Duke Divinity School
Duke Divinity Childbirth and Adoption Parental Leave Policy for Th.D. Students
Established 9/20/17; Revised 5/6/20

Purpose

To allow the 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 ThD students a minimum level of accommodation during the transition to parenthood and reflects the Divinity School’s ongoing commitment to supporting graduate student parents and a healthy academic work/family life balance.

This policy can also be applied during a student’s pregnancy to alleviate any prenatal health concerns that arise. A student could use this leave one time in any given semester, but the nine week period could be divided up over the course of one academic year depending on the nature of the pregnancy/birth/adoption event.

Policy

The designated caregiver(s) will 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. This policy can also be used during the student’s pregnancy to allow for time away from class/work/research due to pregnancy related medical complications.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for accommodation, the designated caregiver(s) must

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

Note: If both parents are Duke ThD students, they may discuss with the office of academic programs a feasible proposal for dividing up an eleven week accommodation period if they so wish.

Parental Leave Accommodations

1. Enrollment Status: ThD students benefiting from accommodation will remain registered as full-time students, thus their eligibility for graduate student benefits remains intact (insurance, student services, access to CAPS and Student Health). Eligible students who are also receiving stipend support would continue to receive that support.
2. Suspension of Academic Requirements and Duties: ThD 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 (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 ThD program director in conjunction with the Office of Academic Formation and Programs will develop a plan to replace necessary duties and responsibilities. Students who were planning to precept or TA will instead be offered an RA position that matches the salary they would have received for precepting or TAing unless the timing is such that the preceptor/TA will be on leave for fewer than two weeks.
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 Divinity School will develop a plan to replace necessary duties and responsibilities. Any additional costs incurred by the Divinity School due to replacement of compensatory work will be funded through Divinity School resources.

Procedure

ThD students seeking accommodation should inform the ThD program director and the Office of Academic Formation and Programs in writing no later than one month prior to the semester during which birth or adoption is expected to take place so that the Divinity School 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 communicate their plans to their Advisor prior to submitting the written request to the ThD program director and the Office of Academic Formation and Programs for final approval.
- If needed, the ThD Director, Associate Dean for Academic Formation and Programs (or designee), the student’s advisor, and the student will meet to coordinate plans for the student’s leave.
- If funding source changes are required, the ThD program Director and/or the Associate Dean for Academic Formation and Programs, or designee will notify the Divinity Financial Aid Office to adjust the student funding source accordingly.

Adopted from the Duke Graduate School Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy for Ph.D. students, 2/27/18