

College of Health, University of Utah

Graduate Student Parental Leave Accommodation Policy – Approved by the College Council on April 18, 2016

Definitions: College (College of Health), Graduate School (University of Utah Graduate School), University (University of Utah)

Preamble

The purpose of this policy is to provide Department Chairs and Graduate Student Directors guidelines regarding support for graduate students, paid Teaching Assistants, and paid Research Assistants when they are requesting parental leave accommodations for family responsibilities. The College has a collective commitment to fostering a family-friendly environment for its students with policies that support family and gender equity. This policy applies to both female and male caregivers of a child, leave for pregnancy and childbirth, as well as adoption and surrogacy, in order to support graduate students in their efforts to expand their families and continue participation in their education. Determining specifics of accommodations will be handled on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Department Chair, in accordance with the guidelines stated below. The College of Health prohibits discrimination on the basis of any status protected by law including the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA). If students are not satisfied with the decision made by the Department Chair, the student may appeal following the steps outlined below.

Procedures

Graduate students who need time off for care-giving and bonding with a newborn or adopted child can request accommodations or a leave of absence. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to, compensation, reduced work schedules, extended deadlines or eligibility clocks, modifications to course or lab work, or remote participation in classes. [link to specifics for chemistry lab] Students must first submit a written request to their Department Chair. If a student is receiving an assistantship or fellowship, a leave of absence will not jeopardize their research or teaching position, provided that the original funding mechanism is viable at the time of their return. Discussions among the Department Chair, Principal Investigator of the respective funding mechanism (if applicable), and student must occur, and an agreement / memorandum of understanding must be signed by all three parties, prior to the student taking leave. This agreement / memorandum of understanding will document specifics of the accommodations.

Graduate students may take a period of up to a total of 12 work weeks within any 12 month period for a parental leave of absence by submitting a Graduate Student Request for Leave Form to their Department Chair at least two weeks prior to the requested leave date. [link to COH form] If a student is receiving an assistantship, a leave of absence may result in termination of that position depending on the specifics of the internal or external grant that is funding the student. Students who are funded by grants external to The University of Utah must follow the rules of the granting agency with respect to absences from academic and research work. If the leave begins before a semester ends, incompletes for course work are possible if the student has completed at least 80% of the coursework before the end of the semester.

Students who wish to discontinue their studies for one or more semesters (other than summer term) must complete a Graduate School [Request for Leave of Absence Form](#).

[<https://gradschool.utah.edu/graduate-catalog/registration/>] The form must be approved and signed by the Supervisory Committee Chair and Department Chair and then forwarded to the Dean of The Graduate School for approval. Requests for leaves of absence may be granted for up to one year for circumstances including parental leave to care for a newborn or newly adopted child.

Graduate students who experience a medical condition associated with their pregnancy and need accommodations recommended by their medical provider should contact the University's Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will work with the student, cognizant faculty, and administration, to determine what accommodations are reasonable and effective. [link to Title IX site]

If a student has health insurance during the semester in which eligibility requirements were met, the policy would be in effect until it expires. After that point the student has the option to enroll in the Continuation Plan. The Enrollment Form is located at www.uhcrs.com/utah.

Following are the typical steps taken in consultation with the Department Chair to determine accommodations/parental leave:

1. Submit written request for accommodations to the Department Chair, meet with him/her, together with the Principal Investigator of the student's funding mechanism (if applicable).
2. If leave of absence is needed, submit Graduate Student Request for Leave Form to Chair.
3. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the Department Chair, the student may appeal by meeting with the Dean of the College.
4. If the student feels she or he has been discriminated against the student may contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. <http://oeo.utah.edu/about-us/faq/>
5. If extenuating circumstances occur that require a longer leave of absence, the student can submit a request for extension of the leave to the Department Chair. A leave of absence longer than one year requires approval from the Graduate School, as noted above.

Synthetic Chemistry Lab Accommodation link: Options that may need to be considered include computer work, spectroscopy, library work, review and paper writing, working on graduate requirements such as seminars, proposals, second-year report, etc.

Graduate Student Request for Leave Form to be created after policy is approved by College Council.