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# **Parental leave for MPLS fixed-term researchers policy**

Summary:

All of our fixed-term researchers are afforded the same benefits, regardless of funding source, underwritten by the department. Specifically, all fixed-term researchers have their contracts and payments extended by the amount of time that they take parental leave.

Background:

Previously, fixed-term researchers (and other staff who would be employed under directly incurred costs on UKRI grants) who become parents could have significantly different experiences in terms of parental leave and/or subsequent contract extension, depending on their source of funding\*. This inequitable situation can have a significant effect on their future career trajectory. This MPLS-specific policy was created in response to this inequity, ensuring all our fixed-term researchers are afforded the same benefits. By extending the researcher’s contract by the period taken as parental leave, it will help to support the reestablishment of their research career. This is a sector-leading approach and a powerful element for inclusion in future Athena SWAN applications.

*\* External funders including Leverhulme Trust, Wellcome Trust and UKRI already supplement grants to cover the additional net costs of paid parental leave (maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave) that cannot be met within the original staffing budget. The John Fell Fund also recently approved costed extensions to cover the costs of parental leave.*

Application:

1. All fixed-term researchers taking maternity leave, adoption leave or shared parental leave have their contracts and payments extended by the amount of time that they take parental leave.
2. This leads to a maximum *additional* incurred cost of 6 months of full pay (minus SMP payments recovered from HMRC).

Worked example:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Parental leave duration** | **Contract extension (post parental leave)\*\*** | **Additional cost to MPLS** |
| 3 months | 3 months | 3 months’ pay (minus SMP recovered) |
| 6 months | 6 months | 6 months’ pay (minus SMP recovered) |
| 9 months | 9 months | 6 months’ pay (minus SMP recovered) |
| 12 months | 12 months | 6 months’ pay (minus SMP recovered) |

\*\* for instances where time remaining to original end date of the contract exceeds the time take as leave. If contract is due to end during the period of parental leave, see point 3.

1. Extension of contracts should apply even if the contract is due to end during the planned parental leave period. If the original contract was due to end e.g. 3 months after the start of the parental leave, then the employee will have their contract extended such that they have 3 months back at work after the period of parental leave. N.B. this does not necessarily cover the work required by a funder in a given time period, for which other resources would need to be found (as is also the case where funding bodies already offer this contract extension).
2. In the case that any specified project work has been finished during the period of parental leave, then the researcher should still be afforded the opportunity to have the contract extended to work on a related area which does not have to be within the same group. This would be beneficial to career reestablishment and development for the returning parent.
3. In the cases where a no-cost extension cannot be obtained from the funder or for the cases where the project has ended, departments need to consider the most appropriate way forward for the person on the fixed-term contract by discussing the possibilities with them. i.e. whether it would be appropriate to redeploy them on another project. If no other projects are suitable or available, then departments may adhere to the original end date of the contract.
4. If circumstances arise where it is difficult to apply the policy at the point that someone starts their parental leave (e.g. someone takes a parental leave near the start of a grant, the funder does not up-front agree to a no-cost extension and it is impossible to say what work might be available on other projects 2 to 3 years’ hence), then departments do not need to extend the contract at that point but can return to the matter later on. However, the expectation remains that a no-cost extension will be requested, or efforts will still be made to ensure that the person is given every opportunity to extend their contract where redeployment on another project is feasible.
5. This policy can only be implemented under conditions of any visa an individual holds.

To note:

* This policy will be reviewed annually for five years after its introduction, to assess the circumstances that arise and costs incurred on its implementation. **Please report any instances of use of the policy (or instances where it cannot be implemented), as well as any feedback on the policy, to the divisional** **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) team** diverstiy@mpls.ox.ac.uk**.**
* This policy is in addition to the University policy on parental leave (<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/family-leave>).