

Paternity Leave

UPR HR25 version 03.0

Policies superseded by this document

This is an amended version of this document, effective from 06 April 2026.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

Amendments have been made to update in line with UK Legislation effective April 2026, and to clarify the University's position on qualifying period for paternity pay in light of those changes.

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy sets out the statutory rights and responsibilities of employees who wish to take paternity leave. The University recognises that, from time to time, employees may have questions relating to their paternity rights. It is the University's policy to encourage open discussion with employees to ensure that questions can be resolved as quickly as possible. Employees should clarify the relevant procedures with Human Resources to ensure that they are followed.

2 Entitlement

- 2.1 *After 6th April 2026, an employee whose wife, civil partner or partner gives birth to a child, or who is the biological father of the child, is entitled to two weeks' paternity leave without the need for qualifying service. Although the legislation requires that they have 26 weeks' continuous service by the end of the 15th week before the*

Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC) in order to qualify for paternity pay, the University will provide paid leave regardless of qualifying service (see section 4).

- 2.2 Paternity leave is also available to the adoptive parents where a child is matched or newly placed with them for adoption. One adoptive parent may take paternity leave where the other adoptive parent has elected to take adoption leave.
- 2.3 To qualify for paternity leave, the employee must also have, or expect to have, responsibility for the upbringing of the child.
- 2.4 *From 6th April 2026, employees who wish to take both paternity leave and shared parental leave may do so, as the previous restrictions on taking Paternity Leave before Shared Parental Leave have been removed.* Please refer to the University's Shared Parental Leave Policy UPR HR26.
- 2.5 Paternity leave must be taken in blocks of one week or two consecutive weeks and not in odd days. It must be taken within *52 weeks* of the birth (*or due date if the baby is early*) or adoption placement.

3 Notification and Acknowledgement of Paternity Leave

- 3.1 If you wish to take paternity leave you must notify your line manager giving at least 15 weeks' notice of the date on which your partner's baby is due. You must notify your line manager of the length of paternity leave you intend to take and the date on which you wish the leave to commence.
- 3.2 In the case of an adopted child, you must give written notice to you line manager of your intention to take paternity leave no later than seven calendar days after the date on which notification of the match with the child was given by the adoption agency. The notice must specify the date the child is expected to be placed for adoption, the date you intend to start paternity leave and the length of paternity leave you intend to take.
- 3.3 If you wish to change the timing of your paternity leave you must give 28 days' written notice of the new dates.

4 Paternity Pay

- 4.1 *Staff, regardless of their length of service* may take two weeks Ordinary Statutory Paternity Leave, paid at the rate set out by the government.
- 4.2 Staff with at least one year of continuous service at the Qualifying Week, will be entitled to two weeks Paternity Leave, paid at their normal rate of pay (this may include an element of Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) where appropriate).

- 4.3 Paternity leave will be conditional upon production of appropriate documents. The statutory paternity online form must be completed: <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/apply-for-statutory-paternity-pay> and sent to Payroll.

5 Time off to Attend Antenatal Appointments

- 5.1 Reasonable consideration will be given to requests made by employees for paid time off during working hours to accompany their partner to essential ante-natal appointments, regardless of length of service. Employees may be asked to provide certification confirming the pregnancy and appointment documents. There is a legal entitlement to unpaid time off to accompany a pregnant woman to attend two antenatal appointments if you are:

- i the baby's father; or
- ii the expectant mother's spouse, partner or civil partner; or
- iii in a long-term relationship with the expectant mother; or
- iv the intended parent (if you're having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement).

6 Neonatal Care Leave

- 6.1 'Neonatal care' is the name given to care for newborn babies which starts in the first 28 days after birth. This may be for:
- hospital care
 - medical care after leaving hospital - this must be under a consultant and include ongoing visits or checks arranged by the hospital where the baby was treated
 - palliative or end of life care

A baby might get neonatal care if they:

- are born early
- are ill or injured when they are born
- have a low birth weight

- 6.2 Employees who are eligible for family leave, including those whose wife, civil partner or partner gives birth to a child, or who is the biological father of the child, are entitled to claim time off called Neonatal Care Leave (NCL) to be with a baby who is receiving neonatal care. It can be used later, when the baby is no longer receiving neonatal care, up to 68 weeks after the birth of the baby.
- 6.3 The right to take Neonatal Care Leave applies from the first day of employment; employees do not require 26 weeks' service to be eligible for leave.
- 6.4 A parent who is eligible for Statutory Paternity Pay (see Section 4.1, above) has the right to also claim Neonatal Care Pay, which is paid at the weekly Statutory Neonatal Care Pay Rate, or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower. However, in order to qualify for pay, they must meet the average earnings threshold and be an employee (casual workers and agency workers are not eligible). Details of the current rates can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/neonatal-care-pay-leave/what-you-get>.
- 6.5 Eligible parents can take neonatal care leave once their child has been in neonatal care for at least 7 consecutive days.
- 6.6 Both eligible parents who have a baby admitted to neonatal care up to the age of 28 days can take one week's Neonatal Care Leave for every 7 full and continuous days their baby is in neonatal care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks of leave.
- 6.7 NCL can be taken in one block (i.e. directly before or after Paternity Leave) or taken as non-consecutive periods of at least one week, up to a maximum of 68 weeks from the child's date of birth. If taken directly before or after Paternity Leave, no additional notice will be required. However, NCL is to be taken later, employees should provide reasonable notice of this in line with the notice expected for annual leave requests.
- 6.8 There may be exceptional situations where the line manager may have to refuse a request for NCL (if not taken immediately) due to pressing operational demands. Where requests to take NCL are declined, the line manager should ensure that the employee is given an appropriate opportunity to take the leave at the earliest possible time and confirm to the employee the reason for declining the request.
- 6.9 Employees wishing to claim Neonatal Leave must inform the University either via their line manager or HR Business Partner as soon as possible after the baby goes into Neonatal care, and again when the baby is discharged. If the University is not informed at the time and is instead notified a long period after the event, then the University reserves the right to request evidence of the baby's neonatal care in order to agree NCL. Evidence may include providing the University with a letter from the midwife or baby's doctor.
- 6.10 In the event of twins or other multiple births, and multiple babies require neonatal care, the total NCL will be added together. This will be capped at 12 weeks in total.

- 6.11 In the unfortunate event that a baby is admitted to neonatal care (for a period of at least 7 consecutive days), discharged, and then readmitted to neonatal care (for a period of at least 7 consecutive days), providing that the second admittance occurs before 28 days of birth, both instances will count towards NCL.
- 6.12 The Line Manager will complete the Neonatal Care Leave Form on behalf of the employee, confirming the dates of leave which have been agreed.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **6 April 2026**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk