

University of Wyoming New Parent Accommodation Policy

The University of Wyoming is dedicated to ensuring optimal success for all graduate students. However, new parents are frequently forced to interrupt their education cycle, sometimes in a transient manner but often permanently. At the minimum, under current guidelines new parents are faced with a difficult and often untenable situation.

The New Parent Accommodation policy is designed to allow new parents to maintain full-time, registered student status and facilitate their return to full participation in graduate activities in a seamless manner without penalty.

In support of maximizing opportunities for new parents in graduate education and in recognition of the importance of parenting, the University of Wyoming formally adopts the following New Parent Accommodation policy for full-time students enrolled in a graduate program. If both members of the new parent partnership are UW graduate students, one but not both will be eligible for the full Accommodation. However, we encourage accommodation of schedules for exams, assignments and programs of study for the graduate student partner. This Accommodation does not apply to part-time students.

A student anticipating becoming a new parent is eligible for Accommodation consideration for a period of up to one semester. The exact Accommodation period will begin on the date specified on the New Parent Accommodation petition approved by Academic Affairs. This petition must be filed and approved prior to the actual date of childbirth or adoption.

The New Parent Accommodation consists of the following:

1. Specific accommodations may include but are not limited to deferment of course assignments, preliminary/qualifying exams, submission of the program of study and full or partial release from teaching and research duties as appropriate. Arrangements for completion of requirements when the Accommodation period is completed should be discussed with the faculty mentor and the principal investigator on the supporting grant (if different from the faculty mentor). The agreed-upon arrangements should be explicitly defined and specified in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the student, the mentor (on behalf of the graduate committee), the principal investigator on the supporting grant (if different from the faculty mentor) and the department head. The MOU will be submitted to Academic Affairs with the New Parent Accommodation petition.
2. For students supported by a section I or section II (funded by grants or other sources of non-state money) graduate assistantship (GA), Academic Affairs will continue to pay a stipend equivalent to the standard UW GA stipend for the period of the Accommodation.

It is important to note that principal investigators will not be accountable for providing GA support during the period of the Accommodation. Payment will be prorated for students with partial assistantships. Graduate assistants will continue to be covered by UW health insurance during the New Parent Accommodation.

3. Students who are not supported by a GA are eligible for the New Parent Accommodation period, but are not entitled to a university-supported stipend or health insurance.
4. For all students approved for New Parent Accommodation, Academic Affairs will provide a one credit hour tuition waiver to allow continuous registration as a full-time graduate student. This will allow international students to maintain their visa status and for all students to maintain financial aid agreements requiring full time enrollment status.
5. To enable a seamless return for the student, departments, mentors and principal investigators are advised to discuss and establish appropriate measures to support students that may include opportunities for continued involvement in limited research, teaching or program milestones during the Accommodation period. However, this agreement should be based upon mutual consent between the student and mentor (and principal investigator on the supporting grant if different from the mentor) and specified in the MOU.

Process

- At least three months prior to the anticipated childbirth or adoption, the student should initiate the New Parent Accommodation petition (available on the Graduate Student Resources web site). The petition requires approval by the student's faculty mentor, the principal investigator of the grant (if different from the faculty mentor), department head or equivalent, college dean and Academic Affairs. This process is designed to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the planned accommodation and measures to ensure equitable and appropriate consideration. The student should discuss specifics regarding the exact nature of the Accommodation, plans for future completion of requirements and milestones, and mutual expectations. In particular, both parties should consider mechanisms to fulfill any teaching responsibilities so that the petitioner may regain his or her graduate assistantship following completion of the New Parent Accommodation period. All expectations and agreements should be included in the MOU.
- Appropriate documentation of the anticipated childbirth or adoption from the student's medical service provider or other official entity is required.

- Upon approval, Academic Affairs will notify the applicant and the department head or equivalent of the dates granted for the New Parent Accommodation.

This policy will be subject to review in AY 2010.