



UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE
HR STRATEGY
FOR RESEARCHERS

MATERNITY
AND PARENTAL
LEAVE MANAGEMENT

MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE MANAGEMENT

Maternity and Parental Leave Support Policy at the University of Pardubice

1. Background

High-standard, motivated and supported employees, proud of their affiliation with the University of Pardubice, are a basic prerequisite for fulfilling the vision and mission of the University, achieving excellence on a national and international scale and for further high-standard and sustainable development of the University, which values their work and appreciates their contribution to the common goals¹.

Human resources management is one of the five priorities for enhancing the quality and promoting sustainable development at the University of Pardubice (hereinafter the “University”). This priority involves modern HR approaches, improving the work environment, providing suitable work conditions and services for all employees as well as systematic support of employees in their career development and full use of their expertise. These steps not only aim to enhance the professional and personal satisfaction of employees, but also support further development of the University, being an important educational and research institution.

The University stresses the need to support parent employees during maternity² and parental³ leave (hereinafter the “leave”). The ultimate objective is to develop a system of institutional support that will enable parents who take care of children to take part in the activities at the University and continue their professional activities and further develop their knowledge and skills. This not only enhances the employee loyalty towards the University, but also motivates the employees to continue their professional career and resume their professional activities.

This Policy is based on the 2021-2030 Gender Equality Strategy of the Government of the Czech Republic, University 2021+ Strategic Plan and other relevant documents including HRS4T Action Plan and the University Gender Equality Strategy. These strategies are in line with the EU international standards endorsed by the University, and promote employment policy aiming at work-life balance and consistent employee career development.⁴

1 2021+ University of Pardubice Strategic Plan

2 Maternity leave is taken in relation to a birth of a child and lasts 28 weeks (37 weeks in cases of multiple births). Pregnant women usually start maternity leave 6-8 weeks before the birth; the leave must not end earlier than 6 weeks after the birth.

3 Mothers are entitled to parental leave after their maternity leave end, whereas fathers are entitled to parental leave from the moment of the birth of the child; parents may choose the duration of the parental leave provided that it does not extend over the third birthday of the child. Adoptive and foster parents may also take parental leave.

4 Some of the measures introduced herein may reasonably apply to doctoral students. Even though doctoral students are not University employees, the University wishes to have them resume and complete the studies if they take the leave before completing the studies. Accordingly, supervisors of doctoral students are advised to use measures introduced in Part 3 hereof to minimize the number of students who fail to complete their studies because of starting a family.

2. Policy Objectives

Stereotypes and attitudes favouring the career development and salaries of male employees still prevail in the Czech labour market. Female employees are considered to have the primary responsibility for taking care of children and other family members, and often face difficulties when returning to work as well as in terms of their professional and career development. Parental leaves are often perceived as an interruption of career development involving loss of knowledge, competences and expertise.

However, active steps taken by employers may mitigate the situation and be mutually beneficial. If employee work-life balance is promoted, employee loyalty is enhanced and their professional growth supported, including more effective time management⁵

In light of this vision, the University has set the following goals:

1. **System of procedures** related to taking the leave and returning to work as well as procedures to be employed by managerial employees in such situations.
2. **Maintaining communication** with employees taking the leave to keep them informed of the activities at the University and their department or office.
3. **Facilitating reasonable employee involvement** during the leave under agreements to perform work or complete a job, as far as legally practicable,⁶ to prevent the professional career from being interrupted.
4. **Developing abilities and skills of employees** during the leave in line with their needs and possibilities of the employer.
5. **Having access** to some of the University facilities and services even during the leave including, without limitation, information systems, library, or buildings.
6. **Enhancing services** for parent employees, either taking the leave or not, having children younger than 15 years of age
7. **Raising awareness** among employees taking the leave and taking care of children below the age of 15 about activities and services available to them.

This Policy is in line with the University commitment to promote equal opportunities, employee career potential development and work-life balance.

⁵ INSTITUTIONAL MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES of APERIO as part of the project entitled Corporate parental leave management – New start. (www.aperio.cz).

⁶ For example, Section 34b(2) of the existing Labour Code stipulates that employees may not perform the activities covered by the employment contract with the employer under agreements to perform work or complete a job. In addition, women may not be employed during the first six weeks after the birth. Section 16 of the Sickness Insurance Act stipulates that there is no entitlement to maternity and paternal pay as long as the employee works for the employer.

