

Managers' Guide to Parental Leave

A Checklist of Things to Consider



Before Parental Leave: Three key discussions to have

ECU recognises that welcoming a child into the home is one of the most significant life changes. Managers play a key role in ensuring all staff are supported in the lead up to parental leave, and on their return to work.

This checklist endeavours to guide managers on how best to provide this support and the discussions are separate from regular one-to-one meetings. These discussions may occur over a number of meetings.

Discussion 1: Sharing the News

What to discuss:

- ☐ Firstly, offer your congratulations and celebrate the news.
- ☐ Encourage your team member to read '**Parental Leave: A guide for ECU Staff**' and visit the '[Working parents at ECU](#)' page on ECU's Staff Intranet site.
- ☐ Ask about what their plans are on sharing the news with their colleagues and other parts of ECU. Respect any desire for confidentiality, particularly if they are in the early stages of pregnancy or placement of the child.
- ☐ If they are pregnant, ask if their health professional has made any recommendations concerning work and how these can be supported. Do your own assessment to identify any safety issues and ensure ECU needs are also being met.
- ☐ Consider any time off for antenatal appointments or adoption related meetings (as provided by the **ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017**), acknowledging dates/times may change as the pregnancy or placement progresses.
- ☐ Agree to meet again to discuss and confirm key dates as well as develop a parental leave plan.

Things for you to consider

- ☐ Consider your biases around work and family - the way you act creates the environment that supports employees to thrive. It helps to be aware of your values, and assumptions around work and family so as not to unfairly influence what your employee considers is going to work for them and their situation.
- ☐ If necessary, seek advice on any specific issues raised through discussions with your HR Business Partner before you meet again with the employee.

Discussion 2: Logistics and Timeline

What to discuss:

- Key dates for parental leave (i.e. start date and anticipated date of return) and booking arrangements. A medical certificate confirming they are fit for work will be required if a pregnant employee wishes to work within six weeks of the expected delivery date.
- Intentions of returning from parental leave either full-time or part-time (remember these may change).
- Key tasks, including current projects, and how these will be managed leading up to parental leave.
 - What activities need to be reprioritised?
 - What can be handed to other team members and when?
 - What activities may need to be stopped if pregnant?
 - How will key stakeholders be informed of relevant changes?
 - What activities may be able to be postponed until the employee returns from parental leave?
 - What other options are there available for parental leave cover?
- For academic staff, explore how teaching and/or research activities will be managed during parental leave. Do arrangements need to be put in place to ensure they are included in grant applications whilst on parental leave? Are any arrangements required for HDR supervision?
- Set a time to complete and review current MPS plans prior to the start of parental leave. This provides a separate opportunity to discuss and recognise achievements in the last 12 months before they go on parental leave.
- Expectations around keeping in touch during parental leave and the arrangements required to support this (e.g. who will contact who during parental leave and how, attendance at planning days, information on training opportunities, information on changes at work).
- Completion of 'Application for Parental and Partner Leave' form and forwarding to Payroll Services. (This can be downloaded from the [FBSC kiosk](#)).

Things for you to consider

- Analyse the employee's role and develop options for parental leave cover based on your discussions. Keep the employee informed of your intentions, as they will need to be involved in any handover plans.

Discussion 3: Finalising the handover plan

What to discuss:

- Agree to handover dates for specific tasks, projects and activities to ensure a smooth transition well before to the last week before starting parental leave.
- Ensure any replacement staff are recruited and on boarded well before the intended start date of parental leave.
- Reconfirm intended return date and agreed keeping in touch arrangements. Advise Payroll Services of any changes by completing an amended 'Application for Parental and Partner Leave' form.
- Most importantly empower the staff member to disconnect from work – welcoming a new child into the family is an important and special time.

Things for you to consider

- A staff member is entitled to return to the position they held prior to taking parental leave (except in specific circumstances outlined in the *ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017 and the Parental Leave Policy (PL188)*).

Remember

Plans may need to change beyond the employee's control. Try to understand the situation if things do not go as planned. Misunderstandings can easily escalate into mistrust if not addressed at the earliest opportunity.