



Returning to Work after Parental Leave A guide for ECU staff



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The information in this guide is of a general nature and should not be taken as indicating individual eligibility or entitlement.

You should seek advice about your personal situation from Human Resources and refer to the Parental Leave Policy (PL188) and the ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017.

Staff seeking information on the Australian Government's Parental Leave Pay need to contact the Department of Human Services.

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## Foreword by the Vice-Chancellor, ECU

Edith Cowan University (ECU) is an inclusive university that values its staff members and the diverse contributions they make to our strategic goals. We are focussed on enabling and supporting people, regardless of gender, to pursue careers in their chosen field. To support staff members returning to work after parental leave, ECU has practical services, facilities and programs relating to work and childcare. This guide collates these initiatives to provide a comprehensive view of what is available. I encourage you to read through and find out how ECU can support your return to work after parental leave.

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Professor Steve Chapman CBE Vice-Chancellor

## Introduction

This guide has been designed to assist ECU staff who are returning to work from parental leave. It covers childcare and work-related information, as well as options provided by ECU that staff can access to assist with parenting responsibilities.

For specific information on what to consider in planning for parental leave, see our *Parental Leave – A guide for ECU staff*.

## Planning your return to work

Ideally, you will have discussed plans about your return to work with your supervisor as part of your original plans for parental leave and have a reasonable idea of what these arrangements are likely to be. Keeping in contact with your supervisor and updating them as to any potential changes at the earliest opportunity provides sufficient time to explore changes to what was originally agreed. You are entitled to return to the position you held before taking parental leave, except for some specific circumstances outlined in the ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017 and the Parental Leave Policy (PL188).

Using 'Keeping in Touch' days during your parental leave

enables you to stay abreast of workplace activities, changes and priorities. These days are a useful way of attending team planning days or key events during parental leave. Further information on these can be found in the *Parental Leave – A guide for ECU staff*.

Returning to work can be daunting and challenging after a long period of leave. Explore with your supervisor whether any handover or induction arrangements need to occur within the first month of your return. Finding a colleague in a similar capacity/role who has successfully returned to work can also be a way of learning about other proven forms of support. Most of all, remember this is a transition period - be prepared to be open-minded and consider alternative options if things do not go as planned.

Confirm your return to work in writing at least eight weeks prior to your agreed return date.

## **Flexible work**

Flexible work refers to changes in work hours / patterns and work location. It may include moving from full-time to part-time work, starting and finishing work earlier, purchasing additional annual leave, or working from alternative locations (e.g. another campus or from home). All flexible work arrangements must comply with the ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017 and university policy, and approval is subject to the business requirements of the work unit.

Full-time staff returning to work from parental leave

may apply to work part-time for up to three years with the ability to revert to full-time. Consider discussing the possibilities with your supervisor as part of your parental leave plans to ensure there is sufficient time to explore all options. Further information is available from Human Resources.

Before you discuss available flexible work options with your supervisor, see the Flexible Work Arrangements Employee Checklist at **intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/flexible-work-arrangements** 

As well as your preferred option, take some time to consider other alternatives – being prepared with these is a great strategy for negotiating a flexible work arrangement that meets the needs of the team/discipline as well as your own. Trialling proposals for a period of time provides the opportunity to assess the practicality of the arrangement and make changes if needed. Before discussing with your supervisor, it is suggested that you discuss flexibility with your childcare provider/s, should the arrangement change at the conclusion of the trial period.

## Professional development

It is important to consider your career and development needs when returning after an extended period of leave, in line with changing workplace needs and your career ambitions. Your workplace might have introduced new teaching and learning applications, IT programs, or have changed operational processes while you were on leave. For academic staff, there may be changes to course/unit content or changes to research priorities. Discuss with your supervisor where your knowledge gaps and development needs might be, and sign up for relevant training and development activities.

For in-house academic and professional courses and workshops, see the ECU Staff Development Portal – ecu.edu.au/staff-development. Topics include Teaching and Learning, Research, Managing People and Processes, and Technology. Alternatively, consider what mentoring and sponsorship arrangements can be put in place that can support your ongoing career needs.

### ECU offers several ways to obtain additional funding to support ongoing professional development:

Funding program*	Focus area
ECU Athena SWAN Advancement Scheme ecu.edu.au/employment-opportunities/athena-swan/edith-cowan-athena- swan-advancement-scheme	Staff with parenting and caring roles.
ECU UniSuper Professional Development Fund ecu.edu.au/employment-opportunities/athena-swan/ecu-unisuper-professional- development-fund	Staff who have had parental and/or career breaks.
ECU Professional Development Fund intranet.ecu.edu.au/learning/awards/professional-staff-career-development-fund	Professional Staff and Academic Career Development Fellows.

\* Funding programs as at May 2019. Funding programs may change over time.