3. Systematic processes and tools design to enhance leave management and promote maternity and paternity as well as work-life reconciliation

Taking leave as well as returning back to work is addressed in some of the University strategic documents including [University Equal Opportunities Strategy](#) and [Action Plan](#). The following sections introduce the new processes and tools to enhance leave management, work-life reconciliation and building “pro-family” environment at the University.

3.1. Maternity and Parental Leave Handbook for Parents

The handbook provides parents with basic information about the legal framework as well as specific recommendations on the steps to take before the maternity leave and the following paternity leave. The handbook also provides guidance on maintaining contact with the University and preparing to return to work. Parent Handbook (Annex No. 1) includes information on applicable legislation as well as specific University procedures. The handbook is available on the [Intranet](#) and University [website](#) and will be updated on a regular basis.

3.2. Interviews with employees taking leave

The University will support systematic communication with parents before and during the leave. To keep them informed about what is going on at the University and help them return back to work and easily re-integrate, it is necessary not to lose contact. Supervisors of such employees as well as the Human Resources (hereinafter “HR”) will be involved in such communication with parent employees.

The key interview will take place before taking the leave and will be conducted by the respective supervisors and may be attended by an HR officer. During the interview, prospective parents will be informed about the Parent Handbook (Annex No. 1) as well as the steps to be taken when taking the leave and when returning.

The interview will address the parents’ plans in terms of length of the leave, maintaining contact with the University and, if applicable, participation in the activities during the leave and plans to return to work. The interview will also include assessment of the employee’s work so far, discussion of future cooperation and an invitation to be in active contact with the employee’s department or office and the University.

To make the quality of interviews consistent and support managerial employees, Handbook for Managerial Employees (Annex No. 2) is available offering a basic framework for the interviews.

3.3. Supporting communication with parents on leave and their involvement in University activities

A special group will be created at MS Teams to maintain contact with parents and provide them with updates on University activities. The group may be joined on a voluntary basis; an HR employee will be in charge of the group.

The University will enable parents during the leave, as far as legally practicable, to take part in various activities such as expert, project or organizational activities, as well as in surveys, strategy development and university events.

3.4. Return to work and career development care

To make the back-to-work transition of employees after the leave as effective as possible, there will be continued communication with their supervisor and the HR. Before returning to work, an

interview will be held to discuss employees' expectations, work-life reconciliation options and career growth plans (see Annex No. 2).

Academic and research employees returning to work after the leave may qualify for University mentoring scheme,⁷ which will support their adaptation and development.

As far as permitted by the University Work Regulations⁸ and in line with the needs of parent employees and the capacity of the respective department, such employees will be offered flexitime, part-time work, remote work or other forms of flexible work arrangements.

In addition, employees will be provided with information about University services and options for parents of children younger than 15 years of age and will receive a handbook for new employees to integrate better during the first days and weeks back at work.

4. Examples of measures

1) Informing parents on the leave about activities at the University:

- communication through MS TEAMS, including information about benefits available, training events and organizational changes,
- informal get-togethers.

2) Reasonable involvement during the leave in line with the parents' interest and department capacity:

- an option to take part, to some extent, in the activities performed before the leave (as long as in compliance with applicable legislation),
- ad-hoc cooperation instead of hiring new employees under agreements to perform work and complete a job (e.g. assistance when organizing professional, social, cultural and sports activities at the University or the faculty or department).

3) Developing employees' skills during the leave:

- on-line courses and webinars tailored to individual needs (e.g. soft-skills, blended learning, introduction to new University procedures and policies, with on-line guidance and training).

4) Use of some facilities and services of the University

- use of IT services (in compliance with security procedures), the library and on-line sources even during the leave.

5) Enhancing services for parent employees with children below the age of 15:

a) Flexible work arrangements:

- reasonable adjustment of start time and end time of daily working hours (e.g. to factor in the opening hours of kindergartens), i.e. specifying a window when a parent employee must be at work but the start and end time will be determined by the parent (specific rules under the Higher Education Act apply to working hours of academic staff),

⁷ The goal of mentoring at the University is to support and develop professional and personal growth of employees through a variety of mentoring schemes such as support and assistance from senior colleagues. Mentoring activities may support teaching skills, stress management or time management among other areas.

