

**Management guidelines for the support of staff  
taking up maternity, paternity / maternity support, adoption, shared parental, and  
parental leave, and carers taking up flexible working opportunities.**

[CLES Pilot 2]

**Executive Summary**

These Guidelines have been produced as part of Geography's work in relation to the Athena SWAN Charter. Consultation with staff with experience of maternity leave highlighted gaps between University policies, College Action Plans and the ways in which they are implemented at the Discipline level, and proposed a means to close those gaps through proposing the Guidelines below. These began as Parental and Carer Leave Guidelines, covering support for those taking maternity, paternity / maternity support or adoption leave, but in the process of consultation (including advice from University HR), were broadened out to include policies supporting Carers. Following review in January 2016, these guidelines were updated and expanded to also support staff taking shared parental and parental leave.

**Further information:**

For full information on the definitions and entitlements for each type of leave, please refer to the University's Parents and Carers webpages: <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/parents/>

These Guidelines are intended to be implemented by staff and managers in the Disciplines across CLES, in conversation with those wishing to take up leave or flexible working opportunities. They are designed to enable the careful planning of support for staff who may be taking leave or alterations to their working patterns for a defined period of time in a way that also supports the Discipline as a whole. Much of what is set out below may already be in place, but it is essential for Athena SWAN purposes to make this available to colleagues in writing. The College encourages its staff to actively liaise with their Head of Discipline, College Manager and/or Executive Dean to tailor their leave arrangements around theirs and their Discipline's needs. Throughout this process the College encourages those taking up leave or flexible working opportunities to collaborate with their Discipline to ensure the best and most appropriate support is arranged. The College expects adequate notice to be given of leave and notification of any changes to the period of leave, for the Head of Discipline, College Manager and Executive Dean to plan and prepare the arrangements required to support a smooth and effective take up of leave and flexible working opportunities.

**Pilot:**

Between the period of March 2014-January 2016 this was a 'pilot' document because it was the first of its kind in the University. The impact of this document, and the processes that it describes, has been monitored in accordance with the Department of Geography's Athena SWAN Silver Action Plan as submitted in April 2014 and January 2015, and through the CLES Athena SWAN committee in support of all discipline's Athena SWAN submissions.

**Consultative process (2013-14):**

These guidelines were initially drafted by a subgroup of the Geography Athena SWAN working group; discussed and amended via discussions with Ailsa McGregor (then Deputy Head of HR, and Athena SWAN lead); discussed, amended and approved in principle by the Geography

Strategy Group and the CLES Athena SWAN working group; and, finally, discussed, amended and approved by the subgroup that first drafted them and endorsed by CLES College Executive Group in March 2014.

### **Review process (January 2016):**

Interviews were carried out between October 2015 and January 2016 with 11 recent maternity, paternity / maternity support and adoption leave returners in CLES (1 maternity returner in Biosciences, 1 maternity returner in Geography, 1 paternity / maternity support returner in Sport and Health Sciences, 6 paternity / maternity support and 2 maternity returners in Psychology). These interviews indicated the positive impact of the guidelines on arrangements around maternity leave.

Interviews with paternity / maternity support leave-takers indicated that greater contingency planning by the Discipline beforehand and more support around workload after returning from paternity / maternity support leave would be helpful, in particular for new members of staff, and that they would like to see a promotion of and commitment to shared parental leave. Additionally, feedback during some paternity / maternity support returner interviews and the October 2014 Biosciences Maternity, Paternity / Maternity Support and Adoption Leave Survey results indicated further Discipline support and actions are needed to encourage take up of the full period of paternity / maternity support leave. PGRs highlighted that the paternity / maternity support leave for PGRs needs to be far more clearly defined and communicated, with most websites currently referring to “staff” only and there being no specific ‘point of contact’ for them around this.

With the creation of a University Shared Parental Leave policy in April 2015 the need for these guidelines to include this leave was also identified.

