

Stanford

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5.9.1 Pregnancy, Childbirth, Adoption, and Lactation: Policy

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Summary

Defines an Academic Accommodation Period for registered and matriculated graduate students anticipating or experiencing a birth. Provides guidance for students who wish to take a leave of absence for pregnancy, adoption, or childbirth-related reasons. Defines a Lactation Accommodation policy for matriculated students and postdoctoral scholars. Complies with the requirements of California Education Code 66281.7.

Rationale

Stanford University recognizes the importance of balancing the family and academic needs of new parents and provides support for graduate students who are anticipating the birth or adoption of a child. Stanford extends this support to parents expecting a baby, to parents who are adopting a child, to parents through surrogacy, and to parents nursing their infants.

This policy does not replace the communication and cooperation between students and their advisors and degree programs, and the good-faith efforts of both to accommodate the birth or adoption of a child. It is the intention of this policy to reinforce the importance of that cooperation and to provide support where needed to make that accommodation possible.

Policy

Stanford University prohibits discrimination on the basis of any characteristic protected by applicable law, including discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, in the administration of its programs and activities. Stanford will neither require nor prohibit leaves of absence for pregnancy or childbirth. In addition, Stanford will reasonably accommodate its graduate students, including pregnant students, so that they may continue to make progress toward the completion of their degree. The accommodation is defined in this policy.

Any student who believes that they have not been treated equitably under the provisions of this policy may file a grievance with the [SHARE Title IX Office](#) ^[1], through the Student Non-Academic Grievance Procedure.

Authority:

- [Vice Provost for Graduate Education](#) [2] (policy)
- [Office of the Registrar](#) [3] via Stanford Services & Support and [Vice Provost for Graduate Education](#) [2] (implementation)

Applicability:

To all matriculated graduate students and the programs in which they are enrolled. The Lactation Accommodation also applies to matriculated undergraduate students and postdoctoral scholars appointed by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

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1. Academic Support for Pregnant and Non-Birth Parent Graduate Students

This policy is intended to provide an accommodation for the demands placed on a student by late-stage pregnancy, childbirth, and the care of a newborn. After careful consideration of this policy and discussion of their academic situation with the advisor and degree program, the parent may choose whether to remain enrolled with a Childbirth Academic Accommodation during the period of time around the birth of the child, to enroll part-time, or to suspend enrollment by taking a Pregnancy or Parental Leave of Absence.

Definition

The term “non-birth parent” as used in this policy includes:

- spouses or partners of individuals (who do not have to be Stanford students) anticipating or recently experiencing the birth of a child;
- parents who adopt a child;
- parents by means of surrogacy.

a) Overview of Enrollment Options

The following summary is intended to assist in making this decision. It is important for the graduate student to review the details of this entire policy, as well as the Leave of Absence policy, and to discuss options with their degree program. International students should discuss with the staff at the Bechtel International Center the impact of this decision on their visa.

CONTINUED ENROLLMENT WITH CHILDBIRTH ACCOMMODATION:

- maintains active student status throughout the period so that housing, health insurance, and other rights and privileges of enrolled students are not impacted;
- provides an Academic Accommodation Period of two quarters for the birth parent and one quarter for the non-birth parent during which academic requirements can be rescheduled;

- extends academic milestones, including candidacy requirements, by one academic quarter;
- excuses the birth parent, if supported by a teaching or research assistantship, from their regular TA or RA duties for a period of one quarter (or 3 months) during which they will continue to receive financial support;
- assures that any student who is already funded will not lose any financial support during the accommodation period; however, does not provide financial support if none was already in place.

PREGNANCY OR PARENTAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

- establishes a period of time during which enrollment is suspended, and the student therefore will not have registered student status;
- provides continuing access to Cardinal Care health insurance during a plan year in which the student has already enrolled in Cardinal Care, but at the student's expense;
- specifies that a student may petition to remain in housing without enrolling if they are on pregnancy or parental leave and enroll for the quarter following their leave (pregnancy leaves may be one to two quarters; parental leaves for non-birth parents are one quarter);
- suspends financial support during the leave period;
- extends the candidacy period (or pre-candidacy period for students not yet admitted to candidacy) for students in programs requiring candidacy by the required amount (one year for pregnancy leaves; one quarter for parental leaves for non-birth parents).

b) Continued Enrollment with Childbirth Accommodation

A Childbirth Accommodation is designed to make it possible to maintain the parent's full-time, registered student status, and to facilitate their return to full participation in classwork, and, where applicable, research, teaching, and clinical training in a seamless manner.

