



RCSI

Maternity Leave Policy

Purpose

RCSI is committed to being an employer of choice and to providing an inclusive and supportive environment with regard to personal situations and work-life balance of staff.

The purpose of this policy is to explain the support you will receive from RCSI if you are pregnant or have given birth. It explains the criteria and process of applying for and receiving maternity leave. It also outlines the protocols for keeping you safe at work during your pregnancy. And it outlines the return-to-work process and supports.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff in RCSI regardless of whether they are full or part time employees who are eligible for Maternity Leave

Policy Statement

RCSI is committed to supporting any member of staff who is eligible for Maternity Leave, to keeping you safe during your pregnancy and as you settle in to the role of new parent. It is also committed to providing you with the time and resources you need when you return to your role after a period of maternity leave.

The content of this policy and procedure complies with the Maternity Protection Act 1994-2004 (Revised and updated 2020)

Leave Entitlements

All eligible RCSI staff are entitled to the following:

- Time off without loss of pay to attend any ante-natal or post-natal appointments.
- 26 weeks paid maternity leave (no qualifying period applies).

- Up to 16 weeks unpaid additional maternity leave where you request this.
- Annual leave accrues as normal while on maternity leave
- Public holidays and privilege days occurring during maternity leave, including any additional maternity leave period accrue while you are on maternity leave and can be taken following your maternity leave.

Maternity Leave is reckonable for pensionable service and contributions will be made to the pension scheme in line with earnings during this leave period, where applicable. However, during Additional Maternity Leave, contributions to the pension scheme will be suspended and benefit will be reduced in line with the period of leave taken.

Those who meet certain social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions on their own insurance record are eligible to receive Maternity Benefit from the Irish government's Department of Social Protection. Maternity Benefit can be paid for a continuous period of 26 weeks from the start of your maternity leave, which should in usual circumstances commence a minimum of 2 weeks before the expected due date and end a minimum of 4 weeks after the birth of your children. The value of Maternity Benefit Payments is deducted from your pay at source.

The Human Resources Department is available to provide you with support and guidance to apply for Maternity Benefit.

It is important to note that any entitlement to leave or other RCSI benefits lasts only as long as your contract of employment lasts.

In order to ensure consistency of application of the policy and fairness for all, the following procedure will be followed whenever Maternity Leave is requested.

Procedure

You are encouraged to discuss your plans to apply for Maternity Leave with your line manager at the earliest opportunity. This will give them the opportunity to provide you with the support you need and to plan activities during your leave period and on your return.

There are three important steps to follow in sequence when you are ready to avail of Maternity Leave:

Step One: Making an Application for Maternity Leave to RCSI

The Human Resources Department and the relevant Head of Department/Nominee must be notified in writing no later than **4 weeks** before the date upon which the maternity leave is due to commence.

You should complete [RCSI Maternity Leave Application Form](#) and return it, together with a doctor's certificate confirming pregnancy and the anticipated due date, to the Human Resources Department as early as practicable, but no later than **4 weeks** before you intend to take Maternity Leave.

This form informs HR you are ready to initiate plans for your Maternity Leave. It indicates you are ready to avail of the supports available to you as part of preparing for Maternity Leave. It also signals to HR & Payroll the appropriate dates to deduct Maternity Leave Benefit from your salary for the duration of your maternity leave.

HR will generate a letter confirming your Maternity Leave dates.

Step Two: Making an Application for Maternity Benefit to the Department of Social Protection

You should apply for Maternity Benefit **6 weeks** before you intend to go on maternity leave. If you are paying A1 PRSI contributions, you must claim Social Welfare Maternity Benefit from the Irish government's Department of Social Protection, as your salary will be reduced by the maximum statutory benefit at source. Please note that Maternity Benefit is subject to income tax. To apply for, and be approved for maternity benefit, you will need to complete an MB2 form.

Please complete the [MB2 Form](#) after 24 weeks of pregnancy or at least 6 weeks before you intend to go on maternity leave.

HR will sign off the MB2 form and you will receive a copy to progress with your Maternity Benefit Claim.

Step Three: Submit your [Maternity Benefit Claim](#) to the Department of Social Protection

Please note your Maternity Benefit Claim will be paid directly to you and not to RCSI.

Further information about Maternity Benefit is available from the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, LoCall 1890 690 690 or via their website www.welfare.ie.

