

Supporting Parents at ACU Information Kit

Staff members who are taking on new parental responsibilities experience significant life changes – and these changes can impact on many areas of their life, work life being one of these.

ACU understands the importance of providing effective family-friendly workplace practices and practical support for parents that will enable positive outcomes for the staff member, their work area and the University. ACU is recognised for its generous and flexible parental leave provisions, which are considered to be leading practice. The University's leave provisions support birth parents, partners, adoptive/foster parents, and grandparents.

This Information Kit is designed to help staff members and their supervisors manage parental leave and the transition to new parental responsibilities. It contains three planning checklists; *Getting ready*, *Staying connected* and *Returning to work* which help to guide the conversation between a staff member and their nominated supervisor about organising parental leave. You can use this Information Kit to ensure a smooth transition between the phases of parental leave and returning to work.



Preparing for leave

During parental leave

Preparing to return to work

Planning for each phase

The staff member, their nominated supervisor and Human Resources all have key roles in managing the different phases of the parental leave process.

The nominated supervisor is responsible for the overall implementation and operation of parental leave arrangements in their work area. For further information or advice, the staff member and/or supervisor should visit Service Central where they can access knowledge articles and make a service request for further advice.

This Information Kit also contains a **Resources Factsheet** for staff and supervisors and a list of useful parenting websites.

Checklist 1: Getting ready

The key to a smooth transition from taking parental leave to returning to work is effective and ongoing communication between the staff member and their supervisor. The first step is to start planning early to make sure that all the necessary arrangements can be made.



Supervisor checklist

- Ensure you are familiar with the relevant policies and guidelines, such as the Parental Leave Policy, Flexible Working Arrangements Policy and Personal/Carers Leave Policy (please see the Resources Factsheet for more information)
- Visit Service Central if you require clarification regarding the Parental Leave Policy and entitlements before meeting with the staff member.
- Meet with the staff member to discuss their parental leave plans and the options for staying in touch while they are on parental leave.
- Diarise when to make contact and send information to the staff member as agreed.
- Consider how the staff member's work will be managed while they are on leave.
- Prepare transition for handover to the staff member/s filling the role or conducting work activities during the parental leave period.
- Be aware that in the last six weeks of pregnancy, fitness for work is a consideration.

Staff member checklist

- Once your adoption or pregnancy is confirmed, obtain and read a copy of the [Parental Leave Policy](#).
- Consider when you would like to (or need to) start your leave and ensure that you apply for it within the required timeframe. Providing as much notice as possible will assist in a smooth transition for your period of parental leave.
- Contact Service Central for assistance with completing your application for parental leave via Staff Connect, the Parental Leave Agreement (if applicable) and with the calculation of leave entitlements.
- Meet with your supervisor to discuss:
 - your plans for the dates of parental leave;
 - how your work will be managed while you are away;
 - your career development/work plan, including whether you would like to be considered for any career development activities or work unit planning days;
 - your preferred methods for staying in touch while on leave e.g. by phone, mail, email and the frequency of contact; and
 - your return to work options.
- Provide appropriate evidence to your supervisor, e.g. for a birth you should provide a medical certificate or for adoption you should provide written confirmation of adoption.
- If you need support before or during leave, you or members of your family can seek help from the Employee Assistance Program (please see the Resources Factsheet for more information).
- From the time you discuss parental leave with your supervisor, you should commence planning your handover of your workplan.

- Start investigating child care options. The ACU [Child Care Referral Service](#) can help with finding suitable childcare. There is also a resources factsheet included on the [Supporting parents at ACU](#) webpage which lists some websites that may assist you.
- Create a contingency plan should you need to leave work earlier than planned.
- Wellbeing considerations are important during pregnancy, but especially in the last six weeks. Consider your fitness for work and in consultation with your supervisor and doctor organise for adjustments to be made as necessary. For instance, exposure to chemicals, work-related lifting (like moving stationary boxes) may be done by other colleagues, and you can adjust your work station to ensure it is ergonomically correct (please see Resources Factsheet).
- Tidy up your workspace two weeks before leaving and prepare for a handover. Arrange for the handover of University equipment such as laptop and mobile phone.
- You retain access to your work emails whilst on parental leave.

Checklist 2: Staying connected

Parents can find the transition back to work much easier if they are given the opportunity to stay connected to their workplace whilst on parental leave. Staff can choose to stay connected with their work unit and the University while on parental leave in a number of ways. This ensures that they are kept informed about significant changes within their work unit, career development and/or advancement opportunities, University events and announcements. Staff should be given the opportunity to attend paid professional development activities and work unit planning days which is, as a principle, supported by legislation in the Federal Government's Paid Parental Leave Scheme. Staff should be invited to work unit celebratory and social events such as morning and afternoon teas, lunches and farewells.



During parental leave

Supervisor checklist

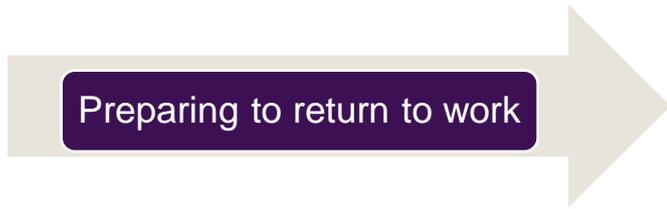
- Keep in contact as agreed with the staff member.
- Notify the staff member of any vacancies, learning and development opportunities, or major changes in the work area during the parental leave period.
- Invite the staff member to social events such as the Christmas party (attendance is of course optional).
- Make provisions to invite and include the staff member in development activities, work unit planning days, meetings, and training programs that will assist the staff member to keep their skills and knowledge up to date as relevant for their role. These days are arranged by agreement between the supervisor and the staff member and should be paid where the staff member is on unpaid parental leave.