⁸ Paragraph 6.1 of the University Work Regulations.

- arrangements enabling parent employees to work a different number of hours on individual days (e.g. due to accompanying a child to after-school clubs), i.e. 5 days of 10 hours in a week, or 3 days of 12 hours plus half a day of 4 hours,
 - gradual back-to-work transition with increasing FTE.
- b) Part-time work options (less than 40 hours a week) depending on the capacity of the department, work and needs of parent employees:
- working hours scheduled on all (or only some) of the working days,
 - working hours are scheduled by the employer;
 - employees are entitled to salary in proportion to their part-time work.
- c) Remote work fully replacing on-site work, if permitted by the specific situation at the department.
- d) Counselling (professional, career and personal) and new services of the Academic Counselling Centre and University Career Centre including services for employees on the leave and employees with children below the age of 15.
- e) Better facilities for childcare:
- suitable environment for short-term use by parents with children if they need to arrange something at the University;
 - changing tables (in each of the main buildings),
 - relaxation zones for short-term use by parents with children.
- f) University events for children of employees (sports, educational, summer camps, Children's Day etc).

5. Summary

As a modern and progressive employer, the University promotes work-life balance of its employees. This includes attention being paid to employees on the leave and employees taking care of small children, who constitute a disadvantaged group on the labour market. This policy is intended not only for such employees, but also for their supervisors, who are looking for ways not to lose good employees. At the same time, the policy is an invitation to engage in an active discussion about a more friendly and flexible work environment.

Annexes:

Annex No. 1: Handbook for Parents

Annex No. 2: Handbook for Managerial Employees

MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE MANAGEMENT

Handbook for Parents

1. Notice of pregnancy

It is entirely at your discretion when you decide to give notice of pregnancy to your employer (i.e. your supervisor). We recommend that you allow for sufficient time to prepare your leave and handover of your responsibilities.

Please remember that until your employer is given notice of your pregnancy, the employer cannot take measures to protect your health as required by the Labour Code, such as limiting your overtime work or work at night.

If your job cannot be performed by pregnant women, you must give the notice of pregnancy immediately (for a list of such jobs see Prohibited Jobs and Workplaces Regulation No. [180/2015 Sb](#)). In such cases you are entitled to be assigned to a different job.

2. Starting maternity leave

You may start the maternity leave 6-8 weeks before the estimated delivery date. The maternity leave lasts 28 weeks, and 37 weeks in case of multiple births.

Before starting the maternity leave, you must complete and file the *Maternity Pay Application Form* with your employer. The form is issued by your gynecologist. The form is the basis to be granted maternity pay from the sickness insurance scheme. Submit the form at the Payroll Department; check the intranet for your contact person:

[Departments and contacts | University of Pardubice – Personnel Department.](#)

If you are not eligible for maternity pay, you may receive the parental pay after the birth of your child (see below for more details).

Fathers may also apply for maternity pay from the moment their child is seven weeks.

For details, see the Czech Social Security Administration website: [Maternity Pay - Czech Social Security Administration](#) or [Reconciling professional and family roles.](#)

Before starting the maternity leave, we recommend that you arrange the handover of your responsibilities and discuss the options for cooperation during the maternity or parental leave.

You must report the child's date of birth once your child is born (see the contact details above).

3. Starting paternity leave

Fathers are entitled to paternity pay for a maximum of 14 days to take care of their newly born child. Paternity leave must be taken within 6 weeks after the child is born. The specific start date is at the father's discretion.

Please complete and file the *Paternity Pay Application Form* with the Payroll Department (for contact details see Section 2 - Starting maternity leave).

For further information and forms, see the website of the Czech Social Security Administration: [Paternity Pay - Czech Social Security Administration](#).

4. Starting parental leave

If you take parental leave once your maternity leave ends, you must contact the Personnel Department not later than 30 days before your maternity leave ends and file an application for parental leave (for contact details see Section 2 - Starting maternity leave).

Before the maternity and parental leave, you may take any unused annual leave. The Payroll Department will specify how much unused annual leave you have.

Apply for the parental pay at your Labour Office, in person, electronically or online through the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs [Parental Pay Application Form](#).

Parental leave may also be taken by fathers from the date the child is born.

