

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Policy

This policy is intended to set out the University's approach to parental leave allowances for doctoral students.

1.2 Scope

Applicable to all incidences of doctoral student parental leave from 1st September 2025 onwards.

2. Policy

2.1 Eligibility

2.1.1 All doctoral students registered at Bath can request to take a period of parental leave, according to the limitations set out in sections 2.2-2.3 (maternity leave), 2.4 (maternity related absence) 2.7 (paternity/ partner leave), 2.8 (adoption leave) and 2.9 (family leave).

2.1.2 A funded doctoral student's entitlement to paid parental leave is determined by the terms and conditions of their individual award and funding contract, so this is controlled by their funder. Students in receipt of a stipend to support living costs from the University or UKRI are entitled to the funding outlined below.

2.1.3 Students in receipt of a fees-only award and students who are self-funded may request the periods of leave detailed within this policy but will not be eligible for any financial support from the University.

2.1.4 Students in receipt of a scholarship or external funding where the stipend to support living costs is administered by the University must consult with their funder to determine whether payments can be made during periods of maternity, paternity/ partner or adoption leave. If the funder confirms that they cannot provide funded parental leave, the University will cover the shortfall, up to the level of funding described for University-funded and UKRI students.

2.1.5 Students who are employed by an external organisation to the University of Bath, as a requirement of their doctoral studies, (e.g., NHS employees registered on the DCLinPsy programme) must follow their employer's HR policy regarding leave entitlement and salary payments.

2.2 Maternity leave

2.2.1 Doctoral students registered at the University of Bath may suspend their studies to take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave if they are the mother who will give birth.

2.2.2 Doctoral students who are the primary adopter may suspend their studies to take up to 52 weeks of maternity-equivalent leave.

2.2.3 During periods of suspension no fees are payable.

2.2.4 Maternity leave may not start earlier than the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth, must be taken as a continuous block and may not end later than the child's 1st birthday.

2.2.5 Maternity-equivalent leave for primary adopters must be taken as a continuous block and may not end later than the 1-year anniversary of the date of placement.

2.2.6 These provisions for maternity leave will apply unless specifically excluded from the terms and conditions of the studentship.

2.3 How to apply for maternity leave

2.3.1 Doctoral students wishing to request maternity leave are required to provide a copy of the MATB1 form (normally issued by the GP or midwife), indicating that the expected week of childbirth falls within the studentship period, to the Doctoral College together with form PGR5 requesting a suspension of studies for reasons of maternity leave.

2.3.2 Doctoral students will receive notification of the approved suspension period and be provided with information about sources of support for student parents.

2.3.3 The Doctoral College should be informed as soon as is reasonably practical when a change to the agreed start date of the maternity leave is required; for example, if childbirth occurs before the commencement of the pre-arranged maternity leave period, then the suspension will be altered to begin on the day following the birth.

2.4 Maternity related absence

2.4.1 Doctoral students due to give birth before completing their course and who do not wish to suspend their studies may instead take a short maternity-related absence from their studies. For those returning to active study very soon after giving birth, it may be appropriate to conduct a risk assessment of the working environment and mode of attendance.

2.4.2 During any such period of absence, fees would continue to be payable, and the end date of the studentship would not be altered.

2.4.3 Students wishing to take a short maternity related absence should talk to their supervisor in the first instance and inform the Doctoral College of their plans.

Visa Holders

2.4.4 In the case of doctoral students sponsored by the University under the Student visa route, a short maternity-related absence can be facilitated through use of an authorised absence. During an authorised absence the student's expected course end date will not be altered.

2.4.5 The maximum period of absence permitted without suspending studies is 60 days. Annual leave allowance can be added to the authorised absence period (Regulation 16 provides details of the holiday entitlements for doctoral students). If such a maternity-related absence continues beyond 13 weeks it will be considered as maternity leave, with the consequence that registration will be suspended.

2.4.6 Alternatively, doctoral students sponsored by the University under the Student visa route who are due to give birth before completing their course may cite these exceptional circumstances in requesting an extended period of authorised absence. Additional assurances must be provided by the student, supervisor, and DoS that the programme can still be completed within the original visa timeframe.

2.4.7 In such cases where exceptional circumstances have been recognised by the University, an additional 4 months may be added to the duration of the authorised absence, so long as this falls within the original visa period.

2.4.8 For a FT student this could facilitate a maternity related study break of up to 6 months duration without the University revoking the visa (an extended authorised absence of 60 days plus 4-months), which could then be followed by up to 25 days annual leave allowance.

2.4.9 Where exceptional circumstances have been cited, and an extended authorised absence has been granted, the University will not be able to sponsor a visa extension should additional time be required to complete the course (unless a new /different exceptional circumstance has arisen).

2.4.10 In all cases advice should be sought from the University's Student Immigration Service (SIS).

2.5 Antenatal care appointments

2.5.1 Doctoral students are permitted to reasonable leave to attend antenatal care as recommended by a doctor or midwife.

