

Graduate/Professional Student Childbirth & Family Leave Policy

TULANE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS DOCUMENT: Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

COORDINATING DEPARTMENTS: n/a

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WHO NEEDS TO KNOW THIS GUIDANCE: Faculty, Staff, and Students in Graduate Programs; School Administrators

WEBSITE ADDRESS FOR THIS GUIDANCE: <http://tulane.edu/ogps/policies.cfm>

Tulane University recognizes the importance of balancing the family and educational needs of new parents and those expecting a baby or the adoption of a child. We are committed to supporting all of our graduate and professional students during their academic careers and to finding ways to accommodate these life events.

This Policy establishes minimum standards for the accommodation of the demands placed on a woman¹ by pre-term labor (as specified by a healthcare provider), late-stage pregnancy, childbirth, and post-natal recuperation. It also extends to parents who adopt a child up to the age of five years. It is expected that advisors, academic staff, and departmental leaders will work with care, consideration, and creativity to provide more than this minimum, according to the particular circumstances of the student.

For their part, new parents or students “stopping the clock” of their education for childbirth or family leave should keep the lines of communication with their departments open. Once they fully return to their graduate work, the student should be careful to demonstrate to their advisors that they are academically engaged and making progress on coursework and research. It is important for pregnant students to review the details of this entire Policy, as well as the University’s Planned Educational Leave Policy, and to discuss her options with her department.

International students should discuss with the staff at the Office of International Students and Scholars the impact of this decision on their visa status and related requirements.

Childbirth Leave

All students who anticipate giving birth during the academic semester or during the period covered by financial support (e.g., stipends, grants, etc.) are eligible for a Childbirth Leave. A Childbirth Leave maintains active graduate/professional student status throughout the leave period, so that housing, insurance, and other rights and privileges of enrolled students remain ongoing.

¹ Tulane recognizes that transgender students who do not identify as female may experience pregnancy and childbirth. This policy is applicable in full to these students as well.

A Childbirth Leave covers pre-term labor (as specified by a healthcare provider), late-stage pregnancy, childbirth, and post-natal recuperation. A Leave lasts eight weeks from the qualifying event and extends academic milestones, including candidacy requirements (including qualifying exams, dissertation, thesis, and coursework), by one academic semester. It also assures that, if the mother is receiving financial support, that support will be maintained through the period of the accommodation.

Students who are planning to take this Leave should initiate discussions with the [Goldman Center for Student Accessibility](#) more than four months before the anticipated birth. After doing so, they will then inform their advisor(s) and director of graduate study at least four months prior to the anticipated birth in order to make preparations for identifying and arranging the childbirth accommodation period. This will provide the time necessary to rearrange teaching duties for those students supported by teaching assistantships or to adjust laboratory or other research schedules.

Family Leave (Paternity, Co-parenting, Fostering and Adoption)

Graduate/professional students at Tulane may take a paid family leave of absence for eight weeks for anticipating or recently experiencing the birth or adoption or fostering of a child or for childcare.

Accommodations that apply to both those taking Childbirth and Family Leaves

Maintaining Full-Time Status

One of the purposes of the Policy is to make it possible for women to maintain their full-time student status so that they continue accumulating credits toward the degree and to avoid triggering any interruptions in their education programs and activities, including on-campus housing, insurance coverage, eligibility for student loan repayment, and deferment of student loan repayment. By remaining full-time students, the visa status of international students is not affected.

While it is usually better for students to remain enrolled full-time, in some cases, depending on the coursework appropriate to the stage of the academic program, part-time enrollment may be more appropriate. This will require careful consultation, in advance, with graduate advisors, the department or program's director of graduate studies, and school graduate admissions officer to ensure that the implications for academic progress, visa status, loan eligibility and deferment, etc., have been thoroughly investigated.

University Stipends and Funding

Student parents on full-time status who receive stipends from their school or other University funds are entitled to draw support while on leave for eight weeks during the academic year. If the student parent is a teaching assistant, their department will fund a replacement teacher for the affected period. During the eight-week period, students supported by teaching assistantships may choose to continue in some limited capacity (e.g., grading, preparing course materials, or other non-intensive duties), in order to finish out an academic quarter, but cannot be required to do so. With advance planning, most research

assistantship assignments can similarly be adjusted to accommodate childbirth. Students in master's and doctoral programs will need to coordinate the fulfillment of requirements with their advisors, department chairs, or directors of graduate study. If the student anticipates needing more than eight weeks of paid leave, they may find that arranging an unpaid leave of absence for a semester is the best solution; please see Planned Educational Leave Policy for more information on these leaves.

External Funding

Some student parents receive external grants or fellowships. Most granting agencies provide for a short period of reduced activity due to health or personal issues. Students who are supported by grants or fellowships external to Tulane must adhere to the rules of the granting agency with respect to absences from academic and research work. If the granting agency requires suspension of fellowship benefits during the eight-week period, students will be eligible for substitute payment from their department.