School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy (SCFP)
University of Reading

Guidance Notes for Childcare Leave

The University has many facilities in place to support working parents and this guide attempts to summarise all the practical aspects of maternity leave, paternal leave, and childcare leave in one document for easy reference. The guide is intended to be helpful for both staff and managers and also directs colleagues to the relevant formal University Policies.

BEFORE TAKING MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE:

If you are pregnant, you are strongly advised to notify your line manager, the School Safety Officer and Human Resources (HR) of your pregnancy as soon as possible (as soon as you believe you are pregnant). A Risk Assessment form for Expectant Mothers should be completed. The forms and guidelines for this can be obtained from the Health and Safety Website:

www.reading.ac.uk/internal/health-and-safety/resources/hs-resources-forms.aspx#mother

This form should be completed with your line manager and returned to the School Health and Safety Manager as soon as possible.

You should meet up with your line manager to carry out a Performance Development Review at least three months before you intend to start your maternity/paternity leave to discuss arrangements for the duration of your absence and your return. It would also be useful to meet with HR to discuss the University's Maternity Policy (see link below) and your options for taking leave.

Key points to consider when going on maternity/paternity leave are summarized below.

1. Arranging Support for Your Undergraduate and Research Students / PDRAs During Maternity/Paternity Leave (essential)

According to the University Code of Practice on Research Students, (http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/cop_resstudents.pdf) all research students should have a supervisory team consisting of a main supervisor and a designated second supervisor. Ordinarily, the second supervisor will continue to provide support and guidance for the student during your absence. Where the second supervisor is external to the University, or has not been assigned, a suitable co-supervisor should be nominated and take on formal supervision for the period of your absence. If a senior PDRA is associated with the student’s project, it may be acceptable to appoint this person as co-supervisor on a day-by-day basis, but an academic staff member must also be nominated as a formal point of contact. Depending on the expertise of the co-supervisor in the student’s research area and to ensure continuity the new supervisory arrangement should be formed well in advance so that you can begin to organise parallel sessions
with the presence of the student and the co-supervisor(s). Advise the Department's Post-graduate Office of the nominated co-supervisor(s) and the expected duration of cover. If you wish to remain involved in the scientific direction of the PhD student's project, up to 10 Keeping In Touch (KIT) days may be used during your leave (to be arranged with your line manager; details can be found on p. 5 of the University’s Maternity Policy). To ensure scientific continuity, you may wish to stay in more frequent, informal contact, either through electronic (emails/Skype) or face to face meetings.

If you have PDRAs, the day to day supervision arrangements will depend on their experience and the degree to which they are capable of looking after themselves in their PI's absence. This will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. An academic member of staff must be nominated as a point of first contact and in some cases, it may be necessary to arrange more regular supervision.

**Note to the Line Manager/HoD:** The additional workload for the staff member taking on these duties needs to be recognized and noted in the workload model, depending on the model being used. The covering staff member may feel they get sufficient reward by being involved in an additional project however it would be advisable to ensure that conversations revolving around the topic of 'names on papers' occur. In cases where post-doc supervision is taken on by a staff member, it may be appropriate to consider that they should receive some component of the overhead incentive to recognize this support.

If you have undergraduate personal tutees these will also need to be assigned an alternative member of academic staff. Discuss this with the departmental senior tutor who will be able to assign the students fairly to other staff members. Advise the department’s teaching office of the nominated supervisor(s) and the expected period of duration. It would be useful to prepare brief reports on the tutees before going on leave to ensure that adequate references can be provided for the tutees at all times even if requested shortly after the start of your leave period. If you have notes from tutee meetings on RISIS then these can be accessed by the alternate tutor.

2. **Re-arrange Project Management (essential)**

If you are an academic member of staff, you should discuss with your line manager what provisions are in place for signing expense claim forms, filling in research council’s (other funding body's) Output and Performance Measures, annual reports, etc. Be sure to discuss schedules with the appropriate Finance Officer, to ensure they are fully aware of your absence and to inform you of any financial issues that may arise in your absence.

If you are a PDRA then you will need to discuss with your line manager how your leave fits in with the research contract and how it will impact on the work of the contract. For grant funded work, possible solutions available to PIs may include employing someone to replace you (if the tasks are time critical), or extending the grant on a no cost extension (you and your line manager will need to check to see what the restrictions are on maternity pay), and putting the work on hold for 6 months (for example), whilst dealing with other deliverables.
3. **Re-arrange Teaching and Administrative Responsibilities (essential)**

If you are a member of academic staff, you will need to discuss with your line manager if and how your leave affects these responsibilities. If necessary another member of staff will be appointed to cover these duties by the DTL / HoD. Similarly, if you are a PDRA and have other duties (e.g. teaching, seminar organization) then alternative arrangements to pass on these duties must be made well in advance. While it is the responsibility of your line manager to arrange for adequate cover, it is essential to give your line manager advance notice that you will be taking leave to help her/him to make suitable arrangements to cover your duties.

