

# Policy Statement Concerning Graduate Assistant Maternity Benefits

***Period of Leave.*** Any female graduate assistant who needs maternity leave will be granted a period equivalent to that afforded to faculty. During this leave she will continue to receive her assistantship stipend at the same appointment level. Currently the leave period is 6 weeks following natural childbirth and 8 weeks following childbirth by caesarian section. Further, her stipend support will be maintained during medically necessary leave prior to delivery upon receipt of a written order from her physician.

***Additional Leave.*** Following this period of time, the student will have to return to her duties or take unpaid personal leave. Note: while faculty and staff have the option of using accrued vacation or leave time through the FMLA, graduate assistants do not, since they do not accrue vacation time and are not eligible for FMLA-based leave.

***Adjustment of Workload.*** If the student wishes to reduce her hours of appointment and her stipend following the maternity leave period to spend more time with her child, that outcome will be negotiated in good faith between her supervisor and herself. For example, a unit may be willing to reduce a 20 hour GA to 10 hours (the minimum to maintain health coverage) or to change her duties to provide further accommodation once the maternity leave period has been completed.

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***Flexibility of Work Hours.*** Another suggested best practice that can be followed under the right circumstances is that of banking extra hours in anticipation of extended leave. Under this scenario, a student may arrange to work more hours early in her pregnancy so that she may be able to have more time following the permitted medical leave period with no reduction in her stipend. This will be worked out with her supervisor and a memorandum of understanding filed with the appropriate offices. If the graduate student's duties involve teaching, another appropriate arrangement is to share teaching duties with one or more other teaching assistants. Under this scenario the pregnant student would teach extra hours for those other students early in her pregnancy. The other students would then cover the pregnant student's duties following her delivery and permitted maternity leave. In this way a student could be given additional leave time at no reduction in stipend level. Any such arrangement as mentioned in this paragraph is subject to approval of the unit head or his/her designee.

*Approved by the Graduate Faculty Council on September 19, 2007*