

DRAFT

Policy on Parental and Childbirth Accommodations for Graduate Students

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1. Overview

This policy is designed to support full-time graduate students of any gender immediately following the birth or adoption of a child. The intent of this policy is to help balance the student's personal and academic needs with the University's need to ensure teaching and research obligations are met.

This policy requires that Colleges, in collaboration with the Graduate School:

1. provide funding or staffing to ensure that departments can continue the work being done by the graduate student during the leave period;
2. enable the graduate student to take a stipend-protected parental leave of absence without losing their role or position with the program.

In addition to providing financial support, this policy will allow the student to maintain full-time student status during the approved leave. While this policy recognizes the protections afforded to pregnant women under Title IX, the policy goes beyond the legal protections to ensure that, in cases where both parents are UNC Charlotte students, both have the option to take leave.

2. Eligibility

This policy applies to graduate students with a current full-time (20 hrs/wk) appointment who anticipate the birth or adoption of a child. Eligible students must have been full-time graduate students for at least one semester at the time parental leave is taken.

3. Funding and Provisions:

The graduate student will be eligible for up to a 6-week paid leave of absence, starting immediately following the birth of a child. In cases of adoption, the graduate student may take up to 3 weeks of paid parental leave.

- Funding for the leave is the responsibility of the department. Where increment money exists, it can be considered as a source of funding. If the department cannot fund the stipend for the student and for the temporary student replacement, the Graduate School will work with the relevant/pertinent college and, if needed, the Provost's office to identify funding.

- Where grant funding is available, it may be used for a substitute for the graduate student during the 6-week (or 3 week) leave period to ensure that the research or teaching effort of the department is not adversely affected.

4. Other Provisions

During the leave period, full-time student status will be preserved for the graduate student on leave, so that financial aid, student health insurance, and housing eligibility are retained. While flexibility with time lines and deadlines should be encouraged, a student's overall program time limit does not change.

5. Planning and Approval

Graduate students who anticipate taking parental leave should meet with their advisors as soon as possible to plan for the leave of absence. When possible, advisors and students should create a plan for the student's research activities that includes a flexible schedule during the time off. If an advisor has specific, research-related deadlines that fall during the planned leave, these should be communicated with the student and the department to ensure that they are met. When flexibility alone will not ensure that work continues, funding for a temporary replacement should be used.

When possible, students who anticipate taking leave should not be in teaching roles during their leave semester. When this is unavoidable, departments may submit requests for support grants in writing to their college dean. The college dean may contact the dean of the Graduate School to request additional funding, when needed.

This policy establishes minimum standards for accommodations for a leave associated with childbirth or adoption. Students, advisors, and programs should maintain open communication to ensure that both the student and the department needs are being met. In some cases, it may be helpful for the student to continue to be academically engaged while making progress on coursework and research. Any such agreement must be mutually arranged.