



**Duke University Graduate School  
Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy for Ph.D. Students  
at Duke University  
Revision Date: September 29, 2008**

## **Purpose**

To allow the primary caregiver of a newborn child or a newly adopted child the possibility to devote full time care to an infant or an adopted child in the first weeks after birth or adoption. This policy guarantees PhD students *a minimum level of accommodation* during the transition to parenthood and reflects the Graduate School's ongoing commitment to supporting graduate students parents and a healthy academic work/family live balance.

*Individual departments and degree programs have the discretion and are encouraged to exceed these guidelines where possible and appropriate.* It is clear that the variety of PhD student academic requirements and responsibilities in different degree programs will have an impact on how those programs structure any accommodation beyond the minimum level required by the Graduate School. Programs have the flexibility to devise accommodation arrangements that correspond to what is possible and necessary in a given degree program context, provided the minimum accommodation is afforded.

## **Policy**

The designated primary caregiver will be relieved of full-time graduate studies and duties for up to seven weeks after the birth or adoption of a child. If need be, up to two of those weeks may be situated before the projected birth or adoption date. The non-primary care giving parent may be relieved of one week of full-time graduate studies and duties in order to provide additional support to the primary caregiver.

## **Eligibility**

In order to be eligible for accommodation, the designated primary care giver or the parent who is not the primary caregiver must

- 1) have been matriculated into a PhD program at Duke University;
- 2) be in good academic standing.

Note: If both parents are Duke PhD students, they may discuss with their respective degree programs and the Graduate School a feasible proposal for dividing up the eight week accommodation period in a different way if they so wish.

## **Accommodation Principles**

1) **Enrollment Status:** PhD students benefiting from accommodation will remain registered as full-time students, and thus their eligibility for graduate student benefits remains intact (insurance, housing eligibility, student services, and the like). Eligible students who are also receiving stipend support would continue to receive that support.

2) **Suspension of Academic Requirements and Duties:** PhD students benefiting from accommodation are relieved of full-time academic and program responsibilities, such as the following: teaching assistant or research assistant duties, official academic examinations (qualifying examinations or preliminary examinations), research deadlines, coursework.

1. Any scheduled coursework or examinations should be rescheduled as appropriate to avoid conflicts with the accommodation period and to provide reasonable time to complete these academic requirements.
2. The department or degree program will develop a plan to replace necessary duties and responsibilities, such as teaching and research. The Graduate School expects that the department or program will demonstrate the maximum flexibility possible.
3. The Graduate School will work with the department or degree program to determine expenses associated with the accommodation period and an appropriate cost-sharing arrangement with the Graduate School.

3) **Accommodation is not a leave of absence**, and the expectation is that the PhD student benefiting from accommodation will remain engaged in her or his academic and research work even if at a reduced level (assuming the good health of the student and the infant or child).

## **Funding**

- Eligible students who are receiving stipend support would continue to receive that support during the accommodation period. If a student is funded through a training or research grant the external sponsor will be expected to continue to pay the stipend to the extent allowable by the granting agency.
- The department or degree program will develop a plan to replace necessary duties and responsibilities, such as teaching and research. Any additional costs incurred by the department or program due to replacement of compensatory work will be funded through the Graduate School. However, accommodations for students in Arts & Sciences and Engineering departments that have a surplus in their carryover bank will be funded through the bank.

## **Procedure**

### **Requesting Accommodation**

PhD students seeking accommodation should inform their department or program (normally through their Director of Graduate Studies) and the Graduate School office **in writing** no later than one month prior to the semester during which birth or adoption is expected to take place so that departments and programs can have adequate time to plan any necessary replacement needs.

- The written request must indicate the ‘expected’ birth or adoption date.
- Students will be expected to obtain the signature of their Advisor and Director of Graduate Studies, prior to submitting this form to the Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs for final approval.
- If funding source changes are required, the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will notify the Office of Budgets and Finance to adjust student funding source accordingly.

### **Related Links**

NIH Parental Leave Policy for Ruth L. Kirschstein NRSA Awards  
<http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-08-064.html>

## Request for Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation

Students who wish to enact the provisions of the Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy are asked to complete the following form. Upon approval from the Dean of the Graduate School, students will be entitled to maintenance of full-time student status, suspension of academic responsibilities, and continued stipend support.

*Please submit this form at least one month prior to the beginning of the academic semester in which you will begin the leave period.*

Completed forms should be submitted to the Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, Graduate School, Box 90065, Suite 127 Allen Building or Faxed to 919-684-2277.

(Please estimate the start of your requested accommodation period and then adjust/confirm after the actual birth/adoption. Students are eligible to begin the accommodation period up to two weeks prior to birth or adoption date if they wish.)

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(street apt. city, state, country postal code)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Unique ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Admit Term: \_\_\_\_\_

I am requesting policy coverage beginning \_\_\_\_\_  
(month/day/year)

Stipend funding source (To be completed by the Directory of Graduate Studies)

\_\_\_\_\_

Advisor (indicating that the student has discussed revised completion schedule)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Graduate Studies (departmental approval indicating good academic standing)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, Graduate School

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_