

PEOPLE FUNCTION POLICY

Maternity Leave Policy

(Effective from 1 August 2026)

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1 Policy statement

- 1.1 The Maternity Leave Policy sets out the entitlements and support available to pregnant employees and to those on and returning from maternity leave.
- 1.2 The legislation governing maternity leave is complex and members of staff who are pregnant are encouraged to contact the [Staff Hub](#) to discuss their entitlements.
- 1.3 Imperial's policies reflect the diversity of our daily lives and must be implemented to ensure equal opportunities and without unfair discrimination. Implementation of the maternity policy must be clear and transparent and line managers and supervisors are required to familiarise themselves with, and understand, this policy and associated procedures.
- 1.4 Imperial's [Values](#) are at the very centre of our work and guide our behaviour as a community, across all levels. This policy aims to protect and promote our Values of Respect, Collaboration, Excellence, Integrity and Innovation.

2 Scope

- 2.1 The Maternity Leave Policy applies to all pregnant employees of Imperial College London.
- 2.1 This policy applies to employees whose baby is born on or after 1 August 2026.

3 Entitlement to maternity leave

- 3.1 There is no qualifying length of service requirement for maternity leave and eligible staff are entitled to take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave.
- 3.2 You are legally required to take a minimum of 2 weeks maternity leave. This is called compulsory maternity leave and will commence on the day on which the childbirth occurs. If a child is born before the expected week of childbirth (EWC), compulsory maternity leave will start on the day after the child is born.
- 3.3 Following 2 weeks compulsory maternity leave, you may take up to 50 weeks of maternity leave provided the notification requirements are followed as set out in section 5.
- 3.4 The start of maternity leave must be no earlier than the 11th week before your expected week of childbirth. Your GP or midwife will confirm your expected week of childbirth by issuing a MAT B1 certificate which is normally issued no earlier than 20 weeks before your expected week of childbirth. This certificate must be sent to the Staff Hub, along with the completed maternity leave request form as soon as it is received so that maternity leave and pay entitlements can be confirmed in writing following a meeting (see 5). The Staff Hub will also enter your maternity leave onto your TeamSeer absence management system record.
- 3.5 If you are absent from work during the 4 weeks before your expected week of childbirth due to pregnancy-related illness, your maternity leave period will start automatically, even if the birth takes place before the start of the 11th week before the birth was originally expected.
- 3.6 Where the baby is born early, maternity leave will automatically start the day after the baby is born. You should notify your line manager as soon as reasonably possible, so that the Staff Hub can confirm your new maternity leave dates.
- 3.7 If the baby is stillborn after the start of the 24th week of pregnancy, maternity leave will start automatically the day after the baby is born.

4 Entitlement to maternity pay

Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP)

- 4.1 All employees taking maternity leave, regardless of length of service, are entitled to Imperial' OMP, provided the notification procedure set out in section 5 has been followed.
- 4.2 OMP is 26 weeks of paid leave which means you will receive your normal rate of pay for the first 26 weeks of your maternity leave. This includes 2 weeks compulsory maternity leave.
- 4.3 You must return to work for a minimum period of 3 months after maternity leave in order to qualify for Occupational Maternity Pay. Imperial retains the right to reclaim Occupational Maternity pay if you fail to return to work for at least 3 months.

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

- 4.4 If you have at least 26 weeks service at the Notification Week (15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC), and your earnings are above the lower earnings limit for National Insurance contributions at the 26th week, you will be eligible for SMP.
- 4.5 If you are not eligible for SMP, you may be able to claim Statutory Maternity Allowance. This is not paid by the university, and you will need to apply for Maternity Allowance yourself following receipt of an SMP1 form. Further information can be found on the [government website](#).
- 4.6 SMP is payable for a 39 week period and is included in OMP. No combination of payments during this period will exceed your normal full pay. Entitlements to maternity pay are as follows:

Week	Eligible for OMP & SMP*	Eligible for OMP only
1-26	Full Pay (incorporating 6 weeks higher rate SMP and 20 weeks lower rate SMP)	Full Pay
27-39	Lower rate SMP	Unpaid
40-52	Unpaid	Unpaid

- 4.7 SMP is payable to those who qualify, regardless of whether or not you intend to return to work.
- 4.8 The current rate of pay for SMP can be found on the [government website](#).