To indicate the positive impact of these policies on carers as well as parents, take up of flexible working opportunities such as Teaching Restriction applications have been recorded (with positive results) and a high awareness of and access to flexible working opportunities in CLES identified via the 2014 Employee Engagement Survey, with 88% (414 individuals) agreeing that they had the opportunity to work flexibly (e.g. flexi-time, homeworking, family friendly hours) in their role.

Below, section A) outlines Athena SWAN Action Plan commitments on i) parental leave and ii) carer support; section B) outlines the proposed parental leave guidelines; and Section C) outlines the proposed carer leave guidelines.

### **A) Athena SWAN Action Plan commitments**

#### **i) CLES’ Athena SWAN Silver commitments on maternity, paternity / maternity support, adoption, shared parental and parental leave:**

*These are the commitments made by the College in support of its Disciplines’ Silver Athena SWAN applications in April 2014. Aims 1 and 2 outline processes, and are already in place. Aim 3 is for Discipline Groups to ‘develop support structures’ for staff returning from parental leave,*

'e.g. reduced teaching commitments.' The Guidelines below flesh out this element of the College's Athena SWAN Action Plan.

**NB** these have been modified so that 'maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave' are referred to throughout.

**Aim 1:**

**Provide cover for members of staff leaving on maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave**

*Action:* The College has committed to providing its Disciplines with sufficient resources to provide this cover.<sup>1</sup>

*Progress:* Decision to be taken with line manager about whether cover is required. For example, in some cases cover may not be necessary if the remaining term of employment is a short period of time or if current staff are available to produce cover.

*Responsibility:* Head of Disciplines, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean, College Manager..

*Date:* November 2012 (extended to Shared Parental Leave April 2015)s

*Status:* in place

**Aim 2:**

**Provide support for members of staff leaving on maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave**

*Action:* Meet with women and men going on maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave to discuss concerns, cover arrangements, return and to raise the support available. This will continue on return.

*Progress:* All staff have been informed through the College newsletter and individual HR pre-leave support emails about the opportunity to meet with College Manager (Professional Services Staff), Head of Discipline or the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean.

*Responsibility:* Head of Disciplines, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean, College Manager.

*Date:* November 2012 (extended to Shared Parental Leave April 2015)

*Status:* in place

**Aim 3:**

**Provide support for members of staff returning from maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave**

*Action:* Develop a support structure for parents returning from maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave. For example, reduced teaching or administrative<sup>2</sup> commitments.

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<sup>1</sup> GSG requests that CLES' Silver action plan be amended to include a stronger statement in place of 'support if the Disciplines cannot cover work with existing staff'.

<sup>2</sup> Requested amendment from GSG April 2014

*Progress:* Discussions to take place within discipline group meetings about how a structure will be implemented. Discussion groups to be advised to discuss.

*Responsibility:* Head of Disciplines with Athena SWAN Leads

*Date:* April 2014

*Status:* To be reviewed in February 2016

## **ii) College Athena SWAN Silver Action Plan Commitment on Carer Support:**

The College is committed to supporting those staff with caring responsibilities through promoting and supporting its staff in accessing the University-wide resources available to support those staff with caring responsibilities, such as [flexible working opportunities](#), [Wellbeing services](#), [Care First](#) support line, [Occupational Health](#) services, [Parents and Carers Network](#) and Budd-E Mentoring Scheme.

*Target:* To ensure that academic staff can balance their caring obligations and academic commitments effectively.

*Improvement & action:* Ensure that all policies and mechanisms for supporting staff are accessible on the University website and promoted as appropriate to individuals. Ensure the opportunity to discuss caring responsibilities privately with their Academic Leads, Head of Discipline or Human Resources Business Partner is offered when annually notifying teaching staff of the opportunity to apply for Teaching Restrictions, and review the gender split of the applications annually.

*Timeline:* The HR Policy team systematically reviewed the documentation and information relating to this area in July 2012, taking on board feedback from staff.

