

# Unpaid Parental Leave Procedure

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## 1. Introduction

The procedure provides guidance on how to apply or process requests for unpaid parental leave.

## 2. Information for staff

If staff meet the criteria laid out in the Unpaid Parental Leave Policy and wish to request parental leave, they should make a request for unpaid parental leave, specifying when the leave will begin and end. Individuals must give at least 21 days' notice of taking leave. This request should be submitted to their line manager in the first instance.

Members of staff will also need to provide documentation to support their application - i.e. the birth certificate (copies of certificates will not be stored), of the child or notification of the adoption date - if this is their first request for parental leave.

Staff members may be asked how much parental leave they have taken whilst in other employment, if they have changed employers during the period in which leave is permitted.

The staff member's line manager's manager will have discretion to agree a longer period of leave in any year, up to the maximum 18 weeks, if this is appropriate in individual circumstances, and if it is operationally feasible to do so. The People Hub will confirm the approved leave period in writing.

## 3. Information for managers

If a member of staff has changed employers within the period when leave is permitted, managers should be asked how much leave they have taken while in other employment in respect of each child. Staff should be made aware that these details may be checked.

When the necessary documentation has been checked, leave should be authorised as a request for unpaid parental leave in the system.

Where the operation of the business would be unduly disrupted and it is not feasible to make reasonable arrangements to adjust for the operational consequences, the line manager can postpone leave for up to six months after the date on which the member of staff wanted to start leave, except in cases where the member of staff is applying for leave straight after the birth or placement of the child. Line managers are encouraged to support these arrangements where possible, and any refusals of these requests would only occur in exceptional circumstances.

Leave can be postponed to an agreed date, or to a suitable future period. However, leave cannot be postponed so that it ends after a child's eighteenth birthday.

For further support and guidance on how to request unpaid parental leave, contact the People Hub on 01908 (5)411111, via Ask People Services or email [People-Hub@open.ac.uk](mailto:People-Hub@open.ac.uk).

#### 4. Information for the People Hub

Staff should be informed of the approval (or otherwise) of their request. This should also provide the reasons for any postponement of leave, the dates on which the agreed period of leave will begin and end, and should be sent **not more than 7 days** after the employee's notice was given.

Staff Payments and the Pensions team will be informed of the unpaid leave automatically, once the request is approved. It will be made clear that this is unpaid parental leave, so that appropriate salary deductions can be made.

Where staff move to an alternative job in another unit within the University, information regarding the amount of unpaid parental leave taken will be available to the new unit upon request.

#### 5. Pension arrangements

As membership of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is suspended during a period of unpaid leave, pensionable service and life assurance cover will stop unless the individual makes separate provision for the maintenance of pension or life cover. These can be maintained provided that the member of staff is willing to fund both the employer and employee contributions. Alternatively, life cover and incapacity cover could be maintained by payment of life assurance premium.

A member of staff who wishes to make separate payments, or requires further information regarding pension arrangements, should contact the Pensions team ([fbs-pensions@open.ac.uk](mailto:fbs-pensions@open.ac.uk)).

#### 6. Useful references

Unpaid Parental Leave Policy  
USS website: [www.USS.co.uk](http://www.USS.co.uk)