



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 regarding the Australian Government's Parental Leave Pay need to contact the Department of Human Services.



Foreword by the Vice-Chancellor, ECU

I am delighted to introduce *Parental Leave – A guide for ECU staff*. This easy-to-read guide outlines the parental leave options available to staff who are welcoming a new child to their family.

Edith Cowan University (ECU)'s gender-neutral parental leave entitlements are helping to shift our university's culture towards acknowledging men (as well as women) as primary care givers and supporting diverse career paths. Recently, we have seen an increased number of men access parental leave as primary care givers. I am proud that ECU supports parents taking career breaks to support their children and their partners in this way. Not only for the benefit of families, but also because when we see men and women accessing parental leave equally, we promote equal access to career opportunities irrespective of gender.

Professor Steve Chapman CBE
Vice-Chancellor

Introduction

One of the most significant life changes is welcoming a child into the home. ECU recognises that this is a time of transition and provides support to staff through parental leave. This guide provides an outline of parental leave options, derived from the ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017, the Parental Leave Policy (PL188) and the Fair Work Act 2009.

The guide also provides information to consider before and during parental leave.

For information on returning to work, see our *Returning to Work after Parental Leave – A guide for ECU staff*.



Before parental leave

ECU has a flexible parental leave scheme that enables you to consider your personal circumstances and how you might like to combine family and work responsibilities.

The information below will help you plan your leave arrangements. To discuss your personal eligibility for parental leave options, please contact Human Resources.

Primary care giver leave

All eligible ongoing, fixed-term staff with 12 months or more continuous service at the expected date of birth / day of adoption have access to 52 continuous weeks of parental leave. Parental leave may consist of paid and/or unpaid periods of leave, as determined by your employment arrangement and continuous service at ECU. This leave is to be taken within 12 months of the date of birth or day of placement.

Employment type	Potential leave entitlement
Ongoing staff	<p>52 weeks of unpaid parental leave for primary care giver, which may include:</p> <p>24 weeks paid leave (or 48 weeks half-pay), <u>and</u></p> <p>For birth mothers up to 37.5 hours paid leave to attend pregnancy related medical appointments prior to the birth,</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>For adoptive parents up to 37.5 hours paid leave to arrange the adoption.</p> <p>Upon return from parental leave and if required, up to 7.5 hours paid time release per week for the first 5 weeks.</p> <p>Note: Part time staff are paid pro-rata for all of the above.</p>
Fixed-term staff	<p>52 weeks of unpaid parental leave for primary care giver, which may include:</p> <p>24 weeks paid leave (or 48 weeks half-pay), <u>and</u></p> <p>For birth mothers 37.5 hours paid leave to attend medical appointments prior to the birth,</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>For adoptive parents 37.5 hours paid leave to arrange the adoption.</p> <p>Upon return from parental leave, 7.5 hours paid time release per week for first 5 weeks.</p> <p>Entitlement ceases on the date that the fixed term contract (or a continuing contingent funded employment contract) expires.</p> <p>Note: Part-time staff are paid pro-rata for all of the above.</p>
Casual Staff	52 weeks of unpaid parental leave for primary care giver

Having another child?

To access an additional period of paid parental leave, you will need to have returned to work for a continuous period of 12 months or more. You will still be able to access unpaid parental leave and the Government Paid Parental Leave Scheme if you have returned to work for a shorter period.

Partner leave

Partner leave is available to eligible staff who are partners of the primary care giver. This leave is to be taken within 12 months of the date of birth or day of placement.

Employment type	Potential leave entitlement
Ongoing staff	<p>2 weeks paid partner leave taken at the time of birth or placement, <u>and</u> Up to 6 weeks unpaid partner leave (taken at the same time as paid partner leave) Note: Part-time staff are paid pro-rata for all of the above.</p>
Fixed-term staff	<p>2 weeks paid partner leave taken at the time of birth or placement, <u>and</u> Up to 6 weeks unpaid partner leave (taken at the same time as paid partner leave) Entitlement ceases on the date that the fixed-term contract (or a continuing contingent funded employment contract) expires. Note: Part-time staff are paid pro-rata for all of the above.</p>
Casual Staff	Up to 8 weeks unpaid partner leave



Sharing the primary care giver role

When your partner returns to work you may choose to become the primary care giver and take leave from work.

