



School of Biological Sciences - Support for Families

The School of Biological Sciences is committed to supporting colleagues with family responsibilities. This guidance applies to all types and grades of staff.

The School follows all University policies with respect to flexible working and family/caring responsibilities. The policies can be viewed via quick links on the [University Family Leave Policies web page](#).

Colleagues are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the support available to them and are welcome to contact inclusion and diversity staff at sbs.EandD@ed.ac.uk with any questions they might have.

In addition we have the following local guidelines and funds to provide enhanced support for staff.

1. Flexible Working Requests
2. Family Support Fund
3. Cover for Maternity, Adoption/Surrogacy, Shared Parental Leave
4. Returning Parents Coaching Programme
5. Returning from Maternity, Adoption/Surrogacy, Shared Parental Leave – Academic Workload Scheme

1. Flexible Working Requests

The School follows University policy in considering all flexible working requests regardless of the individual reasons. The School's approach is that such requests should be agreed to wherever the business allows, including reasonable adjustments. The Flexible Working Policy can be viewed via the [University Family Leave web page](#). In the rare instances where a request is declined, School colleagues are eligible to appeal to decision via contacting Head of School (Academic and Research) or Anne Payne (Professional Services) for a final decision.

2. Family Support Fund

The School wishes to ensure that all types of staff and PhD students with caring responsibilities are not disadvantaged in their ability to attend conferences, work related training or other career development opportunities because of childcare/care for other dependents which might prevent them from travelling.

A small fund exists to which people can apply for support to assist with childcare/dependent care costs incurred on such occasions. Eligible costs might include, for instance, the cost of a child and partner travelling with the individual, or the cost of a carer to remain at home with the dependent.

Each case will be considered individually, but in general the expectation is that the fund will support people who will be away from home overnight or longer, and for whom no viable alternative caring arrangements are possible. The fund is intended to support 'career development' (including networking and research presentation opportunities) and work related training rather than meeting day-to-day work responsibilities.

Staff and PhD students can make an application at any time by completing the application form found on the School's [Family Support Fund webpage](#) and submitting it to sbs.EandD@ed.ac.uk.



3. Cover for Maternity, Adoption/Surrogacy, Shared Parental Leave

Applicability: Cover is applicable to those formally taking longer term types of leave, such as Maternity, Adoption/Surrogacy and Shared Parental Leave. Maternity cover is not provided for PhD students. A replacement cover post is not normally provided for shorter periods e.g. Partner Leave, periods of Emergency Carer Leave. Usually in this case work will be covered by existing staff. In some cases ad hoc paid arrangements for specific duties will be considered.

Professional Services

For professional services positions, the School will arrange cover either through a replacement post carrying out part, or all, of the duties, or occasionally by redeploying/rearranging existing staff workloads.

Academic and Research

The School's default policy is to provide cover for substantial periods of maternity/adoption leave (periods of 8 weeks or more) wherever possible and this will usually be by employing a replacement position to cover the core activities of the person on leave.

Teaching Roles - For an academic teaching member of staff, a maternity cover post will normally be expected to cover teaching responsibilities (likely to be a part-time or semester-only appointment) and may in addition take on research management duties (e.g. supervision of a research team) or other responsibilities if appropriate. Since a cover post is not expected to be originating new academic teaching or research content, the expectation is that a cover post will be at a lower grade (normally grade 7) than the academic whom they are replacing.

Research Fellows - For an academic research fellow, a maternity cover position will be employed if teaching or other responsibilities are sufficient to justify a cover appointment, and/or if a case exists for (e.g. research management cover). An 'acting up' allowance for a senior member of the research team can often address the latter requirement. As above, a lower grade cover post will often be appropriate.

Grant Funded Researchers - For a grant-funded researcher or technician, most funding bodies will pay the costs of maternity cover. For those funding bodies which do not meet these costs, the School will consider funding maternity cover on a case by case basis.

Shared Parental Leave - If two parents in the School are taking shared parental leave resulting in shorter periods of absence by each individual, or one person who is sharing leave with a partner elsewhere wishes to take shorter periods of leave, cover arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The same overall principle - of not creating excess workload for others - will apply but cover for shorter periods of absence by each individual may be better provided by other means than a replacement post.

4. Returning Parents Coaching Programme

Returning Parents Coaching – This support applies to those returning from Maternity, Adoption/Surrogacy and Shared Parental Leave. The coaching is a University managed support that the School strongly supports. You can read more about the coaching and fill in the form to apply at the [University Returning Parents Coaching webpage](#).



5. Returning from Maternity, Adoption/Surrogacy, Shared Parental Leave – Academic and Research Roles – Academic Workload Scheme

Maternity Leave - On returning from any length of Maternity Leave period, new mothers will be given a reduced service workload expectation for approximately 12 months. This is intended to support individuals to return to work whilst caring for their child (e.g. breastfeeding) and to re-establish research programmes.

The service expectation reduction will be 50%, pro-rata to % full-time hours worked for staff who return on a part-time basis. The reduction is applied for the two semesters following return from leave. For staff who return part way through a semester, the reduction may apply for slightly less or slightly more than two full semesters as this will be rounded to the nearest full semester.

Returning from Shared Parental Leave - Arrangements for any reduced service workload expectation for *either* parent/carer will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the length of the absence period, following the same principles of allowing for an appropriate staged return to full duties. Adoption leave will also be treated on a case-by-case basis following the same principles.