6.26 Funding for Research during Parental Leave

1. Introduction

UTS is committed to its parental leave and support arrangements as set out in the Parental Leave Guidelines. To supplement this and wherever reasonably possible, UTS provides support, including financial support, to academic staff who are active researchers to continue to maintain the momentum of their research programs during parental leave, should they wish.

Faculties / units have access to centrally funded paid parental leave so that they are not burdened with funding replacement staff during this period (ie when a staff member is on paid parental leave, their salary is centrally funded allowing the value of their salary to be used for replacement staff). This fund is intended to pay for replacement of the key aspects of an academic role, ie both research and teaching. Recent review of the program has found that typically, faculties often replace the teaching and possibly administrative components of an academic’s workload with a casual academic staff but overlook the research maintenance. These guidelines clarify the faculties’ responsibilities to also fund the research component of an academic’s workload, should this be required, from the savings from staff members’ salaries while their parental leave is being centrally funded and during parental leave without pay.

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

(i) set out expectations of faculties / units to fund the replacement of both the teaching and research of staff while they are on parental leave, and encourage consideration of the provision of additional funding (above and beyond the savings on staff members’ salaries while their parental leave is being centrally funded and during parental leave without pay), where reasonable and appropriate (see 5 sources of funds)

(ii) encourage staff and their supervisors to have work planning and career discussions prior to the commencement of parental leave and to plan appropriate support and replacement arrangements to allow research activity to continue during the parental leave, or approaches to minimise undesired disruptions to an academic’s research program, if requested by the staff member; and

(iii) provide advice on how to approach research continuity planning during parental leave.

2. Context

Parental leave allows mothers or primary carers to take time off work to care for their new born or newly adopted children. However, a period of parental leave can result in the suspension of research work that the academic is highly motivated to progress. Some academics have also experienced difficulties in maintaining or re-establishing research following a period of parental leave as a result of the disruption to their research.
The arrangements set out within this document seek to support staff who would like to continue their research in some way, during their parental leave. However, there is no expectation or requirement for staff members to continue active research work during parental leave. The University is committed to providing parental research work to allow staff to focus on their new child in the way which is best suits them.

3. Eligibility

These guidelines apply to academic staff, who are mothers or primary carers, during a period of parental leave. For the purposes of these guidelines parental leave refers to paid maternity or adoption leave and any unpaid parental leave but excludes partners leave and foster parents leave.

In order to be eligible for research support under these guidelines, academic staff must be active researchers prior to the commencement of parental leave. Staff should consult with their supervisor and/or Associate Dean (Research) for guidance on what is meant by “active researcher”.

4. Working during Parental Leave

If an academic staff member chooses to continue active research work during parental leave they must do so in accordance with the following:

(i) Government Paid Parental Leave: While a staff member receives Government PPL, any work performed must be managed within the parameters set out in the Government PPL Guidelines, including the following:
   - the staff member is permitted to attend work for a maximum of ten days for the purpose of “keeping in touch”
   - the staff member must not work for the University on any day within 14 days of the birth or adoption of the child.

Not adhering to these guidelines may result in the withdrawal of the Government’s PPL Payments.

(ii) UTS Parental Leave Guidelines: These set out arrangements for temporary work during parental leave and return to work before scheduled return date.

5. Sources of Research Funding

The sources of funds to support the research of staff who undertake a period of parental leave include the following:

(i) the research component of funding made available as a result of the savings on staff members’ salaries while their parental leave is being centrally funded and during parental leave without pay (as a guide for a typical academic the research component of funding should be 40% of funding, with 40% for teaching and 20% for administration and other activities)

(ii) additional funding or support in kind, from the faculty / unit budget

(iii) limited additional funding from the Central Research Budget at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and as part of the UTS “Women in Research Initiative” (refer to section 9 of these guidelines).
6. **Research Funding Support Examples**

Some examples of research funding and support potentially available to eligible staff during parental leave include the following:

(i) Re-allocation of work of existing staff and using funding to “back fill” their positions

(ii) Employment of casual or fixed-term staff to:
- continue aspects of the staff member’s research program or
- continue elements of the research program of the research group to which the staff member belongs

For example, a research assistant could work in a laboratory to carry out experiments, or conduct archival research or a survey, etc; or a PhD student could be employed as a research fellow to conduct a literature review, work on publications, etc.

These funds are not available to cover the cost of child care.

7. **Discussing Research Support Needs**

Staff members and their supervisors should engage in work planning and career discussions in the period prior to the commencement of parental leave. If a staff member is seeking financial support under these guidelines, such discussions can facilitate the development of a Parental Leave Research Support Plan (herein to be referred to as “Plan” - see section 8 below) which will set out the approved research support that will be made available during the staff member’s parental leave. While discussions about the staff member’s research program and career are encouraged, there is no expectation or requirement for staff members to continue research work during parental leave. The University is committed to providing parental leave to allow a staff member to focus on his/her new child.

Individually and collectively, the staff member and supervisor will have responsibilities in relation to these discussions. Others may also be involved in these discussions if, for example, a staff member belongs to a research group.

The staff member is responsible for initiating the process by notifying their supervisor of the upcoming parental leave absence (initially informally and then formally via submission of an Application for Parental Leave). The staff member must also be clear about their ambitions and objectives for their research program and career and be ready to discuss these with their supervisor.

The supervisor is responsible for assisting and guiding staff to set realistic objectives for their research continuity aspirations and ascertaining available funding including:
- the cost of replacing the staff member’s teaching during the period of parental leave and hence the balance of the funding available as a result of the savings on staff member’s salary while their parental leave is being centrally funded and during parental leave without pay to support research (and administration) if required.
- other Faculty (or external) funding sources which could be tapped.
- any opportunity for central research budget support.
It is anticipated that the staff member and supervisor will discuss/clarify the following matters as part of the process of developing an effective Plan (refer to section 8):

(i) the staff member’s current research activity and how it relates to their career development
(ii) the research work that can and cannot be continued during the leave. The following should be considered:
   • the objectives and/or tasks within the research work that can be continued
   • the type of skills and capabilities that would be required from others to continue to progress the research program. If others are to be involved, then any authorship recognition that may arise are a result of this should be considered
   • who would be appropriate to undertake the work? Can the role be filled by employing casual or fixed-term staff, or utilising existing staff or PhD students? If casual or fixed-term staff are to be employed, when will this occur and what are the arrangements for their supervision?
   • issues or risks associated with the suspension of the research program or its continuation in the absence of the staff member. The role the supervisor and staff member can play to minimise the impact of these issues / risks.
   • any occupational health and safety issues associated with the continuation of the research prior to or during the parental leave (also refer to the section, “Risks Associated with Current Position”, in the Parental Leave Guidelines)
   • what reporting, records and documentation will be required for external or internal funding bodies and who will be responsible
(iii) the process and arrangements for the handover of work to be undertaken during the leave including key contacts, clients, important dates and milestones
(iv) how the staff member and supervisor will keep in touch during parental leave including.
   • the frequency and mode (email, telephone, Skype, etc) of contact. This could include a schedule of appointments (in person or by telephone / Skype) to provide updates on the progress of research during the leave
   • the process and arrangements for ensuring important information about the research or other information about the workplace is forwarded to the staff member
   • arrangements for remote access to email.
(v) how the staff member plans to resume their research upon return from parental leave.
(vi) the actions that need to be taken before the commencement of parental leave (these could be actions by the staff member and/or supervisor)
(vii) being realistic about what can be achieved, bearing in mind that the staff member will be having or adopting a child, and understanding that they may find their circumstances and needs altered once they are caring for their child.

As part of this process, the staff member and supervisor may also discuss how the staff member intends to use their return to work support (refer to Parental Leave Guidelines) and any anticipated changes to their hours of work following their parental leave (refer to Temporary Variation to Hours or Mode of Employment - Principles and Procedures).
8. Writing a Plan
Prior to the commencement of the parental leave and following discussion in relation to the matters set out in the previous section, the staff member and supervisor will draw up a Plan.

The Plan will identify the following and will require approval by the appropriate authority within the Faculty (the Dean or nominee):

(i) how the research will be continued and the objectives expected to be achieved
(ii) funding levels and source(s)
(iii) if applicable, arrangements for the recruitment of casual or fixed-term staff to continue aspects of the research and the supervisor arrangements for these staff
(iv) keeping in touch, reporting and feedback arrangements with the staff member
(v) the responsibilities of the staff member and supervisor during the parental leave.

The Plan is a planning document and therefore subject to review and amendment, particularly to accommodate changes to the staff member’s circumstances or the research program.

9. Central Research Funding of a Plan
A request for additional funding from the Central Research Budget to support a Plan may be submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) through the Dean. The Dean must explain why the research funds required are beyond faculty capabilities. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) will have discretion to determine whether funding will be provided and, if so, the level of funding. Priority will be given to supporting staff:

(i) whose research is aligned to the strategic research direction of UTS
(ii) whose research program maintenance requires significant investment
(iii) with a high performing research track record.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) must be informed of changes to the Plan if it is supported by Central Research Budget funds.

10. Contact
Staff enquiries related to parental leave Staff Services on email staffservices@uts.edu.au or extension 1060
Staff or supervisor enquiries about arranging replacement staff relevant HR Partner in the HR Management Services Team
- http://datasearch2.uts.edu.au/hru/services/ms.cfm

11. Reference Documents
Parental leave and post parental leave
- Parental Leave Guidelines (includes information about return to work support and links to relevant forms)
- Temporary Variation to Hours or Mode of Employment - Principles and Procedures
- Work life balance webpages
Employment of replacement fixed-term or casual staff

- **Fixed-term appointments**
- **Casual appointments**

Approval and Revisions Tables

Approval

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Revision/Modification History

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