

QUEENS UNIVERSITY BELFAST
ADOPTION LEAVE PROCEDURE



Introduction

Queen’s University is an equal opportunity employer committed to supporting the work life balance of its employees and as such has enhanced the statutory adoption pay provision to offer eligible employees who are adopting a child 18 weeks full pay.

The following adoption leave procedure applies to members of staff who have been notified, by an approved adoption agency, of a match with a child for adoption within the UK.

1. Adoption Leave

- 1.1 A member of staff, whilst in paid employment, is entitled to take 52 weeks continuous adoption leave, provided his/her contract covers the whole period, and he/she is newly matched with a child for adoption by an approved adoption agency.
- 1.2 A member of staff who is eligible for adoption leave is entitled to up to 52 weeks continuous leave, the first 26 week period of which is known as Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) and the remaining 26 weeks as Additional Adoption Leave (AAL).
- 1.3 Only one member of a couple who adopt jointly is entitled to adoption leave. The couple may choose which partner takes adoption leave.
- 1.4 The partner of an individual who adopts, or the other member of a couple who are adopting jointly, may be entitled to paid paternity leave.
- 1.5 Only one period of adoption leave is available irrespective of whether more than one child is placed for adoption as part of the same arrangement.

2. Adoption Pay

All eligible employees are entitled to Queen’s enhanced adoption pay, which is inclusive of Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP), provided they follow the appropriate notification procedure.

Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP)*	Queen’s Enhanced Adoption Pay
Weeks 1 - 6, higher rate SAP**	Weeks 1 – 18, full pay
Weeks 7-39, lower rate SAP ***	Weeks 19 – 39, lower rate SAP***
Weeks 40-52, unpaid	Weeks 40-52, unpaid

*The qualifying requirements for statutory adoption pay are:

- 26 weeks continuous service;
- Earned on average £116 a week;
- Notified their employer that they are entitled to statutory adoption pay and when this is to begin;
- Stopped working for their employer; and
- Elected to receive statutory adoption pay.

** 90% of your normal weekly earnings in the first six weeks of adoptive leave.

*** the lower of £148.68 or 90% of average weekly earnings in the remaining 33 weeks

3. Notice of intention to take Adoption Leave

- 3.1 A member of staff must inform the University, no later than 7 days of being notified by the adoption agency, that he/she has been matched with a child for adoption (unless this is not reasonably practicable) and of the following:
- when the child is expected to be placed; and
 - when he/she wants the adoption leave to start.
- 3.2 The above information should be recorded on the Adoption Leave Notification Form and sent to the HR Hub. A Matching Certificate, which can be obtained from the adoption agency, is also required at the same time or as soon as possible thereafter. Paid adoption leave can only be authorised when the Matching Certificate has been received by People and Culture.
- 3.3 Within 28 days of receipt of the Adoption Leave Notification Form and the Matching Certificate, People and Culture will confirm the adoption leave arrangements in writing, to include the date on which the member of staff is expected to return to work if taking the full entitlement of adoption leave.
- 3.4 The member of staff must also inform his/her Head of School/Department/Unit of his/her adoption leave arrangements.
- 3.5 A member of staff may change his/her mind about when he/she wants to start his/her OAL by informing People and Culture and his/her Head of School/Department/Unit, in writing. The change of date to the commencement of his/her adoption leave must be given at least 28 days in advance (unless this is not reasonably practical to do so).
- 3.6 Although entitlement is to 52 weeks adoption leave, where possible, a member of staff should outline the duration of the leave he/she intends to take when completing the Adoption Leave Notification Form. However, it is understood that it is hard to know beforehand how an individual will feel after the child is placed. If a member of staff decides to alter his/her original return date, at least 8 weeks written notice must be given to the University of the amended return to work date.

4. Commencement of Adoption Leave

Ordinary Adoption Leave

- 4.1 OAL will normally commence on one of the following dates:
- the date of the child's placement (whether this is earlier or later than expected); or
 - a fixed date which can be up to 14 days before the expected date of the child's placement.

