

GRADUATE SCHOOL CHILDBIRTH AND ADOPTION ACCOMMODATION POLICY

RATIONALE

The following policy is intended to assist graduate students who are new parents. It is a supplement to the six week medical separation policy. Unlike the medical separation policy that covers any medical condition, this accommodation policy addresses a single set of circumstances: new parenthood. It is not a leave of absence; it is *an accommodation*. Students maintain their standing as students and are eligible for financial support.

Departments are encouraged to work out specific arrangements with students, on a case-by-case basis, within the broad framework of this policy.

ELIGIBILITY

All full-time students in good academic standing **who are primary and full-time caregivers** of a newborn child or a child less than 5 years old newly placed in the home are eligible. Students must have completed one semester and have been registered and enrolled for at least another semester prior to the request. Students may make use of the policy up to two times provided that at least one semester of full-time enrollment occurs between requests. Parents who are not the primary and full-time caregiver may apply for a leave of absence, but are not eligible for accommodation.

ACCOMMODATION IN COMPARISON TO LEAVE

This accommodation is intended to provide relief from full-time responsibilities while providing continuing financial support. It differs from a leave of absence in three ways.

First, in a leave of absence students are relieved of all responsibilities. If a student wishes to devote full-time care to a newborn or a newly adopted child, the student should request a leave of absence. Under this accommodation, students are relieved of **full-time** graduate studies/duties (such as teaching and research), of official academic exams (e.g., oral candidacy exams, master's comprehensives, etc), and of coursework deadlines for **one semester** (16 weeks) during or immediately following the semester in which the birth or adoption occurs.¹ The choice of the semester is the student's. Students are expected to register and enroll full time and to remain engaged, if at a reduced level. Departments are encouraged to be as flexible as possible with the student seeking accommodation. This student's assignments should allow for maximum flexibility in his/her schedule during the first 6 weeks after the

¹ Students may take incompletes in courses or take a reduced course load; departments may still define these students as full-time, despite the credit hour reduction.

child arrives. The amount of engagement and reduction in workload during the entire accommodation period (both prior to and after the birth or adoption of a child) should be specified **in writing** prior to the onset of the accommodation period. **This agreement should then be approved and signed by the student, the student's adviser, the departmental DGS and the chair or the graduate studies committee, and sent to the Associate Dean of Students in the Graduate School for review. In the event that the student and department cannot reach a decision about an appropriate workload, the Associate Dean of Students in the Graduate School should be consulted. The details of the agreement may be re-assessed and revised after childbirth or adoption.** Accommodated students should submit a brief written progress report to their advisers at the end of the accommodation period.

Second, a leave of absence stops the student's eligibility clock; the accommodation extends it. In the case of a leave, a student still has eight years to fulfill all requirements and must meet all of the normal program and Graduate School deadlines. In the case of accommodation the student's academic eligibility clock is extended by a semester, effectively adding a semester to the student's eligible time to meet all degree requirements.

Third, students who elect to take a leave of absence forego financial support from the University. Students who elect to take accommodation will continue to receive financial support (see below) and the health insurance subsidy.

If, after the end of the accommodation period, the student wishes to have more time, he/she can apply for a leave of absence. The clock will stop, but so will funding. Students on leave may still enroll in the health insurance plan at their own expense.

FUNDING

Students who are fully-funded and who have not yet completed their 5th year of study will continue to be supported financially. They will continue to receive a stipend at the same level for the length of the accommodation (see below for possible exceptions), receive a tuition scholarship, and receive the health insurance subsidy from the Graduate School. Terminal master's students, and students who have completed their 5th year of study, are eligible for the accommodation only, not for funding under this policy. Departments and advisers may provide funding in these cases if there are available resources.

There are two important limits: the total number of years of funding will not be extended and funding is for the academic year only.

- ✚ Teaching Assistants will be relieved of all teaching duties.² As stated above, they must continue to be intellectually engaged in the activities of the department and their research. Details of this engagement should be worked out in writing between the student and the department prior to the start of the accommodation.

² Those students for whom serving as a TA is a requirement must fulfill the requirement in a later semester.

- ✚ Students on research grants who wish to continue to receive full funding must follow the following guidelines. If the student is funded by a grant, the level of support is determined by the granting agency. If the student is expected to devote 50% or 75% of his/her former working hours to his/her research, the grant will pay 50% or 75% of her former stipend, **assuming he/she works at full capacity during those reduced hours**. The Graduate School will make up the difference between what the grant pays and the former stipend, up to 50% of the former stipend. If the grant funding is reduced below 50%, the Graduate School will still pay 50%.

Details of the final arrangement should be worked out in writing between the student and the department prior to the start of the accommodation.

- ✚ If a student is funded by an external fellowship, the level of support is determined by the foundation. If the fellowship is reduced or eliminated as a result of a new child, the Graduate School will fund up to 50% of the student's former stipend under the fellowship. Questions should be directed to the Graduate School.

Parental relief cannot be combined with other funding.

Notification: Eligible students must notify their adviser, Director of Graduate Studies and the Associate Dean of Students in the Graduate School of their intent to use the accommodation policy at least 60 days prior to the expected date of childbirth or adoption. A form will be placed on the Graduate School website for this purpose.