



Duke University Graduate School
Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy for Ph.D.
Students Revision Date: August 18, 2023

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 life balance.

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.*

The Graduate School Accommodation Policy

The designated primary caregiver may be relieved of full-time graduate studies and duties for up to nine 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 designated non-primary caregiver may be relieved of up to two weeks of full-time graduate studies and duties in order to provide additional support to the primary caregiver.

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 eleven week accommodation period in a different way if they so wish.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for accommodation, the designated primary care giver or the non-primary caregiver must

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

Accommodation Principles

1. **Enrollment Status:** PhD students benefiting from accommodation will remain registered as full-time students, 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.
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.

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 fellowship funds. However, accommodations for students in Arts & Sciences and Engineering departments that have a surplus in their carryover bank will be funded through the bank.

Requesting Accommodation

PhD students seeking accommodation should inform their department or program (normally through their Director of Graduate Studies) and the Graduate School office **via the form below** 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 request form must indicate the ‘expected’ birth or adoption date and estimated date of return.

<https://gradschool.duke.edu/financial-support/financial-policies-forms-and-resources>

- Students will be expected to obtain the signature of their Advisor and Director of Graduate Studies, prior to submitting the form to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for final approval.
- If funding source changes are required, the Graduate School will notify the student's department or program to adjust the student funding source accordingly.

Related Links

NIH Parental Leave Policy for Ruth L. Kirschstein NRSA Awards

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-18-154.html>

Please note that the current NIH parental leave allowance is eight weeks. Additional information is available in the NIH Grants Policy [Statement](#), sections [11.2.13.1](#) and [11.3.16.1](#).

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. Eligible and approved students are entitled to maintenance of full-time student status, suspension of academic responsibilities, and continued stipend support for:

- up to nine weeks* after the birth or adoption of a child for the primary care giver, or up to;
- two weeks* for the non-primary care giver.

**Note: If both parents are Duke PhD students, a feasible proposal for dividing up the eleven week accommodation period may be presented for consideration.*

Please submit this form at least one month prior to the beginning of the academic semester in which you will begin the leave period. Students are eligible to begin the accommodation period up to two weeks prior to the birth/adoption date. Students may estimate the start of their requested accommodation period and confirm the actual period after the birth/adoption.

Completed forms should be submitted to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, The Graduate School, Box 90065, 2127 Campus Drive or scanned and emailed to grad-finaid@duke.edu.

Last name: _____ First name: _____ Middle: _____

Address: _____
(street address, apt #, state, postal code, country)

Phone: _____ Unique ID: _____ Dept.: _____

Admit Term: _____

As the primary caregiver, I am requesting approximately _____ weeks accommodation, beginning: _____ (mm/dd/yy) and ending: _____ (mm/dd/yy)

As the non-primary caregiver, I am requesting approximately _____ weeks accommodation, beginning: _____ (mm/dd/yy) and ending: _____ (mm/dd/yy)

Stipend funding source and code (To be completed by the Director of Graduate Studies):

Source: _____ code #: _____

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

Print: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

Print: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Graduate School

Approval Signature: _____ Date: _____

Funding Source Verified: _____ Date: _____