Additional Adoption Leave

- 4.2 The AAL period commences on the day after the last day of the OAL period.
- 4.3 Depending on individual choice, AAL may last from 1 week to a maximum of 26 weeks.

5. Annual Leave

- 5.1 A member of staff accrues contractual annual leave entitlement while on OAL and during AAL.
- 5.2 A member of staff is expected, where possible, to take his/her full annual leave entitlement in a particular leave year. However should this not be possible, due to adoption leave arrangements or exceptional circumstances, he/she will be able to carry over up to the full complement of leave (42 days) to the next leave year, the scheduling of which must be taken by agreement with the Head of School/ Department/ Unit.
- 5.3 Annual leave may be taken at the end of OAL, (where AAL is not taken) or at the end of AAL, by agreement with the Head of School/ Department/Unit, details of which should be confirmed in writing on the Adoption Leave Notification Form.

6. Pension

- 6.1 Pensionable service will continue to accrue as normal as long as the member of staff is receiving salary or Statutory Adoption Pay.
- 6.2 A member of staff who takes unpaid leave including from week 40 of adoptive leave onwards, will not normally be able to make pension contributions for the period of unpaid leave.

7. Career Break

- 7.1 A member of staff on career break will have no entitlement to adoptive pay other than Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP), subject always to eligibility requirements for SAP which can be affected during periods of unpaid leave.

8. Return to Work

- 8.1 A member of staff who wants to return to work from his/her adoption leave earlier, or later, than previously indicated, must give the University 8 weeks written notice of the new date on which he/she wants to return to work.

Ordinary Adoption Leave

- 8.2 A member of staff is entitled to return from OAL to the job in which he/she was employed before his/her absence under the original contract of employment and on terms and conditions not less favourable than those, which he/she would have received had he/she not been absent.

Additional Adoptive Leave

- 8.3 A member of staff who takes AAL is entitled to return to the job in which he/she was employed before his/her absence or if this is not reasonably practicable, to another job which is both suitable and appropriate for him/her in the circumstances on equivalent terms and conditions.

9. Other Information

Pre-adoption

- 9.1 The University will grant a prospective adoptive parent reasonable time off to attend pre-adoption interviews. The member of staff must notify his/her Department in advance of such interviews.

End of Placement

- 9.2 If the child's placement ends during the adoption leave period, the member of staff will be able to continue adoption leave for up to eight weeks after the end of the placement.

Keeping in Touch Days

- 9.3 By mutual agreement between the University and the member of staff, the member of staff while on adoption leave may carry out work under his/her contract of employment for a period of up to 10 days without loss of Statutory Adoption Pay and without triggering a return to work. These days are known as 'Keeping in Touch Days'.
- 9.4 If Keeping in Touch Days are used when the member of staff is in receipt of full pay no further payment will be made for the days worked. If, however, Keeping in Touch Days are used during the period when the member of staff is in receipt of Statutory Adoption Pay, or is not in receipt of any pay, the member of staff will receive payment, for the time worked, to bring pay up to the equivalent of full pay. For example, if the Keeping in Touch Days occur when the member of staff is receiving Statutory Adoption Pay, the Statutory Adoption Pay will continue to be paid and an additional payment will be made which will bring the total to the equivalent of full pay for the time worked.

Reasonable Contact

- 9.5 The University is entitled to make reasonable contact with a member of staff on adoption leave for a number of reasons, such as, to help plan and to discuss arrangements for his / her return to work.

Not Returning to Work

- 9.6 A member of staff who does not wish to return to work at the end of his/her adoption leave is required to give notice, in writing, of termination of the contract.

Other Work Life Balance Leave

9.7 The University's also has a number of work life balance policies:

- Dependant Leave
- Career Break
- Flexible Working
- Maternity leave
- Paternity Leave
- Parental Leave
- Shared Parental Leave

Further information on these policies can be accessed through the web at the following addresses:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/annual-family-other-leave/work-life-balance-policies/>

If you have queries regarding any of the above please contact the HR Hub, extension 3000 or e-mail hruh@qub.ac.uk.

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