

March 2007: Graduate Council Policy on Accommodation of Research Doctoral Student Parents

As many as one in ten of Berkeley's graduate students is a parent of a young child or children. Recognizing the special challenges involved in balancing advanced degree programs and family responsibilities, the University is committed to supporting policies, programs, and services to help graduate student parents meet their family care obligations while they pursue their academic goals.

Parental Accommodations for Research Doctoral Students

In its revised 2003 policy, the Graduate Council of the Academic Senate encourages academic departments to be as generous as possible in accommodating student parents and it establishes minimum standards of accommodation. Research doctoral students who are undergoing childbirth or coping with other serious parenting demands must be granted additional time to meet established deadlines for passing preliminary and/or qualifying examinations and completing their dissertations.

In recognition of the physical demands of childbearing, a woman anticipating childbirth is entitled to receive an extension of up to one extra year for passing preliminary examinations and qualifying examinations, and an extension of up to one extra year toward Normative Time completion while in candidacy. A woman or man experiencing other extraordinary parenting demands, such as the serious illness of a child, is entitled to receive an extension of up to six extra months for passing preliminary examinations and qualifying examinations, and an extension of up to six extra months toward Normative Time completion while in candidacy. However, the total additional time granted by this policy cannot exceed two years, no matter how many children are involved. Academic units must acknowledge these extensions in their calculations of Normative Time both before and after advancement to candidacy.

Withdrawals, leaves, and delayed progress toward completion of degree may have implications for the visa status of international students. International students are urged to consult with the Office of Services for International Students and Scholars (SISS) before modifying their degree progress.

Eligibility. A research doctoral student requesting parental accommodations must have substantial parenting responsibilities. Parenting responsibilities include childbirth, care of a newborn or newly adopted young child, the serious illness of a child, and other exceptional circumstances relating to a child. The child may be the student's child or that of a spouse or domestic partner.

Parental Accommodation and the Dean's Normative Time Fellowship. A student eligible for the Dean's Normative Time Fellowship (DNTEF) who has been granted a time extension for parental accommodation is entitled to a credit in the

normative time calculation. Credit for up to two semesters of parental leave before advancement to candidacy will be granted provided that either 1) the student formally withdraws for that purpose, or 2) the student intends to register to undertake a modified schedule and applies for parental leave status before or at the start of the proposed semester of leave. The Head Graduate Adviser of the student choosing the second option should send a memorandum with this request to the Graduate Division (and submitted to the Student Services Degrees Unit, 318 Sproul Hall). Retroactive requests will not be considered.

Childbirth Accommodations

In addition to being eligible for extensions of time under the Graduate Council's Parental Accommodations provision, research doctoral students who are women anticipating childbirth and are supported by graduate student instructor (GSI) and/or research (GSR) appointments will be excused from regular duties for a period of six weeks without loss of financial support (a longer period may be granted in the case of exceptional medical circumstances experienced by the mother or child before or after birth). They may choose to continue to work in some modified capacity during this six-week period but are not be required to do so. (Graduate Division explanatory note: Per the UC-UAW Academic Student Employee Agreement, eligible non-doctoral GSIs may also be on paid childbearing leave from regular duties for a period of up to four weeks.)

Support for a GSI or GSR replacement during the six-week period may be charged by the academic unit to the campus's Childbirth Accommodation Fund upon Graduate Division approval. Unless a semester-long period is approved due to very exceptional circumstances, the replacement GSI or GSR would not qualify for fee remissions since the appointment is limited to six weeks. Regarding replacement appointees, students who hold F-1 or J-1 visas are not eligible for exception to work over 50% time. (Graduate Division explanatory note: GSI replacement costs for eligible non-doctoral GSIs on childbearing leave are covered by the department.)

Women research doctoral students supported by university fellowships will experience no change in their funding arrangements during the six-week childbearing leave. Those supported by fellowships external to UC must adhere to the rules of the granting agency in regard to leaves from work. If the granting agency defers to university policy regarding paid childbirth leave, the six-week leave will be paid by the grant. If the granting agency requires suspension of payment during the six-week period, the student will be eligible for substitute payment from the Childbirth Accommodation Fund. If continued funding is allowed by a grant supervised by a Principal Investigator (PI) but project deadlines require that a PI hire a temporary replacement, the replacement's salary is eligible for reimbursement by the campus's Childbirth Accommodation Fund for the six-week period.

Note: Students will not receive financial support under this provision if they do not already hold a fellowship or academic appointment.

Applying for continued support through the Childbirth Accommodation Fund. The student must complete the Petition for Childbirth Accommodation Funding and secure the applicable verifications and signatures. The student's academic unit must submit all required information to the Graduate Services Office, 318 Sproul Hall #5900, at least 30 days prior to the beginning of the leave.