suitable for the expression of milk. Staff are reminded of the need to comply with the University health and safety standard on children, young adult and vulnerable people on campus. Staff should not have sole responsibility for dependents whilst they are working.

The Faculty/Department should apply fair and open practices for the allocation of resources (including study leave) and review these arrangements to ensure that staff who have/have not taken leave and/or had working pattern adjustments have equal access

Support for carers

The University recognises that support for carers is more difficult to define given the wide ranging circumstances which carer support can cover. The principles set out in this document however should be applied to those with carer responsibilities, in particular taking time at an early stage to have a dialogue with the employee about their work arrangements and to plan and provide cover where a period of leave is required and consider working pattern adjustments for caring duties.

Further information and guidance on the University policies please see the caring for a dependant webpages.

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