

Expectant and new parents guide

Stage 1 – Preparing for parenthood



So where do you begin?

There's a lot to consider before a baby or child arrives while you manage work and other commitments.

This section includes relatable topics to assist you with preparing for the baby or child's arrival.

It includes information, tips, online resources and checklists to help you with planning and making informed decisions.

Acknowledgment of Country

ACU acknowledges and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways. We recognise their spiritual and ongoing cultural connection to Country. We respectfully acknowledge Elders past and present and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.

A Prayer for Parents

Loving God,
You are the giver of all we possess, the source of all of our blessings.
We thank and praise you.

Thank you for the gift of children.

Help us to set boundaries for them,
and yet encourage them to explore.
Give us the strength and courage to treat each day as a fresh start.

May our children come to know you, the one true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

May your Holy Spirit help them to grow in faith, hope, and love,
so they may know peace, truth, and goodness.

May their ears hear your voice,
May their eyes see your presence in all things.
May their lips proclaim your word.
May their hearts be your dwelling place.
May their hands do works for charity.
May their feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord.

Amen.

Sharing your news with colleagues

Welcoming a new addition to your family is personal and it's for you to decide the best time to share your news at work. A confidential conversation with your supervisor early on is recommended so they can support you and provide guidance through this initial phase. Each person's experience is different, and communicating openly will ensure your supervisor understands and accommodates your needs, such as applying for leave, appointments and check-ups, and any workplace adjustments that may be required.

Staff tip: If you are applying for parental leave, the [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#) advises that no less than 10 weeks' notice is required or as early as practicable for the adoption/permanent placement of a child. Get to know your parental leave entitlements at the 'Leave offerings' section of this guide.

Attending appointments while working

As part of your preparation for parenthood, you may have to attend medical appointments and health consults; appointments to prepare for adoption and fostering; or be a partner wanting to attend antenatal appointments, which may require time off work.

There are generous leave provisions set out in the [ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement](#) and [ACU Personal Leave Policy](#) that you can utilise. Speak with your supervisor about any upcoming appointments so you can confirm your attendance ahead of time and apply for the applicable leave.

Supervisor tip: Be proactive and engage with the staff member about their plans. Know what leave provisions are available and offer this information upfront as they may have single or regular appointments to attend. Being supportive will create a positive experience for the staff member's parent journey.

Pregnancy at work

Your individual experience as an expectant parent can require adjustments to your working arrangements to ensure you maintain your wellbeing during conception and/or pregnancy. Discuss your support needs with your supervisor which could include the following options:

- New or changed flexible work arrangements, such as reducing your work fraction, working remotely or a change in start and finish times.
- Personal leave due to pregnancy related illness.

- Adjustments to accommodate any physical hazards or risks that may impact being able to work onsite or remotely which may require workplace adjustments or transfer to another role for the duration of the pregnancy.

More information about support during pregnancy is available in Section 5 of the [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#).

ACU's Employee Assistance Program is available to you and your immediate family members to access at **no cost**. [Acacia EAP](#) provides a 24-hour confidential counselling service and health and wellbeing resources about subjects including [Perinatal Mental Health](#). Contact **Acacia EAP** on **1300 364 273** or online.

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Invest time in looking after your health and wellbeing throughout your pregnancy or parenthood journey by maintaining a healthy diet, exercising, and spending time with family and friends. Seek independent advice from your medical or health practitioner on a plan that is right for you.

The university is committed to providing a safe and respectful working environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying, as these behaviours can impact psychological and overall wellbeing. Speak with your supervisor or with People and Capability if you experience unwanted workplace behaviour at any stage of your parenting journey.

Supervisor tip: Establish regular catch ups with your staff member and determine if any support at work, reasonable adjustments or management of hazards at work are needed.

Unplanned cessation of pregnancy or leave

Sometimes things don't go as planned. If you and your partner experience the loss of a child during pregnancy, at the time of the birth or in the period after the birth, leave is available during this difficult time. Every person's experience and needs are different, and you are encouraged to speak confidentially with your supervisor or People and Capability to seek support and guidance.