*Success measures:* That support for teaching staff with caring obligations are adequately reflected in the uptake of the College's Teaching Restriction applications, the gender balance of applicants recorded and reviewed, and a high uptake and perceived support of flexible working opportunities is recorded in the Employee Engagement Survey.

*Responsibility:* Heads of Discipline, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean, and College Manager.

## **B) Guidelines for the support of staff taking maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave:**

*These guidelines are organised to flesh out the three aims regarding maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave outlined in CLES' Athena SWAN Silver Action Plan. **NB** it is recognised that, for staff adopting children, the timescales are different from maternity / paternity / maternity support leave and are often outwith the staff member's control.*

When support is requested, managers in the College and Discipline will:

### **i) provide cover for members of staff on maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave:**

- The Head of Discipline, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean or College manager, when meeting with a member of staff taking maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave, will refer to and support this document;
- the decision on how the leave will be covered in each case will be made after discussion with the Head of Discipline;
- the Discipline's starting point is that additional support should be provided to cover teaching and administrative responsibilities (plus handover time – see below), and only in exceptional circumstances will it be covered by existing staff undertaking additional work.<sup>3</sup>
- the guidance will ensure that arrangements for all three stages of the leave (before, during and after) are in place before the leave begins;
- the guidance will be consistently applied regardless of the staff member's career path (Education and Research, Education and Scholarship, Research), status of contract (fixed term or open ended, full-time or part-time) or pay grade (subject to funders requirements<sup>4</sup>) the Discipline will be supported by the College and University to provide adequate cover, including providing necessary financial support;
- the University, College and Discipline will not initiate discussion of a member of staff's terms of contract at any time between the notification of pregnancy and three weeks after the return to work unless this conflicts with normal University procedures such as the timing of consultation meetings in relation to the management of fixed term contracts or other routine contractual matters;
- the College and Discipline will make every effort to ensure that that no member of staff taking leave or changing their working pattern to meet parent and/or carer responsibilities is seen as responsible for any increase in colleagues' workloads;
- the impacts on staff who have taken leave or changed their working pattern on Discipline and College practices concerning the distribution of resources (e.g. for study leave) will be monitored to assess whether these are equitable across those who have (not) taken leave and/or had working pattern adjustments.

**ii) provide support for members of staff leaving on maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave**

- these leave guidelines will be communicated clearly to all concerned (the member of staff, line managers, etc.) via email and through a permanent and clearly marked presence of this document on its webpage. This will be in addition to the Guidance provided by the University on its Parents and Carers webpages;<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It is recognised that for some periods of leave it may not be possible to provide 'like for like' cover due to the specialist skills of staff. However the overarching principle will be to ensure that the work is covered as much as possible to ensure that neither the member of staff taking the leave or the discipline staff feel over burdened by unreasonable additional work being allocated.

<sup>4</sup> CLES will continue to lobby funders to ensure that their requirements align to the principles in these guidelines

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/parents/>

- line managers will make efforts to ensure that no additional work (above existing scheduled and agreed workload) is given to the person taking leave, either as a consequence of her/his impending period of absence, or for other reasons;
- all pregnant employees are required to carry out a maternity risk assessment with her/his line manager (or if preferred with a mentor or college health and safety representative) and to review this at regular intervals;<sup>6</sup>
- she/he will be given time to hand over duties to colleagues who will cover work in her/his absence. A planning allowance in SWARM will be allocated for this purpose. This means that maternity cover will start before maternity leave. A period of 2 weeks is the recommended handover period (as required <sup>7</sup>), although it is recognised that last minute changes to the leaving date may be necessary;
- staff taking leave will be made aware of support they can receive about changing working patterns<sup>8</sup> well in advance of the allocation of teaching on their return to work. The discipline's Director of Education and programme directors will fully support them in this;<sup>9</sup>
- staff with research grants that are interrupted by leave will be able to choose whether project work can be covered by others, paid for by the grant, or carried/saved up for their return, in accordance with the rules of the funding body and provided that all funding requirements are met.