Parental leave must end by the time the child is 3 years. If you originally decide to take shorter parental leave, you can further extend it until your child is 3. Once the parental leave ends, you may request unpaid leave to be granted by your employer until your child is 4. Such unpaid leave will be granted at the discretion of your employer.

Maintaining cooperation with your employer during parental leave is a good way not to lose touch with the employer, work and colleagues. As far as legally practicable, you may cooperate with your employer during parental leave under agreements to perform work or complete a job. Such work must be different to what you do under your employment contract and cannot be done during the first six weeks after the birth.

We recommend that you talk about your back-to-work date with your supervisor in advance.

Parental leave may be taken with interruptions.

5. Keeping in touch with the employer during maternity and parental leave

During maternity and parental leave, it is advisable to keep in touch with the employer and talk about the back-to-work arrangements.

On the university level, the HR (including Personnel Department and HR Award Office) is responsible for communicating with employees on maternity and parental leave.

Employment-related issues are dealt with by the Personnel Department. Contact details: [Departments and contacts | University of Pardubice – Personnel Department](#).

The HR Award Office keeps those interested updated about the University through MS Teams (click [here](#) to join the group), organizes get-togethers and provides support in terms of work-life reconciliation Contact details: [Departments and contacts | University of Pardubice – HR Award](#).

6. Returning to work

You are entitled to return to the same job after maternity leave. If not practicable in situations when the department no longer exists or on similar grounds, you will be assigned a different job under the employment contract (i.e. the same job title and place of work).

After the parental leave, you are not entitled to return to the same job and department. However, you must be assigned a job consistent with your employment contract. If the employer cannot assign you a job consistent with your employment contract, the employer may propose modification of your employment contract.

Before returning to work, contact your supervisor and agree in advance on the date and terms of your return to work. This also applies to situations when you plan to return to work earlier than originally reported.

For any questions related to your maternity, paternity and parental leave, please contact Personnel office: [Departments and contacts | University of Pardubice – Personnel Department.](#)



MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE MANAGEMENT

Handbook for Managerial Employees (Supervisors)

The University of Pardubice (hereinafter the “University”) strives to create a good work environment for its employees, which involves promoting pro-family employment policy. As part of such efforts, it is key to introduce an effective system of support for parents on maternity and parental leave (hereinafter the “leave”), which will enable parent employees to keep in touch with their employer and develop their expertise even during the leave.

Therefore, the Maternity and Parental Leave Support Policy at the University of Pardubice (hereinafter the “Policy”) has been prepared, which includes this Handbook for Managerial Employees as its Annex No. 2. It is the role of managerial employees (supervisors) that is key to implementing the Policy as they may act as a link between the general system in place at the University, specific needs of the department and the individual needs of the employees.

This Handbook does not aim to further increase the administrative burden, but rather provide a tool to facilitate communication between supervisors and their subordinate employees. This Handbook includes a brief definition as well as specific details of the steps necessary to introduce systematic processes in the following areas:

- employees starting leave,
- communication with parents on leave and keeping them updated of the activities at the University and their department;
- getting employees involved during the leave, as far as legally practicable (agreements to perform work or complete a job);
- developing the abilities and skills of employees on leave in line with their needs and the capacity of the department;
- managing the return to work and defining the role of supervisors in this respect.

Communication of supervisors with employees differs according to the stage of the leave-related process. For each stage, specific procedures are defined and additional information is provided.

1. Steps to be taken when receiving notice of leave

- Ask about an estimated date when the employee plans to start the leave and have an appointment with the employee.
- Inform the HR if you wish to rely on their support.
- Provide the employee with relevant information about taking leave at the University (see Annex No. 1: Handbook for Parents)
- Prepare a schedule for handing over the employee’s responsibilities.

Remember!

- It is at the discretion of each employee when she decides to give notice of pregnancy to her employer.

- Under the Labour Code, pregnant employees may request in writing to have shorter working hours or another adjustment of weekly working hours. Employers must grant such requests unless prevented from doing so by serious operational grounds. If the request is not granted, a written reasoning must be provided.
- Under the Labour Code, pregnant employees cannot work overtime.
- The HR will be happy to provide assistance with the interview and discuss any issues related to leave management. More specifically, issues related to employment may be discussed with the Personnel Department: [Departments and contacts | University of Pardubice – Personnel Department](#); other issues related to leave management may be discussed with the HR Award Office: [Departments and contacts | University of Pardubice – HR Award](#).
- Feel free to contact the respective office. Employees may also request that the HR be involved.

