

Graduate and Professional Student Parental Accommodation Academic Regulations

June 1, 2022

Purpose: Consistent with the University's efforts to be inclusive and to support academic-personal life balance, the University believes it is important to provide accommodations for graduate and professional students who become new parents, whether by childbirth or adoption, so that they may contribute to their family responsibilities while continuing to make progress towards their degree. This practice will help develop students who can successfully integrate their academic and personal pursuits. In recognition of the challenges of balancing the demands of graduate study and parenting a new child, these guidelines aim to improve the academic environment for student parents. The Graduate and Professional Student Parental Accommodation Guidelines assist graduate students immediately following the birth or placement for adoption of a child. The purpose of these guidelines is to make it possible for a student to maintain registered full-time student status, along with all the benefits of such status, while facilitating the return to full participation in courses, research and teaching.

Eligibility: The Parental Accommodation Guidelines apply only to full- and part-time students enrolled in graduate and professional programs who are in good academic standing and who are making satisfactory progress toward completion of a graduate degree. Students must have completed at least one full-time semester of their degree program to become eligible for coverage under these guidelines. The guidelines cover the situation of students who experience a childbirth, who adopt a child who is unable to be enrolled in full-day public school due to age or other developmental reasons, or who is a partner of someone who has experienced a childbirth or an adoption for whom the student has parental responsibilities. These eligibility requirements cover all provisions of the guidelines.

I. Parental Accommodation Period

Eligible students may be granted a Parental Accommodation Period for eight weeks immediately following the birth of a child or the placement for adoption of a child for whom the student has parental responsibilities. During this period of accommodation, the student will continue to be enrolled as a student. Because the student remains enrolled as a student and continues to pay tuition, this is not a formal leave of absence. It is instead a modification of deadlines and academic expectations to accommodate the student's new parental responsibilities. The student may be able to postpone completion of course assignments, examinations, academic milestones and other academic requirements for the eight-week Accommodation Period. However, the Accommodation Period does not extend the University's academic Statute of Limitations.

Because the Accommodation Period needs to be tailored to the student's individual circumstances and the timing of the student's academic responsibilities, the student should consult in advance with the program advisor, research advisor or office of student services about how the student will meet academic goals and requirements. The student is responsible for ensuring that this consultation takes place as far in advance of the Accommodation Period as possible.

Students enrolled in programs characterized by sequential courses or clinicals should consult with their advisor on how to complete their program. Some programs with lockstep coursework or clinical duties may not have enough flexibility within the curriculum to allow a student to take an eight-week accommodation period. In these cases, the program should be as flexible as possible even if accommodations are more limited and/or must be enacted for less than eight weeks.

The student must complete the accommodation period within the eight weeks following the birth or placement for adoption. The student may not divide the time period of parental accommodation for use past this time limit. However, if both parents are eligible graduate or professional students, each is entitled to the eight-week period of accommodation, and the accommodation periods may be taken simultaneously or immediately sequentially. In the event of a multiple birth or adoption, the length of the accommodation period is eight weeks.

After the end of the Parental Accommodation Period, students are expected to return to graduate or professional study and resume progress toward completing their degrees. Faculty are encouraged to remain flexible in their expectations of students who become new parents, so that students can meet the demands of graduate or professional study at the same time that they face new demands in their parental roles. Nothing in these guidelines can or should replace communication and cooperation between student and advisor, and the good-faith efforts of both to accommodate the birth or adoption of a child. It is the intent of these guidelines to reinforce the importance of that cooperation and to provide support to make that accommodation possible.

Special Notice to International Students: Students who are attending the University of Pittsburgh with a F-1 student visa or J-1 Exchange Visitor visa are strongly encouraged to consult in advance with the Office of International Studies about their plans during the period of Parental Accommodation.

II. Students With Graduate Appointments

A. Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, Graduate Student Assistants, or Graduate Student Researchers (TAs, TFs, GSAs, or GSRs)

Students with TA, TF, GSA and GSR appointments and their faculty advisors are encouraged to collaboratively work out anticipated accommodations one semester before the anticipated birth or placement for adoption or as soon as possible.

Eligible Students: Faculty members who serve as faculty advisors to and/or oversee the assistantships of TAs, TFs, GSAs and GSRs who assume new roles as parents should offer flexibility to allow students to take advantage of the Parental Accommodation Period. During this period the students will continue to receive their stipend, benefits, and tuition support.

In most cases, students funded by external grants will receive their parental accommodation stipend and benefits through their specific grant, provided that the granting agency permits such action. If the funding agency has terms and conditions which do not permit funding pursuant to this guideline, the department or school will financially support the Parental Accommodation Period.

B. Fellowship Recipients

Eligible students who are supported by University of Pittsburgh fellowships will continue to receive their fellowship support and benefits during the Parental Accommodation period.

Eligible students who are supported by fellowships external to the University must adhere to the rules of the granting agency with respect to absences from fellowship activities.

III. Approval

An eligible student must submit a written Request for Graduate or Professional Student Parental Accommodation after appropriate consultation with the advisor, research advisor (if applicable), and graduate chair. The request, together with appropriate documentation of the anticipated birth or placement for adoption (for example, a letter from the student's medical provider with an estimate of delivery date or from the adoption agency with an date of the placement for adoption), will be submitted to the student's graduate or professional program office for approval.

The University of Pittsburgh strives to build and maintain a positive and healthy learning environment. Reporting concerns, asking questions and understanding Pitt's response to them is critical to this process. Any student who believes that they have been treated unfairly or has been denied eligibility according to these guidelines are encouraged, but not required, to first discuss the situation with their program advisor, research advisor, ombudsperson, or office of student services. Students are also encouraged to report any unfair treatment or discrimination via the [Pitt Concern Connection](#). The [Pitt Concern Connection](#) enables our campus communities to elevate irregular or troublesome issues so that they can be investigated and resolved. Students are also encouraged to report any discrimination to the [University's Title IX Coordinator](#).

For general questions, contact graduate@pitt.edu.