

Shared Parental Leave for Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) Issued August 2021

The University of Sheffield recognises that family groups are diverse. This policy applies to PGRs irrespective of their gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, biological sex, or if transitioning.

Context

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) is an employment right which enables eligible mothers, fathers, partners, and adopters to choose how to share time off work after their child is born or placed. This could mean that the birth parent or primary adopter shares some of the leave with their partner.

Shared Parental Leave is created where an eligible **birth parent** or adopter brings their maternity or adoption leave to an end early. This is called “curtailing” maternity or adoption leave. The untaken weeks of maternity or adoption leave can be taken as SPL if the birth parent/adopter and their partner are eligible for this – up to a maximum of period of 26 weeks.

Postgraduate research students

PGRs are not normally employed by the University (with the exception of staff candidates and students funded by some EU programmes). Nevertheless, the University recognises the potential benefits to new parents or adopters in being able to share leave and wishes to put in place a policy to enable this for PGRs who receive their stipend from a University-funded source.

This policy cannot emulate that for employees in every detail. It is designed to offer a similar opportunity to PGRs, at least in part based on trust.

Principles for University-funded PGRs

Shared parental leave does not create a new leave entitlement. Instead, it enables leave to be shared. For shared parental leave, the PGR must be sharing the care of their child between the two parents or adopters during the year following the birth or placement of their child. And be one of:

- a. the birth parent;
- b. the primary adopter;
- c. the spouse, civil partner, or partner of the birth parent / primary adopter;

In order to be eligible, the PGR must be in receipt of a University-funded stipend at the expected time of the birth of the child or adoption placement **and** one of the following must be the case:

1. Both parents or adopters are University-funded PGRs or are PGRs whose funding allows shared parental leave to be taken. In this case, with the consent of both students, the

University will permit the leave to be shared and the normal [University maternity stipend](#) (up to 26 weeks or pro-rata) to be shared in the period following the birth of the child. The SPL does not have to be consecutive (each parent could take shorter periods or could take the leave at the same time).

2. One parent or adopter is a University-funded PGR, the other is employed and entitled to shared parental leave. If the eligible birth parent or adopter chooses to curtail their maternity or adoption leave, this may be shared by the partner. If the eligible birth parent chooses to curtail their maternity or adoption pay, the partner may be entitled to a stipend at the rate usually provided to them by the University up to a maximum of 26 weeks (or pro-rata).
3. One parent is a University-funded PGR, the other is self-employed and entitled to maternity allowance. If the eligible birth parent chooses to curtail their maternity leave, this may be shared by the partner. If the eligible birth parent chooses to curtail their maternity allowance, the partner may be entitled to a stipend at the rate usually provided by the University for up to a maximum of 26 weeks (or pro-rata).

Process

- PGRs eligible for, and electing to take, SPL must apply for a leave of absence on parental grounds for the duration.
- Before applying for leave of absence, the PGR should discuss their plans with their supervisory team.
- Applications for shared parental leave will normally be made at least eight weeks before the SPL is requested to begin. This is to allow sufficient time for the request to be reviewed, followed up as required, and actioned when approved.
- Applicants should fill in this short form to apply for SPL under this policy confirming that their partner is eligible for SPL and intends to curtail their maternity leave/allowance with the relevant dates. The University will not check with the employer about the curtailment and expects PGRs to be honest. If applications are discovered to have been misleading, the University will expect to recoup any payments made for the purpose of shared parental leave.
- Standard UKVI restrictions on LOAs will apply for PGRs with student visas as there are no exceptions for parental leave. This means it will not be possible to take a substantial period of leave whilst maintaining visa sponsorship; please consult the terms of the visa and the International Student Support, Advice and Compliance Team for further guidance.

Postgraduate research students not funded by the University

Depending on the source of a PGR's funding, they may be entitled to shared parental leave. This is determined by their funder's guidance.

All PGRs are entitled to apply for a leave of absence, although PGRs on student visas would need to be mindful of the permitted absence from study.

The University is committed to working with funders and sponsors to promote its approach to shared parental leave, and to encourage more of them to enable this.

This policy was agreed by University PGR Committee in July 2021 and published in August 2021 and will be reviewed after 12 months - please contact pgr-scholarships@sheffield.ac.uk with any feedback.