

Maternity leave, ordinary paternity/maternity support leave, shared parental leave and adoption leave stipend payments - Policy for funded postgraduate research students

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1. Introduction

1.1 The following policy relates to the payment of studentship maintenance stipends during periods of maternity leave, ordinary paternity/maternity support leave, shared parental leave and adoption leave and applies to postgraduate research students¹. All students are equally considered irrespective of fee status.

1.2 This policy is an appendix to the '[Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy](#)'. Students should also refer to the interruptions procedures specified in the '[Statement of Procedures: Periods of Registration and Changes to Registration Status for Graduate Research Students](#).'

2. Student eligibility criteria for receiving maternity leave, ordinary paternity/maternity support leave, shared parental leave, and adoption leave stipend payments

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

- a) Self-funded students;
- b) 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;
- c) Students in receipt of bursaries² or awards covering tuition fees only;
- d) 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.
- e) 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](#)'.

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

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

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.

2.3 Students in receipt of annual maintenance stipend funding from the following sources are eligible for receipt of stipend payments under this policy:

- a) Students who receive Research Council funding;
- b) Students who receive University of Exeter funding;
- c) Students who are funded through funds allocated and administered by the University of Exeter;
- d) Students who are funded via a project funded by a research grant paid to the University of Exeter.

2.4 Students are eligible:

- a) whether registered on a full-time or part-time basis;
- b) from the point of initial registration on their programme;
- c) 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 date of adoption falls within the funded period;
- d) to receive stipend payments under this policy on multiple occasions.

3. Types of Leave

3.1 Paid maternity and adoption leave:

- a) 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 c.41% of the full stipend rate (which is a level commensurate with employee entitlements to statutory maternity pay);
- b) 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 ordinary paternity/maternity support leave:

- a) for up to 10 days of paid leave at the full stipend rate*. These may be taken at any time during a partner's pregnancy or within three months following the birth.

3.3 Paid shared parental leave:

- a) For up to 50 weeks of Shared Parental Leave. The first 24 weeks will be paid at the full stipend rate*, after which the following 13 weeks will be paid at c.41% of the full stipend rate (which is a level commensurate with employee entitlements to statutory maternity pay). Further information can be found on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay-employer-guide/overview>;
- b) For a further period of unpaid leave of up to 13 weeks.

4. Identification of Eligibility

4.1 For offer letters sent out from the 2017/18 academic year 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 leave, ordinary paternity/maternity support leave, shared parental leave and adoption 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. Where offer and award letters do not

make specific reference to eligibility (which may be the case in some instances for students who entered prior to the 2018/19 academic year) the criteria specified in this policy **should** determine whether a student is eligible for receipt of stipend payments under this policy. In any instance where a student's eligibility is not clear the relevant College's Postgraduate Research Office **should** be consulted in the first instance.

5. Process for application for a period of funded leave

5.1 Maternity, shared parental and adoption leave: Stipend funding to cover a period of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave will be released to cover a period of interruption for maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave. As such the student **must** have a [period of interruption](#) of the relevant length approved in order for the funding to be extended commensurately. Students may be required to supply evidence to support the request for continued stipend funding under this policy. Sources of evidence will normally be those set out under the [equivalent staff procedure](#), however specific advice as to what information must be supplied will be provided to the student at the time, upon request. Students may also be required to provide sufficient notice of their intention to take a period of interruption on these grounds. For example, to apply for shared parental leave a student must 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 section 4.4 of the ['Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy'](#)).

5.2 Ordinary Paternity/Maternity Support Leave: Students will not have this period recorded as an interruption. However, if an extension to the expected submission date is deemed appropriate because of the limited time remaining before submission, a manual adjustment to this date may be made by the College, 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 Ordinary Paternity/Maternity Support Leave (see section 7.2 of the ['Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy'](#)).

6. Confidentiality

6.1 Students should note that every effort will be made to respect the confidential nature of any disclosure of information on these grounds (see section 5.7 of the ['Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption 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, which would result in continued stipend payments under this policy, where the external funder has responsibility for provision of funding.

7. Returning from a period of funded leave

7.1 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 alternatively, 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).

* 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, shared parental

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 College's Postgraduate Research Office to check the arrangements for their individual award.

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