

Policy for Parental Leave in the Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering

Policy Statement

The Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering aims to support the academic and career goals of all members of our division. We recognize that the decision to begin a family often coincides with the years during which graduate students and post-doctoral researchers are engaged full-time in research. Our parental leave policies for graduate students and post-doctoral researchers were created to address the potential conflicts and issues that may arise at the intersection of two important life goals—advanced training and parenthood. Our policies aim to ensure that our graduate students and post-doctoral researchers can approach parenthood with minimal impact on their professional aspirations.

Full-Time Graduate Students (Doctoral)

For graduate students in the PME, the University policies on parental leave are stated in the student manual (<https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/parents>). The PME augments this policy in the following ways:

1. **All new parents will be offered the option of *parental relief academic modification*.** This modification allows the new parent to stay at home with the child for up to 12 weeks. One quarter of divisional financial support from the PME to the student's PI will serve to mitigate financial impact on the PI's lab and to reduce potential conflicts between the student and the PI. The student, PI, and Dean of Students will meet in advance of the leave to discuss plans and expectations for the student's progress to graduation.
2. **The student will maintain active student status throughout the period of leave.** Rights and privileges associated with enrolled student status will be uninterrupted (this includes access to U-SHIP insurance).
3. An additional quarter of leave and student support is available to pregnant students if there are documented medical necessities associated with the pregnancy -- per university policy.
4. Pregnant/nursing students working in laboratories with potentially hazardous conditions, e.g. chemical or ionizing radiation exposure, may request *academic modification* for up to the equivalent of three quarters. In these cases, the student will be provided with support via TA-ship (without teaching lab duties), etc. **Concerns about hazardous**

exposures should be raised in the meeting between the student, PI, and Dean of Students so that an appropriate plan can be put in place.

5. New parents may also receive *parental relief academic modifications* if their field work involves extensive travel that is incompatible with their parental duties. **Concerns about traveling for field work should be raised in the meeting between the student, PI, and Dean of Students so that an appropriate plan can be put in place.**
6. **Nursing/pumping rooms are available within the Eckhardt Research Center (ERC).** Nursing students working outside of the ERC should contact the Dean of Students to identify possibilities for more proximal locations.
7. Travel stipends to offset the costs of childcare at conferences may be available for students by application.

Post-Doctoral Researchers

For postdoctoral researchers in the PME, the University policies on parental leave are stated in the Postdoctoral Researcher Policy Manual

<https://postdocs.uchicago.edu/postdocmanual/benefits-and-leave-policies/parental/> . The

PME augments this policy in the following ways:

1. **Instead of the six weeks noted in the Postdoctoral Researcher Policy Manual, all new parents will be offered the option of up to 12 weeks of parental leave.** Twelve weeks of divisional financial support from the PME to the scholar's PI will serve to mitigate financial impact on the PI's lab and to reduce potential conflicts between the scholar and the PI. **The researcher, PI, and Dean's representative will meet in advance of the leave to discuss plans and expectations.**
2. **The scholar will maintain an active status throughout the period of leave.** The University will maintain health insurance and other benefits on the same conditions as if the Postdoctoral Researcher were working, subject to applicable plan documents and law. While on Parental Leave, the Postdoctoral Researcher's share of the premiums for those benefits will continue through payroll deduction at the same contribution rate as if they were an active Postdoctoral Researcher.
3. **An additional 12 weeks of *academic/research modifications* is available to pregnant postdoctoral researchers if there are documented medical necessities associated with the pregnancy.** Depending on the nature and extent of the modification, additional financial support from the PME may be available.
4. New parents may also elect up to 12 weeks of academic/research modification to care for a new child.

5. Pregnant/nursing researchers working in laboratories with potentially hazardous conditions, e.g. chemical or ionizing radiation exposure, may request *academic/research modifications*. **Concerns about hazardous exposures should be raised in the meeting between the researcher, PI, and Dean's representative. Stipends may be available for researchers whose work involves hazardous exposure.**
6. **Nursing/pumping rooms are available within the Eckhardt Research Center (ERC).** Nursing researchers working outside of the ERC should contact the Dean's representative to identify possibilities for more proximal locations.
7. No appointment period is extended by the accommodations offered here unless there is an explicit extension of the appointment agreed upon by the appropriate PME official. New parents may combine (as per applicable PME policies) a new child accommodation request with earned paid sick leave, vacation leave, or short-term disability leave.