



GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS SUPPORTING STAFF RETURN TO WORK FROM PARENTAL AND ADOPTION LEAVE



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Create change

Supporting your staff return to work following Parental and Adoption Leave

It is important that you support your staff returning to work following a period of parental and adoption leave. This Guide provides you with information on how best to achieve this.



Parental and adoption leave scheme

UQ has a parental leave scheme which is funded through an on-cost charge via the salary process, meaning that Parental Leave salaries are charged against a Central (corporate) opal unit and not the staff member's local area. Contact HR for more information.

Keeping in touch with staff on parental and adoption leave

Keeping in touch days are voluntary and are provided to staff for genuine work activities, such as training, to become familiar with new or updated processes, and participating in planning meetings or discussions that may impact their role. More information can be found in the **UQ Parental Leave Procedure**.

It is recommended that you discuss with your staff whether they would like to schedule keeping in touch days prior to going on leave so that you can ensure you have their correct contact details and can plan for this as is appropriate. You can take this opportunity to have a conversation with your staff about their plans for returning to work, and enquire what you can do support them through this transition. It is important to understand that this may be the start of an ongoing conversation, and is not anticipated to lead to a formal agreement.



Supporting staff returning to work

As a supervisor, you should actively work to support and foster your staff's development following a period of parental or adoption leave, and make all reasonable accommodations to ensure that their return to work is as smooth and comfortable as possible. Your **local HR staff** and **Workplace Diversity and Inclusion** will provide assistance and information about how you might best support a staff member's return to work from a period of parental or adoption leave.

While the staff member is on parental or adoption leave, you may continue discussions about their return to work plan. You should be guided by the needs and wants of the staff member, in accordance with **UQ Policies and Procedures**, in developing and implementing the staff members return to work plan.

It is important that the career development of staff is supported following a period of parental or adoption leave. This is an ongoing conversation with your staff member, but initial discussion should be had during the development of their return to work plan.

The return to work plan should include:

- Any changes to work pattern;
- Allocation of work;
- Breastfeeding accommodation (if applicable);
- Professional development; and
- Time to check-in with the staff member three-to-six months after they return to work to evaluate the return to work plan and make any adjustments as necessary. This should be open to ongoing conversations, and not limited to a one-off conversation.

If you require any information in the development and implementation of a return to work plan, please see your **local HR Team** and/or the **Workplace Diversity and Inclusion team**.

Flexible work arrangements

The University provides a number of different options to cater for the individual needs of staff members. These options can be discussed, and where appropriate current working arrangements may be adjusted, to suit all parties. Flexibility makes it easier for staff to accept and meet personal, family or carer obligations while maintaining career progression and workplace satisfaction.

The **National Employment Standards (2013) in the Fair Work Act (2009)** provide employees with the right to request flexible work arrangements in certain circumstances such as where they are the parent, or have the responsibility for the care of a child who is of school age or younger. Requests for flexible work arrangements can only be refused on the basis of reasonable business grounds.

Flexible work arrangements refer to changes in hours of work (e.g. reduction in hours worked, changes to start/finish times), changes in patterns of work (e.g. working 'split-shifts' or job sharing arrangements) and changes in location of work (e.g. working from home or another location).

Eligible staff must submit their request for flexible working arrangements in writing **via a form** by setting out the details of the change sought and the reasons for the change. Requests for flexible working arrangements must be considered by the supervisor and approved by the Authorised Officer. The staff member who has made the request must receive a written response from the Authorised Officer within 21 days of receipt of the request.

Please refer to the **Flexible Working Arrangements policy** for more information and contact HR if you have any questions regarding the consideration of requests.

Breastfeeding and expressing

The University of Queensland is a breastfeeding friendly organisation and will make all reasonable accommodations for a staff member who is breastfeeding or expressing at work. There are a number of aspects that you need to consider when determining the provision of reasonable accommodation for staff breastfeeding and expressing at work, some of which are outlined below.

There are a number of parenting rooms for staff who are breastfeeding available across most UQ locations. A full list of facilities can be found on the **Parenting Rooms website**. These facilities are not available in every building on UQ campuses. When discussing your staff member's needs for breaks for breastfeeding, you should take into consideration the time needed for them to travel to an appropriate location on campus to express or feed their child.

There are potential health and safety risks if someone who is breastfeeding is unable to feed or express when they need to. This is not always a set schedule and some flexibility will be necessary in the accommodation of breastfeeding. It is important that you consider the risks to health and safety to the staff member when providing accommodations for breastfeeding.

It is also important to understand that breastfeeding or expressing may differ according to the age of the child (for example, breastfeeding or expressing frequency and duration is likely to be different for a parent of a one month old in comparison to a one year old). UQ supports flexible work practices and endeavours to provide reasonable accommodations for staff who are breastfeeding.

For more information about breastfeeding accommodation, please contact **Workplace Diversity and Inclusion**.



More information

For more information please see:

- **Your local HR Team**
- **Workplace Diversity and Inclusion**
- **UQ Policies and Procedures**
- **UQ Resources for Work and Family**
- **Fair Work Ombudsman**
- **Australian Government Supporting Working Parents Guide**



Checklist

ACTION	CHECKED
<p>Prior to the staff member going on parental or adoption leave organise a meeting to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • duration of the Parental or Adoption Leave; • other leave entitlements they may wish to take; • interim arrangements for their position (e.g. handing over work to others or recruitment of a replacement staff member for the period of the leave); • commencing discussions about a return to work plan; • whether the staff member wishes to keep in touch while on leave, how they would like this to happen and their preferred contact details while they are on parental; and • provide information about the facilities, support and information available to them during pregnancy and upon return to work. 	
<p>While the staff member is on leave touch base with them as is agreed. If additional necessary training or information arises while they are in leave keep them informed as is appropriate.</p>	
<p>Ensure that you are familiar with the relevant UQ Policies and are informed about your responsibilities as a supervisor in facilitating the staff members return to work. You might like to seek information from HR and Workplace Diversity and Inclusion</p>	
<p>Around 4-6 weeks prior to the staff member returning from parental or adoption leave, touch base with them to schedule a meeting to discuss their return to work plan. The return to work place should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any changes to work pattern; • allocation of work; • breastfeeding accommodation (if necessary); • staff professional development; • information about the support and facilities available to staff returning to work, such as the information in the Return to Work Information Sheet for Staff; and • time to check-in with the staff member three-to-six months after they return to work to evaluate the return to work plan and make any adjustments as necessary. This should be open to ongoing conversations, and not limited to a one-off conversation. 	
<p>Facilitate the implementation of their return to work plan. Seek support and additional information from HR as is appropriate.</p>	
<p>Support the staff member during the transition of their return to work. Schedule regular career progression meetings to ensure that their career is continued to be supported and advanced.</p>	