**QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY BELFAST**

**MATERNITY LEAVE PROCEDURE**

**Introduction**

Queen’s University is an equal opportunity employer committed to supporting the work life balance of its employees and as such has enhanced the statutory maternity pay provision to offer pregnant employees 18 weeks full pay.

**1. Maternity Leave**

* 1. A member of staff, whilst in paid employment, is entitled to take 52 weeks continuous maternity leave, provided her contract covers the whole period.
	2. The first 26 week period is known as Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) and the remaining 26 weeks as Additional Maternity Leave (AML).
	3. There is a compulsory maternity leave period of 2 weeks effective from the day on which childbirth occurs.

**2. Maternity Pay**

All employees are entitled to Queen’s University Enhanced Maternity Entitlement, which is inclusive of Statutory Maternity Pay / Maternity Allowance, provided that they follow the correct notification procedure.

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| **Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) \*\*** | **Queen’s University Enhanced Maternity Pay**  |
| Weeks 1 - 6, higher rate SMPWeeks 7-39, lower rate SMP Weeks 40-52, unpaid  | Weeks 1 – 18, full pay \*\*Weeks 19 – 39, lower rate SMPWeeks 40-52, unpaid |
| \*\* Employees with less than 26 weeks service or earnings under the Lower Earning Limit (LEL) in the Qualifying Week (the 15th week before the Expected Week of Confinement (EWC)) are not eligible to receive SMP. They may, however, be able to apply to the Social Security Agency for Maternity Allowance which is paid to them directly.  |

**3. Notice of Intention to Take Maternity Leave**

* 1. A member of staff must inform the University, no later than the end of the fifteenth week before her expected week of childbirth, of the following:
* That she is pregnant;
* The week her baby is expected to be born (EWC); and
* When she wants her maternity leave to start.
	1. The above information should be recorded on a Maternity Leave Notification Form and sent to the HR Hub. A Maternity Certificate (Mat B1), which can be obtained from a GP or registered midwife, is also required at the same time or as soon as possible thereafter. Paid maternity leave can only be authorised when a Mat B1 Form has been received by the HR Hub.
	2. Within 28 days of receipt of the above, the HR Hub will confirm the maternity leave arrangements in writing, to include the date on which the member of staff is expected to return to work if she were to take her full entitlement.
	3. The member of staff must also inform her Head of School / Department / Unit of her maternity leave arrangements.
	4. The member of staff may change her mind about when she wants to start her OML by informing the HR Hub and her Head of School / Department / Unit in writing. The change of date to the commencement of her OML must be given at least 28 days in advance (unless this is not reasonably practical to do so).
	5. Although entitlement is to 52 weeks leave, where possible, a member of staff should outline the leave she intends to take when completing the Maternity Leave Notification Form. However although it is understood that it is hard to know beforehand how an individual will feel after the baby is born, 8 weeks notice must be given to the University of her return to work date if the return date is altered.

**4. Commencement of Maternity Leave**

4.1 **Ordinary Maternity Leave**

OML will normally commence no earlier than the beginning of the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth and on one of the following dates:

* The date specified by the member of staff in her notification to the University; or
* During the four weeks before the start of the expected week of childbirth, if the member of staff is absent from work for a pregnancy related illness. Under these circumstances her maternity leave will start automatically, regardless of when she has previously said she wanted her maternity leave to start; or
* The day after childbirth occurs, where the OML has not commenced i.e. if the birth is earlier than expected.

Where the birth is earlier than expected, if the member of staff has not already done so, she must notify the University as soon as it is reasonably practicable, by completing the Maternity Leave Notification Form. The Maternity Leave Notification Form must be sent to the HR Hub along with an MAT B1 as appropriate.

4.2 **Additional Maternity Leave**

The AML period commences on the day after the last day of the OML period.

Depending on individual choice, the AML may last from 1 week up to a maximum of 26 weeks.

1. **Annual Leave**
	1. A member of staff accrues contractual annual leave entitlement while on OML and during AML.
	2. A member of staff is expected, where possible, to take her full annual leave entitlement in a particular leave year. However, should this not be possible due to maternity leave arrangements or exceptional circumstances, she will be able to carry over up to the full complement of leave (43 days) to the next leave year, the scheduling of which must be taken by agreement with the Head of School / Department / Unit.
	3. Annual leave may be taken at the end of OML, (where AML is not taken) or at the end of AML, by agreement with the Head of School / Department / Unit.
2. **Pension**

* 1. Pensionable service will continue to accrue as normal as long as the member of staff is receiving salary or statutory maternity pay.
	2. A member of staff who takes unpaid leave including from week 40 of her Maternity Leave onwards, will not normally be able to make pension contributions for the period of unpaid leave.
1. **Career Break**
	1. A member of staff on career break will have no entitlement to maternity pay other than Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), subject always to eligibility requirements for SMP which can be affected during periods of unpaid leave.
2. **Return to Work**

A member of staff who wants to return to work from Maternity Leave either earlier or later than first agreed, must give the University 8 weeks' written notice of the date on which she wants to return to work.

* 1. Ordinary Maternity Leave

A member of staff is entitled to return from OML to the job in which she was employed before her absence under the original contract of employment and on terms and conditions not less favourable than those, which she would have received had she not been absent.

* 1. Additional Maternity Leave

A member of staff who takes AML is entitled to return to the job in which she was employed before her absence or if this is not reasonably practicable, to another job which is both suitable for her and appropriate for her in the circumstances on equivalent terms and conditions.

1. **Other Information**
	1. Antenatal Care

A member of staff is entitled to paid time off work to attend antenatal appointments, which should be made on the advice of a registered medical practitioner, a registered midwife or a registered midwife/ health visitor. The individual must notify her Department in advance. A Department has the right to ask for an appointment card or other document that shows an appointment has been made.

* 1. Still Birth

The University does not make any distinction between still and live births in the granting of its maternity leave.

* 1. Keeping in Touch Days

A member of staff is entitled to work for a period of up to 10 days during Maternity Leave, known as Keeping in Touch Days, without loss of Maternity Allowance or Statutory Maternity Pay or without triggering a return to work. These days should be by agreement with the Head of School / Department / Unit.

The University is entitled to make reasonable contact with a member of staff on Maternity Leave for a number of reasons, such as to help plan and to discuss arrangements for her return to work.

* 1. Work Life Balance Policies

The University has also a number of Work Life Balance Policies:

* Dependant Leave.
* Career Break.
* Flexible Working.
* Adoptive Leave.
* Parental Leave.
* Paternity Leave.
* Childcare Voucher Scheme.
	1. Not Returning to Work

A member of staff who does not wish to return to work at the end of her OML or AML is required to give notice, in writing, of termination of the contract.

* 1. Statutory Provisions

Where, in exceptional circumstances, any requirements imposed by the University or under any relevant statutory provision prohibits an employee from working for any period after the end of the ordinary maternity leave period by reason of her having recently given birth, her ordinary maternity leave period continues until the end of the later period.

If you have a specific query relating to your maternity leave, please contact the HR Hub on 028 9097 3000, or email hrhub@qub.ac.uk.