**Note to the Line Manager/HoD:** Cases for maternity cover need to be made by the Head of Department / Head of School (usually 0.5FTE for academic cover, 1FTE for technical and support staff) to cover duties for colleagues taking maternity leave.

4. **Re-organise Communication During Maternity/Paternity Leave (essential)**

You can expect your line manager to maintain reasonable contact with you whilst you are on maternity/paternity leave but arrangements for dealing with post, telephone calls and emails must be made. You can set up a new email address with ITS to which only PhDs or researchers have access (for those whose work relies on regular contact). You should post an out of office response on the regular email address notifying of your absence and that there will be a delay in responding. Message filters into folders are also a good way of sorting emails into topics, and certain things will need to be put on hold during your absence. Arrangements for someone to open your post during your absence, or for this to be forwarded to you, should be made. Similarly, your answer phone message should be modified, perhaps directing callers to the appropriate member of administrative support. The University will also maintain reasonable contact with you whilst you are on maternity/paternity leave. While you are not required to correspond with the University while on leave, it is useful to make an effort to stay in touch about key developments and respond to request that will affect your work when returning from your leave (e.g. completing the lecturer unavailability form to ensure family-friendly teaching hours compatible with standard childcare provision in the following academic year).
WHILE ON MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE:

5. **Effective Use of Keeping In Touch (KIT) Days (optional, but recommended)**

You may, by agreement with your line manager, carry out up to ten days of work – known as Keeping In Touch (KIT) days under your contract of employment during the maternity/paternity leave period. The type of work that you may undertake on KIT days is a matter for agreement between yourself and your manager. KIT days allow you to go into work for up to 10 days (which may be either separate days or a single block) without losing any SMP/ASPP or triggering the end of your leave. For this provision to work you must agree with your line manager that you will do some work and the type of work to be undertaken. The provision does not allow the University to insist that you carry out work, nor does it confer a right on you to be offered work. Examples of activities for KIT days include: monitoring committees, attending workshops/training sessions, checking emails at home, seeing students who need additional support, reading reviews or draft papers, recruitment procedures for PDRAs/PhD students etc...

Returning parents feed back that KIT days as well as informal contacts during the leave period are very useful, in particular to ensure continuity of research projects, to stay informed about academic and administrative developments as well as organizational and personnel changes within the Department/School.

The School recognises this contribution to maintaining contact with the departments during maternity/paternity leave and top up payments for any KIT days carried out during the period where only SMP/APSS is paid or during a period of no pay needs to be agreed in advance with the line manager and Head of School. Formal arrangements to record activities and time spent during these KIT days should be made with the line manager before the start of maternity/paternity leave wherever possible.

6. **Keep in Touch with University/School/Department/Colleagues/Students (optional, but recommended)**

Maintaining informal and social meetings with colleagues is a good way to stay up-to-date with developments, as is –to some extent– accessing the University’s web site. Keeping in touch with any students, PDRAs and members of staff (in particularly those who cover for you) will be helpful for an efficient return and a smooth transition back to work. This is not a requirement and you may choose to stay out-of-touch throughout your leave, but returning parents tend to have an easier start back at work if they made at least a limited amount of contact while on leave.

7. **Organize Childcare Cover for Returning to Work**

Many parents use the RUSU on-campus nursery and find this a convenient option. If you wish to use the campus nursery, it is essential to put your child’s name on the waiting list as early as possible. Ensure you complete the lecturer unavailability form (usually sent out in February for the following academic year) which allows parents to block out up to 5 slots per week 9.00–10.00 and 17.00–
18.00 (nurseries tend to open no longer than 8.00–18.00). Finding a suitable nursery in a convenient location may take some time and most nurseries have waiting lists of many months. UK childcare costs are among the highest in the EU (ca. 43% of the average wage for two children; Penn, H. and Lloyd, E., Costs of childcare. London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre, Working Paper No. 18, 2013), so that it is worth investigating the best options in your individual circumstances e.g. using tax-free childcare vouchers or other salary-sacrifice schemes, for example:

http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/WorkingatReading/BenefitsPlus/ChildcarePlus/humres-childcareplus.aspx

8. Request for Flexible Working Upon Return from Maternity Leave (optional)

Arrangements for flexible working after your maternity/paternity leave should be discussed with your line manager before you go on leave, if possible. If not, then this request needs to be made up to 8 weeks before your return. You may request flexible working arrangements such as part time work, flexible working hours, compressed working hours, or working from home. In response to part time working requests, our policy is to reduce and monitor the workload of the individual concerned as the University contracts do not specify hours of work.

These requests should be made to the line manager and Head of School in writing (see annex 2 of the University’s Health and Well Being policy). In addition, if you wish to return earlier or later than previously agreed, then you are required to give 8 weeks' notice of the change.

Annual leave accrued during maternity/paternity leave can be used to extend the leave for a period or to take one day a week for a term so that you are paid for e.g. 5 days but work a 4 day week. This needs to be discussed with your line manager before you go on leave. Unpaid leave can also be requested in advance, but this will need to be approved by the Head of School.

Flexible working can also be requested by parents of small children via the lecturer unavailability form (usually in February for the following academic year). Other colleagues have temporarily reduced their contracted hours to meet childcare needs.
UPON RETURN FROM MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE:

9. Your Role After Returning to Work

You should return to essentially the same role as before your leave and there should be no substantial changes in your duties without your agreement. If this is not possible, your line manager should give adequate notice for any substantial changes and outline why these changes are unavoidable.

When you return from maternity leave, you should arrange to meet with your line manager to discuss your roles and activities. For example, when returning to work you may want to spend more time than previously on research if you feel that your discipline has moved on significantly, or if deadlines are approaching then you may want to focus on, for example, examinations and marking in the short term. The school recognizes that colleagues returning from maternity leave may need some support as they return to work. These requests should be made to the line manager and Head of School in writing using the Request for Flexible Working Form (see annex 2 of the University's Health and Wellbeing Policy for more details).

If you are asked to fulfill any new roles, you should be given adequate time to prepare and your leave period does not count towards this preparation time.

It might be useful to arrange a follow-up meeting with your line manager 3–6 months after your return to work to make sure you are coping well with balancing work and parenthood.

Note to the Line Manager/HoD: In case any substantial changes in the role of a person on leave are unavoidable, it is essential to give the staff member as long a notice as possible (e.g. if new teaching is required). You should allow for a transition period when the staff member returns from childcare leave and there can be no expectation of preparing teaching material during childcare leave.

10. Breast-Feeding Mothers

If you are breast feeding then you must notify your line manager, the School Safety Officer and Human Resources and a Risk Assessment form for Breast Feeding Mothers should be completed. The forms and guidelines for this can be obtained from the Health and Safety Website:

Safety Website:  
www.reading.ac.uk/internal/health-and-safety/resources/hs-resources-forms.aspx#mother

This form should be completed with your line manager and returned to the School Health and Safety Manager as soon as possible. There are facilities for nursing mothers that you can use, as needed. The on-campus nursery is a particularly convenient childcare option for breast-feeding mothers.
11. **Sabbatical on Your Return (for Academic staff only)**

You might be able to use sabbatical leave on your return from maternity/paternity leave subject to adequate cover of your teaching/administrative duties. Fellowships or external funds may be used to fund teaching during sabbatical leave. This could relieve you of teaching duties and the supervision of project students in order to concentrate on catching up with research and rebuilding lost momentum in terms of grant income and publications.

12. **Parental Leave**

New parents with a minimum of 1 year’s continuous service are entitled to a total of 13 working weeks of unpaid Parental Leave per child. You can take up to four weeks Parental Leave per calendar year until your child reaches 5 years of age. More details can be found in the University’s Parental Leave Policy (see link below).

13. **Emergency Childcare Leave**

If your child is sick or if childcare arrangements suddenly collapse (e.g. an illness of a childminder without alternative cover being available) you can follow the steps outlined below to cancel your teaching/administrative duties:

- inform your line manager/HoD/HoS (i.e. the designated person to whom absence is to be reported in your Department) immediately, briefly outlining the issue and identifying all affected commitments; and
- ensure that all affected parties (including staff, students, technicians and visitors) are informed about the cancellation/re-arrangement; if you cannot do this yourself, this may be delegated to the most appropriate secretarial staff.

Details about the University’s emergency leave and absence reporting procedures can be found at: www.cms.rdg.ac.uk/draft/internal/humanresources/policiesandprocedures/AbsenceandLeave/humres-unplannedleave.aspx?nostats=t

There is no statutory right for unplanned leave to be paid, but you may be allowed to take the time from your annual leave entitlement or be given the opportunity to make up the time by working additional hours on another day within a reasonable timeframe at the discretion of the Head of School. The latter will usually be acceptable if teaching/administrative commitments are re-arranged and fully covered by the affected member of staff after returning to work.
Useful websites:

**Family Leave Information:**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/policiesandprocedures/AbsenceandLeave/humres-familyleave.aspx

**Maternity Policy:**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/humanresources/humres-maternity_policy.pdf

**Parental Leave Policy:**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/humanresources/humres-Parental_leave.pdf

**Childcare Voucher Scheme (Childcare+):**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/WorkingatReading/BenefitsPlus/ChildcarePlus/humres-childcareplus.aspx

**Health and Well Being Policy:**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/policiesandprocedures/humres-healthandwell-being.aspx

**Information on Flexible Working:**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/WorkingatReading/humres-flexibleworking.aspx

**Risk Assessment Forms for Expectant Mothers:**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/health-and-safety/resources/hs-resources-sampleriskassessments.aspx

**Policies for Absence Reporting and Emergency Leave:**
http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/humanresources/humres-absence_reporting_procedure.pdf

**RUSU On-campus Nursery:**
http://www.rusu.co.uk/nursery/

**Little Owls On-campus Pre-school:**
http://littleowlpreschool.net/