

Childbirth Accommodation Policy

Summary

Provides an academic accommodation period for registered and matriculated women graduate students (including students in professional schools) anticipating or experiencing a birth.

Rationale

To increase the number of women pursuing advanced degrees, it is important to acknowledge that a woman's prime childbearing years are the same years she is likely to be in graduate school, doing postdoctoral training, and establishing herself in a career. This childbirth accommodation policy is designed to partially ameliorate the intrinsic conflict between the "biological" and the "research" and "training" clocks for women graduate students.

Nothing in this policy replaces the communication and cooperation between student and adviser, and the good-faith efforts of both to accommodate the birth of a child. It is the intention of this policy to reinforce the importance of that cooperation, and to provide support where needed to make that accommodation possible.

This policy is intended to provide an accommodation for the demands placed on a woman by late-stage pregnancy, childbirth, and the care of a newborn. It is designed to make it possible to maintain the mother's full-time, registered student status, and to facilitate her return to full participation in classwork, and, where applicable, research, teaching, and clinical training in a seamless manner.

1. POLICY

All women graduate students (including students in professional schools) anticipating or experiencing a birth who are registered, matriculated students:

- are eligible for an academic accommodation period of up to two consecutive academic quarters around the time of the birth, during which the student may postpone course assignments, examinations, and other academic requirements;
- are eligible for full-time enrollment during this period and will retain access to Stanford facilities, Cardinal Care, and Stanford housing;
- will be granted an automatic one-quarter extension of university and departmental requirements and academic milestones, with the possibility of up to three quarters by petition under unusual circumstances; and
- if supported by teaching and/or research assistantships, will be excused from their regular TA or RA duties for a period of six weeks during which they will continue to receive support. Students will not receive a stipend or salary if none was received previously, but

are eligible for the academic accommodation period and the one-quarter extension of academic milestones.

1.1 Eligibility

The childbirth accommodation policy applies to matriculated and enrolled women graduate students anticipating or experiencing a birth. Adoption, foster-care placement, and paternity leave are covered under existing policies governing leaves of absence (see GAP 5.3, [Leaves of Absence and Reinstatements](#)).

Birth mothers may opt to use a leave of absence instead of the benefits provided by the childbirth accommodation policy. Depending on the stage in her academic career, the timing of the birth, her funding source, and the level of assistance she will receive from others in caring for the newborn, a woman may find it more advantageous or feasible to take one or more quarters of leave of absence rather than remaining enrolled and utilizing a childbirth accommodation. This may especially be the case for medical students because of the highly structured and sequential M.D. curriculum, particularly in the first two years.

1.2 Requesting a Childbirth Academic Accommodation Period

Women graduate students anticipating or experiencing the birth of a child may formally request a one-quarter extension of university and departmental academic requirements and a childbirth academic accommodation period. This academic accommodation period is not a leave of absence from university responsibilities. The expectation is that the woman will be in residence, and, assuming good health of the pregnant woman or new mother and the infant, will remain engaged in classwork and research, and, if applicable and feasible, clinical activities, even if at a reduced level.

The childbirth accommodation policy is administered by the Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE) through [an online application process](#). A letter from the student's health-care provider stating the anticipated delivery date must accompany the application.

The application is electronically routed to the student's advisor for approval or denial, and the completed application is then routed to the VPGE Office. VPGE will notify the student, the student's department, and the relevant University administrative offices whether the one-quarter extension of University and departmental academic requirements and the Academic Accommodation Period of two quarters, beginning with the quarter in which the birth is expected, have been approved or not.

1.3 Coursework, Research and Clinical Activities

Approval of an academic accommodation period will stop the academic and research clocks with regard to assignments due, reports anticipated, or other class- and research-related requirements. It does not, however, waive class attendance requirements for students in the Law School or clinical training or other requirements in the Medical School. Students in other schools are expected to attend class and participate in seminars to the extent that the health of mother and

newborn, and the demands of caring for an infant, allow. Faculty or relevant staff are expected to work with the student to make arrangements for submitting work for completion of requirements when the student returns, and to grade it promptly so as to remove any "Incomplete" notations as rapidly as possible. Faculty members are encouraged to assign "N" and "L" grades, where appropriate.

1.3.1 Part-Time Enrollment

This policy makes it possible for women to maintain their full-time student status, so that they continue accumulating units toward their residency requirement, and to avoid triggering any interruptions in on-campus housing, insurance coverage, eligibility for student loans, and deferment of student loan repayment. By remaining full-time students, the visa status of international students is not affected.

