Supporting employees going on parental or carer’s leave
A PLANNING AND CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR MANAGERS
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Welcome

While highly rewarding, being a new parent or caring for other family members can be stressful for employees. Macquarie University supports employees who are parents and/or carers, so that they can successfully integrate their work and personal life. At Macquarie, being a parent or a carer and having a great career isn’t mutually exclusive.

This guide provides information about how you, as a manager, can best support team members who are planning to take time out for the arrival of a new baby or to care for others. It will help you navigate through the various conversations, decisions and actions you’ll be taking. There’s a separate guide for team members, so that together you can best plan for their upcoming leave and flexible work requirements.

This guide is intended to be read in conjunction with the information and relevant policies on the University’s Carer’s Hub website, including:

- leave and other provisions
- support and resources
- carer stories.

Thank you for playing a positive and critical role in fostering an inclusive environment for your team members who have caring responsibilities.

WHO IS A PARENT OR CARER?
At Macquarie, we use a broad and inclusive definition of parents and carers to allow us to support the many ways in which employees can have children and be a family. This includes married couples, single parents, those in same-sex relationships or de facto relationships, adoptive or foster parents, employees who are surrogates, and those who care for stepchildren. Carers could be looking after young children, an elderly parent, or a family member with a disability, illness or chronic medical condition.
Having the conversation

TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT PARENTING OR CARING
When your team member approaches you to talk about their needs as a carer or to discuss their pregnancy, remember that this may be a time of heightened stress for them as they may be concerned about the impact their role as a parent or carer may have on their career.

As a manager, you are encouraged to:

- **Be open** to discussing the needs of the individual. Reassure them that you are committed to supporting them and helping them find the best outcome to meet their needs.

- **Avoid making assumptions** about the team member’s circumstances. Each care situation is unique. Some caring responsibilities are predictable and can be anticipated in advance. Others are less predictable, require urgent attention or are irregular in nature. Caring needs may also change over time.

- **Be comfortable** with asking them to help you manage their workload and priorities, but let them know that you’ll work together on finding solutions to ensure that the needs of the team and other stakeholders, colleagues and partners continue to be met.

- **Focus on the team member’s specific circumstances** and potential career impacts, eg if they are an academic staff member on a grant-funded fellowship, discuss with them how this may be affected and how any issues can be addressed.

- **Have an open mind** around possible solutions. Understand the wide range of leave and flexible working options available at Macquarie that are designed to support employees. These can be mixed and matched to suit individual and team needs, depending on the particular requirements and circumstances. Details of leave and other entitlements for parents and carers can be found on the University’s Carer’s Hub website. For more information and resources on flexible work options, refer to the Flexible Work Policy and Procedure or search for ‘managing flexible work’ on the University’s staff website.

- **Work with the team member to create a plan** around the delivery of their key projects and responsibilities. Help them prioritise and plan for handovers, either in the immediate term or in the longer term if they are taking an extended period of leave; for example, for the birth of a child.

- **Discuss how you’ll stay in touch**, depending on the individual’s personal circumstances and choice. Some people going on parental leave may want to be kept updated on team news or be invited to some team activities, while others may want to be kept up to date on projects they’re involved with. Some employees who are caring for others during an emergency may be comfortable with receiving work-related text messages, while others may prefer not to be contacted at all. Under the Australian Government Keeping in Touch Days policy, employees on unpaid parental leave will be paid to participate in activities such as planning days, training or conference attendance, up to a maximum of 10 days. The scheme aims to facilitate a smooth return to work for new parents; however, employees are not obliged to take part in any work activities while on parental leave.
Types of leave available

FOR PARENTS
Macquarie University offers a range of paid and unpaid parental leave options for employees who are the primary carer of a newborn, adopted or foster child; and for those supporting their partner during the arrival of their child. There are options to take leave flexibly, and where both parents work at Macquarie, to share parental leave. Employees may also be eligible to combine parental leave with other types of leave, such as annual leave, long-service leave or leave without pay.

Employees are encouraged to read through the information and ‘frequently asked questions’ on the University’s Carer’s Hub website to understand their entitlements, and to speak with their HR Client Team representative if they have any questions or concerns.

Some may also be eligible for the Australian Government Parental Leave Pay Scheme or Dad and Partner Pay, which provide financial assistance to parents of newborn children, in addition to the parental leave offered by the University. These schemes are run externally to Macquarie and the employee must evaluate their eligibility requirements and apply directly to the Department of Human Services.

If you have questions or concerns, speak with your HR Client team representative.

APPLYING FOR LEAVE
Wherever possible, the University asks employees to provide at least 10 weeks notice of their intention to take paid parental leave.

A completed leave form detailing the intended leave arrangements is required for all types of parental leave. A link to this form can be found on the Carer’s Hub on the University’s staff website.

Supporting documentation:
- **Parental leave** (primary carer – birth related) – a medical certificate confirming pregnancy and expected due date
- **Parental leave** (primary carer – placement related, ie adoption or foster care) – copy of placement papers from the relevant agency
- **Parental leave** (surrogate) – a medical certificate confirming pregnancy and expected due date and copy of the birth certificate when the baby is born
- **Parental leave** (primary carer – partner) – copy of the birth certificate or placement papers from the relevant agency
- **Partner leave** (supporting) – copy of medical certificate confirming pregnancy, or birth certificate.