Leave options in the [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#) and [ACU Compassionate Leave Policy](#) include:
Before commencing parental leave:

- For continuing and fixed term staff - 10 days personal leave in addition to any existing personal leave entitlement; and any existing recreation (annual) leave and/or long service leave.
- For casual or sessional staff - unpaid compassionate leave (pending eligibility).

After parental leave has commenced:

- For continuing and fixed term staff - leave type and number of weeks is set out in the [ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement](#).
- For continuing and fixed term staff - 2 days compassionate leave following the death of a member of an immediate family, household or relative.
- For casual or sessional staff - unpaid compassionate leave (pending eligibility).

Staff tip: It's important to look after yourself during this difficult time and to lean on your family, friends and social groups for support. You can access confidential independent counselling through Acacia EAP, speak to your GP or refer to Services Australia for support with [grief and loss](#). This short video from [Grief Australia](#) may resonate with how you feel right now and lets you know you're not alone.

Supervisor tip: It's important to be supportive during this difficult time, while at the same time respecting that people have different needs and ways of coping with grief. It is recommended you make contact via email or text in the first instance so the staff member can decide the level of support and or contact they'd prefer. Support offered could include:

- Checking on the staff member's wellbeing.
- Reminding them the EAP is available 24-hours a day to provide confidential support if it's needed.
- Providing practical assistance with issues such as leave entitlement queries or managing workload as required.

Leave offerings

In planning your leave, our generous leave provisions outlined in the [ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement](#), [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#) and [ACU Personal Leave Policy](#) should be explored before submitting an application for leave.

Eligibility for parental leave is based on you having responsibility as the primary carer of a child whether you are a birth parent, adopting parent or carer following permanent placement. Leave eligibility is based on your employment type and years of service. Other forms of paid leave may also be taken in conjunction with parental leave.

Leave type	Employment type	Length of completed paid continuous service	Paid leave entitlement	Unpaid leave entitlement	Further unpaid parental leave
Primary Carer	Continuing and fixed term staff	Less than 52 weeks	The greater of 8 weeks or 1 week for each completed calendar month of continuous service at ordinary salary rate	The remainder of the period up to 52 weeks	52 weeks
		52 weeks but less than 104 weeks	12 weeks at ordinary salary rate	40 weeks	52 weeks
		104 or more weeks	36 weeks at ordinary salary rate	16 weeks	52 weeks
Primary Carer	Casual and sessional staff	Engaged on a regular and systematic basis for a period of at least 12 months		52 weeks	52 weeks subject to written approvals
Foster Parent	Continuing and fixed term staff	Upon commencement	6 weeks at half pay on date of placement		
Second Parent	Continuing and fixed term staff	Upon commencement (to be taken within 12 weeks of birth, adoption or placement)	15 days at ordinary salary rate from date of birth, adoption or placement		
Couple	A couple is entitled to one paid leave entitlement, dependant on length of completed paid continuous service. Refer to the ACU Parental Leave Policy .				

Staff tips: To work within a six-week period of your expected birth due date, provide your supervisor with a medical certificate to confirm it is medically safe for you to continue working. Discuss your leave plans with your supervisor **before** submitting a leave application in Staff Connect.

For further information about leave provisions log a [Service Central](#) request to speak to a People and Capability Services Consultant. To calculate your leave balances at a future date, log into your [Staff Connect](#), select “Leave”, enter a future date and hit the ‘Predict’ button to view estimated leave balances.

Supervisor tips: Start workforce planning once you know the leave dates. Consider if the work can be absorbed by the existing team or if a backfill is required for the period of the leave. Where possible, fill via an internal expression of interest process. This can be promoted as a staff development opportunity (internal secondment, higher duties allowance, an identified career development goal from a team member’s performance plan) before sourcing an external candidate.

Establish how you will stay in contact with the staff member and how this will work (ie. method of contact, contact details and what information will be provided).

Government services and financial assistance

It’s important to start looking into Commonwealth government financial assistance and other supports to assist in managing your financial situation prior to birth or adoption. The [Raising kids](#) section of the [Services Australia](#) website is a good starting point.

