

<b>Parental Leave Procedure</b>	
<b>Enabling Policy Statement; Executive Owner; Approval Route:</b>	Our Colleagues – Chief Operating Officer – Operations Committee
<b>Is the Procedure for internal use only (Non- disclosable) ?</b>	Disclosable
<b>Associated Policy Statements:</b>	N/A
<b>Authorised Owner:</b>	Human Resources Director
<b>Authorised Co-ordinator:</b>	Associate Director (People Services)
<b>Effective date:</b>	04 July 2024
<b>Due date for full review:</b>	04 July 2027
<b>Sub documentation:</b>	N/A

### Approval History

<b>Version</b>	<b>Reason for review</b>	<b>Approval Route</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.0	Migration to the POPP structure	Operations Committee	04 July 2024
1.1	Changed to a Day 1 right under the Employment Rights Act 2025 from 06 April 2026	Operations Committee – Chair’s Approval	01 April 2026

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The University recognises that many of its employees have obligations relating to children which require a balancing of work and family caring responsibilities. The University confirms its commitment to supporting its employees in these circumstances and to encouraging an appropriate environment of support and understanding.
- 1.2. The purpose of this document is to establish a clear procedure for the consideration of a request from staff with children to undertake a period of unpaid absence to enable them to spend time with their family.

## 2. Scope and Exceptions to the Procedure

- 2.1. This procedure relates to all categories of staff i.e. full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary from day one of employment who have a child under 18 years of age.
- 2.2. It should be noted that there are no changes to ordinary unpaid parental leave as a result of the introduction of shared parental leave.
- 2.3. The University has other related procedures that may be of interest to its employees or their partners who have or are expecting children.
  - Flexible Working Procedure
  - Adoption, Foster to Adopt and Surrogacy Leave Procedure
  - Shared Parental Leave Procedure
  - Paternity and Partner's Leave Procedure
- 2.4. Parental Leave may be requested in relation to any child, either born, or adopted. The child does not have to be physically living with the parent in question.
- 2.5. The right to Parental Leave applies to mothers and fathers, or to any individual who has obtained formal parental responsibility for a child under the Children's Act or its Scottish equivalent.
- 2.6. For the purposes of Parental Leave, a disabled child is one for whom Disability Living Allowance is awarded.
- 2.7. This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. It may be amended from time to time with appropriate consultation with recognised trade union representatives.

## 3. Definitions and Terminology

- 3.1. **Parental Leave** Leave which is taken in order to care for a child, to make arrangements for the child or to enable the parent to spend more time with the child. It might include:
  - spending more time with the child in the early years
  - accompanying a child during a stay in hospital
  - checking out new schools
  - settling a child into new childcare arrangements
  - enabling the family to spend more time together, e.g. taking the child to stay with grandparents

## 4. Procedural Principles

### 4.1. Entitlement

- 4.1.1 The maximum Parental Leave entitlement per child is 18 weeks or pro rata for part-time employees. Parental Leave is a right per parent and the 18-week maximum period applies to all employees regardless of where they worked when they first received it. The University will therefore seek confirmation of Parental Leave already granted to new employees by their previous employers. It will also advise future employers, upon request, of the amount of Parental Leave taken during an individual's employment with the University.
- 4.1.2 Parental Leave may be taken at any time up until the child's 18th birthday. If the child has been adopted, Parental Leave may be taken from the date of placement up to the child's 18th birthday. It may only be taken after this time if it has been subject to postponement by the University.
- 4.1.3 Parental Leave may be taken in blocks or multiples of one week, subject to a maximum of four weeks' leave in a year. In this respect, for full-time employees, any part of a week will count as a whole week. Therefore, if a full-time employee takes only 3 days' Parental Leave in a particular week, and works the rest of the week, this will count as a full week of Parental Leave entitlement.
- 4.1.4 In the case of a disabled child, Parental Leave may be taken a day at a time, subject to a maximum of four weeks' leave in a year.
- 4.1.5 A "year" is defined as a 12-month period, which starts from the date, or its anniversary, of when the employee becomes entitled to take Parental Leave in respect of an individual child.
- 4.1.6 Parental Leave will be unpaid leave.
- 4.1.7 Parental Leave is an individual entitlement and cannot be transferred between parents.

### 4.2 Notice Provision

- 4.2.1 Applications for Parental Leave should be made at least 21 days before the leave is required. However, if more than two weeks' leave is being requested then the length of notice must be at least twice the length of the Leave required.
- 4.2.2 In the case of a prospective father wanting to take leave when his child is born (in lieu of or in addition to Paternity Leave), an application for Parental leave must be submitted at least 21 days before the expected week of childbirth or as soon as is reasonably practical.
- 4.2.3 Similarly, in the case of a prospective adopter wishing to take leave when the adoption takes place (in lieu of or in addition to Adoption Leave), an application for Parental Leave must be submitted at least 21 days before the week in which placement for adoption is expected to occur, or as soon as is reasonably practicable.

### 4.3 Postponement

- 4.3.1 The University reserves the right to postpone Parental Leave approval for up to 6 months where this is necessary due to the business needs of the area in which the applicant works. In these circumstances, the employee will be advised in writing, within 7 days of the reason for the postponement and will be consulted about alternative dates for the

postponed leave to take place.

- 4.3.2 There is, however, no right to postpone Parental Leave that is requested to take place immediately after a child is born, or at the time when the child is placed with a family for adoption.
- 4.3.3 If postponement takes the period of leave beyond the child's 18th birthday, the employee retains the right to take leave after this date.

