

REQUESTING A PREGNANCY/PARENTAL LEAVE? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

Congratulations! You're going to be taking a pregnancy and/or parental leave! This document is intended to help you navigate the months leading up to your leave as well as when you return to ensure your leave goes smoothly from a career perspective. The most current supplemental policy statement (SPS) is [SPS-C4 - Pregnancy and Parental Leave](#) (June 2017).

The Faculty of Engineering also has a Guidance Document regarding Pregnancy and Parental Leave (See [Appendix A](#)), created to guide faculty members and department chairs.

PAPERWORK

Career Progress:

As soon as you are on leave, your academic clock for tenure and promotion will automatically stop for one year. If you wish to maintain the original timing of your tenure application, please send a written request to your department chair before the end of your leave.

CP/M calculations are explained in detail in Section VI of the [policy](#). You are encouraged to discuss this with your department chair.

"A Faculty Member who has taken a leave in accordance with this Policy is still eligible for Career Progress/Merit awards. These awards shall be calculated as follows, taking into account the Faculty Member's normal division of duties between research, teaching, and service: If the Faculty Member has teaching evaluations for the year under evaluation, these will be used to calculate the teaching portion of the CP/M score, even if fewer classes were taught than usual (e.g., if two courses were taught in Fall semester and the Faculty Member was on leave during the Winter and Spring/Summer semesters). Likewise, if the Faculty Member engaged in service for the year under evaluation, this service will be used to calculate the service portion of the CP/M score. If no teaching or service was performed during the year under evaluation, the score will be estimated based on the average of the past three years for which scores are available.

In the year of the pregnancy/parental leave and the year following the pregnancy/parental leave, to calculate the research portion of the CP/M score, the Faculty Member may choose one of two options: (i) the average of the past three years for which research evaluations are available (normally those prior to the leave), or (ii) an evaluation of the past calendar year alone. A Faculty Member may be more likely to choose the second option in fields where publications (e.g., books) may take several years to appear or where there are unpredictable publication lags (e.g., journals), but either option is available to any Faculty Member on leave under this Policy. The Faculty Member shall inform his or her Chair of the elected option in writing at the time of the annual report submission."

Annual Records of Activities

Although you do not need to provide a [Record of Activities](#) while you are on leave, it is highly recommended that you submit one at least one month prior to commencing your leave. This prevents any misunderstanding by your Chair in assessing your CP/M, and helps them make the judgements outlined in the policy quoted above.

Human Resources / University Staff:

To request a pregnancy and parental leave, please notify your department chair and copy your Human Resources Advisor (See www.workingatmcmaster.ca). You will be sent paperwork to complete in advance of your leave, including:

- Choosing whether to continue your contributions to Long Term Disability benefits (requires you to provide monthly cheques to the university to maintain this coverage while on leave)
- Choosing whether to continue to contribute to the Pension Plan (also requires you to provide monthly cheques to the university)
- A form indicating your decisions on the above options. Must be completed PRIOR to your leave, otherwise the university assumes you are not partaking in either
- The university provides a top up to your employment insurance (EI) payments via a Supplemental Unemployment Benefit. You will need to indicate which plan (A or B)
- Employment Insurance (EI) must be applied for within four weeks of the interruption of earnings. If you apply after this, you risk not getting your full 50 weeks of EI payments. The Record of Employment (ROE) is automatically sent over after your last regular pay period
- When you receive your first EI payment, provide HR with a copy of the statement so they can start your SUB payments
- Add your new baby to your Extended Health and Dental plan after your baby is born (baby's name and birth date is required)

Parking Services

Email the Parking Office (parking@mcmaster.ca) to suspend your parking pass, with applicable dates, if you don't want to maintain your parking pass while on leave (if you do, you will have to provide payment if you are currently paying by payroll deductions).