Staff tip: Log into your MyGov account in [Services Australia](#) to research government services and financial support that you may be entitled to before the baby or child arrives.

External resources for Stage 1

- [Pregnancy Birth and Baby](#): Australian Government [Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
- [Raising kids](#): Site offers services and information to help with the cost of raising a child.
- [BabyCenter](#): Community based, resources on all these associated with parenthood.
- CatholicCare/ CentreCare: Loving care to all members of community. Locations: [Ballarat Diocese](#) | [Brisbane Diocese](#) | [Canberra Archdiocese](#) | [Melbourne Archdiocese](#) | [Parramatta Diocese](#) | [Sydney Archdiocese](#)
- [Gidget Foundation](#): Expectant parents from First Nations Communities.
- [Rainbow Families](#): Organisation supporting LGBTQ+ parents and their children.
- [Indigenous.gov.au](#): Supporting First Nations mothers and babies.
- [Parenting with a disability](#)
- [Raising Children](#): Including adoption, children living with autism or a disability.
- [Birthready](#): Geared for expecting dads and partners, community based.
- [PANDA](#): Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia site for families.
- [Intercountry Adoption Australia](#): Guide to overseas adoption.
- [Grief Australia](#): Providing help and fostering a greater recognition of grief.
- [Raising Children Network](#): New baby (home) checklist and things to consider.

Stage 1: Preparing for parenthood – staff checklist

Print out and tick (if needed) to plan your way through Stage 1

- Read and become familiar with the [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#)
- Educate yourself on leave available to attend appointments [ACU Personal Leave Policy](#)
- If applicable* - consult with my supervisor on any workplace support or adjustments I might need (*where relevant provide medical documentation to support your request*)
- Speak with my GP or another health practitioner for advice on a plan to maintain my own health and wellbeing
- If relevant* - Seek support from the Employee Assistance Program available for me and my immediate family members
- Run a leave calculation prediction in Staff Connect to check my available leave balances
- Submit my parental leave application with at least 10 weeks' notice of the birth or as early as practicable for the adoption/ permanent placement of a child, including certification to support the request
- Prepare a work handover document one to three months prior to leave
- Return work equipment (eg. laptop, mobile phone) to supervisor on last day of work
- Check what government assistance is available to me, including financial assistance
- Contact [Service Central](#) by call, live chat or log a service request for more information

Stage 1: Preparing for parenthood – supervisor checklist

Print out and tick (as needed) for a discussion with your staff member during Stage 1

- Organise initial meeting/ conversation with staff member about their leave plans and expected due date (pregnancy) or child adoption/ permanent placement date
- Become familiar with the [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#), [ACU Personal Leave Policy](#) and [ACU Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#)
- Start workforce planning and consider:
 1. If the work can be absorbed by the team (*assess current team workload and priorities*)
 2. Temporarily backfilling the position through:
 - (i) internal expression of interest process (*promote as a development opportunity*)
 - (ii) recruitment (*internal only opportunity for existing ACU staff or external advertising for candidate sourcing*)
- Consider any support or reasonable workplace adjustments needed during the pregnancy. The [WHS and wellbeing website](#) can provide more information or lodge a [Service Central](#) request for assistance from People and Capability
- Check that present workload/ tasks are manageable and assist where needed to prioritise work
- Set up regular check-in appointments with the staff member.
How are they doing? Do they require dates/ time off to attend appointments? Are there any hazards at work that need to be managed?
- 10 weeks before leave commences, ensure the parental leave application is submitted (with certification) and is approved (*for the adoption/ permanent placement of a child, application to be lodged as early as practicable*)
- The return to work date following parental leave is recorded in the calendar and to schedule contact with the staff member at least one month prior the return date
- Establish how contact/communication will occur with the staff member while they're on leave (*confirm their preferred method of email, mobile, text message, other*)
- One month before leave commences, meet with the staff member clarify work in train, how the work might be handed over and preparation of a handover document
- One week before leave commences, schedule a time to meet on work handover items, hold a celebratory morning tea, lunch or virtual event with the team to wish them well
- Last day before leave commences, catch up on any final work items and the return of any equipment