**iii) provide support for members of staff returning from maternity / paternity / maternity support / adoption / shared parental / parental leave on return from leave by ensuring:**

- a member of staff returning from leave will be expected to undertake the same teaching, research and administrative work agreed before going on leave provided that there have been no significant changes to teaching programmes or other areas of responsibility outside the control of the Head of Discipline. This will be confirmed in a meeting with the head of Discipline on a KIT day or in the first week back;
- to find their feet, catch up with emails, establish new work-life arrangements (e.g. checking that the child is settling in well at nursery/school), s/he will not be expected to resume teaching for the first two to three weeks after the return to work, in particular to resume their research activities;
- on return to work, s/he will not normally be expected to accompany residential field courses or other related work activities which require a residential element for the first 12 months, but will be asked if s/he wants to 'opt in' to this teaching or other activities. If there is an unavoidable requirement support will be provided to facilitate attendance and sufficient notice provided.
- a significant 'return to work' allowance or alternative tailored support will be provided following discussion with the Head of Discipline. This could be in the form of an additional time allowance in SWARM or the provision of contract researcher support, or

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/oh/guidanceandadvice/maternityriskassessment/>

<sup>7</sup> Managers should use their discretion to ensure that the member of staff feels well supported when they commence leave and that they have been able to hand over properly

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/parents/change/>

<sup>9</sup> If the employee is new in post, she/he will be informed of this process in the offer letter pack

additional funds to pump prime research activity or a combination of support mechanisms. This will enable her/him to re-establish her/his research and other contacts / expertise plus regain academic confidence that will have been interrupted by leave;

- if modules, lectures, administrative roles, and/or research work have significantly changed in her/his absence, she/he will be given adequate preparation time in SWARM to modify / update previous notes and practices;
- she/he will also be able to request the use of annual leave to plan a phased return to work, either by taking it in blocks of time, or by taking one or two days per week as leave for a period of time, subject to the rules of the University's maternity scheme;
- she/he will be entitled to take emergency leave for situations such as child illness, in accordance with University regulations.<sup>10</sup> Line managers will be aware of this entitlement;
- nursing mothers will be able to use the Nursing Mother Rooms available on all three University campuses<sup>11</sup> and, in addition to this, can contact Dr [Elizabeth James](#), Technical Services, who may be able to identify alternative rooms in College buildings that are suitable for the expression of milk and nappy changing.

## **B) Support for Carers**

The discipline recognises that support for carers is more difficult to define given the wide-ranging circumstances which carer support can cover e.g.

- caring for a parent or partner who may be living with the staff member, or residing elsewhere (locally, nationally or internationally);
- caring duties covering short term care e.g. recovering from a planned hip operation where some adjustment may be required;
- caring duties covering long term care e.g. a medical condition which will not improve and may become more severe.

The principles set out in the start of this document however can also be applied to those with carer responsibilities i.e. taking time to plan and provide cover where a period of leave is required and ensuring that there is a culture of inclusive practice for those who have working pattern adjustments for caring duties.

Further information and guidance for Undergraduates, Postgraduates and Early Career/Postdoctoral Researchers is available [online:](http://biosciences.exeter.ac.uk/research/ecrn/maternity/)  
<http://biosciences.exeter.ac.uk/research/ecrn/maternity/>

Written by Ian Cook et al, Geography Athena SWAN chair (Aug 2012- June 2015), [i.j.cook@ex.ac.uk](mailto:i.j.cook@ex.ac.uk). First updated 26 February 2014 by Samuel Braide following presentation to the CLES CEG. A formal review of the impact and effectiveness of these guidelines took place in January 2016 led by Kitty Adhamy-Nichol in consultation with the then CLES Athena SWAN Working Group members and CLES HR Advisor Georgia Grayling.

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/parents/emergencyleave/>

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/parents/return/nursing/>