#### **4.4 Procedure for Requesting Parental Leave**

- 4.4.1 An employee who wishes to apply for Parental Leave should complete the form in the appendix of this document and submit it to their HR Representative through their line manager. In the case of a disabled child, evidence of the award of the Disability Living Allowance will also be required.
- 4.4.2 The Line Manager will formally confirm approval or otherwise the Parental Leave request both to the individual employee and to the appropriate HR representative.
- 4.4.3 An application can be made by the mother, father, adopter or guardian of such a child provided they have, or expect to have, responsibility for the upbringing of the child.

#### **4.5 Terms and Conditions of Employment During Parental Leave**

- 4.5.1 An individual who is on formally approved Parental Leave remains fully employed on their employment contract with the University unless this contract is terminated by either the University or the employee. This means that the employee continues to benefit from their statutory employment rights.
- 4.5.2 Whilst on Parental Leave, employees remain bound by their contractual terms, especially those relating to notice periods and confidentiality.
- 4.5.3 A period of absence on Parental Leave does not affect entitlement to paid annual leave.

#### **4.6 Pension Arrangements**

Note: the following paragraphs are correct at the time of publication of this Scheme. The information may, however, be changed at any time by either of the respective occupational pension schemes and should always be checked with the University Pensions team.

- 4.6.1 **University of Surrey Pension Plan:** any period of unpaid Parental Leave is treated as unpaid leave of absence. The employee may elect to increase their contributions on their return to work to make up for any loss of payments while they were not contributing. Where this election is made the employer will also pay their standard contributions for the same period.
- 4.6.2 **Surrey County Council Pension Scheme:** any period of unpaid Parental Leave is treated as unpaid leave of absence. This leave of absence will not count for pension purposes unless the member makes an election to pay additional pension contributions to buy the lost pension. Where the election to buy the lost pension is made within 30 days of returning to work the cost is shared between the member and the employer. If the election is made after 30 days of returning to work the full cost to buy the lost pension is made by the member.

- 4.6.3 **Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) Ltd:** any period of unpaid Parental Leave will be treated as a period of temporary absence. Membership of USS will be suspended for this period. The employee may elect to pay contributions following their return to work. This will mean they will be credited with pension scheme membership in full.
- 4.6.4 **PensionPlus Salary Exchange Scheme:** If by taking unpaid leave your salary reduces below the National Minimum Wage or the NIC Lower Earnings Limit, employees will automatically be suspended from the PensionPlus Scheme. Employees will be automatically reinstated once their earnings meet or exceed these levels.
- 4.6.5 Questions should be directed to the University's Pensions department by email at [pensions@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:pensions@surrey.ac.uk)

#### 4.7 Returning to Work after Parental Leave

- 4.7.1 An employee is guaranteed the right to return to the same job as before if the Parental Leave:
- is for a period of 4 weeks or less; or
  - is for a period of 4 weeks or less and follows other statutory leave but not additional adoption or maternity leave
- 4.7.2 An employee is guaranteed the right to return either to the same job or, if this is not practicable, to a similar job which has the same or better status, terms and conditions as the original job where Parental Leave:
- is for a period exceeding 4 weeks; or
  - is for a period exceeding 4 weeks and precedes a period of additional adoption or maternity leave

#### 4.8 Protection from Detriment and Dismissal

- 4.8.1 Employees taking Parental Leave will not be subject to any detriment on the grounds that they have taken such leave or have sought to take such leave. Neither will they be dismissed on these grounds.

#### 4.9 Other Information

- 4.9.1 It is possible that employees may be able to claim social security benefits whilst on Parental Leave.
- 4.9.2 Employees on Parental Leave who are on low incomes may become eligible for Housing and Council Tax Benefit, or an increase in the benefits which they are already receiving. Further advice may be obtained from the local authority.
- 4.9.3 Working Families Tax Credit or Disabled Persons Tax Credit are unaffected by periods of Parental Leave.

### 5. Governance Requirements

#### 5.1. Implementation: Communication Plan

The procedure was embedded when first published and is available on SurreyNet (HR Procedures Page) for all staff to access.

#### 5.2. Implementation: Training Plan

The procedure was embedded when first published. Further support will be provided to colleagues implementing the procedure when required.

### 5.3. Review

This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if required by a change in legislation or practice.

## 5.4. Legislative Context and Higher Education Sector Guidance or Requirements

### 6.4.1 Applicable Legislation

This procedure complies with the following legislation.

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Employment Act 2002
- Work and Families Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) Act 2023

### 5.5. Sustainability

This policy supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG's) in the following ways.

- SDG 3 Good Health and Well-Being – enabling a significant work/life balance for staff.
- SDG 5 Gender Equality – enabling staff to parent, whilst maintaining their work roles where required or desired
- SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth – supporting parents to take parental leave in various forms and to remain economically active.
- SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities – offering opportunities for staff who may find it difficult to work and provide childcare.

## 6. Stakeholder Engagement and Equality Impact Assessment

6.1. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed on 01 May 2024 and is held by the Authorised Co-ordinator.

6.2. Stakeholder Consultation was completed, as follows:

Stakeholder	Nature of Engagement	Request EB Approval (Y/N)	Date	Name of Contact
Governance	Review of Version 1.0	N	19/02/2024	Kelley Padley
H&S	Review of Version 1.0	N	06/02/2024	Matt Purcell
Sustainability	Review of Version 1.0	N	05/04/2024	Martin Wiles

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Parental Leave Application

<b><i>Your dates for unpaid parental leave</i></b>	
I wish to take unpaid parental leave because	.....
I want to be away from work from	.....
Until	.....
Total number of days	.....
<b><i>Your declaration</i></b>	
Surname	.....
First name	.....
Employee Number:	.....
I confirm I am eligible for this leave	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature	.....
Date	.....
For parents of disabled children making their first application for Parental Leave: I enclose evidence of the award of Disability Living Allowance <tick box>	