COMMENCING LEAVE
A staff member who is pregnant can commence leave up to six weeks prior to the baby’s expected date of birth. Their parental leave can commence earlier with approval but will not commence later than the date of birth of the child.

When a staff member is the partner and primary carer, their parental leave commences from the date they take on primary care of the child. This leave must be utilised in full before the child’s second birthday.

For a primary carer of an adopted or foster child, parental leave normally commences from the date the child is placed with the parents. Partner leave is usually taken at the time of the birth or placement of the child. You are encouraged to discuss your team member’s leave needs with them.

FOR CARERS
Macquarie University offers a range of leave options to allow employees to take time off for their caring responsibilities. These include:
- **Paid personal leave**: Staff receive an allocation of personal leave that may be used for personal sick leave and family/carer responsibilities (please see the University’s Personal Leave Policy).
- **Annual leave**: Employees receive four weeks of annual leave per year, which can also be used for caring for others if paid personal leave entitlements are exhausted or not appropriate to the circumstance.
- **Purchased leave**: Eligible professional staff can purchase an extra five or 10 days of leave per year. Eligible academic staff can purchase an extra four weeks of leave per year.

Carers are also entitled to request flexible work arrangements. For more information search for ‘leave’ and/or ‘flexible work’ on the University’s staff website.
Employees may find they need to change the way they work, to meet their caring requirements. Macquarie offers a range of flexible working options that employees can access on a short, medium or longer-term basis, depending on their specific needs. These include:

- **Not working in the office:** Working from home or another venue either on a specific day of the week or ad hoc if required.
- **Not working 9am – 5pm:** Employees can request to vary their start and finish times; for example, start earlier and leave earlier, or start and leave later.
- **Not working full-time:** In some roles, part-time or job-sharing arrangements may be possible.

For more information on flexible work options and good practice strategies for making flexibility work, search for ‘managing flexible work’ on the University’s website. The website also has resources including a checklist for assessing a flexible work request, and a working from home conversation guide.

Here are some tips for having a positive, productive conversation about flexible working:

- Have an open discussion with your team member about flexible work options that fit the individual, the team and stakeholders.
- Understand the various flexible working and leave options available. These can be mixed and matched to meet a range of needs either for the short or longer term.
- Be comfortable asking questions about how workload, key priorities and deliverables will be managed. Think about how workload can be structured, including from a broader team perspective, as there may be opportunities for other team members to expand their skill sets by taking on some activities while their own priorities are readjusted.
CREATING A SAFE WORKPLACE
Macquarie is committed to providing a safe working environment for all its employees. If your team member has concerns about their health or the physical impact of their pregnancy, you should encourage them to seek advice from their treating doctor and discuss their concerns with you.

Your role as manager is to help the employee find solutions that keep them safe at work. An employee may have concerns about the requirements of their role or working environment; for example, if their role requires them to stand a lot, or if it involves manual handling or working with chemicals. They may also be concerned about their hours and commuting time or about work-related travel requirements.

Support your team member to make adjustments that will allow them to continue to work safely, such as to their work station, environment, role or working arrangements. You can seek assistance with this from the University’s Health Management Adviser.

Speak with your HR Client Team representative if you have any questions or concerns.

SUPPORT DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY
An employee who is pregnant, or one whose partner is pregnant, may also access two days of paid personal leave for the purpose of attending routine medical appointments or pre-natal classes held during working hours. Employees can also use their sick leave during pregnancy, including to undertake IVF cycles.

Should the child be born prematurely, employees are eligible to start parental or partner leave from the date of the birth, rather than the date they’d originally planned for. All that’s required is for them to submit a revised leave application when convenient.

In the event of a miscarriage, stillbirth or early infant death, employees may use their personal leave and leave without pay. They may also need support with their return to work, including for example, a graduated return.
## Parental leave checklist

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<tr>
<th><strong>THINGS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEAM MEMBER</strong></th>
<th><strong>NOTES</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Staying safe at work</strong></td>
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<td>Any health or safety concerns they may have about the requirements of their role or working conditions</td>
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<td><strong>Going on Leave</strong></td>
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<td>Their planned parental leave dates – commencement and return</td>
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<tr>
<td>The type of leave they’re taking: paid or unpaid parental leave, annual leave and, if applicable, the Australian Government’s Parental Leave Pay or Dad and Partner Pay</td>
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<td>Any impacts on teaching, research and key projects they’re working on</td>
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<td>If the staff member is on a grant-funded fellowship – how may this be affected and how can any impacts be addressed?</td>
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<td>If they lead a research team or supervise PhD students – how will these responsibilities be managed?</td>
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<td>What their handover will be – to whom and where their notes will be saved</td>
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<tr>
<td>How they’d like to keep in touch – how often they’d like to be communicated with while they’re away, and by which method – phone call, email or text message</td>
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<tr>
<td>If they’d like to be included in team activities; for example, strategy sessions or team days while they’re away. They have 10 paid Keeping in Touch Days that they can access while on unpaid parental leave</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who their primary contact in the team will be</td>
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<td>How they’ll communicate their absence with their stakeholders, team members and colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>The support available at the University and through external organisations – details and links can be found on the Carer’s Hub website</td>
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**HELP THEM TAKE THEIR LEAVE**

| | |
| Be familiar with the University’s Parental Leave Policy so you understand the available leave options and entitlements | |
| Review and sign the employee’s application for parental/partner leave, ensuring the appropriate supporting documentation is included | |