- **CURRENT POLICY** allows you to request closer parking pass during your pregnancy. You will have to contact the Employee Health Services (EHS) Consultant <http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/ehs/contacts/> to request your accommodation. The EHS Consultant can make the accommodation immediately, if you follow up with the form. The form is currently only available by request (not on the website), but only requires your supervisor's signature and the requested accommodation (presumably Lot I parking for a 2-3 month duration). These accommodation requests are authorized on a case-by-case basis. You may be asked to provide documentation from your physician, particularly if you are requesting a lengthy or unusual accommodation.

RESEARCH

The Dean has created the Engineering Life Event Fund (see [Appendix B](#)), for which you are eligible to apply. This will provide you with funding to hire a post-doctoral fellow or research associate to assist your research program while you are on leave. Prior to your leave, you must write a request letter indicating the reason for the request, the scope of your research and its funding source. You must also submit a current curriculum vitae that specifically highlights scholarly accomplishments and student mentorship over the last three years. The Chair must write a letter of support and deliver the request to the Dean. It will be reviewed by Associate Dean (Research) and Associate Dean (Graduate Studies).

As with faculty who go on sabbatical, you are encouraged to find a colleague who is willing to supervise your graduate students while you are on leave.

NSERC Discovery Grants provide the option to extend your grant at the current funding level by a year. You should complete your request for an extension at least 30 days prior to your leave. The Research Office for Administration, Development and Support ([ROADS](#)) can help you prepare the request form. Depending on the grantee's circumstances, the options include:

- extending the period for using funds in the current grant by up to two years, or
- adding up to two years of funding at the same level as the current grant.

More details can be found in the appropriate section of the [Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide](#). Grantees applying for extended funding will also need to refer to the [Checklist for Maternity, Parental, Medical or Family Medical Leave for Grantees](#).

Ethics, Biosafety, Radiation and Animal Use approval (and any other trainings you may have) will continue to expire while you are gone. It is advised that you make a list of all renewals you have to complete for your lab and take care of them before your leave starts. In addition, it is essential (in conjunction with your Chair) to appoint another qualified faculty member who will be responsible for safety issues, protocol renewals and responses to audits within your lab. This must be communicated to the [Environmental & Occupational Health Support Services](#) (EHOSS).

Suggestions:

- Assign financial approval delegation to a trusted student or colleague who can maintain things like purchase approvals for you
- Request your department admins to package up and forward any mail you receive to your home address on a semi-regular basis

TEACHING

Relevant Policy:

Section VII of [SPS C4](#) states that “When a pregnancy or parental leave ends, the Faculty Member will normally return to the same role and duties that she/he performed prior to the leave. The returning Faculty Member will not be required to teach additional courses to “make up” the courses not taught during the leave. Furthermore, taking into consideration the teaching needs of the department, the Faculty Member will normally have the option to teach the same courses that she/he taught previously.”

Suggestions:

- You are encouraged to have a discussion with your department chair about whether they can hire a sessional to teach your courses while you are on leave, so that you can get the same courses back when you return.
- Pregnancy can be exhausting; feel free to teach sitting down!
- Not every baby comes conveniently between semesters (or over the summer). If you will be starting your leave in the middle of a semester, do not feel pressured into taking your leave early. You should have a conversation with your Chair about how to transition your teaching. You will have some work to prepare prior to going on leave, but you are NOT required to consult with your substitute while on leave. Make it clear that pregnancy leaves can start early unexpectedly. You are NOT required to continue working after you are on leave (e.g. grading exams). In addition, the Faculty and your department will share the cost of a sessional equally to cover part of the term after your return to work to ease you back and allow prep time for your courses. Try your best to negotiate this prior to going on leave.
- Teaching when you have a young family can be a challenge (they get sick and can't go to daycare, or you may have been up all night). Try to stay organized, so if you need to cancel a class, you will have a way to communicate with the students. Creating video lectures (posted to a website) can allow you to stay on track with the course. Build a support network of people who could watch your child with short notice, if you need to come in for a lecture.

SERVICE

Typically, this is the easiest part to take care of; just notify the chairs of the committees you serve on (and discuss with your Chair, who is responsible for finding a replacement for you) the date you plan to be on leave. You should not need be contacted about the committees you served on for any reason.

