

St John's College Framework on parental leave

1. Aim

The aim of this framework is to support pregnant students and students on maternity, paternity or adoption leave and to ensure their fair and consistent treatment.

2. Scope

The College's framework is intended to be read in conjunction with the [University policy on Student Maternity, Extended Paternity and Adoption Leave](#).

The College substantially follows the University's policy, under which a student giving birth may apply for maternity leave, typically for a full year, and the other parent a shorter form of leave referred to in the University documentation as 'paternity leave'. Different arrangements are made for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, and postgraduate research students. There are also arrangements for adoption leave.

In cases which do not fall under these standard arrangements, student parents are advised to contact the College for advice.

3. Application for maternity leave

The University policy clearly differentiates maternity leave from suspension of status for medical or disciplinary reasons. It aims to ensure consistent and fair treatment of pregnant students and new mothers and provides new mothers with the right to a protected period of leave after the birth (the term 'mother' refers to an individual who gives birth).

a. Undergraduate students

Students who give birth may choose to suspend their studies, normally for no less than one year, before recommencing their studies, usually at the same point at which they suspended. Where possible, the leave period should be timed to take account of the academic requirements of the course and should commence at the end rather than part way through a term.

Applications for maternity leave will be dealt with under the College Policy on undergraduate suspension of studies (available [here](#)). Applications must be supported by a MATB1 form available from a midwife.

Students should notify their Tutor and the Academic Office of their pregnancy no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth. Earlier notification may be necessary in some cases, for example where a student works in a potentially hazardous environment.

b. Postgraduate Taught Students

Students on postgraduate taught courses who give birth may choose to suspend their studies, normally for no less than one year, before recommencing their studies. Where possible, the leave period should be timed to take account of the academic requirements of the course and should commence at the end rather than part way through a term.

Students should notify the Academic Office as well as their academic Department of their pregnancy no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth. Earlier notification may be necessary in some cases, for example where a student works in a potentially hazardous environment.

Postgraduate taught students should submit a University application for suspension of status for maternity, extended paternity or adoption leave on the [GSO.17b](#) form.

Applications must be supported by a MATB1 form available from a midwife. Within College, this will be considered on behalf of the relevant College Officer, usually the Senior Tutor.

c. Postgraduate Research Students

Students who give birth during their period of registration for a postgraduate research degree are automatically entitled to suspend their studies for up to 3 terms (1 year) of maternity leave. The timing of maternity leave will depend on a number of factors, including term dates and the nature of the student's research work. Such leave is calculated separately from the 6 terms of ordinary suspension of study that may be permitted. Terms of maternity leave do not have to be taken consecutively but do have to be taken within 12 months of the birth and any unused terms may not be taken at a later date

Students who hold Research Council or other sponsoring body awards must align their periods of University and funding body leave. Where there is a conflict of interest between the two policies, the sponsoring body's policy will be followed in relation to the area(s) of conflict.

Students should notify the Academic Office as well as their supervisor and academic Department of their pregnancy no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth. Earlier notification may be necessary in some cases, for example where a student works in a potentially hazardous environment.

Postgraduate research students should submit a University application for suspension of status for maternity, extended paternity or adoption leave on the [GSO.17b](#) form. Within College, this will be considered by the relevant College Officer, usually the Senior Tutor. Applications must be supported by a MATB1 form available from a midwife.

4. Paternity leave

The University uses the terms 'paternity leave' and 'student fathers' in its documentation. Here we use 'partner' for the latter.

a. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students

Partners may take up to 2 weeks' (10 working days) ordinary paternity leave. Ordinary paternity leave cannot start before the birth and must end within 56 days of the birth. Where possible, the leave period should be timed to take account of the academic requirements of the course. If ordinary paternity leave coincides with an examination period students should apply for exam excusal or other appropriate changes to assessment expectations in the usual way (see [here](#) for further information).

Partners are also eligible to apply for a longer period of suspension, in line with the arrangements made for maternity leave. This will normally last one full year so that the student may recommence studying at the point at which they suspended.

b. Postgraduate research students

Partners may take up to 2 weeks' (10 working days) ordinary paternity leave. Research Council funded students are entitled to 2 weeks (10 working days) paid ordinary paternity leave on full stipend. Ordinary paternity leave cannot start before the birth and must end within 56 days of the birth. In line with the policy adopted by the Research Councils, this leave is not taken as a suspension of status and the submission date is not adjusted. Where possible, the leave period should be timed to take account of the academic requirements of the student's research.

