

# **Maternity Leave - Guidance on Procedures for Postgraduate Research Students**

**June 2014**

**Research Office Graduate Education Team**

## **CONTENTS**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Maternity Leave Entitlement**
- 3. Applying for Maternity Leave**
- 4. Sickness During Pregnancy**
- 5. Returning from Maternity Leave**
- 6. Health and Safety**

## **1. Introduction**

This document provides guidance to female full-time and part-time postgraduate research students of doctoral (including Professional, Engineering and Enterprise Doctorates), Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Medicine (MD) degrees, on procedures for applying for maternity leave.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with University's *Policy on Circumstances Leading to Changes to Postgraduate Research Study* available at <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/changestodegrees/>

Students who are in receipt of an annual maintenance stipend<sup>1</sup> funded by the University or from a Research Council funding may be entitled to funding from the University during their period of maternity leave and should refer to the University policy:

- *Maternity, Adoption and Paternity leave Policy for Funded Postgraduate Research Students*

## **2. Maternity leave entitlement**

A student may interrupt their degree for the purpose of maternity leave for a maximum period of 12 months per period of leave subject to approval from the relevant School or Faculty.

## **3. Applying for maternity leave**

Students must discuss their forthcoming maternity leave with their supervisor/s and the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office as early as possible, and should confirm the start date of the maternity leave not later than the 15th week before the date on which the baby is due.

Maternity leave can be postponed or brought forward to a chosen start date by informing the supervisor/s and the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office at least 28 days (or as soon as possible thereafter) before the leave is due to start.

A student may choose when to start her maternity leave, subject to the following constraints:

- The maternity leave period cannot start before the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth.
- The maternity leave period will be automatically triggered if a student is absent from their programme wholly or partly because of pregnancy after the beginning of the 4th week before the expected week of childbirth.

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<sup>1</sup> Students in receipt of bursaries or awards covering tuition fees only are not eligible to receive pay during maternity leave. (The definition of 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.)

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- The latest date maternity leave can start is the date of childbirth.

Once maternity leave dates have been agreed, students must submit the relevant interruption permission form to the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office no later than the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of childbirth. The student must also forward her original MAT B1 form as soon it is provided by her GP.

The appropriate School or Faculty graduate office will then confirm in writing the terms of the maternity leave, maternity stipend payments (if applicable) and the latest date on which the student should return to study.

Where a student fails to inform or apply to the appropriate Faculty or School for Maternity leave provision before the stipulated dates in this policy, the leave must be approved by the Associate Dean for Graduate Education.

#### **4. Sickness during pregnancy**

If during the pregnancy, a student is unable to attend studies due to illness, the normal procedures for sickness absence reporting should be followed (as detailed in section 17 of the University's *Policy on Circumstances Leading to Changes to Postgraduate Research Study*). However, any period of pregnancy related sick leave beyond the 36th week of pregnancy may automatically trigger commencement of the maternity leave. The supervisor/s or School or Faculty graduate office may require confirmation from the student's doctor that they are fit to return to study.

#### **5. Returning from maternity leave**

Students are not permitted to return to study during the first two weeks from the date of childbirth. This is classed as a period of compulsory maternity leave.

Students who wish to return to study earlier than had been agreed prior to the start of the maternity leave, must advise their supervisor/s and appropriate School or Faculty graduate office in writing, giving at least 8 weeks' notice of the intended date of return. The graduate office will amend the duration of the interruption period and end of programme date.

Students who wish to return to study later than had previously been agreed, must seek permission from their supervisor/s and, if s/he is in agreement, request a further interruption to studies bearing in mind the maximum leave entitlement of 12 months.

A student who has been studying full-time but who indicates they wish to return to study on a part-time basis following maternity leave, and have no visa restrictions, will receive sympathetic consideration of her request, and will be accommodated wherever possible.

#### **6. Health and safety**

The School/other organisational unit in which a pregnant student works is responsible for risk assessments in relation to her work and environment. Any health and safety concerns should be raised immediately within the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office. Occupational Health may be consulted for confidential advice and guidance.