Staff member checklist

- Communicate with the University if there are any changes in your leave requirements and respond to communication from the University in a reasonable timeframe.
- You will need to provide **at least two months'** written notice to your supervisor of your intention/non-intention to return to work following parental leave, so have a discussion with your supervisor before this time so you can plan for your return to work before your period of parental leave expires (and within minimum timelines). The discussion should include the following:
 - confirmation of your anticipated return to work date;
 - your role;
 - your proposed return to work plan;
 - orientation back into the workplace;
 - any special requirements you may have such as working flexible hours (e.g. for time to express/breastfeed);
 - whether you are requesting a variation to your hours of work; and
 - whether you are considering extended parental leave without pay or further unpaid parental leave (refer to Parental Leave Policy for further details).
- Formalise the arrangements by confirming them in writing to ensure that everyone is clear, and so you are providing the necessary two months' written notice to your supervisor. This can be amended once, by you giving four weeks' written notice.
- Confirm your childcare plans. The ACU [Child Care Referral Service](#) can assist you to find suitable childcare.
- Manage your own wellbeing prior to returning to work. The Resources Factsheet has a list of websites, programs and ACU policies that may assist you.

Checklist 3: Returning to work

There are a number of provisions at ACU that can help parents in organising their return to work and resources to help parents whilst at work.



Supervisor checklist

- Prepare for the staff member's return, which will be similar to the new starter process.
- Organise any handover or flexibility arrangements that will need to occur.
- Plan re-entry into the workplace with the staff member.
- If needed, take appropriate action to change the staff member's working arrangements, e.g. a request to vary form in Staff Connect for reduced hours.
- If the staff member is interested in taking extended parental leave without pay, as their supervisor you should discuss their plans with them and decide how the University will keep in touch whilst they are on extended parental leave without pay.
- Advise new parents of the resources available to help them adjust to balancing parenthood and working life.
- Check in with the staff member once they have returned to work, to see how they are settling in.

Staff member checklist

- Participate in conversations with your supervisor to plan your return to work arrangements.

Resources Factsheet

Topic	Relevant ACU policies, guidelines and Q&As
General information	
Staff wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Assistance Program The EAP is a confidential counselling service available to ACU staff and their immediate family. It is available to staff as a resource during parental leave. Counselling can be provided face-to-face or over the telephone for personal or work-related issues. Tailored over-the-phone perinatal counselling sessions are also available to support women through pregnancy and the first years of their baby's life. Contact EAP on 1800 818 728.
Parental Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental Leave Policy This policy outlines the provisions, entitlements and application process for parental leave, adoptive leave and foster parent leave.
Personal leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal/Carers Leave Policy This policy outlines the provisions for personal/carers leave due to appointments and commitments associated with pre-natal and post-natal responsibilities
Work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-life Balance Statement This statement summarises flexible working arrangement, leave arrangements, career development opportunities and employee welfare initiatives.
Flexible Working Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible Working Arrangements for Professional Staff Policy This policy outlines the options available for flexible arrangements with respect to working hours. • Working Flexibly at ACU - Guides for Staff and Supervisors • The process for managing requests for flexible working arrangements is set out in these guides for staff and for supervisors
Breastfeeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding Policy • Parenting/nursing rooms Please see the links below for details relating to Parenting/nursing rooms on your campus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ballarat Parenting Room - Brisbane Parenting Room - Canberra Parenting Room - Melbourne Parenting Room - North Sydney Parenting Room - Strathfield Parenting Room
Children on University Premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children of Staff and Students on University Premises Procedure Read the ACU procedures on bringing children onto University premises.
Ergonomically correct workstations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace ergonomics presentation Are you sitting well at your workstation? Maximise your day-to-day comfort and efficiency with these handy hints.
Support to find Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACU Child Care Referral Service ACU provides access to a free childcare referral service to assist staff with identifying suitable child care options.
Service Central Parental Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Knowledge base on Service Central Answers to frequently asked questions about parental leave.

Information for Women Academics only

Assistance for
Childcare Expenses

- [Childcare Support for Women Academic Staff Policy](#)
Learn about childcare assistance available to female academic staff.

Research Awards

- [Research Awards for Women Academic Staff Policy](#)
ACU is committed to the ongoing support of women Academic Staff members who resume work at ACU following a period of parental leave. These Awards are designed to assist women Academic Staff to re-establish their research profile.

General Parenting Information

Childcare Resources

- Department of Human Services website: Provides information regarding Government payment schemes; Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, and Paid Parental Leave Scheme: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au>
- My Child website: A government website that provides details of registered child care providers and information for parents about child care, including the support available: <http://ifp.mychild.gov.au/ChildCareService/Search.aspx>
- Care for Kids website: Provides information about child care, nannies and baby sitting services across Australia: <http://www.careforkids.com.au/default.asp>

Parenting Resources

The following websites have a range of articles about baby, pregnancy and parenting issues you may find useful:

- <http://www.babycenter.com.au/>
- <http://www.kidspot.com.au/>
- <http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au>
- <http://www.karitane.com.au>