Applications for suspension for an extended period of paternity or shared parental leave of up to 3 terms will be considered, with account being taken, where appropriate, of the

sponsoring or funding body's policy. See further in paragraph 10 below. Where the College is the sole funder, advice should be sought at the earliest stage from the Senior Tutor

5. Adoption leave

The College aims to ensure that its arrangements for adoption leave parallel those for maternity and paternity leave, as under the [University policy](#).

6. Same sex couples

In cases which do not fall under the arrangements for adoption leave, the woman who gives birth to the child will be eligible to take maternity leave which her partner will be eligible to take paternity leave.

7. Overseas students

Under the terms of the student visa, overseas students who suspend their status may be required to return to their home countries while suspended depending on the length of the suspension. They would then need a new Confirmation for Acceptance for Studies (CAS) and visa to resume their studies. Students should consult the Student Immigration team for advice on immigration and visas (email student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk).

8. Access to facilities while on parental leave

Undergraduate and postgraduate students on parental leave will retain their University cards and access to University SSO account, giving access to email, the University's electronic resources, and University libraries.

Students on parental leave are not expected to be studying and therefore are not entitled to access to the academic facilities of the College. Students on parental leave may, however, continue to have access to the College as a social space and will retain the ability to book meals in hall.

New mothers may not attend the College for work purposes for two weeks after giving birth.

The MCR and JCR may offer associate membership of their common rooms to students on parental leave for the period of their suspension.

9. Planning for return to study

Undergraduate and postgraduate students on parental leave are encouraged to maintain occasional contact with their tutor or their supervisor so that arrangements may be made for their return to study.

Prior to a student's planned return to study from an extended period of parental leave, arrangements will be made via the Academic Office for timely discussion of arrangements to support a student's successful return to College and study. This may include provision of advice on adjustments to mode of study.

Postgraduate research students should consult the [University policy](#) and contact their Department for arrangements for Keeping in Touch and return to study.

If ill-health prevents a student from returning to work after completing their maximum period of maternity leave, further suspension of status should be sought in the usual way for ill health and notifications made accordingly (e.g. to the funding body). If a student is unable to return to work due to the illness of their child, they should seek a further

suspension of status in the usual way, if necessary by application to the Education Committee.

10. Financial support

Postgraduate students in receipt of a scholarship intending to take a period of parental leave should seek early advice from their funding body as to the provision of funded leave. In general, the College will seek to align its scholarship arrangements with those agreed with the University departments and external funding bodies. Postgraduate students who are fully funded by the College may apply to the College for up to six months paid maternity leave and up to six months suspension of award. Application may be made to the College for funding of shared parental leave. Paid and unpaid leave periods should be taken consecutively.

On-course students who are experiencing unforeseen financial hardship are encouraged to speak in the first instance to the Fellow for Welfare regarding an application to the College Financial Assistance Fund.

Home/EU students should ensure that they have applied for all of the government funding for which they may be entitled. This may include child benefit and Parent's Learning Allowance <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/assistance/hardship>

Students may also apply to the University's [centrally administered hardship fund](#).

11. Accommodation

Pregnant students living in single College accommodation are advised to contact the Accommodation Office to arrange for a risk assessment of the accommodation to be carried out, and if necessary, may have to move to more appropriate accommodation.

It is not possible for a child to be accommodated in single accommodation.

Students are advised to contact the Accommodation Office at the earliest opportunity regarding the potential availability of family accommodation. It should be noted that students who have suspended their status are not usually expected to be resident in College. Should the new parent wish to continue to breastfeed on return to studies, a suitable private space and opportunity to express breast milk can then be planned, particularly where accommodation is not based on-site. A secure, clean fridge, in which to store milk will be considered.

12. Childcare

Bainton Road nursery is a purpose-built facility that caters for children from 6 months to pre-school age <https://www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/college-life/bainton-road-nursery/>. It gives priority to the children of students and employees of St John's. Students interested in requesting a place for their child(ren) in the Bainton Road Nursery should contact the Nursery

Information about the University's childcare services, including nurseries, play-schemes and help with the cost of childcare, is available from the Childcare Services website: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare/>.

13. Sources of further advice

Students are encouraged to seek informal discussion and advice from their tutors/college advisers, the Academic Registrar, the Graduate Officer, members of the College welfare team including the Head of Wellbeing and Fellows for Welfare and Graduates, or the Senior Tutor. Postgraduate students should also consult their Department.

University information for student parents can be found here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/childcare?wssl=1>

OUSU may be able to offer advice for student parents, <https://www.oxfordsu.org/advice-wellbeing/>

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