

# **Carnegie Mellon University**

## **Student Maternity Accommodation Protocol and Resources**

## **Protocol and Resources for Student Maternity Accommodations**

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## I. Summary of Maternity Accommodations

The birth of a child is a significant life event that may require time away from academic pursuits for delivery and recovery from delivery of a newly born child. This document outlines Maternity Accommodation options available to students who anticipate giving birth to a child.

Students whose anticipated delivery date is during the course of a semester may need to take time away from their academic responsibilities. Carnegie Mellon offers students two (2) options for Maternity Accommodation:

- **Short-Term Maternity Accommodation** (see Section IIIA for details) – A short term absence from academic responsibilities up to a maximum of six (6) weeks. Short-Term Maternity Accommodation may be extended by two (2) weeks, for a total of eight (8) weeks, where a longer absence is medically necessary. Prior to the absence students must work with relevant university faculty and staff to adjust their course work, course schedules, research and other academic responsibilities during the period of absence. This may include extensions of time to complete assignments, incomplete grades, and/or dropping courses. Students who take a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation will remain enrolled.
- **Formal Leave of Absence** (see Section IIIB for details) – A formal leave of absence under the Student Leave Policy. Generally, the Student Leave Policy permits students to take a leave of absence for a full-semester, mini-semester, or for the time remaining in the semester during which the leave is taken. Students who take a Formal Leave of Absence drop all remaining courses for the semester and are unenrolled for the semester.

Carnegie Mellon also offers financial assistance to students who give birth to a child:

- **Interest Free Loan** (see Section IVA for details) – Any student who gives birth to a child is eligible to apply for an interest free loan from the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.
- **Stipend Continuation** (see Section IVB for details) – Doctoral students who receive an academic stipend funded by Carnegie Mellon are eligible to continue to receive stipend funding for up to six (6) weeks during a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation or a Formal Leave of Absence. Continued academic stipend funding may be extended by two (2) weeks, for a total of eight (8) weeks, if an absence longer than six weeks is medically necessary.

Students seeking any of the above Maternity Accommodations must register with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs by following the Maternity Accommodation Process outlined in Section II below. Students are encouraged to register ninety (90) days in advance of the anticipated delivery and should register no later than sixty (60) days in advance

of the anticipated delivery. Students should also consult with their academic advisors either before or in conjunction with registering with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

## **II. Maternity Accommodation Process**

**Eligibility:** All enrolled students that give birth to a child are eligible to take either a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation (section IIIA.) or a Formal Leave of Absence (section IIIB.)

**Registering for Maternity Accommodations:** Students must contact the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs to register for Maternity Accommodations. Students will complete a CMU Student Maternity Accommodation Form and meet with a member of the Dean's Office staff to determine resources and procedures appropriate for the individual student. Planning for the student's discussion with her academic contact(s) (advisor, associate dean, etc.) will be reviewed during this meeting.

**Coordination with Academic Department:** Students taking a Maternity Accommodation must coordinate with their department to make any necessary adjustments to their course work, course schedules, research and other academic responsibilities. Staff in the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and the Office of Graduate and Postdoc Affairs are resources to assist students in coordinating with their academic department and instructors.

**Financial Support Election:** Students will be given the opportunity to request financial assistance during the Maternity Accommodation. All students are eligible to apply for an interest free loan through the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs (see Section IVA).

Funded doctoral students who are receiving an academic stipend paid by Carnegie Mellon during the period of requested accommodation are eligible to continue to receive stipend funding for up to six (6) weeks, or eight (8) weeks if medically necessary (see Section IVB).

**When to Register:** To ensure timely planning, students are encouraged to register at least ninety (90) days before the anticipated delivery. Students should register no later than sixty (60) days in advance of the anticipated delivery.

**Documentation:** Students must complete the CMU Student Maternity Accommodation form. The form should be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs sixty (60) days before the anticipated accommodation/leave date.

Students must submit medical documentation of the anticipated delivery date to the University Health Services Comprehensive Care Manager at minimum thirty (30) days before the anticipated accommodation/leave date. The UHS Comprehensive Care

**Manager** will verify receipt of this information and the anticipated delivery date with the Office of Dean of Student Affairs while maintaining the confidentiality of student medical records.

Students who request a two (2) week extension of Short-Term Maternity Accommodation and extended stipend support must submit medical documentation of the need for a continued absence to the UHS Comprehensive Care Manager.

**Notification of Childbirth:** In order to receive accommodations, students who have previously registered with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs must notify that office of the birth. Maternity Accommodations will begin at that time. Late notification may result in delays in the provision of Maternity Accommodations.

**Notification of Return:** Students on Short-Term Maternity Accommodation must provide notice of their anticipated date of return to school and their actual date of return. Students on a Formal Leave of Absence must submit the Petition to Return from Leave.

