

EPA Policy on the Support of Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Leave

Ireland's strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology, Innovation 2020, highlights gender equality as a key issue to be addressed in order to deliver on the vision of becoming 'a global innovation leader'. It calls for action to 'address gender issues relating to career progression in research and innovation'.

In June 2016, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) published a National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This document contains a number of objectives and related recommendations aimed at Research funders to help them support higher education institutions to address gender inequality in research careers

One particular area of concern relates to the reimbursement of maternity/paternity/adoptive leave by Research Funders, which is seen as one of the major impediments to Gender Equality in Higher Education Authorities. To address this issue the EPA is introducing this policy to provide support for Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Leave.

In general staff wishing to avail of this leave fall into two broad categories

- A. Salaried staff with the relevant PRSI eligibility
- B. Post-graduate students and salaried staff without PRSI eligibility

A. Salaried staff with the relevant PRSI eligibility

With effect from 1st June 2017 the EPA will consider applications for additional funding for the duration of the statutory period of leave in the case of maternity, adoptive and paternity leave. In such cases the additional funding represents the difference between their social welfare entitlement and the salary stipulated for the employee in the EPA grant award and their contract of employment. **The funding is available for up to a maximum of 26 weeks in the case of maternity leave, 24 weeks in the case of adoptive leave and 2 weeks in the case of paternity leave.** To be eligible for consideration for such funding the host institution must be able to clearly demonstrate that:

- i. The employee is dedicated for 100% of their working time to a project which is fully funded by the EPA Research Programme (excluding the Green Enterprise Programme)
- ii. The staff member meets the criteria laid down in the Host Institutions internal policies and procedures to qualify for payment of salary whilst on maternity, paternity or adoptive leave
- iii. The host institution will assume responsibility for determining the eligibility or otherwise of an employee for social welfare.
- iv. The employee in each case will assume responsibility for ensuring that the relevant social welfare benefit is claimed in a timely manner.

B. Post-graduate students and salaried staff without PRSI eligibility

Where a post-graduate student or employee does not meet the criteria to qualify for maternity, paternity or adoptive benefit then, with effect from 1st June 2017, the EPA will consider applications

for additional funding for the duration of the statutory period of leave. In such cases the additional funding available will be equivalent to the salary stipulated for the employee in the EPA grant award and their contract of employment. **The funding is available for up to a maximum of 26 weeks in the case of maternity leave, 24 weeks in the case of adoptive leave and 2 weeks in the case of paternity leave.** To be eligible for consideration for such funding the host institution must be able to clearly demonstrate that:

- i. The employee or student is dedicated for 100% of their working time to a project which is fully funded by the EPA Research Programme (excluding the Green Enterprise Programme)
- ii. The staff member or post graduate student meets the criteria laid down in the Host Institutions internal policies and procedures to qualify for payment of salary whilst on maternity, paternity or adoptive leave
- iii. The host institution will assume responsibility for verifying the ineligibility or otherwise of the employee or student for social welfare benefit.

Entitlement to PRSI / Social Welfare Benefit

A person's entitlement to social welfare benefit is determined by reference to guidelines laid down by the Department of Social Welfare. In accordance with Social Welfare guidance persons eligible to receive social welfare maternity benefit are those who have at least 39 weeks PRSI paid contributions in the 12 month period before the first day of maternity leave or date of placement of their child or at least 39 weeks PRSI paid contributions since first starting work **and** at least 39 weeks PRSI paid or credited contributions in the relevant tax year or in the year following the relevant tax year. Alternatively, they must have at least 26 weeks PRSI paid contributions in the relevant tax year **and** at least 26 weeks PRSI paid contributions in the tax year prior to the relevant tax year. Only PRSI Classes A, E and H are considered eligible for such benefits.

Application Process

Applications for supplementary maternity, paternity or adoptive leave funding must be made by completing the relevant Supplementary Grant Application form available on Smart Simple and submitting this together with the requisite supporting documentation to the EPA appointed project officer.

All applications must be made through SmartSimple at least two months before the planned start date of the staff members' maternity, paternity or adoptive leave.

Payment of Additional Funding

Payment of the additional funding award will be made on submission of a completed Cost Statement at the end of the leave period. The cost statement must be accompanied by a written declaration by the Host Institution that the employee has taken the relevant period of maternity, paternity or adoptive leave and that the cost of that leave is in accordance with the accompanying cost statement.

No Cost Extensions

Any applications for a no-cost extension in the event of maternity or paternity leave will be considered on a case by case basis. EPA will determine at its sole discretion whether such an extension is warranted to ensure that all deliverables of the project are met.

Appendix A:

Statutory Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Leave

Maternity Leave

Under current legislation the amount of maternity leave available is as follows:

- for employees who do not meet the minimum number of contributions in respect of PRSI- 0 weeks
- For those employees who do meet the minimum number of contributions in respect of PRSI- 26 consecutive weeks (where the duration of the contract of employment provides for at least 26 weeks of further employment from the date maternity leave commences)
- Where less than 26 weeks of employment remain then the entitlement to payment will only extend to the end date of their employment contract.
- Employees also have the right to an additional period of 16 weeks unpaid leave, which must be taken immediately following the maternity leave period. There is no entitlement to social welfare maternity benefit for the additional sixteen weeks leave. **EPA will not provide supplementary funding in respect of any salary payments made during this period.**

Adoptive Leave

Under current legislation the amount of adoptive leave available is as follows:

- 0 weeks for employees who do not satisfy the PRSI contribution conditions
- 24 consecutive weeks for employees who satisfy the PRSI contributions, whose contracts of employment have 24 weeks or longer to run.
- For employees with less than 24 weeks left in their contract, their entitlement to paid Adoptive Leave only extends to the end of their contract.
- Employees also have the right to an additional period of 16 **weeks unpaid leave**, which must be taken immediately following the adoptive leave period. There is no entitlement to social welfare adoptive benefit for the additional sixteen weeks leave. **EPA will not provide supplementary funding in respect of any salary payments made during this period.**

In the case of a foreign adoption, some or all of the sixteen weeks additional adoptive leave may be taken immediately before the date of placement. There is no entitlement to social welfare adoptive benefit for the additional sixteen weeks leave.

Paternity Leave

Under current legislation the amount of paternity leave available is as follows:

- 0 weeks for employees who do not satisfy the PRSI contribution conditions
- 2 consecutive weeks for employees who satisfy the PRSI contributions, whose contracts of employment have 2 weeks or longer to run.
- For employees with less than 2 weeks left in their contract, their entitlement to paid paternity leave only extends to the end of their contract.