Additional Resources:

1. [Pregnancy / Parental Leave Policy for Faculty and Librarians](#), SPS C4 McMaster University
2. [Maternity-related reassignment and leave, maternity leave and parental leave \(Government of Canada\)](#)
3. [Generic Pregnancy and Parental Leave Information from Human Resources, McMaster University](#)
4. [Request for a Leave of Absence](#), McMaster University
5. [Advice to New Faculty Members to Increase Your Chances of Getting Tenure](#), McMaster University

Faculty of Engineering Guidance Document Regarding Pregnancy and Parental Leaves

This document is directed towards members of the Faculty of Engineering planning a pregnancy/parental leave, as well as their department Chairs. The purpose of this document is to clarify the rights and responsibilities of the faculty member taking pregnancy and/or parental leave and their Department Chair. This document also offers strategies for the smooth transition of responsibilities. The McMaster Pregnancy/Parental Leave Policy for Faculty and Librarians (SPS C4) states that "Pregnancy and parental leaves are leaves of absence during which a faculty member or academic librarian is relieved of all duties including teaching, graduate supervision, research and service." This document is organized into five sections, including: general, teaching, research, service and timing, and administration. Additional resources are suggested at the end of this document.

General:

- *What is the difference between a pregnancy and parental leave?*

A pregnancy leave is 17 weeks long, and may only be taken by the birth mother. It begins as early as 17 weeks prior to the expected delivery date of the child, and no later than the birth date of the child. The commencement of the pregnancy leave may be delayed beyond the birth date of the child in cases where the child requires extended post-natal hospital care. The length of a pregnancy leave may be extended beyond 17 weeks under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Dean.

A parental leave is up to 35 weeks long for employees who have taken a pregnancy leave, and begins immediately following the pregnancy leave. Employees who have not taken a pregnancy leave are entitled to up to 37 weeks of parental leave, which must commence within 52 weeks of the birth of the child. Eligibility for a parental leave includes any parent, which is defined in SPS C4 as "(i) a child's biological mother or father; or (ii) a person with whom a child is placed for adoption; or (iii) a person who is in a relationship of some permanence with the parent of the child and who intends to treat the child as his or her own." For clarity, this policy is equally applicable to same-sex parents within the definition set out above."

- *How does this document apply to adoptive parents?*

Adoptive parents are eligible for the parental leave portion of the leave. In some circumstances adoptive parents may be granted a pre-adoption leave to attend to requirements of the adoption process.

Teaching:

- *Whose budget pays for sessional/overload teaching to cover leaves?*

The Dean discusses the overall instructional needs of the department with the Department Chair. Where warranted the Dean will provide the department with additional resources to engage sessional/overload instructors to fill in for faculty who are on leave.

- *Is it appropriate to assign double teaching duties either prior to a leave¹ or upon return from a leave to make up for time on leave?*

It is not appropriate to assign double teaching duties either prior to or upon return from a leave. The only circumstance in which this arrangement may be acceptable is if the faculty member going on leave has willingly agreed to overload teaching, and will therefore be compensated for extra teaching duties.

- *How are teaching loads assigned for faculty members who choose not to take the full year of leave to which they are entitled?*

In this case, the faculty member's teaching duties must be scaled according to the portion of the year that he/she will be actively working. This should be negotiated between the individual faculty member and his/her Department Head.

- *What if all of your teaching is scheduled to occur in one term, and you will (or will not) be on leave that term?*

This question is only relevant to faculty members who have chosen not to take the full year of leave to which they are entitled. In this case, the faculty member's teaching duties must be scaled according to the portion of the year that he/she will be actively working. For example, the teaching load of a faculty member who takes a six month leave must be reduced by half. If a faculty member was scheduled to commence a leave on January 1st, and he/she regularly taught all nine units in the fall term, this load must be reduced to 4.5 units in the fall term. If, for some reason, the faculty member agreed to teach all nine units in the fall term, he/she should be compensated for 4.5 units of overload teaching.

