

Complete Policy Title:

Parenting Leave Policy

Policy Number (if applicable):

Approved by:

Senate

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June 6, 2012

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Responsible Executive:

**Associate Vice-President and Dean of
Graduate Studies**

Enquiries:

[University Secretariat](#)

***DISCLAIMER:** If there is a Discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails*

Intent

The Parenting Leave Policy (the “Policy”) is intended to assist parents in successfully combining their graduate studies and family responsibilities with minimum financial and/or academic impact. The University will provide the following arrangement for parents requiring parenting leave from their studies. The Policy applies only to full time graduate students as defined by the School of Graduate Studies.

Definitions

“McMaster Graduate Scholarship Funds”- The sum total of departmental and graduate scholarships as well as research account support committed to the student. It does not include funding from external sources; funding from employment such as Teaching Assistantships or Research Assistantships, or; most scholarships held in trust.

“Parent”- Includes the birth mother of a child; a person with whom a child is placed for adoption; and a person who is in a relationship of some permanence with a parent of a child and who intend to treat the child as his or her own.

“Parenting Leave”- An unpaid leave of absence from studies of up to 52 weeks’ duration for a birth mother of a child or up to 37 weeks’ for the parent of child who is not the birth mother.

Leave of Absence from Studies

Eligibility

A leave of absence for up to 52 weeks is permitted for Parenting Leave. A student electing not to take the maximum amount of time available for parenting leave will not have the option of taking any unused portion at a later date.

Parameters

A Parenting leave for the birth mother may consist of two parts – a pregnancy leave and parental leave. The pregnancy leave must begin, at the earliest, up to 17 weeks before the anticipated due date or on the date the child comes into the care and control of the parent for the first time and lasts for 17 weeks. The parental leave must begin right after the pregnancy leave and lasts for up to 35 weeks. Alternatively, the birthing mother may only take the parental leave. In this case the leave can be a maximum of 37 weeks in length and must begin at latest within 52 weeks after the birth of the child or the date on which the child comes into the care and control of the parent for the first time.

The Parenting leave for a non-birth mother can be a maximum of 37 weeks in length and must begin at latest within 52 weeks after the birth of the child or the date on which the child comes into the care and control of the parent for the first time.

It is understood that when a student takes a Parenting leave, the duration of the leave will not be counted as time towards the time limits in which the student is required to complete or make progress in his or her graduate studies program.

In order that the student's supervisor and/or program can make suitable arrangements to cover ongoing responsibilities during the student's absence, students are expected to provide as much notice as possible of the intention to take a Parenting Leave under this Policy.

A student is normally expected to give at least four weeks' notice of the date on which he/she intends to take his/her leave(s) and at least four weeks' notice of the date on which he/she intends to return from leave, should this date be different from the date agreed upon at the time the leave was granted.

A Parenting Leave or a portion thereof *may* be taken simultaneously with a Pregnancy and/or Parental leave from employment, in accordance with the Employment Standards Act, should the student also be an employee of McMaster University.

If both parents of a child are McMaster Graduate Students, only one parent is eligible to access Parenting Leave under this Policy at any one time. This Policy does not preclude the other parent from applying for a leave of absence under another policy or program and the approval or denial of that leave application will be determined on the basis of the parameters of that leave policy or program.

Combination with Other Leaves

If a student is also an employee, it is incumbent upon the student to review their terms and conditions of employment and/or Collective Agreement (if any) and apply for the appropriate leave of absence from employment there under.

Financial Support from the School of Graduate Studies for Parenting Leave

Eligibility

Students who have not completed a minimum of 16 weeks of graduate studies at McMaster will not be eligible for Financial Support under this Policy. They will remain eligible for a leave of absence from studies, in accordance with the above.

Parameters

A student in receipt of McMaster Graduate Scholarship Funds who has a child (or children) by birth or adoption may receive the financial support available under the Policy for a minimum period of 4 months and a maximum period of 8 months.

A student electing not to take the maximum amount of time available will not have the option of taking any unused leave at a later date.

A student in receipt of McMaster Graduate Scholarship Funds who takes a Parenting Leave under the Policy will be entitled to continue to receive graduate scholarship funds at the normal monthly rate, to a maximum of \$750 per month and to a maximum total of \$3,000, provided that a "Leave of Absence Information Form" has been submitted to and approved by the School of Graduate Studies.

The formula used to determine the "normal monthly rate" when a student is not currently in receipt of scholarship funds is the total of their McMaster Graduate Scholarship Funds averaged over the previous or current academic year depending on the start date of the parenting leave.

Combination with Other Forms of Financial Support

To maximize flexibility, the financial support available under the Policy can be combined with stipends from sources, excluding those from the Tri-Agencies (noted below) and can be spread over a period of between 4 and 8 months at the discretion of the student. However, in no case will funding for Parenting Leave from the School of Graduate Studies exceed a total of \$3000 (and \$750.00/month).

If the parent of the child for whom the Parenting Leave is being taken is eligible to receive parental support from CIHR, NSERC, or SSHRC for the leave at any time during the Parenting leave, the parent is not eligible for financial support under McMaster's Parenting Leave Policy.

When two McMaster graduate students are the parents of a child, only one of those students will be entitled to claim the financial support under the Policy.

Financial support during Parenting Leave for students who are also employees of the University, provided as part of their terms and conditions of employment, are distinct and separate from the financial support available under this Policy. Other financial benefits, except as specifically excluded herein, can be taken concurrently with the financial support provided under this Policy provided that the individual meets the eligibility requirements for those plans for the duration for which they are accessing financial support under those plans.

The financial support provided under this Policy is not considered an approved Supplemental Unemployment Benefit Plan for the purposes of receiving Employment Insurance. Therefore, students wishing to access financial support under this Policy in addition to Employment Insurance (“EI”) benefits should be aware that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (“HRSDC”) may consider financial support under this Policy to be earnings and could therefore require repayment of some or all EI benefits received. It is incumbent upon the student accessing financial support under this Policy to contact HRSDC if they have questions in this regard.

For questions on the administration of the Policy, contact the School of Graduate Studies.