* Previous continuous University or Trust service will be recognised for the purposes of SMP for the following categories of staff: Professor, Reader, Non-Clinical and Clinical Senior Lecturer, Non-Clinical and Clinical Lecturer, Assistant and Associate Professors, and Clinical Research Fellows, Nurses and Allied Health Professionals.

5 Notification

- 5.1 You should let your line manager know that you are pregnant as soon as is reasonably practical so that a risk assessment can be carried out. This may be in confidence, and you should agree with your line manager when others can be told.
- 5.2 In order to be eligible for leave and pay, you must notify your manager and inform the Staff Hub by completing the [Maternity Leave Request Form](#) no later than the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth of:

- The fact that you are pregnant;
 - The expected week of childbirth, as stated on your MAT B1 (a certificate available from a doctor or midwife);
 - The date you intend to start maternity leave (maternity leave can commence on any day of the week).
- 5.3 Following receipt of your MATB1, the Staff Hub will contact you to confirm your maternity entitlements.
- 5.4 If you subsequently wish to change your mind about the start date of your maternity leave, you must give four weeks' notice of the new start date, unless maternity leave is automatically triggered as per points 3.5 or 3.6, by informing your line manager and the Staff Hub.

6 Risk assessment

- 6.1 Any work activity which could pose a risk when pregnant must be assessed to determine if anything needs to be done. Your manager, or person in charge of your work, is responsible for carrying out an assessment. It is your responsibility to let your manager know as soon as you are pregnant in order for the assessment to be undertaken.
- 6.2 Guidance on pregnancy risk assessments is available from the Safety Department or [Occupational Health](#).
- 6.3 Completed Risk Assessments should be held locally with the department/division.
- 6.4 It is relatively rare for special measures to be required because work will have already been organised to avoid exposure to risk. If, however, there is any element of possible risk, your manager will work with you to reorganise the responsibilities during pregnancy. If you have any concerns at all about the effects of work on your pregnancy, you should raise these with your manager, in the first instance, at the earliest opportunity. You and/or your manager can also seek advice from the Safety Department or Occupational Health.

7 Time off for antenatal appointments

- 7.1 All pregnant staff are entitled to reasonable paid time off to keep appointments for antenatal care made on the advice of a doctor, registered midwife or registered health visitor. Antenatal care is not necessarily restricted to medical examinations – for example, it could include parenting classes – as long as these are advised by a registered medical practitioner, midwife or health visitor. You should give your manager as much notice as possible of appointments.
- 7.2 With the exception of the first appointment, your manager may ask for a certificate from a registered medical practitioner, registered midwife, or health visitor to confirm that you are pregnant and an appointment card or other evidence showing that an appointment has been made.

8 Keeping in touch

- 8.1 Your manager may make reasonable contact with you during your maternity leave: for example, to update you on what is happening at work, promotion opportunities or to discuss your return to work. This contact is separate to a Keeping in Touch (KIT) day. Prior to the commencement of your maternity leave, your manager will normally discuss the arrangements for staying in touch, the reasons for this contact and the types of things that might be discussed: for example, work-related matters or information on training courses.

- 8.2 Additionally, where it is agreed between you and your manager, you may carry out work or attend training for up to 10 Keeping in Touch days during your maternity period without your maternity leave being brought to an end. Further details are available on the [Keeping in Touch Days webpage](#).

9 Annual leave during maternity leave

- 9.1 Your contractual annual leave, including bank holidays and university closure days, is accrued throughout the whole period of your maternity leave. Your holiday entitlement will be updated to reflect this.
- 9.2 Part-time employees are entitled to a prorated entitlement to any bank holiday and closure days that occur during their period of maternity leave added to their overall holiday entitlement.
- 9.3 You are encouraged to consider using a proportion of your annual leave entitlement before the start and after the end of your maternity leave.
- 9.4 If the maternity leave period is likely to cross two annual leave years, you may carry over annual leave accrued in the first leave year but must use these days within three months following your return to work. Any annual leave accrued in the second leave year may be taken as normal.
- 9.5 Annual leave cannot be taken between the end of the paid maternity period and the beginning of any unpaid maternity period.
- 9.6 The Staff Hub will be able to provide specific advice on annual leave entitlements during maternity leave.