All pregnant students and non-birth parent students who are registered and matriculated in a graduate degree program:

- are eligible for an Academic Accommodation Period of up to two consecutive academic quarters around the time of the birth (two quarters for the birth parent and one quarter for the non-birth parent), during which the student may work with the advisor and degree program to reschedule course assignments, examinations, and other academic requirements;
- are eligible for full-time enrollment during this period and will retain access to Stanford facilities, Cardinal Care, university housing, and other rights and privileges of registered students;
- will be granted an automatic one-quarter extension of university and degree program requirements and academic milestones, with the possibility of up to three quarters by petition under unusual circumstances.

c) Requesting a Childbirth Accommodation

Matriculated and enrolled pregnant graduate students or non-birth parent students may formally request a Childbirth Accommodation, including a one-quarter extension of university and degree program academic requirements and up to two-quarters of Academic Accommodation Period around the birth of a child. This Academic Accommodation Period is not a leave of absence from university responsibilities. The expectation is that the student will be in residence, and, assuming good health of the birth parent and the infant, will remain engaged in classwork and research, and, if applicable and feasible, clinical activities, even if at a reduced level.

The Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE) administers the Childbirth Accommodation process through an [online request](#) [4]. A letter from the birth parent's health-care provider stating the anticipated delivery date must be provided as part of the request.

The request goes to the student's advisor for review and the degree program is notified. Once reviewed by the advisor, the request is then routed to the VPGE Office. VPGE will notify the student, the student's advisor and degree program, and the relevant university administrative offices regarding the one-quarter extension of university and degree program academic requirements and the Academic Accommodation Period of up to two quarters, normally beginning with the quarter in which the birth is expected.

d) Coursework, Research and Clinical Activities

A Childbirth Accommodation will provide a two-quarter period for the birth parent and a one-quarter period for the non-birth parent of scheduling flexibility in regard to assignments due, reports anticipated, or other class- and research-related requirements. It does not, however, waive class attendance requirements for students in the Law School or clinical training or other requirements for students pursuing an M.D. or other degrees in the Medical School that require clinical training. Students in other schools are expected to attend class and participate in seminars to the extent that the health of the birth parent and newborn and the demands of caring for an infant allow. Faculty or relevant staff are expected to work with the student to make arrangements for submitting work for completion of requirements, and to grade it promptly so as to remove any "Incomplete" notations as rapidly as possible. Faculty members are encouraged to assign "N" and "L" grades, where appropriate.

e) Part-Time Enrollment

A Childbirth Accommodation makes it possible for pregnant and non-birth parent graduate students to maintain their full-time student status, so that they continue accumulating units toward their residency requirement, and to avoid triggering any interruptions in on-campus housing, insurance coverage, eligibility for student loans, and deferment of student loan repayment. By remaining full-time students, the visa status of international students is not affected.

While it is usually better for the student to remain enrolled full-time, in some cases, depending on the coursework appropriate to the stage of their academic program, part-time enrollment would be appropriate. This will require careful consultation, in advance, with the students' advisor, the degree program's student services administrator and possibly Bechtel International Center. The consultation will ensure that the implications for academic progress, visa status, loan eligibility and deferment, etc., have been thoroughly investigated. In completing the petition for the Childbirth Accommodation, the student may request up to two quarters of part-time enrollment by means of a [Graduate Petition for Part-Time Enrollment](#) [5]. If part-time enrollment status is approved, the student will retain all privileges of the Childbirth Accommodation.

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2. Pregnancy or Parental Leaves of Absence

Stanford neither requires nor prohibits a Pregnancy or Parental Leave of Absence. All provisions of the Leave of Absence policy (see [GAP 5.3 Leaves of Absence](#) [6]) will apply.

Any pregnant graduate student may request a Pregnancy Leave of Absence in order to suspend their student enrollment around the time of the birth. Any matriculated pregnant graduate student requesting a Pregnancy Leave of Absence will automatically be approved for a leave period of four quarters (12 months). Students may choose to return to enrolled status before the Pregnancy leave period expires.

Non-birth parents may request a Parental Leave of Absence. Non-birth parents who request a Parental Leave of Absence will automatically be approved for a leave period of one academic quarter.