Examples of parental leave

Scenario 1

Malia is a full-time ECU staff member with three years of continuous service. She wants to take parental leave for one year, using a combination of paid and unpaid leave. Malia has accrued three weeks of annual leave. Malia and her supervisor discuss Malia's leave options, and agree to Malia taking 48 weeks at half pay, commencing six weeks before the expected date of birth, then three weeks of annual leave at full pay and one week unpaid parental leave.

Towards the end of the parental leave year, Malia's personal circumstances have changed. She applies for a further 12 month period of unpaid parental leave, which her supervisor approves. Towards the end of her second year of parental leave, Malia discusses her return to work options with her supervisor, and they agree on a part-time arrangement for two years. She also attends her team's annual planning day whilst on unpaid parental leave and is paid for this day using a 'keeping in touch' day.

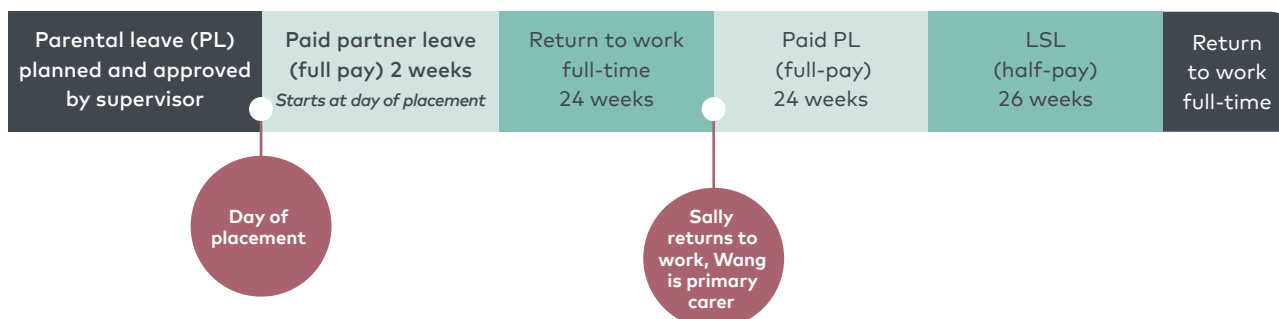
Malia's parental leave timeline



Scenario 2

Wang is a full-time ECU academic staff member and has accrued 13 weeks of long service leave. Wang and partner, Sally, adopt a child. Sally spends the first 6 months as the primary care giver. Wang takes 2 weeks of paid partner leave when the child is placed with Wang and Sally. When Sally returns to her workplace after 6 months of leave, Wang becomes primary carer for the child. Wang takes 24 weeks of primary care giver leave at full pay, then uses long service leave at half pay (26 weeks) before returning to work full time.

Wang's parental leave timeline



Scenario 3

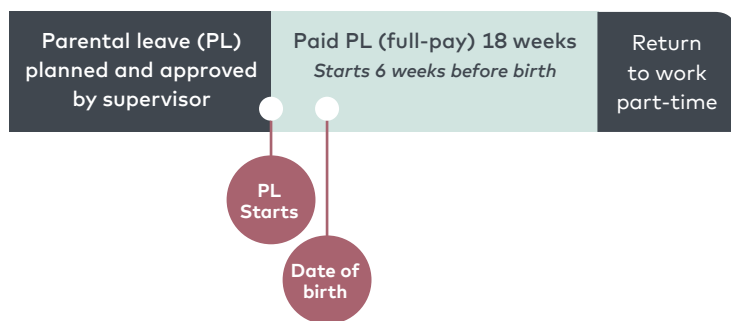
Jo and Lee are both long-standing ECU staff members. Jo is pregnant and both want to share the primary care giver's role. They have a combined entitlement of 24 weeks of paid parental leave, which can be shared between them. Jo and Lee can both be on paid leave at the same time for up to 8 weeks. Both Jo and Lee carefully plan their parental leave with their respective supervisors.

Jo takes 18 weeks of paid parental leave, commencing 6 weeks prior to the expected date of birth. Lee takes 2 weeks of paid partner leave from the date of birth. When Jo returns to work, Lee takes 6 weeks of paid parental leave, followed by a period of unpaid partner leave. Lee then returns to full-time work.

