WHEN YOUR STAFF MEMBER RETURNS TO WORK FROM PARENTAL LEAVE

This fact sheet covers:

- Re-induct your staff member
- Negotiate flexible work arrangements if required
- Further advice and guidance

Re-induct your staff member

Returning to work after any period of extended leave can be daunting for some staff members so it is important that you are aware of this and actively make the effort to re-induct your staff member back into the workplace. You are encouraged to meet with your staff member on their first day back and discuss developments in the local work area and across the University during their absence, expectations regarding new work arrangements (particularly when a staff member has reduced their time fraction upon their return from parental leave) and any other relevant issues. As part of their induction you should meet with them regularly to check in on their progress and how they are feeling being back at work.

While staff members who take partner leave will not have been away from work as long as those who have taken maternity/adoption-related leave, it is still important to meet with those staff when they have returned to work to check in on their progress and how they are handling being back at work since becoming a parent.

Negotiate flexible work arrangements if required

Flexible work arrangements are available and may be organised with your staff member taking into consideration the operational requirements of the area. You should carefully consider each request for flexible work arrangements on its own merits. Under state and federal equal opportunity legislation, Deakin has a two-fold obligation to its staff returning from parental leave:

- to ensure that the staff member is not disadvantaged by having taken parental leave; and
- to accommodate any reasonable request of a staff member for flexible work arrangements

Is the flexible work request reasonable?

In determining what is "reasonable" in relation to a flexible work request, the following factors should be considered:

- the nature of the job performed by the staff member;
- the type of flexible arrangement requested;
- the likely duration of the flexible arrangement;
- the operational requirements of the position and Deakin;
- whether there are alternative ways of addressing the reason for the request; and
- the detriment to the staff member if the request is refused.

Practical considerations

Where you believe that the operational requirements of your area are able to accommodate a flexible work arrangement (i.e. that the request is "reasonable") you will need to address a range of issues depending on the type of flexible work arrangement. These matters may include:

- If the staff member is seeking to return from parental leave at a reduced or different time fraction, you will need to determine with the staff member whether this will be a permanent reduction in their fraction or whether the reduced time fraction is for a specified period at which time they will return to their previous time fraction or an alternate one.
Practical considerations continued...

- If the staff member is seeking to work from home, whether it is practical or possible for the staff member to perform some or all of their duties from home and if so, what are the legal (occupational health and safety) and practical (communication / interacting with other staff etc.) requirements that would need to be met?

- If the staff member is seeking a job sharing arrangement, does the type of work undertaken support such an arrangement and is there an appropriate person with whom a job sharing arrangement would work?

- If the staff member wants to alter their time fraction and/or the days and hours of work from what they were previously working, you will need to consider whether the staff member’s preferred work arrangements align with other members of your team.

These same considerations will be relevant in dealing with any request for a flexible working arrangement that has been made by a staff member in connection with family or carer’s responsibilities, even where the request has not been made pursuant to their return from parental leave.

Further advice and guidance

If you require further information in relation to a request by your staff member for a flexible work arrangement you can contact your HR Adviser for further advice.