

# Graduate School DRAFT 9-24-09

## Short-Term Parental Leave Plan for Graduate Students

Washington State University is seriously committed to providing a quality graduate education in a family-friendly environment. As part of that effort, the Graduate School has developed a Short-Term Parental Leave plan for graduate students who become parents. Parental leave is particularly important to graduate students as they try to balance the demands of their work, graduate studies, and personal life. Pregnancy, childbirth and adoption are significant events in a graduate student's life that require time away from the classroom and the lab. Parental leave will help students to maintain their student status during these life-changing events. This plan will assist graduate students and their families, reduce attrition and improve time to degree, and standardize the treatment of graduate students who become parents during their studies at WSU.

**Background:** The purpose of these guidelines is to address situations in which graduate students at all campus locations are not able to fulfill their duties and responsibilities on a short-term basis due to the birth or adoption of a child, which will be referred to as Parental Leave through this guideline. *“Short-term” is defined as leave from duties for up to four consecutive weeks.* In cases in which short-term Parental Leave is needed, the faculty advisor, the program, and the Graduate School should make a good faith effort to minimize the impact that such circumstances have on graduate students by helping them to maintain full-time enrollment status during the semester in which the absence is needed. This is particularly important so that the student maintains financial aid eligibility, loan deferment, and visa status. International students should check with the International Programs Office regarding their visa status.

**Plan Summary:** The Parental Leave plan provides up to four consecutive weeks of paid leave for the period directly before or after the birth or adoption of a child. During this time, the student continues to be enrolled (i.e., tuition will be paid/waivers will remain in place) and, if on an assistantship appointment, the student will continue to receive graduate assistant health benefits and his/her stipend support.

**Eligibility:** The Parental Leave plan applies to all full-time enrolled graduate students at all campus locations anticipating the birth or adoption of a child. Eligible graduate students are those with a current full-time appointment who have been full-time graduate students for at least one academic year (two academic semesters, not including the summer) at the time Parental Leave is taken. Students must maintain their full-time enrollment status during Parental Leave.

- A full-time graduate student on an assistantship appointment is eligible for four consecutive weeks of paid Parental Leave from his/her graduate program. In the event that both parents are full-time graduate students at WSU, only one may take Parental Leave or the four consecutive weeks may be shared between them.
- Full-time graduate students who are not on an assistantship may request Parental Leave without tuition or stipend support.

**Financial Support for Graduate Assistants:** The Graduate School has established a process to provide temporary financial assistance to programs to enable them to continue to support

students on graduate assistant appointments during short-term Parental Leave. These funds will be provided by the Graduate School to ensure that the graduate student's funding is continued during their approved leave period and the research/teaching efforts of the department are not adversely affected. Programs should request stipend replacement funds for graduate assistants who seek Parental Leave via the Short-Term Parental Leave form, which should be signed by the student, the faculty advisor and the Program Chair, and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. These short-term replacement funds will be available for graduate assistants on any funding source. In addition to the temporary stipend funds, the Graduate School will maintain resident and non-resident tuition waivers for the assistant during the approved Parental Leave period, not to exceed the current appointment period. For students on grant funding, the Graduate School will provide flexible tuition waivers to replace the QTR during the approved Parental Leave period.

**Parental Leave Academic Plan:** Faculty and other mentors are expected to work with graduate students to make fair and appropriate alternative arrangements during Parental Leave in the form of a written Parental Leave Academic Plan. Graduate assistants should alert their program chair and advisor as soon as they know of the impending need for a leave so that any necessary work adjustments and academic arrangements may be made. Students who are planning to request a Parental Leave should meet with their faculty advisor no less than ten weeks prior the proposed start of the leave to develop a plan for their academic work. The agreed upon plan should be attached to the Short Term Parental Leave form before it is submitted to the Graduate School. The Disabilities Resource Center should be consulted if there are medical issues that require reasonable accommodation.

While graduate assistants will not be required to perform any duties during their period of Parental Leave, they may want to maintain a certain amount of involvement with their advisor during the Parental Leave period. This involvement should be mutually agreed upon by the student and the faculty member.

**Parental Leave Procedures:** Parental Leave may extend up to four consecutive weeks. Graduate students who seek Parental Leave should complete a Short-Term Parental Leave form, attach a copy of their academic plan for the leave, and have the form signed by their faculty advisor and program/department chair. The form must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than eight weeks prior to the anticipated start date of the leave. The student and graduate program will be notified in writing of the Graduate School's decision on the Short-Term Parental Leave request. In addition, if the student is on an assistantship appointment, the Graduate School will work with the program to provide funds for the continuation of the student's stipend during the leave period. After the period of approved leave, graduate assistants are entitled to return to their assistantship positions for the duration of their current appointment.

**Absences beyond Short-Term Parental Leave:** The Short-Term Parental Leave plan does not cover medical situations or complications due to childbirth. Programs may provide additional unpaid time off beyond the Parental Leave based on the student's documented needs, but university policies regarding reasonable accommodation and/or Graduate Leave must be followed. Graduate students should apply for an official leave of absence (see Graduate School Policies and Procedures, Chapter 5) from their graduate studies if they anticipate being absent for an entire semester or more. Students should be advised that there is no guarantee of an assistantship position after returning from an absence beyond the short-term Parental Leave.



The Graduate School
SHORT TERM PARENTAL LEAVE for GRADUATE STUDENTS

The Graduate School
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P. O. Box 641030
Pullman, WA 99164-1030

If you have questions please contact
the Graduate School programs staff by calling:
(509) 335-1337 or (509) 335-1218
Fax: (509) 335-1949

Name: (Last, First MI) I.D. Number: (required)
E-Mail Address: Phone Number: ( )
Program: Degree: Doctoral: Masters:

Campus: Pullman Tri-Cities Vancouver Spokane DDP Int'l (F-1/J-1) Student: Yes No

NOTE: Short-term parental leave may be granted to graduate students for the birth or adoption of a child for up to four consecutive weeks directly before or after the event. If both parents are WSU students, only one parent may take parental leave, or the four weeks may be shared between them; however, each student must submit a separate leave request form. Refer to the Short-Term Parental Leave Plan at: www.gradsch.wsu.edu/ Attach your agreed-upon Academic Plan to this form before submitting it to the Graduate School.

Requested Parental Leave dates: From / / To / /

Your reason(s) for requesting leave: Birth of child Adoption of child

Is the other parent a graduate student at WSU? Yes No If yes, please provide:

Name Academic Program:

The above information is accurate and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Student Signature Date

Program must complete the following section:

Program: Are replacement funds requested? Yes No Academic Plan attached: Yes No
Current Funding Status of Student: TA RA Other GA
Position Account Information: Please provide Program, Budget and Project numbers:
Advisor Signature Date Program Chair Date

Graduate School: Approved Denied

Dates of approved leave Signature Date

International Programs Approval: Date