- *How do you deal with a leave commencing or ending half way through a term?*

All duties must be re-assigned at the beginning of a leave. Therefore, if a leave is scheduled to commence mid-term, the Chair must assign an instructor to take over teaching duties at this time. When planning this transition, it must be recognized that a baby's due date is only accurate within two to three weeks under the best of circumstances, and that pre-term deliveries and bed rest are not uncommon. With this in mind, early planning and regular communication between the assigned and replacement instructors is the best strategy. The replacement instructor is responsible for all teaching duties related to this course remaining in the term (e.g., lecturing, setting the assignments and final exam, grading the final exam, liaising with students and TAs, assigning final grades). The instructor going on leave should strive, when at all possible, to ensure that all deadlines have been met prior to the commencement of the leave, and that the course materials (including any submitted student work, grades, etc.) are left in such a state that the new instructor can easily continue with the course, including access to any electronic resources.

If a faculty member returns from leave mid-term, they may be assigned teaching duties, consistent with his/her regular teaching load (which must be scaled if he/she did not take a full one-year leave).

¹ The term 'leave' in this document refers solely to pregnancy/parental leaves.

- *Is a faculty member on leave required to answer student e-mails or hold office hours while on leave?*

No, a person on leave is not required to interact with students in any way during his/her leave.

- *How are teaching evaluations handled for courses taught for part of a term, and then taken over by a sessional due to a leave?*

If a course is split between two instructors, then both instructors must be evaluated separately. If the replacement instructor has not taught long enough for a fair evaluation to be conducted at the time the Dean's office initiates the evaluation process, then it is the responsibility of the replacement instructor to notify the Department Chair, who will arrange for that evaluation to be conducted at a later date.

- *Is it appropriate for the replacement instructor, hired to accommodate a pregnancy or parental leave, to consult with the faculty member on leave about their course?*

The quality of undergraduate education is extremely important to McMaster University. Therefore, a replacement instructor should normally be appointed well in advance of the scheduled leave². Course instruction cannot be interrupted, and therefore a lengthy transition period provides ample opportunity for communication to occur between the outgoing and replacement instructors, even if the leave commences earlier than planned. When at all possible, both instructors should meet before the leave commences to ensure an orderly transfer and that the new instructor has access to all required materials, including grade sheets. Once a leave has begun, however, the replacement instructor should avoid contacting the faculty member on leave. It should be noted, however, that if proper communication has not occurred before the leave commences, there may be a need to contact the faculty member on leave to obtain grades sheets etc.

Research:

- *How should graduate supervision be handled?*

McMaster Policy on pregnancy and parental leaves (SPS C4) states that during such a leave a faculty member is **relieved of all duties including teaching, graduate supervision, research and service**. Therefore, the chair (or his/her representative), in consultation with the faculty member going on leave, must arrange for an alternate supervisor(s) for the graduate students of the faculty member going on leave. The degree of involvement of the alternate supervisor is up to the faculty member going on leave; some faculty on leave choose to manage their research programs while others do not. It should be noted, however, that if the alternate supervisor does a significant amount of work, he/she may need to be recognized, e.g. by being included on publications. The degree of involvement of the alternate supervisor, together with authorship on papers, should be discussed prior to the leave.

² SPS C4 Section IV (i) states that "In order that suitable arrangements can be made to provide for the absence of the Faculty Member on a pregnancy leave, the Faculty Member is expected to provide a minimum of two weeks of notice of her intent to take such a leave."

- *What happens to PhD Supervisory committee duties?*

A faculty member on pregnancy and/or parental leave is to be relieved of all duties including Ph.D. supervisory committee duties (SPS C4). It is the responsibility of the chair (or his/his representative) to find a committee member to replace the faculty member on leave for the duration of that leave. This should be done in consultation with the supervisor(s) of the Ph.D. student(s). Some supervisory committee members choose to maintain their positions on supervisory committees while on leave. This is fine, as long as the faculty member on leave fulfills their committee duties while on leave.