10 Terms and conditions of service

- 10.1 Continuous service is unbroken during a period of maternity leave. The whole period of maternity leave (both paid and unpaid) counts towards the calculation of those benefits which accrue with length of service, i.e. sickness benefits, annual leave and redundancy pay.
- 10.2 Where applicable, the normal annual increment or contribution payment will be awarded at the usual time, as will any pay award implemented by the university.
- 10.3 Pension rights and contributions will be dealt with in accordance with Imperial's pension schemes. Contributions and entitlements will continue as normal whilst you are on full pay or SMP (if on SMP, the university maintains the contribution at the full rate). If you are planning on taking a period of unpaid leave, you should make an appointment to discuss your individual position with the pensions team by emailing pensions@imperial.ac.uk.

11 Neonatal care leave

- 11.1 Neonatal care leave is available in addition to maternity leave if the following conditions are met:
- Your baby needs at least seven consecutive days of neonatal care within the first 28 days after birth.
 - You are the child's parent, the child's intended parent (applicable to surrogacy) or the child's adopter or prospective adopter (applicable to adoptions) and have responsibility for the upbringing of the child; or
 - You are the partner of the child's mother, adopter or prospective adopter and have or expect to have main responsibility for the upbringing of the child (apart from the mother), and

- The leave must be used to care for the baby.

- 11.2 Neonatal care leave allows you to accrue one week of leave for every seven consecutive days your baby receives neonatal care, up to 12 weeks in total. The leave may be taken at the end of your maternity leave and must be taken within 68 weeks of the birth of your baby.
- 11.3 Neonatal care leave is paid leave and is provided in addition to other family leave. Further information about this entitlement is set out in the [Neonatal Care Leave Policy](#).

12 Ending maternity leave

- 12.1 Maternity leave will automatically end 52 weeks after the start date unless you have specified a return date.
- 12.2 If you wish to amend your return-to-work date, you must give at least eight weeks' notice if the date is earlier than previously agreed. You will need to provide your new date to your line manager and the Staff Hub.
- 12.3 If, prior to commencing maternity leave, you had notified your manager and the Staff Hub that you intended to return to work before the end of the 52 weeks, you may decide to return to work on a later date. If this is your intention, then notice of your new, later date of return must be provided to your manager and the Staff Hub at least 8 weeks before the earlier date.
- 12.4 You may wish to curtail your maternity leave in order to enter into shared parental leave with your partner. For details on this refer to the [Shared Parental Leave Policy](#).

13 Returning to work after maternity leave

Returning to Work during weeks 1 - 26

- 13.1 If you choose to return to work during weeks 1 - 26, you will be entitled to return to your same job, on the same terms and conditions, as if you had not been absent. The exception to this is where a redundancy situation has arisen and the original job no longer exists.

Returning to Work during weeks 27 - 52

- 13.2 If you choose to return during weeks 27 - 52 you will usually be entitled to return to the same job, on the same terms and conditions, unless a redundancy situation has arisen. However, if there is a reason other than redundancy (such as operational demands or a need for a change in working practices) which makes it not reasonably practicable for you to return to the same job, you are entitled to return to a job suitable to you and appropriate in the circumstances, with terms and conditions which are not less favourable than your original job.

14 Ending employment

- 14.1 If you decide that you do not wish to return to work after maternity leave, you must give the period of notice as set out in your terms and conditions of service or reach an alternative agreement with your manager.
- 14.2 Your employment will end once your notice period comes to an end and you will be paid in lieu of any accrued untaken holiday, bank holidays, and closure days.

- 14.3 Imperial retains the right to reclaim Occupational Maternity Pay if you fail to return to work and continue in employment for at least three months.
- 14.4 If your post is potentially at risk of redundancy or your contract is due to end during your maternity leave, you will be consulted as appropriate in accordance with the [Fixed Term Worker Procedure](#) or [Change Management Policy](#). In these circumstances, Imperial will pay the appropriate OMP entitlement until the last day of your employment. After this date, if you are entitled to SMP, this will be paid as a lump sum in your final payslip.