As defined in that policy, the following conditions are permitted for Pregnancy and Parental Leaves of Absence:

- The Pregnancy and Parental Leave will be approved automatically (one year for pregnancy leaves; one quarter for parental leaves for non-birth parents) regardless of prior accumulated leave time. Earlier return from leave is permitted where applicable.
- For students in programs requiring candidacy, a Pregnancy or Parental Leave extends the candidacy period (or pre-candidacy period for students not yet admitted to candidacy) by the required amount (one year for pregnancy leaves; one quarter for parental leaves for non-birth parents).
- The Pregnancy Leave of Absence period will be expected to include the quarter in which the child is born. The timing of a leave of absence ending before the birth, or starting after the birth, is subject to approval by the degree program.
- In the case where a Pregnancy or Parental Leave of Absence would extend the student’s cumulative leave total beyond 8 quarters, that extension will be permitted so that the student may return to his or her program. The student will then be considered to have reached his or her maximum cumulative leave. Subsequent leaves will not be permitted except in the case of another pregnancy.
- A student may petition to remain in housing (one to two quarters for pregnancy leaves; one quarter for parental leaves for non-birth parents) without enrolling if they are on pregnancy or parental leave and enroll for the quarter following their leave.

	Pregnancy Leave - Birth Parent	Parental Leave - Non-Birth Parent
Leave Period	12 months (Four Quarters)	Three Months (One Quarter)
Candidacy Period Extensions (if applicable)		
• Pre-candidacy Period	12 months (Four Quarters)	Three Months (One Quarter)
• Candidacy Period	12 months (Four Quarters)	Three Months (One Quarter)
University Housing Petition Options*	Remain in housing for one to two quarters during leave and enroll the quarter following leave	Remain in housing for one quarter during leave and enroll the quarter following leave

*Questions about university housing should be directed to [R&DE Student Housing](#) [7].

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3. Funding for Birth Parent

As part of a Childbirth Accommodation, pregnant graduate students in their first six years of graduate study who are supported by teaching and/or research assistantships will be excused from their regular TA or RA duties for a period of one quarter (three months), normally during the quarter in which the baby is born, without any loss of financial support. If the student is funded by a fellowship or training grant, this support will typically remain unchanged during the accommodation period.

Graduate students who do not have an ongoing commitment of financial support in the form of fellowships or training

grants, or teaching or research assistantships, may request a Childbirth Accommodation, including an Academic Accommodation Period and an automatic one-quarter extension of academic requirements, but are not eligible for tuition or other funding from the Childbirth Accommodation Fund.

Assistantships

For most graduate students for whom a teaching assistantship (TA) is part of their support package, it should be possible to arrange the timing of teaching assignments to accommodate childbirth. During the one quarter (three month) period, students supported by teaching assistantships may choose to continue in some limited capacity (e.g., grading, preparing course materials, or other non-intensive duties), in order to finish out an academic quarter, but cannot be required to do so. With advance planning, most research assistantship (RA) assignments can similarly be adjusted to accommodate childbirth. Most granting agencies provide for a short period of reduced activity due to health or personal issues. The support of students while they are writing or otherwise preparing the development or defense of a dissertation is typically an allowable expense on a research grant or contract if the student has already been funded to do the work related to that project.

For birth parents whose doctoral program is funded by a 50% FTE RA or TA, in most cases, they will be funded for one quarter during the period of accommodation. The student's financial support will be provided in the form of a stipend payment to the student from the Childbirth Accommodation Fund.

It is expected that the Childbirth Accommodation Funding would replace one quarter of RA/TA funding. If the date of birth makes that untenable, the VPGE Office will work with the degree program and provide the balance of a 25% FTE RA/TA appointment for two quarters in the form of a stipend and tuition payment. Matching degree program RA or TA funding for two quarters may provide flexibility for the student and degree program to arrange funding around the birth.

Once a Childbirth Accommodation has been processed, the VPGE Office will determine if the regulations of the funding agency supporting the assistantship allow a period of reduced activity and occasional absence. If it does not, the student's salary and/or stipend and associated tuition for the funding accommodation period will be paid from the Childbirth Accommodation Fund, administered by the VPGE Office. If continued funding would be allowed by the granting agency, but project deadlines require that a Principal Investigator hire a temporary replacement, the support for the birth parent may be charged to the Childbirth Accommodation Fund for the funding accommodation period.

The student, their advisor, and the degree program should recognize that it might not be feasible to return to a regular TA or RA assignment immediately after the Childbirth Accommodation period. In that case, arrangements should be made to move a teaching assignment to another quarter, to assign limited on-site duties to a research assistant, or to find an alternative form of support. These issues should be negotiated sensitively with the student's needs in mind. The student should work proactively with their degree program to make arrangements for ongoing support beyond the childbirth funding accommodation period if they cannot return to normal duties.

Fellowships

Students who are supported by fellowships internal to Stanford normally have their stipends distributed as lump-sum payments at the beginning of each quarter. Students supported in this manner will see no change in their fellowship support.

