

## GRADUATE STUDENT PARENTS POLICY

### Rationale

The University of Chicago's commitment to diversity has shaped the course of research and education at the University throughout its history. As we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we seek to increase the number of women pursuing and successfully completing advanced degrees in preparation for assuming leadership positions in universities, government, and industry. We also believe that a graduate student parent has a better chance of successfully continuing the program and completing the degree when the duties of a new parent are shared by the spouse/partner. We recognize that a woman's prime childbearing years often are precisely those years when she is engaged full-time in preparation and study for these positions. Her prime childbearing years may also be those years when the spouse/partner is engaged full-time in his or her academic studies or career. This policy addresses the conflicts and issues that may arise as the two goals – pursuit of an advanced degree and parenthood – come into play simultaneously.

This policy cannot anticipate every individual circumstance relating to childbirth and parenting. Rather, this policy establishes the principles and the minimum modifications for women graduate students who become pregnant and give birth and for all graduate students who become new parents. Students must always work closely with their advisors, departmental chairs, and Area Deans of Students in planning for a birth or having a child, arranging a timeline for meeting requirements, and accommodating particular circumstances. Students must communicate early, frequently, and clearly with their advisors about their progress and their engagement in courses and research. Advisors, too, must be realistic about the rate of progress of students experiencing childbirth or taking care of a newborn.

The success of this policy depends upon full and open communication and cooperation among the student, the advisor, departmental chair, and the Area Dean of Students. The desired goal is to maintain the student-parent's full-time status in his or her academic program and to ease the return to full participation in classes, research, teaching, or clinical training.

### Options

Several options are available to graduate students in various statuses in the University. A student who has reason to believe that she or he will wish to exercise one or more of these options should discuss her or his situation with the Area Dean of Students as early as possible to draw up an agreement and clear timeline for academic requirements.

#### 1. EXTENSIONS

New parents in doctoral programs may request a one-quarter extension for departmental, program, and University milestones and requirements that come due after the birth of the child. Thus, for example, in a department in which petition to candidacy must be made by the end of the Scholastic Residence (normally, that is, by the end of the fourth year), a birth mother (whether or not she takes a one-quarter leave of absence for childbirth

during those four years, see below) may request one additional quarter to prepare for the petition to candidacy.

New parents in Master's and professional programs may request a one-quarter extension for departmental, program, and University milestones and requirements that come due after the birth of the child. Such extensions are not to exceed professional regulatory requirements toward degree completion. Thus, for example, in a Master's or professional program with a limited number of years in which the degree is to be completed, a birth mother (whether or not she takes a one-quarter leave of absence for childbirth during those four years, see below) may request one additional quarter to complete the degree.

Note: Extensions for departmental, program, and University milestones and requirements do not extend a doctoral student's eligibility for full-time status in Scholastic and Advanced Residence beyond the total of twelve years from entry in the PhD program nor the Master's or professional student's eligibility for full-time status beyond the maximum duration of enrollment from entry in the program.

## 2. ACADEMIC MODIFICATION

One- or Two-Quarter Academic Modification A birth mother in a Master's or professional program, or in a doctoral program until admission to candidacy (that is, normally during Scholastic Residence or the early years of Advanced Residence) may choose to maintain full-time status during the quarter of her late-stage pregnancy, the quarter in which she gives birth, or the quarter in which she is engaged in the care of a newborn and receive an Academic Modification for these extra demands. The period of Academic Modification permits adjusting her course load and/or due dates for course assignments, papers, examinations, and other course-work requirements. Class and seminar attendance and participation are expected to the extent permitted by the health of the mother and newborn.

New fathers or adoptive parents in Master's and professional programs or in a doctoral program until admission to candidacy (that is, normally during Scholastic Residence or the early years of Advanced Residence) engaged in the care of a newborn may request similar Academic Modifications for one quarter.

Students with teaching duties are urged to initiate conversations with their department or program chairs and the Area Dean of Students well in advance to arrange to teach in a quarter other than that of the birth or care of the newborn. This modification should be given to new mothers and new fathers.

Students receiving tuition and/or stipends dependent upon laboratory and field research are urged to initiate conversations with their department chairs, lab supervisors, and the Area Dean of Students well in advance to adjust laboratory and research schedules. Students who are supported by fellowships external to the University must follow the rules specified by the granting agency for absences and leaves. Certain research grant conditions may necessitate the P.I. hiring additional help during the period of reduced

activity. The mechanisms for continued financial support will be addressed on an individual basis with the P.I. and the Area Dean of Students.

Further modifications and considerations may be necessary throughout a woman's pregnancy or period of lactation, for example for students who may be exposed to toxic chemicals or who must travel for field research. Advisors, Area Deans of Students, and students are urged to work together to provide a safe learning environment.

Note: The quarters of Academic Modification do not extend a doctoral student's eligibility for full-time status in Scholastic and Advanced Residence beyond the total of twelve years from entry in the PhD program nor the Master's or professional student's eligibility for full-time status beyond the maximum duration of enrollment from entry in the program. Moreover, because the student continues to be enrolled full-time, the quarters of Academic Modification in and of themselves do not stop the clock on departmental, program, and University academic milestones and requirements.

### 3. LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR CHILDBIRTH

One-quarter leave of absence for childbirth Since academic year 2000-2001, the University has permitted a female doctoral graduate student in Scholastic or Advanced Residence to take a one-quarter leave of absence for childbirth (see Student Manual, Residence Track). This option remains available. A pregnant student should discuss with her Area Dean of Students and with the Office of International Affairs (if relevant) the implications of such a leave for medical insurance coverage, visa status, loan repayment, University housing, etc. She may choose to use the leave-of-absence for childbirth in addition to or instead of the other options outlined above.

Note: A leave-of-absence does not extend a doctoral student's eligibility for full-time status in Scholastic and Advanced Residence beyond the total of twelve years from entry in the PhD program. However, the leave-of-absence does stop the clock on departmental, program, and University academic milestones and requirements; the clock resumes when the student returns to full-time status.

Students in Master's or professional programs also may take a one-quarter leave of absence for childbirth. A pregnant student should discuss with her Area Dean of Students and with the Office of International Affairs (if relevant) the implications of such a leave for medical insurance coverage, visa status, loan repayment, University housing, etc. She may choose to use the leave-of-absence in addition to or instead of the other options outlined below

<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>BENEFICIARY</b>	<b>"BENEFITS"</b>
<b>Extension</b>	1 Qtr	New parents	Additional quarter for academic milestones/requirements.
<b>Academic Modification</b>	1 Qtr	New parents	Full-time students status; adjust course load, due dates for assignments, and examinations, etc.
	2 Qtrs	Birth mothers	
<b>LOA</b>	1 Qtr	Birth mothers	Clock stops on dept., program, Univ. academic milestones/requirements. - consider implications
<b>Combination</b>	Any combination of the above		
<b>Note:</b> this policy does NOT extend doctoral students' eligibility for full-time status beyond 12 years or other graduate students eligibility for full-time status beyond the maximum duration of enrollment from entry into the program			