15 Pregnancy and baby loss

- 15.1 If you have miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy or termination before 24 weeks into your pregnancy, there are no entitlements to ML, OMP and SMP. You may however be entitled to occupational and/or statutory sick pay.
- 15.2 If you have a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy onwards, or the baby only survives for a short period of time after birth, full maternity leave and maternity pay will be retained, irrespective of the timing of the birth. In addition, you are entitled to take 4 weeks' paid parental bereavement leave, which can be added to the end of your maternity leave. For further details, please refer to the [Special Leave Policy](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/special-leave-policy-leave-domestic-and-personal-reasons)<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/special-leave-policy-leave-domestic-and-personal-reasons>.
- 15.3 You can access support through [Confidential Care](#), Imperial's Employee Assistance Programme.
- 15.4 You may also wish to access support from various [baby loss organisations](#).

16 Support after maternity leave

Elsie Widdowson Fellowships

Elsie Widdowson Fellowships apply to academic staff returning from maternity or adoption leave. The purpose of the Fellowship is to allow a returning member of academic staff to concentrate on consolidating their research activity.

The Fellowships provide this opportunity through part-funding i.e. 50% (met centrally) of the salary costs for up to 12 months immediately following the member of staff's return from maternity, adoption/surrogacy and/or shared parental leave. This means that the department/division can relieve the member of staff of teaching and administrative duties during the agreed period of the research programme. The remaining half of the salary costs will be met by the department/division.

Applications for Elsie Widdowson Fellowship Awards are not restricted to one Award and, therefore, academic staff who have previously received the award may make additional applications.

The rules of the Fellowship and details of how to apply can be found on the [Elsie Widdowson Fellowship Award webpage](#).

Early Years Education Centre (EYEC)

Childcare for children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years is available, by application, from the Early Years Education Centre. For details of fees and how to apply for a place please contact the Manager, or the Supervisor, on telephone number 020 7594 5120 / 5121 or visit: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/early-years>.

Nursing Rooms

The university has designated resting and nursing rooms across different campuses, listed on the Estates Operations webpages, available to parents and those who are pregnant who need a space to rest as well as to those who need to express milk or nurse their baby. The rooms are available for both staff and students.

Parents' Network

Imperial's Parents' Network aims to provide a one stop shop for all relevant policies and information related to being a parent at Imperial and enables you to build networks with your colleagues which will provide mutual support.

Parent Buddy Scheme

Imperial operates a Buddy Scheme, available both prior to and post-maternity, adoption, surrogacy and shared parental leave. The scheme provides the opportunity to be paired up with a returner from one of those categories of leave who has been back in the workplace for a few months and who can act as a sounding board to answer any questions. For further details, please email parents@imperial.ac.uk.

Flexible Working

If you are thinking about changing your work pattern, please speak to your line manager as soon as possible in order to explore what opportunities are available to you. Further information can be found in the Flexible Working Policy.

Confidential Care

The university's employee assistance provider, Confidential Care, can offer you support by way of a help sheet, which gives basic suggestions that could help your return to work. A free 24-hour confidential advice line is also available for practical and emotional support.

17 Related policy and guidance

[Paternity/Maternity Support Leave](#)

[Adoption Leave Policy](#)

[Special Leave Policy](#)

[Flexible Working Policy](#)

[Neonatal Care Leave Policy](#)

18 Glossary of Terms

Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC)	The week, beginning with midnight between Saturday and Sunday, in which it is expected that childbirth will occur
The Maternity Certificate (Mat B1)	A certificate issued by a GP or midwife, verifying the fact of pregnancy and confirming (EWC) or actual date of birth in cases where the child is born early.
Antenatal Care	Medical care of those who are pregnant and their children during pregnancy.
Compulsory Maternity Leave	A minimum two week leave period which all pregnant staff must take immediately after the date of childbirth.
Statutory Maternity Leave	A 52 week leave period including compulsory maternity leave which all pregnant staff are entitled to take.
Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP)	26 weeks of full pay, paid for the first 26 weeks of maternity leave.
Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)	39 weeks of statutory maternity pay is available to eligible employees. 26 weeks of SMP is included within OMP.
Maternity Allowance	A benefit paid to those who are working and who are unable to get Statutory Maternity Pay.
Keeping in Touch Days	Days agreed between a member of staff and their manager when they will carry out work or attend training.