**LEAVING THE OFFICE**

| | |
| Check they’ve set up their out-of-office and voicemail before they go, and that they’ve let people know who to contact in their absence | |
| Send a note to colleagues and contacts on their last day letting them know who to contact about their portfolio while they are away | |
### HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR TEAM MEMBER TO UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES

| Help them identify what the real issues are and what can be done |
| Focus on the options and the possible solutions |
| Give careful consideration to any requests for support or adjustments, with a focus on working together to find a solution |
| Allow time for proper consideration of the issues and the needs of both the team member as well as their projects/team |

### EXPLORE THE OPTIONS

| Expand your knowledge about the leave and flexible working options available to support employees with caring responsibilities (for details see the University’s Carer’s Hub website) |
| Discuss the available alternatives with the employee and their team |

### ASSESS THE OPTIONS AND THE IMPLICATIONS

| Discuss with the team member what their desired outcome is |
| Allow time to consider the options, carefully assessing which arrangements are most suitable and most likely to address the needs of the employee and the University |
| Think about the positive implications and possible impacts on your team; for example workloads and project deadlines |
| Consider any health and safety issues for the team member. You can contact your HR Client manager for advice or to raise any concerns |
| Make the process open and transparent |

### DEVELOP A PLAN

| Develop a plan with the team member for their new work arrangements |
| Discuss the arrangements with the team and any impact on them |
| Consider developing new performance measures or changing performance objectives if required |
| Consider options for when your team member returns to work after taking leave for caring responsibilities, including career development opportunities |
| Document the agreement with your team member so that you can both have a useful reference point |

### MONITOR AND REVIEW THE PLAN

| Check in with your team member to ensure that what has been agreed to is working as expected |
| Trial the new arrangement for an agreed period then review how effective it has been so far for them, for you and for your team |
| Be prepared to make adjustments to the arrangement as a result of changes to individual circumstances or University needs to ensure its continued effectiveness |

Available support

**MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY SUPPORT OPTIONS**
Macquarie offers a range of support services for staff.

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**
The EAP is a free, 24/7, confidential counselling, coaching and wellbeing service. It provides support around how to best achieve lifestyle, work, personal and family goals, and offers assistance with managing work and life experiences, issues or concerns. Search for ‘EAP’ on the University’s staff website.

**PRIVATE HEALTHCARE DISCOUNTS**
Macquarie has partnered with Medibank Private to offer employees corporate health cover including an ongoing 9 per cent discount on the cost of private health insurance. Search for ‘Medibank Private’ on the University’s staff website.

**MEDICAL SERVICES**
There are a range of medical services on or near campus, including a General Practitioner Clinic. Search for ‘hospitals and clinics’ on the University’s staff website.

**SPORT AND AQUATIC CENTRE**
Keep active at the Sport and Aquatic Centre. Search for ‘sport and aquatic centre’ on the University’s staff website.

**ON-CAMPUS CHILDCARE**
There are three early childhood education and care centres at Macquarie University. Places are limited but priority is given to staff and students. For more information on childcare and school holiday programs search for ‘children’s services’ on the University’s staff website.

**OTHER SUPPORT OPTIONS**
A number of external organisations provide useful information, fact sheets and tools for carers.

For parents:

**PAYMENTS AND SERVICES FOR FAMILIES**
Department of Human Services
humanservices.gov.au/individuals/families

**CHILDCARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT**
Australia’s online childcare portal
mychild.gov.au
Childcare Services City of Ryde

**PREGNANCY AND BIRTH**
Department of Health’s Pregnancy, Birth and Baby website
pregnancybirthbaby.org.au

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR CHILDREN**
Families NSW
www.families.nsw.gov.au

**WORKING PARENTS SUPPORT**
Supporting Working Parents
supportingworkingparents.humanrights.gov.au

**INFORMATION ON LEGAL ENTITLEMENTS**
Fair Work Ombudsman

For carers of others:

**CARERS PAYMENTS AND SERVICES**
Department of Human Services
humanservices.gov.au/individuals/carers

**CARERS ADVICE AND SERVICES**
Carers NSW
carersnsw.org.au

**CARERS RESOURCES**
Carers Australia
carersaustralia.com.au

**USEFUL CONTACTS**
If you need additional information or support, contact your HR Client Team representative.

If you have any questions about diversity and inclusion, contact a member of the Workplace Diversity and Inclusion team at workplacediversityinclusion@mq.edu.au