While it is usually better for the woman student to remain enrolled full-time, in some cases, depending on the coursework appropriate to the stage of her academic program, part-time enrollment would be appropriate. This will require careful consultation, in advance, to ensure that the implications for academic progress, visa status, loan eligibility and deferment, etc., have been thoroughly investigated. In completing the petition for the academic accommodation period, the student may request up to two quarters of part-time enrollment by means of a [Request for Graduate Tuition Adjustment](#). If part-time enrollment status is approved, the student will retain all privileges of the childbirth accommodation policy.

1.4 Funding

In addition to being eligible for up to two quarters of academic accommodation, those women graduate students supported by teaching assistantships, and/or research assistantships will be excused from their regular TA or RA duties for a period of six weeks during which they will continue to receive support. If the student is funded by a fellowship or training grant, this support will typically remain unchanged during the accommodation period.

Students who do not have an ongoing commitment of financial support in the form of fellowships or training grants, or teaching or research assistantships, may petition for an academic accommodation period and an automatic one-quarter extension of academic requirements, but are not entitled to tuition or other funding from the childbirth accommodation fund.

1.4.1 Assistantships

For most Ph.D. students for whom a teaching assistantship is part of her support package, it should be possible to arrange the timing of teaching assignments to accommodate childbirth. During the six-week period, students supported by teaching assistantships may choose to continue in some limited capacity (e.g., grading, preparing course materials, or other non-intensive duties), in order to finish out an academic quarter, but cannot be required to do so. With advance planning, most research assistantship assignments can similarly be adjusted to accommodate childbirth. Most granting agencies provide for a short period of reduced activity

due to health or personal issues. The support of students while they are writing or otherwise preparing the development or defense of a dissertation is typically an allowable expense on a research grant or contract if the student has already been funded to do the work related to that project.

In most cases, students who are supported by 50% FTE research assistantships may be reduced to a 25% FTE appointment for one quarter during the period of accommodation. The balance of the student's financial support will be provided in the form of a stipend payment to the student from the childbirth accommodation fund.

The student, her adviser, and her department should recognize that it might not be feasible to return to a regular TA or RA assignment immediately after the six-week period. In that case, arrangements should be made to move a teaching assignment to another quarter, to assign limited on-site duties to a research assistant, or to find an alternative form of support. These issues should be negotiated sensitively with the student's needs in mind. For her part, the student should work proactively with her department to make arrangements for ongoing support beyond the six-week period if she cannot return to her normal duties.

Once a request for a Childbirth Accommodation has been approved, the VPGE Office will determine if the regulations of a funding agency allow a six-week period of reduced activity and occasional absence. If it does not, the student's salary and/or stipend and associated tuition for the six-week period will be paid from the childbirth accommodation fund, administered by the VPGE Office. If continued funding would be allowed by the granting agency, but project deadlines require that a Principal Investigator hire a temporary replacement, the support for the mother may be charged to the childbirth accommodation fund for the six-week period.

1.4.2 Fellowships

Students who are supported by fellowships internal to Stanford normally have their stipends distributed as lump-sum payments at the beginning of each quarter. Students supported in this manner who have had their petitions approved will see no change in their fellowship support.

Students who are supported by fellowships external to Stanford must adhere to the rules of the granting agency with respect to absences from academic and research work. If the granting agency requires suspension of fellowship benefits during the six-week period, the student will be eligible for substitute payment from the childbirth accommodation fund.

2. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

	PROCESS STEPS	RESPONSIBILITY
1.	Initiates discussions with her adviser(s) and departmental or school administrators at least four months prior to the anticipated birth in order to make arrangements for an academic accommodation period.	Student
2.	Completes the Request for Childbirth Accommodation Period and provides doctor's statement.	Student

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| 3. | Generates an email notification to the faculty advisor, with a link to the student's online application. | Online application |
| 4. | Reviews the request, and discusses plans with the student. Indicates whether the request is approved or not on the application. | Academic adviser |
| 5. | Upon approval or denial, generates an email notification to the VPGE Office with a link to the completed application | Online application |
| 6. | Confirms funding arrangements with the department, if necessary. | VPGE Office |
| 7. | Conveys approval or denial on the application. | VPGE Office |
| | Upon approval, notifies the following offices by email of the terms of the Academic Accommodation Period: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the student • the student's department and adviser | |
| 8. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the VPGE Office • the Office of the Registrar • the Bechtel International Center, in the case of an international student. | Online application |
| 9. | Processes supplemental financial support for the student, if any, in GFS (related to assistantships). | VPGE Office |
| 10. | If the student wishes to reduce enrollment below full-time, completes the Request for Graduate Tuition Adjustment , indicating a childbirth accommodation period, and processes as described in GAP 5.2, Part-Time Enrollment . | Student |