- *Can you write a grant proposal while on leave?*

A faculty member on pregnancy and/or parental leave is to be relieved of all duties including research (SPS C4). As such, the faculty member on leave has no obligation to write grant proposals, however they may do so if they wish.

- *It's my year to reapply to NSERC when I am on leave – do I have to apply even if I am on leave?*

Holders of NSERC Discovery Grants or other grants who plan to take parental leave can take advantage of various provisions to extend their funding. Depending on the grantee's circumstances, the options include:

- extending the period for using funds in the current grant by up to two years, or
- adding up to two years of funding at the same level as the current grant.

More details can be found in the appropriate section of the [Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide](#). Grantees applying for extended funding will also need to refer to the [Checklist for Maternity, Parental, Medical or Family Medical Leave for Grantees](#).

- *How is supervision of research staff handled?*

Since a faculty member on pregnancy and/or parental leave is to be relieved of all duties, supervision of research staff must be reassigned to an alternate supervisor for the duration of the leave. This reassignment of duties is the responsibility of the department chair (or his/her representative) in consultation with the faculty member going on leave. The degree of involvement of the alternate supervisor is up to the faculty member going on leave; some faculty on leave choose to manage their research programs while others do not. Again, it should be noted that if the alternate supervisor does a significant amount of work, he/she may need to be included on publications. The degree of involvement of the alternate supervisor, together with authorship on papers, should be discussed prior to the leave.

Service:

- *Are faculty members expected to continue to serve on committees during their leave?*

No, faculty members are not required to serve on committees during their leave. It is the responsibility of the Department Chair to reassign faculty to committees on which the person taking leave was previously serving. This also applies to service on other university bodies to which the faculty member may have been elected or appointed.

- *Are faculty members required to perform other administrative duties (e.g. graduate chair, associate chair, etc.) while they are on leave?*

No, faculty members on leave are not required to perform *any* administrative duties. It is the responsibility of the Department Chair / Dean, etc. to reassign faculty to these duties prior to the start of the leave.

- *Whose responsibility is it to find a replacement for administrative duties?*

It is the responsibility of the administrator who made the original assignment (typically Department Chair) to reassign faculty to *all* service duties that the person taking leave was previously performing.

- *How should service duties be transitioned?*

In the case of service duties involving leadership roles (e.g., graduate chair, associate chair, etc...) a replacement should be appointed well in advance (two to three months) of the scheduled leave. Occasionally pregnancy/parental leave dates must be bumped forward due to unforeseen circumstances. Leadership roles should not be left empty, and therefore this lengthy transition period provides ample opportunity for communication to occur between the outgoing and incoming leaders, even if the leave commences earlier than planned.

Timing & Administration:

- *What is the procedure for taking a parental leave? And returning from a parental leave?*

The faculty member planning the leave must notify the Department Chair, in writing, of the anticipated start and end dates of the leave. The Department will then notify the Dean's office, and the Dean's office will notify the Office of the Provost. SPS C4 specifies the terms for the length a leave.

- *How is CP/M calculated for the period when you are on leave and the following year?*

A faculty member on parental leave is entitled to a CP/M increase during his/her leave. Although there is no specific policy addressing CP/M increases during pregnancy/parental leaves, the spirit of the Research Leave Policy, SPS 16, should be followed. SPS 16 states that "... Leave recipients will not be penalized in CP/M or promotion deliberations for the absence of teaching or University service activities during the leave period. ATB and CP/M awards will be based on the faculty member's full salary, not on a reduced salary received during the leave."³ Following this

³ [Research Leave Policy SPS C1](#)

reasoning, and given that no research is expected during a pregnancy/parental leave, the merit increase given during the leave should be based on the faculty member's past performance. Most leaves do not span the calendar year (i.e. Jan-Jan), and therefore it is in the best interest of the faculty member on leave to submit merit reports for the portion of the year that they worked.

