



University of  
St Andrews

# Parental leave for postgraduate research students

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<b>Purpose</b>	This policy relates to support available to postgraduate research students due to pregnancy or adoption of a child, and applies to students who become pregnant, partners who are pregnant and students adopting a child.

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Purpose / changes</b>	<b>Document status</b>	<b>Author of changes, role and school / unit</b>	<b>Date</b>
3.0	Addition of miscarriage provision	Approved	Emmy Feamster, Acting Head of Education Policy and Quality	14 June 2022

# UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

## POLICY ON PARENTAL LEAVE FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

### 1. Entitlement

The University is committed to accommodating appropriate adjustments to postgraduate research students to support them in their studies due to pregnancy or adoption of a child. This policy enables postgraduate research students to take time away from their studies while remaining registered with the University, thereby allowing students to maintain links with their research supervisor and make use of university facilities including the Library. Students may take up to one year away from their studies as parental leave. This applies to students studying both full-time and part-time. No tuition fees are due during a period of approved Parental Leave. Postgraduate research students cannot undertake teaching or tutoring during a period of Parental Leave. The policy intends that research supervisors and students can keep in touch; normal levels of supervision will resume at the end of the Parental Leave period. In line with an existing agreement with Fife Council, students will be exempt from Council Tax if they remain resident in Fife.

The policy applies to postgraduate research students who become pregnant, have partners who are pregnant, and students who are adopting a child. Students may request additional periods of leave for subsequent pregnancies or adoptions.

The University recognises that the effects of miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death can be extremely distressing and that to many individuals a miscarriage is the loss of a baby, regardless of how early in pregnancy it occurs. For the purposes of this policy, there is no distinction between live, stillbirth and neonatal death (when the baby dies within the first 28 days of life) after 24 weeks of any pregnancy. Students who experience a miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy may also need time off from their studies to recover physically and emotionally and it is appreciated that the amount of time off that is needed will vary by individual. Schools and supervisors should work sensitively with students to provide this time off. If the student wishes to have 4 weeks or longer off this should be handled as a [leave of absence](#) or period of compassionate leave.

### 2. Notification

Any student who has their pregnancy confirmed by a GP, has a partner who is pregnant, or is to adopt a child, is encouraged to report this to their research supervisor and Director of Postgraduate Studies so that appropriate academic advice and guidance can be provided.

The following issues should be addressed:

- Whether an interruption of studies is required and, if so, for how long;
- Any time-off or adjustments that might be required so that the student can attend medical appointments.
- Residence during the period of Parental Leave.

A written record of agreed arrangements should be produced and retained by the supervisor and a copy should be sent to the Registry Support Officer by emailing [reg-support-pgr@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:reg-support-pgr@st-andrews.ac.uk) so that the student record can be updated accordingly. Any relevant period of agreed Parental Leave up to one year will be discounted from the student's record. The student should be encouraged to keep in touch with the supervisor during the period of Parental Leave. Students do not have an automatic right to return to study on a part-time basis but they are entitled to ask about the possibility of changing hours with their supervisor. Postgraduate students studying at the University on a Student visa must return to study on a full-time basis after a period of Parental Leave.

If a student is in receipt of funding from an external sponsor, the student has the sole responsibility to inform their sponsor of their change of circumstance. If a student is funded by a UK Research Council, the supervisor/student must liaise with the relevant FAS Team at the University to ensure that the Research Council is informed.

The student should contact their supervisor and the Registry Support Officer at the end of the agreed period of Parental Leave to confirm their date of return. If further leave is required, this should be dealt with by requesting a Leave of Absence.

### **3. Finance**

Postgraduate research students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies should contact them for advice on funding related matters. UK Research Councils normally pay a maternity, paternity or adoption leave stipend.

Postgraduate research students in receipt of a maintenance grant from the University may be entitled to receive a maternity, paternity or adoption stipend from the University. The maternity or adoption (as the primary carer) stipend is available for up to six months. A stipend is available for up to two weeks for paternity or, in the case of adoption, for the parent who supports a primary carer (this is also applicable for same-sex couples). Stipend payments are made on the condition that students declare their intention to return to their studies; the stipend must be returned to the university if the student does not re-engage with their studies.

It is recommended that any postgraduate student taking a period of Parental Leave should contact the Fees and Funding team in Registry about the possible effect on the fees to be charged when study resumes ([fees@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:fees@st-andrews.ac.uk)). Students requiring additional support and guidance, financial or otherwise, should contact Student Services ([theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk)). Students who are self-funded, or who have entered an unfunded period of studies, may be eligible for discretionary funding from the University. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### **4. Visas**

Postgraduate students studying at the University on a Student visa will need to consider the length of maternity/paternity/adoption leave depending upon:

- The timing of any interruption of studies;
- The due date of the birth;
- The decision the student has made about progressing with their studies after the birth of the child. Note that a maternity stipend for students in receipt of a

maintenance grant from the University is made on the condition that students declare their intention to return to studies.

The visa implications of a maternity/paternity/adoption leave should be considered at the earliest possible opportunity, and it is vital therefore that contact be made with the International Student Adviser by emailing [advint@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:advint@st-andrews.ac.uk).

## 5. Health and Safety

The study environment must be assessed for risk while students are pregnant, within 6 months of the birth (if the student has returned to study) and for as long as the student continues to breastfeed. Both the University and the student have an obligation to ensure that research and study are not carried out in an unsafe environment. This is particularly important where the student may be in close proximity to complex apparatus, chemicals etc. The Head of School must arrange for an assessment to be carried out and a copy of this should be returned to Environmental, Health and Safety Services (EHSS).

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