PGR Parents: A Toolkit

This toolkit provides policy summaries and links to all the relevant documents you will need if you will be interrupting your PGR studies for the purpose of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave and summarises some of the other facilities/resources available to both expectant PGR parents and PGR parents who have returned from leave.

- Policy Overviews
- Flexible Working
- Council Tax Exemptions
- Potential Financial Support
- Facilities / Resources

Policy Overviews

Maternity Leave
The University permits PGRs to interrupt their degree for the purpose of maternity leave at any time from the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth until the date of childbirth for a maximum period of 12 months where the individual is the primary carer. The period of leave must be taken in one consecutive block. Once the interruption period dates have been agreed, PGRs must submit the relevant interruption/change of circumstances application form to the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office no later than the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

For full details see section 5 of the Interruptions Procedure.

Adoption Leave
A PGR may interrupt their degree for the purposes of adoption leave for a maximum period of 12 months subject to approval from the relevant School or Faculty. Adoption leave is available to individuals who adopt or one member of a couple where a couple adopt jointly. Adoption leave can be taken either from the date of child placement OR no more than 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) prior to the date of child placement. Once the interruption period dates have been agreed, PGRs must submit the relevant interruption/change of circumstances application form to the appropriate School or Faculty graduate office.

For full details see section 6 of the Interruptions Procedure.

Shared Parental Leave
Shared Parental Leave is no longer available to UKRI funded PGRs. Both SPL and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) are defined in law and operated by HMRC. For a parent to benefit from either SPL or ShPP they must meet the legal eligibility criteria.

1 Please note that for all interruptions to programme (including maternity, adoption and unpaid parental leave) international PGRs should refer to the Student Immigration Team for advice regarding any potential immigration / visa implications.
This includes a requirement that they are an employee. Doctoral students funded by UKRI are not employees and so are not able to give HMRC the information required to process an application. Shared Parental Leave will therefore be removed from the UoM Interruptions Procedure.

The full UKRI statement.

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**Unpaid Parental Leave**

The student parent partner who is not in receipt of parental leave is entitled to apply for an interruption for up to 50 weeks for the period of time following the birth/adoption of their child as unpaid parental leave. This leave must be completed within 12 months of the birth/adoption of the child. The student must formally apply for the interruption.

See section 8 of the [Interruptions Procedure](#).

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**Paternity Leave**

A total of 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) of paternity leave may be taken. The programme end date may be extended by this period of time dependent on the terms and conditions of your funder. In the case of adoption leave, a total of 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) leave may be taken to support the primary carer. Paternity leave cannot start before and must be completed within 56 days (including weekends and public holidays) of the child’s birth / placement. The 14 days of paternity leave must be taken in one block.

For full details please refer to section 10.2 of the [Change of Circumstances for Postgraduate Research Students Policy](#).

In all cases further advice and the relevant interruption/change of circumstances form are available from your local PGR support teams:

- Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health or email the [Doctoral Academy](#)
- Faculty of Humanities
- Faculty of Science and Engineering

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**Flexible Working**

PGR parents on a full-time programme who find that they require more flexibility in order to continue their research may have the option to apply to switch to part-time study (either for the remainder of their programme or for a block of time).

Currently part-time study is only offered at 50% but from September 2021 the University will be launching a pilot that will also allow for a 60% arrangement. If this pilot proves successful, further flexibility arrangements will be considered.

It should be noted that some sponsors do not permit part-time study so PGRs considering switching to part-time study should refer to their funder T&Cs. Also, international PGRs are not permitted to study part-time according to the conditions of the Student Visa. Some PGR programmes cannot be set up to operate on a part-time basis due to discipline-specific requirement.
In all instances PGRs should discuss their individual circumstances with their supervisor and/or PGR admin support team in order to fully consider the best options available.

Council Tax whilst on Interruption for Parental Leave
If you take an interruption or leave of absence from your studies but are expected to return to the same course within 12 months then you should remain exempt from Council Tax. Further advice can be sought from the Faculty contacts listed above or from the Student Services Centre ssc@manchester.ac.uk.

Potential Financial Support
If you are struggling financially due to becoming a parent you could be eligible for support via the Universities Living Cost Support Fund.

If pregnant / or a parent you may also be eligible for the additional sources of Government support detailed in this document. You could also visit the Manchester City Council website to see if you qualify for up to 30 hours of free childcare a week.

Facilities / Resources for PGR Parents

PGR Parents Group
The PGR Parents Group is open to all parents, parents-to-be and carers who are postgraduate research students at the University. The group meets once a month. These informal sessions provide the opportunity to:

- discuss issues related to returning to your programme after parental leave;
- share experiences of balancing research and caring responsibilities in a safe environment;
- hear about what has worked for others;
- offer peer support.

If you have any questions about the peer support group, please contact: iqra.habib@manchester.ac.uk

Breast Feeding Rooms
Expressing or breastfeeding rooms for returning mothers can be found in Jean McFarlane Building, rooms G.315, G.316 and G.317. All rooms are on the ground floor. They have frosted glass in the door and can be locked from the inside. The fridge in the room behind Reception can be used for storing milk. Please just call into reception in the Jean McFarlane Building if you wish to use an expressing/ breastfeeding room.

In addition, other buildings may also have provisions for breastfeeding and expressing milk, please check with your building reception to find out about available facilities in your building.

Baby Changing Facilities

Students’ Union   Ground floor toilet under stairs, 1st Floor disabled toilet
Manchester Museum  Basement adapted toilet by the lift
Christie's Building  Ground floor accessible toilet
Martin Harris Building (Centre for Music and Drama)  Ground floor accessible toilet
Main Library  Blue ground floor toilet
Michael Smith Building  Adapted toilet by reception
University Place  Level 0 adapted toilet
Humanities Bridgeford Street  Basement toilet
John Ryland's Library  Accessible toilets in basement of the entrance wing

Yammer Parents Support Group
Sign up here:
https://www.yammer.com/live.manchester.ac.uk/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=18331402240

Student parents’ guide from Students’ Union
Student Parents @ University of Manchester Students' Union

Facebook group
University of Manchester Student Parents and Carers | Facebook

Campus Nurseries
There are two nurseries available for use by PGRs. The nurseries provide care for children from six months to five years and are staffed with trained and experienced personnel in accordance with the local authority's requirements.
https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/human-resources/benefits/childcare/campus-nursery/