

MATERNITY, PATERNITY, SHARED PARENTAL AND ADOPTION LEAVE

LOCAL WORKING PRACTICE

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Please note that this document describes a local working practice for staff and students in the Department of Chemistry, and that University-wide policies will override anything stated in these local guidelines.

The **local guidelines** on maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave outline the **departmental support mechanisms** for staff members **before, during and after leave**, and lists the **responsibilities** of **staff and line managers** to ensure that targeted support is provided in a timely manner.

The Department of Chemistry aims to ensure that all staff (academic, research, support, technical etc.) expecting a baby or in the process of adopting a child are fully and practically supported before, during and after taking leave, enabling them to successfully manage and balance work and childcare commitments.

N.B. Guidelines regarding leave for **Research Students** are strongly dependent on the funding body and support available in terms of length of leave and pay can vary enormously: research council students should consult their council student handbook for details of support whereas other students would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Irrespective of the type and duration of leave, the Department envisages to provide as much practical support to students taking leave as possible. As such, students considering leave should contact the departmental PG Administrator in the first instance to discuss their situation. While we recognise that the issues faced by students may not always be the same as those faced by staff when taking leave, the Department seeks to ensure that appropriate support is provided to all of its members, both staff and students, and some of the staff support mechanisms discussed herein may also be relevant to students. For example, if you wish to return to your studies part-time after leave, then please discuss this with the PG Administrator and your supervisor who will explore all avenues in order to accommodate your needs. This is part of Chemistry's Athena SWAN commitment, a scheme which recognises and celebrates good employment practice undertaken to address gender equality in higher education and research.

During planned conception, pregnancy or breastfeeding, an individual written **risk assessment** should be compiled in conjunction with the Departmental Superintendent, confidentially, if required, in order to identify potential hazards which may harm the baby. The department strongly encourages openness about disclosing pregnancy as early as possible so that all activities can be risk-assessed on a case-by-case basis in a timely manner.

1. Before Leave.

- Your line manager will discuss the **University's leave policies** with you following your disclosure of intent to take leave in the first instance. You are entitled to **regular meetings** and **discussion** with your line manager before going on leave. In the case of maternity, after 20 weeks of pregnancy, you should expect weekly meetings with your line manager.
- Your line manager will be fully supportive of the need for **flexible working** during pregnancy or in the weeks prior to adoption taking place, to allow for doctors appointments, antenatal classes, meetings with social services and time to prepare in the case of adoption, among other instances. This includes the opportunity to occasionally work from home, if appropriate. You are, therefore, strongly encouraged to refer to the local departmental guidelines on Flexible Working, as well as the local departmental guidelines on Homeworking, which outline the various flexible and homeworking options available to you.
- In consultation with you and the head of department, your line manager will **review** and **adjust workloads** where appropriate.
- You should also expect your **colleagues** to demonstrate support by exercising greater **flexibility** and **assisting** you where possible. In particular, if you have to go on leave unexpectedly, e.g. early birth or adoption, then other staff members will be immediately engaged to complete urgent tasks. This applies to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave irrespective of duration.
- Where **continuation of the role** is essential, the department will ensure that recruitment of a temporary replacement member of staff to cover the role takes place in advance in order to facilitate a smooth handover of responsibilities prior to leave.

2. During Leave.

- Up to 10 KIT days ('**Keep-In-Touch**' days) may be arranged with the full support of the line manager and head of department to enable those on leave to remain connected with, and informed about the activities within, the department and the wider University.
- You are very welcome to **stay in touch** with colleagues if you choose to or find it useful, and you will be kept on all departmental mailing lists by default. However, you will not be expected to be in contact with the department or respond to messages whilst on leave, and you can opt out of departmental mailing lists at any point. Likewise, you would not be expected to attend any meetings or complete specific work-related tasks unless you choose to do so, for example, *via* KIT days.
- For **research-active** staff, the department will aim to ensure that research is disrupted as little as possible during leave. For example, other staff may be engaged to assist in student supervision and local partnerships may be generated to continue vital strands of research wherever possible.
- University-wide **Maternity/Adoption Research Support** (MARS) fund has been established to provide additional funding to help and support academic staff taking maternity or adoption in order to prevent or minimise disruption to their research. Staff taking extended Shared Parental leave may be eligible. For further information, see: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/hr/total-reward/files/MARS.html>

3. After Leave.

- The department recognises the importance of **flexible working** upon return from leave, for example, to facilitate the practicalities surrounding childcare, enabling

doctors appointments etc. As such, your line manager should hold a review to assess your needs and provide full support for flexible working, both formal and informal. All options should be made available to you, which are also outlined in the local departmental guidelines on Flexible Working and Homeworking.

- Upon return to work, a full and comprehensive **handover of responsibilities** from the temporary member of staff covering the role to the staff member returning from leave should take place.
- Your line manager in conjunction with the head of department will aim to ensure that you do not return to work to a full **workload** and that it **increases gradually** over time. The department will aim for academic staff to have a reduced administration and teaching load for a temporary period in order to allow more time to be devoted to research activity. In all cases, other members of staff may be engaged to assist in making the transition to a full workload as smooth as possible.

4. Responsibilities of the Staff Member Taking Leave.

- Anyone intending to take leave should inform their line manager and head of department as soon as possible, so that appropriate support mechanisms can be put in place in a timely manner.
- Attend regular meetings with the line manager to review individual needs for support and flexible working. If meetings are not frequent enough, take initiative to organise additional ones with your line manager.
- Be honest and genuine about your needs and make informal flexible working requests to your line manager directly with some advance notice, wherever practically possible.
- For pregnant women, familiarise yourself with the risk assessment concerning your wellbeing and the safe working environment, abide by the risk assessment and raise any concerns with the Departmental Superintendent or your line manager.
- For research-active staff, liaise with your line manager, head of department and other staff to identify individuals who could assist in student supervision, and to establish as many avenues as possible for the research programme to continue during leave of absence.
- For research-active staff, apply for the Maternity/Adoption Research Support (MARS) fund at least 4 weeks before taking leave.
- Contact the Departmental Administrator at any point to be removed from departmental e-mailing lists, if desired.
- If at any point before, during or after leave, you feel that you may benefit from additional support from the department, ensure that you make your thoughts known to your line manager or the head of department.
- If you have to leave unexpectedly and urgent tasks need to be completed, let your line manager know as soon as possible what these tasks are and who else in the department are most competent to complete them, so that other staff members could be engaged to finish these jobs.
- During leave, contact your line manager if you wish to take KIT days.
- Upon return to work, meet with your line manager to review your needs for flexible working and your workload so that the transition back into work is as smooth as possible.
- Agree flexible working arrangements with your line manager. Make any formal application for flexible working to HR *via* the head of department.

5. Responsibilities of the Line Manager.

- Hold regular meetings, ideally weekly, with the relevant staff member prior to leave.
- Be prepared to support the individual outside of these meetings and whilst they are on leave, if required.
- In the case of a pregnant staff member, ensure that the Departmental Superintendent compiles a written, individual health and safety risk assessment as soon as possible in order to provide a safe and appropriate working environment.
- Be accommodating in requests for flexible or homeworking prior to leave, taking into account the circumstances and role.
- Where relevant, particularly for longer leaves of absence, organise the recruitment of a replacement member of staff to cover the role whilst the individual is on leave.
- Finalise the recruitment process well in advance of the individual taking leave so that there is sufficient time for the individual to meet with the person covering the role and ensure adequate handover of responsibilities. This is particularly true in the case of an early pregnancy or adoption, the timing of which is difficult to predict and, therefore, should be taken into account when planning for recruitment.
- Ensure that the handover of responsibilities takes place both before and after leave and that it occurs smoothly, in full and without rush. This is to minimise unnecessary stress, confusion and errors both to the temporary worker and the person returning to work after leave.
- Upon return from leave, carry out a review of support needs of the individual. Provide all flexible working and be accommodating concerning informal requests for occasional flexible or homeworking.
- In liaison with the head of department, ensure that any formal requests for flexible working are discussed, approved and forwarded to HR in a timely manner.
- In conjunction with the head of department, seek to ensure that the individual returning to work starts with a lower workload and that the full load is reached gradually. Explore avenues to enable some of the workload to be evenly distributed to other staff members.

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