

Guidance on Student Paternity/Partner and Adoption Leave

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Director of Student Wellbeing	5 May 2023	May 2026

Guidance statement

The Guidance outlines the University's approach to Student Paternity/Partner and Adoption Leave.

Who needs to know about the Guidance?

- Heads of School and Department
- Course Directors
- Students

Contacts

The Student Wellbeing Services are responsible for providing advice and assistance concerning the arrangements for Student Paternity/Partner and Adoption Leave.

The team can be contacted by emailing: studentsupport@canterbury.ac.uk

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Definitions

In this Guidance, we have used the common terms 'maternity' and 'paternity', but our definitions are not restricted to any particular gender. We use the following definitions throughout this Guidance.

- Primary carer: a student who will give birth or adopt a child as its designated primary carer.
- Primary carer's partner: a student who will be
 - the father of a child; or
 - the husband or partner of the mother (or adopter); or
 - the child's adopter
- Adoption: the process whereby a student aged 21 or over assumes the parenting of another from that person's legal parent(s), irrespective of whether the student is:
 - single; or
 - married; or
 - in a civil partnership; or
 - an unmarried couple (same-sex and opposite-sex); or
 - the partner of the child's parent

To be adopted, a child must:

- be under the age of 18 when the adoption application is made
- not be (or have never been) married or in a civil Partnership

Discussing the funding implications with a Student Support Adviser

There could be financial implications for taking paternity or adoption leave, especially student loans. The University strongly advises the student to discuss the impact with a [Student Support Adviser](#) at an early stage.

Entitlement to paternity/partner leave pay exists within employment law. Consequently, very few students are entitled to such leave or pay. However, the University allows students who are partners of new mothers/primary carers to apply for paternity-related absence.

Where a student is working and considered by the UK government to be employed, they may be entitled to paternity/partner leave pay from their employer.

Students may be entitled to paid paternity/partner leave if they have a bursary or research council funding. A student must familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of their award.

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Paternity/Partner Leave

A student wishing to take paternity/partner leave must apply for an authorised absence in line with the [University Interruptions Policy](#).

A student may take a total of two weeks of paternity/partner Leave at any time during a partner's pregnancy or within three months following birth.

The University encourages early notification as partners may need to attend antenatal appointments.

The University will record the paternity/partner leave for up to two weeks as an authorised absence from the course.

Adoption Leave

Arrangements for adoption leave normally parallel those made for maternity and paternity/partner leave. The primary carer takes 'maternity leave,' regardless of gender, and the carer's partner takes 'paternity' leave.

Therefore, when couples adopt a child, only one parent may apply for adoption leave, which has the same status as maternity leave as defined above. It includes same-sex couples. To be clear, a 'father' can be designated as the primary carer and the 'mother' as the 'partner.'

The child's primary carer may apply for adoption leave and be eligible to interrupt their studies in line with the student maternity leave arrangements. A student wishing to take adoption leave must apply for an interruption of study in line with the [University Interruptions Policy](#).

The other partner may apply for paternity/partner Leave, as defined above. Students in the adoption process who expect to undertake parental responsibility for a child but not as the primary carer may take two weeks of paternity/partner Leave within three months of the adoption.

Discussing plans with the Personal Academic Tutor and Course Director

Those students on taught courses (including the EdD and Doctorate in Clinical Psychology) submit their requests for paternity/partner leave to their Course Director.

Caring for a child while studying will impact a student's study. Students wishing to take paternity or adoption leave must discuss their plans with their Personal Academic Tutor or Course Director. The reason is to explore the implications for the student's study on the course, including participating in learning and placement activities and undertaking assessments.

In compulsory elements of courses, such as field trips or work placements, their Personal Academic Tutor or Course Director can explore with the student the feasibility of undertaking them at an alternative time.

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If it is impossible to rearrange a compulsory element, the Course Director will explain the reasons in writing.

It is essential to

- Have an agreed written statement on the practical arrangements for affecting learning, placement and assessments before the University approves the paternity/partner leave; and
- Ensure students on paternity-related absences have the means to receive materials from missed seminars and lectures; and
- Consider, in discussion with the student, whether there is a need for a Temporary Learning Agreement (TLA). For instance, if the student needs extra support because there are assessments around the time of the birth or if there are complications during childbirth.

Research students discussing plans with the Dean of the Graduate College

Students studying for research degrees (MPhil and PhD) wishing to take paternity/partner leave should discuss their plans with their supervisor. The reason is to explore the implications for the student's research.

Students studying for research degrees (MPhil and PhD) submit their requests to the Dean of the Graduate College.

In line with the policy adopted by the Research Councils, this leave is not a suspension of status, and the submission date is not adjusted.

Flexibility in attending appointments and in the event of complications

There is an expectation that Schools will take a flexible approach when students

- (a) wish to attend antenatal appointments with their partners
- (b) need to take time off due to complications
 - a. with their partner's pregnancy, or
 - b. pregnancy-related illness, or
 - c. complications at or after the birth require additional support, such as premature birth leading to a lengthy hospitalisation.

The arrangements must be agreed upon with the course director in advance and recorded in a temporary learning agreement. It will depend on the specific circumstances, such as

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- the student's circumstances
- the nature of the course
- any placement requirements
- the point in a student's studies
- the scope for adjusting the learning, teaching and assessment arrangements

The University will record these instances as an authorised absence where this is agreed.

Assessments

Students can also use the exceptional circumstances arrangements if there is a paternity-related adverse consequence when a student chooses to sit an assessment. An example is if their partner

- (a) is in labour, or the assessment is scheduled during their paternity-related absence
- (b) has a severe pregnancy-related illness

Extended paternity/partner leave

Extended parental leave, beyond the total allocation of two weeks, will impact a student's studies. Students wishing to take extended paternity/partner Leave must discuss their plans with their Personal Academic Tutor, Course Director, or the Dean of the Graduate College as relevant. The reason is to explore the implications for the student's study on the course, including participating in learning and placement activities and undertaking assessments. There needs to be consideration given to the support provided to the student.

Having an agreed written statement recorded in a student support plan is essential. It needs to address the practical arrangements relating to learning, placement and assessments and the support arrangements for the student. It should be agreed upon before the University approves the extended paternity/partner leave.

Financial implications for seeking extended paternity/partner leave, especially student loans, may be significant. Before making an interruption request for extended Paternity/Partner Leave, the student must discuss the impact with a [Student Support Adviser](#).

The University will record extended paternity/partner leave as an interruption.

The discussion must take place before formally applying for interruption of studies. A student wishing to take extended paternity/partner Leave must apply for an interruption of study in line with the [University Interruptions Policy](#).

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It is essential to make explicit the period of agreed leave in the application.

The timing of extended paternity/partner leave for research students depends on several factors, including submission dates and the nature of the student's research work.

Research students eligible for a further period of paternity/partner Leave from their Research Council or sponsor may request a matching period of Paternity/Partner Leave from the University.

Students on a Student (formerly Tier 4) Visa

Students on a Student (formerly a Tier 4) Visa taking the permitted two-week period can have this processed as an authorised absence. Students should request an Authorised Absence Form to complete and return to your Course Director or the Dean of the Graduate College.

Once completed, the Course Director will return it to the Immigration Compliance Team for authorisation.

The Home Office states that students on a Student (formerly Tier 4) Visa who interrupt their studies for a significant period must leave the UK. There is a requirement to leave the UK and obtain a new CAS and Visa to enable a return following the interruption. If there are any dependents related to the Visa, it will also apply to them.

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