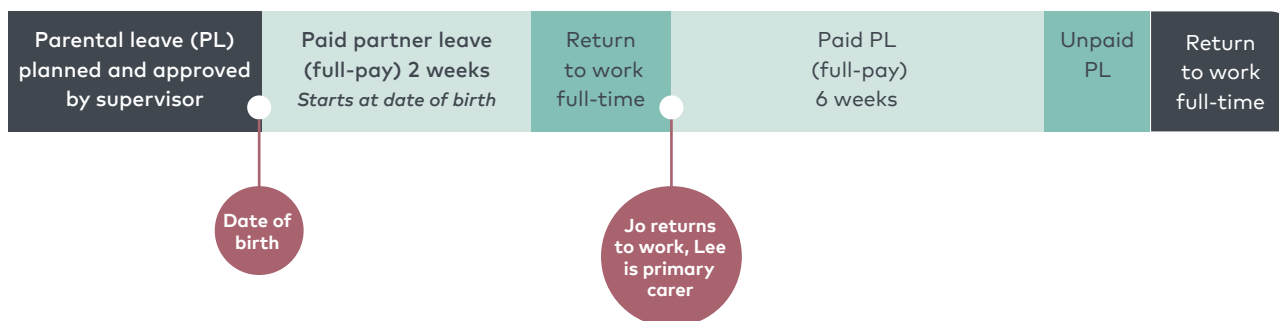
Prior to commencing parental leave, Jo accesses 5 hours of antenatal leave to attend her registered medical practitioner appointments.

On Lee's return to full-time work, Lee accesses 7.5 hours per week paid time release for 5 weeks.

Jo's parental leave timeline



Lee's parental leave timeline



Applying for parental leave

While planning your parental leave, please discuss your options with your supervisor. Leave arrangements are to be consistent with the ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017 and the Parental Leave Policy (PL188).

To apply for parental leave, fill out the Parental and Partner Leave application form through Staff Kiosk on the ECU Staff Portal at least 8 weeks before commencing leave.

ECU acknowledges that sometimes plans need to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If this happens, talk to your supervisor.

Pregnancy, wellbeing and the workplace

ECU aims to provide staff with a healthy and safe workplace.

Where required, your supervisor will provide support in:

- modifying, or transferring you to a safe position at the same classification level until the commencement date of parental leave;
- considering parental leave options and plans;
- attending antenatal appointments.

If you have any health and safety related concerns regarding your duties or the workplace, inform your supervisor immediately.

For further information on work health, safety and wellness, **contact osh@ecu.edu.au**.

Notifying ECU of your pregnancy

Staff are to give at least 8 weeks written notice of intending to take parental leave.

Pregnant staff are encouraged to tell their supervisor of their pregnancy as soon as possible to ensure that their workplace and duties remain appropriate.



Attending appointments

As a birth mother, you have access of up to 37.5 hours of paid antenatal leave to attend medical practitioner or other health professional appointments during your pregnancy.

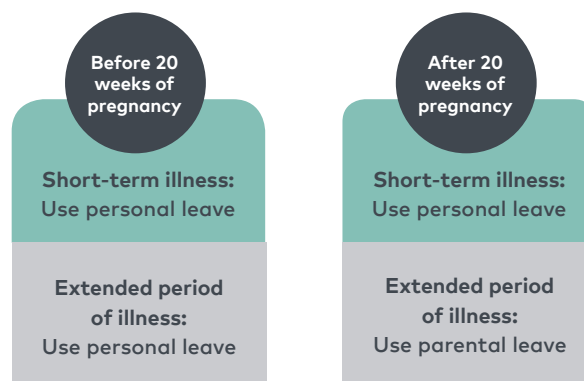
If you are a partner wanting to attend antenatal appointments with the birth mother, talk to your supervisor about how this can be accommodated within existing work arrangements.

Adopting parents can access to up to 37.5 hours of leave for the purposes of arranging the adoption.

Illness during pregnancy

If you become ill or injured during your pregnancy, you can apply for personal leave entitlements via the Staff Kiosk. If you have an extended period of illness, the type of leave you take depends on what stage you are in your pregnancy.

If you wish to work within six weeks of your expected date of birth, provide your supervisor with a medical certificate confirming you are fit to continue working.



Miscarriage, stillbirth and perinatal death

If your pregnancy ends in a late term miscarriage (from 22 weeks of pregnancy), stillbirth or perinatal death (within 28 days of birth) and you had an entitlement to paid parental leave, you will be entitled to up to 14 weeks paid parental leave (or up to 28 weeks at half pay).

If your partner's pregnancy ends in late term miscarriage, stillbirth or perinatal death, you are entitled to one week paid partner leave (or two weeks at half pay) at this time.

Two days compassionate leave are also available. In these circumstances, you are not required to have returned to work for 12 months to access subsequent Paid Parental Leave.

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

If you or a family member is going through a difficult time, please seek assistance.

W: intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/eap

During parental leave

Varying leave arrangements

While you are on parental leave, you may wish to change your return-to-work date. In this circumstance, please discuss with your supervisor. You may wish to request a further period of unpaid parental leave to follow on from the end of your initial parental leave period. This request is to be made in writing to your supervisor as soon as possible, but at least eight weeks before the end of your initial parental leave.

Keeping in touch days

'Keeping in touch days' are intended to allow you to maintain contact with the workplace during parental leave, and have a smooth transition back to work. You and your supervisor can agree on up to ten occasions during parental leave when you can attend activities such as:

- team planning meetings;
- academic conferences;
- planning discussions or meetings that may affect your role;
- professional development sessions;
- IT or process training.

These occasions may be any length of time – from as little as one hour, up to a full day (7.5 hours).

Accessing keeping in touch days is optional. For further information, visit intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/working-parents or contact Human Resources.

Planning your return to work

Contact your supervisor at least eight weeks prior to the end of your parental leave to discuss and confirm your return to work date. A shorter notice period can be agreed to if it is not practical at the time to finalise these arrangements. Whilst this is a formal requirement, it can be helpful to keep in touch with your supervisor throughout the leave period so both of you are updated on changes at work and your own situation.

You are entitled to return to the same position that you held immediately before taking parental leave, with some exceptions as contained in the ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017.

If you wish to request a flexible working arrangement such as part-time work, discuss possible options with your supervisor before commencing leave. Consideration will be given to your circumstances, suitability of the role for flexible work and impact on other staff.

Further information on flexible working arrangements is available at intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/flexible-work-arrangements

The *Returning to Work after Parental Leave – A guide for ECU staff* is a useful source of information on topics such as ECU's childcare services, breastfeeding rooms and negotiating flexible work.

Parental leave checklist

Before parental leave

- ☑ **Confirm your parental leave entitlement:** Human Resources will be able to provide you with details on your parental leave entitlement, based on your contract type and length of service.
- ☑ **Inform your supervisor:** Let your supervisor know that you are intending to take parental leave, and discuss relevant parental leave options. Parental leave arrangements should be consistent with the ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017 and be approved by your supervisor. Also inform your supervisor of any scheduled antenatal or adoption related appointments that you will need to attend during work hours.
- ☑ **Complete an Application for Parental and Partner Leave form:** This form advises the University of your leave dates and which types of leave you will be accessing (including annual leave and long service leave if applicable). Your supervisor's approval is required before sending to Payroll Services for processing. You can download the Application for Parental and Partner Leave form from Staff Kiosk > My HR > Leave > Book Leave.
- ☑ **For birth mothers, obtain a medical certificate:** A medical certificate confirming the expected date of birth of your child is required. Send a copy of your medical certificate to Payroll Services to enable antenatal leave to be activated on Staff Kiosk.
- ☑ **For adopting parents, obtain adoption agency documentation:** Adoption agency documentation is required to confirm the adoption placement. The documentation will need to be provided to Payroll Services to enable adoption arrangement leave to be activated on Staff Kiosk.
- ☑ **Discuss keeping in touch with your supervisor:** Inform your supervisor of how (or if) you want to keep in touch with the workplace while you are on parental leave, e.g. continue receiving team emails, invitation to planning days, emails about job opportunities and development activities, etc.

While on parental leave

- ☑ Keep in contact with the workplace as agreed.
- ☑ Contact your supervisor if you need to change your parental leave arrangement.
- ☑ Confirm your return to work with your supervisor at least eight weeks prior to the return date.



Contacts

For general parental leave information, contact Human Resources – hr@ecu.edu.au

For health, safety and wellness information, contact Safety and Employment Relations – osh@ecu.edu.au

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

This guide has been developed by the Human Resources Services Centre, and is based on the Fair Work Act 2009, ECU Enterprise Agreement 2017, Parental Leave Policy (PL188), and other relevant ECU policies. 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.