- *How does T&P clock work?*

Faculty members taking pregnancy/parental leave have the option of deferring academic decisions relating to their career for a period of one year (per leave). The deferral process *must* be initiated by the faculty member *within one year* of the birth or adoption of their child. The faculty member initiates the process through a written request to the Dean. The Dean then either approves this request or not, and submits the appropriate recommendation to the Provost. Under normal circumstances, a deferral of one year is granted. Further details regarding this process are available in SPS C4.

- *What is the procedure for deciding whether a faculty member's T&P clock is stopped or not by a leave?*

A faculty member's T&P clock will only be stopped if he/she makes a written request to the Dean within one year of the birth or adoption of the child. Under normal circumstances, this request will be granted.

- *How does research leave clock work?*

The research leave clock stops from the date that the leave starts, and restarts on the date that the faculty member returns to work.

- *How does pregnancy/parental leave affect research leave?*

Pregnancy/parental leave affects the research leave clock as discussed above. If both leaves overlap, the pregnancy/parental leave must be taken first, followed by the research leave.

- *What are the important deadlines related to leave?*

As much notice as is possible or reasonable for both the Department Chair and the Dean's office is appreciated so that arrangements for teaching, administration, and committees can be addressed effectively.

- *If a faculty member's leave takes part of an academic year, how is the workload for teaching, committee work and administration determined for the remainder of the year?*

It is the responsibility of the Department Chair to ensure that the faculty member's workload, including teaching, committee work, administration and graduate student supervision, are covered by another faculty member or sessional instructor for the duration of the leave.

- *Is it okay to contact a faculty member who is on pregnancy/parental leave on a regular basis to see how much they are accomplishing while on leave?*

No, it is not okay to contact faculty members on pregnancy/parental leave to inquire about work duties, as they are not required to be conducting any duties.

Additional Resources:

1. [Pregnancy / Parental Leave Policy for Faculty and Librarians](#), SPS C4 McMaster University
2. [Maternity Leave Work and Family Provisions in Canadian Collective Agreements](#), HRDC Canada
3. [Request for a Leave of Absence](#), McMaster University
4. [Advice to New Faculty Members to Increase Your Chances of Getting Tenure](#), McMaster University
5. [Employment Standards Act](#), Government of Ontario

Engineering Life Event Fund (ELEF)

From time to time, faculty members may find it necessary to take a leave from their academic positions for some time. Reasons could include, but are not limited to, poor health, pregnancy and parenting, family care, or a similar life event. These events can have a negative impact on the progression of a faculty member's scholarship and career.

In recognition of this concern, the Faculty of Engineering has established a mechanism that partially addresses this matter. Faculty members can apply for support from the Engineering Life Event Fund (ELEF), particularly to hire a post-doctoral fellow or research associate to assist that faculty member's scholarship during the period of the leave. At present, the fund is able to support roughly three recipients per year, but this number can change as fiscal constraints tighten or loosen.

The following conditions apply to the ELEF:

1. Applicants will be eligible for a leave from the University in order to qualify;
2. The faculty member is tenured or has a tenure-track appointment at the time of the application and has been employed at McMaster in the position for at least one year;
3. The research to be performed during the leave is externally funded;
4. A successful recipient will be expected to return to McMaster University's Faculty of Engineering for a least one year following the leave;
5. Support from the fund will be provided for a maximum period of one year at a time, renewable for an additional year under exceptional circumstances; and
6. Completed applications will typically be submitted in advance of the leave.

Applications should be routed through the faculty member's Department Chair and submitted to the Dean by that Chair. A complete application will include: (i) a cover letter that indicates the reason for the leave, the scholarship that will be continued, and its funding source, (ii) a supporting letter from the Department Chair, and (iii) a current resume that specifically highlights the faculty member's contributions to scholarship and student mentorship over the past three years.

The Associate Dean (Research and External Relations) and Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) will review these applications on the basis of need and the quality of the applicant's scholarship over the past three years, and make a recommendation to the Dean who will make a decision. The Dean's decision will be communicated to the applicant and Department Chair.