# **On-campus support**

### ECU Athena SWAN parenting rooms

Parenting rooms are available on every ECU campus. Equipped with a change table, fridge, microwave, sink, armchair and table, they provide a safe and secure place for you to feed or change your child and/or express breastmilk if needed.

For more information, see ecu.edu.au/centres/facilities-and-services/our-services/childcare/parent-facilities-on-campus





### ECU Athena SWAN parent car parking

If you have a staff parking permit and drive your children to childcare or school on the way to work, you're able to use parent parking bays. The purple bays have clear signage and are only accessible after set times.

### These parking bays are located at:

Joondalup Campus	Mount Lawley Campus	South West Campus
Car Parks 4, 8, 19	Car Park 6	Car Parks 3, 5
Available from 9am	Available from 9am	Available from 8.30am

### Long day childcare

All campuses have childcare facilities that provide long day care for children aged 0-5 years (Joondalup and Mount Lawley) and 0-6 years (Bunbury).

Joondalup Early Learning Centre	Mount Lawley Childcare Centre	College Community Childcare, Bunbury
Building 12	Building 26	Robertson Drive, Bunbury
Ph: 6304 5680	Ph: 9370 6850	Ph: 9780 7267

For detailed information on ECU's Childcare centres, visit

#### ecu.edu.au/centres/facilities-and-services/our-services/childcare/childcare-centres

For information on other long day childcare services closer to home, visit childcarefinder.gov.au/

### Occasional childcare

Occasional childcare is available for staff requiring short term childcare whilst working on campus. Each crèche caters for children aged 2 months to 5 years old. A minimum 72 hours notice needed for bookings.

ECU Sports and Fitness Centre Crèche (Joondalup)	ECU Sports and Fitness Centre Crèche (Mount Lawley)	South West Campus Crèche
Building 22	Building 21	Building 4
Ph: 6304 5000	Ph: 6304 6700	Ph: 9780 7723

For detailed information on occasional childcare, visit

ecu.edu.au/centres/facilities-and-services/our-services/childcare/occasional-care



### ECU Kids Holiday program

This program is open to children aged 5 to 12 years old, and is held at Joondalup and Mount Lawley campuses. Half-day and full-day sessions are available.

For further information, visit ecu.edu.au/fas/sport/school\_holidays.php

#### **Health services**

Keeping healthy is important when you have parenting and work responsibilities. As a staff member, you can access ECU Student Health Services for medical appointments at Joondalup and Mount Lawley campuses. General practitioners and nurses are available at both campuses, and a physiotherapist is available at Mount Lawley campus.

For further information, visit ecu.edu.au/about-ecu/campus-facilities/health-services

#### **Counselling service**

ECU provides free and confidential 24/7 counselling services for staff and their immediate family members through an external provider.

For further information, visit intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/eap

#### Health and Wellness program

ECU's health and wellness program Live Life Longer has a wide range of physical, nutritional, mental and social wellness activities on campus. There is also a wellness portal with practical information on health and wellness.

For further information, visit hr.ecu.edu.au/wellness



## External links for parents

#### Raising Children - raisingchildren.net.au

The Australian Parenting website with information on a huge range of topics including pregnancy, babies, children, teens, health and disabilities.

#### Parents and Carers at Work - parentsandcarersatwork.com

An education and coaching service with online podcasts and articles on parenting and work.

#### Australian Breastfeeding Association – breastfeeding.asn.au

Practical information from Australia's leading breastfeeding association.

#### Stayin' On Track - stayinontrack.com

Online resources developed by Aboriginal men for Aboriginal dads.

#### Beyond Blue - Healthy Families - healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au

Information and support for families regarding mental health, development and resilience.

#### Relationships Australia - relationships.org.au

Provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities.

## Return to work checklist

- Confirm in writing your return to work: Confirm your return to work date in writing at least 8 weeks prior to the conclusion of parental leave, but not less than 4 weeks prior.
- Consider and discuss flexible working arrangements prior to your return: Familiarise yourself with ECU flexible working policy and guidelines: intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/flexible-work-arrangements. If you are interested in a flexible working arrangement, discuss with your supervisor. Flexible working arrangement approval is subject to the business requirements of the workplace.
- Contact childcare providers (if required)
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with parenting-related facilities on campus:
  e.g. ECU Athena SWAN parenting rooms and parent car parking.
- ☑ Discuss professional development / training with your supervisor on your return to work.





## Contacts

For general information on returning to work after parental leave, contact Human Resources Services Centre – hr@ecu.edu.au

### You can also view our parenting resources at intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/working-parents

This guide has been developed by Human Resources Services Centre, and is based on the Fair Work Act 2009, ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017, and relevant ECU policies and guidelines. Guide published June 2019, the information in this publication may be superseded/require revision in the event any of these underlying source documents are amended.