Students who are supported by fellowships external to Stanford must adhere to the rules of the granting agency with respect to absences from academic and research work. If the granting agency requires suspension of fellowship benefits during the one quarter period, the student will be eligible for substitute payment from the Childbirth Accommodation Fund.

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4. Support for Lactating Parents

This policy applies to undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral scholars (faculty, staff, or campus visitors should contact the [WorkLife Office](#) [8]).

Stanford University supports the importance of health and bonding for parents nursing their infants. To promote a family-friendly work environment and to ensure access for students and postdoctoral scholars who wish to breastfeed, the university will provide reasonable accommodations to enable parents to express breastmilk.

Lactation spaces are available to all members of the university community, including students, postdoctoral scholars, and third parties who participate in Stanford programs and activities. The [WorkLife Office](#) [8] maintains a list of campus spaces that may be used for lactation. Additional [resources for lactation support](#) [9] are available through the WorkLife Office.

Recommended Steps

Step One – Request: Student or postdoctoral scholar discusses a lactation accommodation the GLO or the OPA representative. The request does not need to be made in writing nor is a doctor's note required.

Step Two – Discussion: The GLO or OPA representative will meet with the student or postdoctoral scholar to acknowledge the request and help develop an accommodation. The representative should confirm that the student or postdoctoral scholar has a private, clean and secure place to express breastmilk (see Identifying Space). If the student or postdoctoral scholar has questions or concerns about the available accommodations on campus, questions should be referred to the Title IX Office.

Step Three – Follow up: The GLO or OPA representative should confirm the accommodation in writing and offer to revisit the plan with the student or postdoctoral scholar after two to three weeks to see if any changes are needed.

Accommodation Periods

A reasonable accommodation includes time taken as needed by the student or postdoctoral scholar to express breastmilk in a space that complies with state and federal requirements (see Identifying Space). When possible, time should be taken during regularly scheduled meal and rest periods. The number of breaks needed to express breastmilk may vary. A nursing parent will typically need two or three breaks during an eight-hour period; however, additional break times may be necessary. The break schedule should be based on the parent's needs and the operational needs of the degree program.

Identifying Space

Appropriate space that complies with state and federal requirements includes any clean space that can be made private, shielded from view and free from intrusions, and is not located in a bathroom. Appropriate space can include a private office, a conference room with a locking door, or any other compliant space that can be secured and shielded from view.

- **Student or Postdoctoral Scholar's Own or Adjacent Building:** Every effort should be made to identify space in the building in which the student or postdoctoral scholar spends the majority of time. It may be necessary to identify more than one space in order to meet the needs of the student or postdoctoral scholar. Space may be identified at an adjacent building within a reasonable walking distance and that is accessible during the arranged lactation schedule. A reasonable distance is recommended as no more than a 5-minute walk from the student or

postdoctoral scholar's building.

- **Identified Lactation Locations:** If space cannot be identified in the student or postdoctoral scholar's building or an adjacent building, the [WorkLife Office](#) [8] maintains a list of campus spaces that may be used for lactation.

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Related Content:

Related Policies

- [GAP 5.2 Part-Time Enrollment](#) [10]
- [GAP 5.3 Leaves of Absence](#) [6]

Related Bulletin Sections

- [Pregnancy, Childbirth, Adoption and Lactation Policy](#) [11]
- [Leaves of Absence](#) [12]

Related Information and Forms

- [Request for Childbirth and Parental Accommodations](#) [4] (online application)
- [Graduate Petition for Part-time Enrollment](#) [5]

Source URL: <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-5/subchapter-9/page-5-9-1>

Links

[1] <https://sharetitleix.stanford.edu/>

[2] <mailto:vpge@stanford.edu?subject=GAP%20Inquiry>

[3] https://stanford.service-now.com/services?id=services_portal_home

[4] <https://vpgeapps.stanford.edu/app/ChildbirthAccommodation/auth/>

[5] <https://registrar.stanford.edu/part-time-enrollment-petition-graduate-students>

[6] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-5/subchapter-3/page-5-3-1>

[7] <https://rde.stanford.edu/>

[8] <https://cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/benefits-rewards/worklife>

[9] <https://cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/benefits-rewards/worklife/children-family/lactation-support>

[10] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-5/subchapter-2/page-5-2-1>

[11] <https://bulletin.stanford.edu/academic-policies/graduate-degrees#degree-progress1>

[12] <https://bulletin.stanford.edu/academic-policies/graduate-degrees#leave-reinstatement>