2.6 Maternity stipend

2.6.1 Doctoral students in receipt of a UKRI studentship or a University Research Studentship Award will receive 39 weeks of paid maternity leave:

- During the first 26 weeks of maternity leave a stipend at the same rate as is normally provided by the studentship will be payable.
- This stipend then reduces for the following 13 weeks of maternity leave, to an amount equivalent to statutory maternity pay (SMP).
- Any period of maternity leave beyond 39 weeks will be unpaid.

2.6.2 A primary adopter in receipt of a UKRI studentship or studentship funded by the University who takes maternity-equivalent adoption leave will receive equivalent payments to the maternity stipend.

2.6.3 Students who are funded from other sources should contact their sponsor about provision of a maternity stipend.

2.7 Paternity / Partner leave

2.7.1 The child's father or a birth parent's partner may suspend their studies to take up to two weeks of funded leave. For these purposes, "partner" means a person who lives with a birth parent and the child in an enduring family relationship and will bear shared responsibility in raising the child but is not the birth parent's parent, grandparent, sibling, child, aunt or uncle.

2.7.2 Paternity/ partner leave may not start before the birth, must be taken in blocks of not less than five working days, and may not end later than 56 days after the birth.

2.7.3 Doctoral students in receipt of a UKRI or University studentship will receive full stipend during the 10 days of paternity/ partner leave.

2.7.4 Doctoral students wishing to take paternity/ partner leave should contact the Doctoral College to arrange a short suspension of registration.

2.7.5 Additionally, the child's father or birth parent's partner may suspend their studies to take an extended period of unpaid parental leave, up to a maximum of 50 weeks duration.

2.7.6 Unpaid parental leave may be taken in up to three blocks of leave, or all at once, and may not end later than the child's 1st birthday.

2.7.7 Students wishing to take unpaid parental leave should contact the Doctoral College to arrange a suspension of registration.

2.8 Adoption leave

2.8.1 Leave and payments for new adoptive parents will be granted on an equivalent basis to that outlined above.

2.8.2 Students wishing to request adoption leave are required to provide a copy of the matching certificate provided by the adoption agency, indicating that the expected date of placement of the child will occur during the studentship period, to the Doctoral College to arrange a suspension of studies for reasons of maternity-equivalent (main adopter), or paternity / partner-equivalent adoption leave.

2.8.3 Prospective adopters are also permitted reasonable time to attend appointments with the adoption agency or Social Worker.

2.8.4 All references to adoption and adoption leave include circumstances where individuals foster a child for adoption or are 'Parental Order' intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement.

2.9 Ongoing parental responsibilities – Family leave

2.9.1 Beyond the child's 1st birthday, students may take a shorter period (up to 1 month) of unpaid 'family leave' to provide care to a child for whom they are a parent or carer on an annual basis.

2.9.2 Students wishing to take unpaid family leave should contact the Doctoral College to arrange a suspension of registration.

2.10 Bereaved families

2.10.1 In the terrible event of a stillbirth or miscarriage after 24 weeks of pregnancy, or of neonatal death within 52 weeks of the birth, the same maternity or paternity/ partner leave and payment provisions outlined above will apply.

2.10.2 Students who experience a miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy may also need time off from their studies to recover and under such circumstances the normal sick leave arrangements apply.

2.10.3 Student Support provides a confidential service to give immediate advice and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year <https://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/be-well-talk-now/> and can link with further NHS bereavement, emotional, and counselling support services.

2.10.4 The Doctoral College will assist in planning a return to studies, and any change in mode of attendance that would facilitate this.

2.11 Extension of studentship end date

2.11.1 The studentship end date and expected submission date will normally be extended by a period equal to the period of maternity, paternity/ partner, adoption or family leave taken whilst suspended.

2.12 Repayment of stipend paid during leave

2.12.1 Qualifying students receive a stipend during their maternity, paternity/ partner or adoption leave in order that they may return to their studies thereafter and complete their studies, and it is expected that they shall do so.

2.12.2 It is acceptable for a student to return to study on a part-time basis and they should contact the Doctoral College to arrange this.

2.12.3 If a student fails to return at all following maternity, paternity/ partner, or adoption leave, or returns for a period of less than 12 weeks, they will normally be required to repay any stipend payments received during that leave period.

2.13 Subsequent requests to suspend studies

2.13.1 The number of parental leave suspensions that can be taken during a studentship is not limited, and they do not count towards the maximum limit of suspension time permitted under Regulation 16 for doctoral programmes. However, these parameters are set by the University to enable students to maintain satisfactory momentum, and accruing more time in suspense than is normally permitted may significantly impact the student's ability to meet progress expectations.

3. Related Policies and Procedures

[Regulation 16: Doctoral and Research Degrees](#)

[Advice and support for expectant student parents at Bath](#)

[Information for student parents at Bath](#)

[Student Support at Bath](#)

[Bereavement support at Bath](#)

4. Document Control Information

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