### **III. Time Away for Maternity Accommodation**

Students whose anticipated delivery date is during the course of the semester may consider taking time away from their coursework and/or research responsibilities. All students who give birth to a child while engaged in coursework or research are eligible to take either a **Short-Term Maternity Accommodation** (section IIIA.) or a **Formal Leave of Absence** (section IB.).

#### **A. Short-Term Maternity Accommodation:**

Carnegie Mellon University endorses a short-term absence from academic responsibilities up to a maximum of six (6) weeks or, if medically necessary, eight (8) weeks. Prior to the absence, students must work with relevant university faculty and staff to adjust their course work, course schedules, research and other academic responsibilities during the period of absence. Students must work with their course instructors to discuss the possibility of receiving incomplete grades, the need to drop the course or to take a semester leave of absence. Students must also work with their faculty and any relevant departments to develop plans for research, teaching, and other academic responsibilities for the time they are away.

Due to the unique nature of each student's personal and academic circumstances and the anticipated time of delivery, the particular details of each Short-Term Maternity Accommodation may vary on a case-by-case basis. Staff in the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and the Office of Graduate and Postdoc Affairs are resources to assist students in coordinating with their academic department and instructors.

Students who take a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation will remain enrolled. Doctoral students who are receiving an academic stipend paid by Carnegie Mellon during the period of requested accommodation are eligible to continue to receive stipend funding. For additional details on continued stipend funding, see Section IVB below.

Students who intend to take a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation for the birth of a child must register with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs as described in Section II above.

**B. Formal Leave of Absence:**

The Student Leave Policy permits students to take a leave of absence for medical or personal reasons, including the birth of a child<sup>1</sup>. Generally, the Student Leave Policy permits students to take a leave of absence for a full-semester, mini-semester, or for the time remaining in the semester during which the leave is taken. Students who take a Formal Leave of Absence drop all remaining courses for the semester and are unenrolled for the semester.

If a student needs more time than a 6 week Short-Term Maternity Accommodation (8- weeks if medically necessary), the student should consider a Formal Leave of Absence.

Students who intend to take a Formal Leave of Absence for the birth of a child who wish to seek any form of Maternity Accommodations must register with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs as described in Section II above. Students who intend to take a Formal Leave of Absence for the birth of a child but do not intend to seek any accommodations are still encouraged to go through the registration process to explore support available to students giving birth to a child.

For more details on a Formal Leave of Absence see  
<http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/StLeave.html>.

**Important Considerations Regarding Formal Leaves of Absence:**

1. International students who are in the United States on an F1 or J1 visa must consult the Office of International Education for information on possible visa implications regarding taking a formal Leave of Absence beyond the Short-Term Maternity Accommodation.
2. Doctoral candidates in ABD (All But Dissertation) status who wish to take a leave of absence should refer to the [Doctoral Student Status policy](#).
3. The recording of student courses and grades during a leave of absence depends on the time when the leave of absence is taken. As detailed in the policy:

- For leaves taken on or before the university deadline to drop classes, all courses and grades are removed
  - For leaves taken after the university deadline to drop classes but before the last day of classes, a "W" (withdrawal) grade will be assigned to all classes
  - For leaves taken after the last day of classes, the permanent grade assigned by the instructor will be recorded
4. Students on a formal leave of absence are not permitted to live in university housing, attend classes or maintain employment as students at Carnegie Mellon while the leave is in effect.
  5. During any period of a formal leave of absence students may not serve as teaching assistants or research assistants.
  6. Departments may not charge effort to grants during student absences.

### **C. Tuition Adjustments for Maternity Absences**

#### **Short-Term Maternity Accommodation:**

Students who elect to take a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation and who are engaged in doctoral research may have their research units adjusted for the semester to ensure continuous full time enrollment commensurate with their plans. For Ph.D. students whose tuition is paid by the department, assessed tuition will be adjusted for the period of Short-Term Maternity Accommodation, not to exceed eight weeks.

For all undergraduates, all masters students and for doctoral students not funded by an academic department, tuition will be reviewed and adjusted if necessary based on the number of units dropped due to the Short-Term Maternity Accommodation and if the student moves from full-time to part-time enrollment.

Fees will not be adjusted for any student Short-Term Maternity Accommodation (e.g. activity fee; technology fee, etc.).

#### **Formal Leave of Absence:**

When a student takes a Formal Leave of Absence, tuition is adjusted according to the University's Tuition Adjustment Policy, available at <https://www.cmu.edu/sfs/tuition/adjustment/>. Under this policy, students who take a leave of absence before completing 60% of the semester are only charged tuition based on the number of days completed within the semester. Students who have completed more than 60% of the semester prior to taking a leave of absence are not eligible for a tuition adjustment, unless an extenuating circumstance warrants an exception.