2. Meeting before starting the leave

- Discuss the planned length of leave and any options to get the employee involved during the leave (e.g. agreement to complete a job or to perform work, part-time work).
- Prepare Leave Plan, which may be used as a basis for further communication (see a model leave plan attached to this handbook).
- Discuss the preferred communication channel during the leave (e-mail, phone, or otherwise).
- Inform employees of the options available to keep in touch with the University (e.g. [MS Teams](#) group for parents on leave).

Remember!

- Parental leave may be taken up to the moment when the child is 3 years, and the return date may be changed.
- Active involvement of employees during leave facilitates their return.

3. During the leave

- Keep the employees informed, using the agreed communication channel, about any major changes at the department or designate another person to do so.
- Monitor whether any changes have occurred on part of the employee or the employer which may affect the return to work. Incorporate any such changes into the Leave Plan.

Remember!

- Employees may wish to return earlier, or later, or may apply for unpaid leave until the child is 4 years old in situations when they may be unable to find a kindergarten for the child etc.
- Employees substituting the employees on leave should also be informed of any changes, so they can plan their professional career accordingly.
- It may be a good idea to invite employees on leave to informal events at your de-

partment taking into account their needs (e.g. events not to be held in the evenings, locations suitable for newborns and toddlers etc.)

4. Return from the leave

- Have an appointment with the employee before they return from the leave. Discuss your expectations and plans and record them in the Leave Plan (e.g. career development plans, individual development plans).
- Discuss any requests in terms of working hours adjustments. Look for win-win solutions. As far as possible, be open to requests enabling better work-life reconciliation.
- To facilitate adaptation, think about involving the employee in the mentoring scheme or “buddy scheme”¹.
- Inform the HR and they will organize any mandatory training (e.g. occupational health and safety), or other training as may be needed. Employees returning from leave will also undergo adaptation training and receive a handbook for new employees to integrate better during the first days and weeks back at work.

Remember!

- Employees should return to the same job and workplace. If not practicable as the original job is no longer needed or the department has been closed, the employer will assign them to a job consistent with their employment contract (i.e. the job title under the contract).
- The Labour Code requires employers to grant requests of parents taking care of children below the age of 15 unless prevented from doing so by serious operational grounds. If the request is not granted by the employer, a written reasoning must be provided.
- Remote work does not mean no work, but work from another place. Part time work means less work and fewer working hours for a lower salary.

5. First months after the return

- Monitor the adaptation of the employee e.g. by holding an interview with them 3 months after their return.

Annex: Maternity/Parental Leave Plan

¹ In this context, buddy means a person that facilitates the re-integration of employees returning after leave in terms of work tasks and mastery of new procedures (e.g. the employees substituting the employee on leave).

Maternity/Parental Leave Plan

Before starting the leave:

First name and surname *(of the supervisor):*

First name and surname *(of the employee):*

Expected return from the leave:

Interest to work during the leave and the form *(e.g. agreement to perform work or complete a job, if legally practicable, early part-time return):*

Preferred communication channel during the leave *(e.g. e-mail, phone):*

Other relevant information:

Access to University systems

The netID of employees remains active so they may access cloud-based systems and work with them; they may also use the University library. Access to the e-mail remains.

Keeping the University laptop: YES/NO *(delete as applicable)*

(University laptops may be used to access remote desktops through VPN and access apps such as verso.upce.cz, iFIS, or terminal server).

Keeping the access to the University systems active YES/NO *(delete as applicable)*

(You may also specify systems for which access should be retained and for which terminated. Use [ServiceDesk](#) to inform the respective system administrators of your requirements, or contact the HR Award Office (hrmanager@upce.cz) and they will provide you with assistance)

Card access: YES/NO *(delete as applicable)*

(If you wish to keep access, you must complete and file a request for host access, see Intranet - Operational issues - Forms - Personnel - Others.)

Return to work:

Request for part time work or other adjustment of working hours or shorter working hours *(subject to agreement, you must file a request for part-time work, see Intranet – Operational information - Forms - Personnel – Employment):*

Professional development and career growth plans: