

Maternity Leave Tip Sheet

Introduction

Congratulations on your pregnancy! Discovering you are pregnant brings many emotions - excitement and joy, but also feelings of being anxious and even overwhelmed can surface. Preparing for your baby's arrival takes time, and so does getting ready to take a break from work.

You probably have lots of questions about what you need to do to ensure that you apply for any benefits that are available to you. The DCU Maternity Leave [Toolkit](#) provides you with everything you need to know about maternity leave - from your entitlements, to additional supports offered, to the forms you need to complete, and lots more. The toolkit is very detailed so this Maternity Leave Tip Sheet provides you with an overview of the entitlements and supports available to you. It also provides you with a useful checklist to ensure you complete all the required actions.

Policy

DCU is committed to supporting you before, during and after your maternity leave. The Maternity Leave Toolkit provides full details of the DCU [Maternity Leave Policy](#), your role and responsibilities, in addition to those of your manager, as they relate to the policy, and lots of further information and supports. Please note there is a separate [Maternity Leave Policy for Researchers](#).

Employees are entitled to twenty-six consecutive weeks of statutory paid leave, and public holidays that fall within this period. In addition, employees have the option of availing of up to sixteen weeks' unpaid leave immediately following the initial period of paid leave.

Additional Supports

Maternity Buddy scheme

All expectant parents have access to a buddy through pregnancy, maternity leave and until six months after their return to work. The Maternity and Paternity Buddy Scheme supports staff who are preparing for, taking or returning from maternity, paternity or adoption leave by providing access to a 'buddy'. A buddy has first-hand experience of becoming a parent and can share their personal experience of the transition to the dual role of parent and employee.

The scheme allows for informal exchange of information, support and advice on matters relating to maternity/paternity and adoption leave. The buddy can provide support and advice during the return to work phase providing the returner with the opportunity to benefit from the experience of another member of staff who has been through the process themselves.

The scheme is employee led – it's up to the expectant parent and their buddy to decide on the schedule of meetings or whether they would prefer a more informal arrangement (contact of up to one hour per month is the recommended guideline).

If you or your partner are preparing for the arrival of, or adopting a new baby, and would like to pair up with a maternity/paternity buddy please contact learning.development@dcu.ie or HR on 700 5194 to request access to the buddy database. You are then free to select your chosen buddy and make contact with them directly.

Keep in Touch (KIT) Days

Staff on maternity leave have the option of availing of three Keep in Touch (KIT) days during the period of their maternity leave without affecting maternity pay. The days can be used for any activity which would ordinarily be classed as work under their contract of employment. KIT days are optional and the activities to be undertaken should be agreed in advance between the staff member and their

line manager. Staff will be entitled to apply for paid time off in lieu (on their return from maternity leave) for any KIT days worked. The administration of KIT days will be managed locally between the manager and staff member. Note - Time off in lieu of KIT days worked should be applied for and approved locally through the CoreTime system.

Teaching Free Period

Academic staff with teaching commitments may apply for a research exclusive period following their maternity leave. This is available for one semester and must be availed of within the first 12 months of returning to their post. Full details on the conditions of the teaching free period can be found on page 2-3 of the Policy document.

Lactation Facilities

DCU is committed to providing mothers who are staff members with flexibility to take breaks (lactation breaks) during their workday for the purpose of expressing and storing breast milk. DCU supports breastfeeding mothers by providing a private, comfortable 'Mothers' Rest Room' for them to express and store breast milk for their babies. Details can be found on the [HR website](#).

Checklist

Before Maternity Leave

- ☐ Familiarise yourself with your maternity entitlements through the DCU Maternity Leave Policy. For advise or further information on any aspect of the policy you can contact HR on 700 5149.
- ☐ Decide if you would like to make contact with a Maternity Buddy. To access the list of DCU maternity buddies please contact HR at 700 5149 or equalitydiversityinclusion@dcu.ie.
- ☐ Advise your Manager/Head of School of your intention to avail of maternity leave as soon as you are ready to do so but not later than 4 weeks before the commencement of your leave.
- ☐ Give advance notice to your manager of the dates and times of your pre-natal appointments.
- ☐ Ensure that all necessary [documentation](#) is completed and submitted to HR and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection after 24 weeks of pregnancy but at least 6 weeks before you plan to commence your maternity leave.
- ☐ Complete a [Pregnancy Risk Assessment](#) in conjunction with the DCU Health and Safety Department.
- ☐ It is recommended that you discuss the following with your manager prior to commencing maternity leave
 - The level of communication that you would like to maintain with your manager during your maternity leave, if any.
 - Any plans that you may have to avail of optional Keep in Touch days during your maternity leave and what you might use them for.
 - Arrangements for appropriate handover of duties prior to departure.

During Maternity Leave

- ☐ Keep a record of any KIT days used as they can be claimed as days off in lieu (through Core) on your return to work.
- ☐ In order to avail of sixteen weeks' unpaid leave you must notify your Head of School/Unit and the HR Department at least four weeks before your paid maternity leave is due to end. The unpaid additional maternity leave must be taken immediately following normal paid maternity leave.
- ☐ If you wish to avail of the Teaching Free Period during the first semester following your maternity leave you must advise your manager at least 6 weeks before you are due back from maternity to allow for appropriate cover to be extended/arranged.
- ☐ Give notice of the date of your return to work to HR at least four weeks before the date of return.

- ☐ If you wish to avail of any annual leave entitlements directly after your maternity leave period ends you must agree this with your line manager.
- ☐ Keep in touch with your Maternity Buddy throughout your maternity leave if you wish. A buddy can be particularly helpful as you approach your return to work date when you are likely to be making childcare plans and preparing to balance career and family commitments. This can prove to be a stressful transition and you are encouraged to use all the supports available to you.

After Maternity Leave

- ☐ Maintain contact with your Maternity Buddy if required (until 6 months after your return to work).
- ☐ Meet with your manager to discuss any new developments, current priorities, work/career goals for the coming months and any supports that you might need to avail of.
- ☐ As this can be a stressful time remember that further support is available through the [DCU Employee Assistance Programme](#) both for you and immediate members of your family.
- ☐ Request to attend the [Returning to Work After Extended Leave Workshop](#), facilitated by Learning and Development.
- ☐ If you availed of any KIT days during your maternity leave remember to request the appropriate number of days off in lieu through Core.