A leave of absence for a student due to the birth of a child qualifies as an extenuating circumstance under the Tuition Adjustment Policy. Therefore, the deadline related to completing 60% of the semester for receiving a tuition adjustment does not apply to students who take a leave of absence due to the birth of a child.

#### **D. Time to Degree**

With any leave of absence there may be implications of taking time off that would impact the time to degree for a student. The policies addressing the limit on time to degree for undergraduate, master's and doctoral students all provide a request for a waiver from the overall time to degree should additional time be needed.

At the undergraduate level there is a limit of eight years for time to degree in the Statute of Limitations policy. Should a student require additional time they can request a waiver from the dean of the student's college.

<https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/ug-statute-of-limitations-student.html>

The University's Master's Student Statute of Limitations requires that students complete their degree within seven years from the original date of matriculation as a Master's student and also provides a process for students to request an extension if needed for circumstances such as family or parental leave.

<https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/masters-students-statute-of-limitations.html>

The Doctoral Student Status Policy requires that students complete their degree within ten years from original matriculation as a Ph.D. student and also provides a process for students to request an extension if needed for circumstances such as family or parental leave.

<https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/doctoral-student-status.html>

Note that there may be more restrictive requirements in the departments and colleges and these should be considered as well when planning a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation.

## **IV. Financial Resources during Maternity Accommodation**

### **A. Interest-Free Maternity Loan for Graduate and Undergraduate Students**

Students who give birth to a child are eligible to apply for an interest-free maternity loan through the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. Students interested in applying for a loan should contact the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs to schedule an appointment to discuss loan eligibility and the application process.<sup>2</sup> Loan applications should be completed a minimum of 30 days in advance of needed funding. These loans will be repayable within one year of the loan disbursement with a repayment plan set up through the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. Students who have received a maternity loan within the prior 12 months are not eligible to receive another maternity loan. Like other fiscal responsibilities, loans must be repaid in full prior to receipt of one's diploma.

### **B. Academic Stipend Continuation for Funded Doctoral Students**

Carnegie Mellon University provides stipend continuation for Carnegie Mellon funded doctoral students who take a Maternity Accommodation and who are receiving an academic stipend paid by Carnegie Mellon in the semester of the accommodation. Stipend continuation is available to students who take a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation or Formal Leave of Absence due to the birth of a child.

Stipend continuation provides 100% continuation of the student's normal stipend for up to six (6) weeks. Students may apply for a two (2) week extension of funding, for a total of eight (8) weeks, if an absence longer than six weeks is medically necessary. Students requesting this two week extension of stipend continuation will be required to submit medical documentation.

For students on a Formal Leave of Absence, the method of paying stipends may vary (e.g. payments may be issued via Accounts Payable instead of Payroll Services). Different tax rates may also apply to stipends paid to a student on a Formal Leave of Absence, even if the normal stipend is untaxed.

Students must register for the Maternity Accommodation with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs as described in Section II above in order to receive stipend continuation.

### **C. External Funding for Stipend Continuation**

A limited number of grants and fellowships, such as the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program, provide funding for maternity leave in some circumstances. Graduate students supported by external Fellowships must consult the rules and regulations of the fellowship providers concerning leaves and work with their departments to meet the requirements. Where such funding is available, stipend continuation will be funded through the student's grant or fellowship before drawing on university funding.

## **V. Related Additional Resources**

If you have any questions or concerns about Maternity Accommodations, please contact the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs at 301 Warner Hall or 412-268-2075.

**Disability Resources:** Students who are pregnant or who have other medical conditions or complications related to the birth of a child (prior to taking or returning from a Maternity Accommodation) may be eligible for reasonable accommodations through the university's Disability Resources Office. See <https://www.cmu.edu/disability-resources/students/index.html>.

Office of the Dean of Student Affairs - <https://www.cmu.edu/student-affairs/dean/>

Office of Graduate and Postdoc Affairs - <http://www.cmu.edu/graduate/> & [grad-ed@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:grad-ed@andrew.cmu.edu)

University Health Services – [www.cmu.edu/health-services/](http://www.cmu.edu/health-services/)

Student Leave Policy: <https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/student-leave.html>

Lactation Rooms –

<https://www.cmu.edu/hr/work-life/life-experiences/pregnancy/lactation/index.html>

### **Footnotes:**

- 1) Students may take a formal leave of absence (section IB above) for a variety of personal or medical reasons as identified in the Student Leave Policy.  
<https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/student-leave.html>.
- 2) The interest-free loans discussed in section IVA of this document may also be available to students who experience financial hardship due to a leave of absence for other personal or medical reasons. Students should consult with a member of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs to discuss his or her circumstances.