Keeping you Safe

RCSI aim to take all possible steps for your safety. A separate risk assessment will be carried out when you:

- Notify your line manager and/or Human Resources that you are pregnant and apply for maternity leave.
- Return to work, including breastfeeding arrangements should these be required.

The Head of Department/Nominee and/or Human Resources will coordinate the risk assessment process and identify any measures that may be required to keep you safe for the duration of your pregnancy and on your return to work.

- If the assessment identifies particular risks in relation to your pregnancy, these will either be removed or you will be moved away from them.
- If neither of these options is possible, you will be given health and safety leave from work which may continue up to the beginning of maternity leave.
- During health and safety leave, you will receive your normal wages for the first 3 weeks as set out in the Maternity Protection (Health and Safety Leave Remuneration) Regulations, SI 20/1995.
- After this, Health and Safety Benefit may be paid. Human Resources will support you with this.

Some additional entitlements and benefits

Attending Ante/Post Natal Appointments & Classes

When you have applied for Maternity Leave, you are entitled to paid time off to attend one set of ante-natal classes. Your partner, if also employed at RCSI, is entitled to time off from work, without loss of pay, to attend the last two ante-natal classes in a set before the birth.

We ask that **2 weeks** written notice be given to your Head of Department/Nominee when you have ante-natal or post-natal appointments. We request that where possible, appointments should be scheduled at the beginning or end of the working day. If the appointment finishes during the working day, you are expected to return to work. You may be required to provide proof of appointments by furnishing an appointment card or other certification.

Free Pre and Post Natal Gym Support

RCSI Gym offer free and post-natal consultations and training sessions to all RCSI staff members at all stages of pregnancy. The Gym team will help you develop an individual plan. You do not need to be a member of the gym to avail of this support. For more information contact the gym on 01-402 5096 or email gym@rcsi.com.

Please remember it is important to get clearance from your GP before starting any exercise during and after pregnancy.

Prior To Maternity Leave

You and your Manager or Head of Department should discuss/map out arrangements for covering your workload for the duration of your maternity leave. Also, you can agree if and how you may want to be contacted while on maternity

and for what purpose, for example, general check in, team updates etc. Please note there is no obligation to be contactable during maternity leave.

Academic Staff Commencing Maternity Leave

For Academic staff commencing Maternity Leave, discuss and outline with your Head of Department, how to cover for example:

- The supervision of any PhD students (the majority of the supervision would normally be taken over by the second supervisor).
- The supervision of research staff.
- The provision of cover for educational duties.
- Arrangements for a smooth handover.

Extended Maternity Leave

Additional Unpaid Maternity Leave: You are entitled to apply for a period of additional unpaid maternity leave for up to a further 16 weeks, in addition to the 26 weeks paid maternity leave.

Please complete the RCSI [Additional Maternity Leave Application Form](#). This form signals your interest in additional unpaid leave. It must be completed and submitted to HR six weeks prior to the end of your 26 paid Maternity Leave. The receipt of this form signals your intention to take unpaid leave. HR and Payroll will make arrangements to reduce your salary in accordance with the dates you indicate.

Sick Leave: If you become ill while you are on additional maternity leave, you must notify your HR Partner that you are ill and wish to end the additional maternity leave early. As in normal sick leave instances, you would provide a sick cert from your GP. Subject to agreement with the University if your HR Partner agrees to this request, your unpaid leave will be treated as sick leave and you may be eligible for Illness Benefit. You can take the rest of your additional maternity leave at a later date.

If at the end of your maternity leave you are unable to return to work due to illness, normal sick pay entitlements apply, where you provide a sick cert, in the normal way, as being unfit for work due to illness. Sick pay, in this situation, must be approved in consultation with the Director of Human Resources and the Head of your Department, where you intend to return to work and have advised of this in writing.

Maternity leave must be taken in one continuous block, including any sick leave.

Premature Births: From 1st October 2017, the paid maternity benefit period was extended in cases where a baby is born prematurely.

The extended period of benefit will be equivalent to the duration between the actual date of birth of the premature baby and the date when the maternity leave was expected to commence (i.e. ordinarily **2 weeks** before the expected date of birth). This new measure will increase the duration of maternity leave and the associated maternity benefit to be paid in cases where a baby is born prematurely.

Regardless of when your baby is born, you must take **4 weeks** maternity leave after the birth. If your baby is born so late that you have fewer than four weeks remaining in your maternity leave, you are nonetheless entitled and obliged to take 4 weeks' maternity leave after the birth. Maximum paid maternity leave however is limited to 26 weeks.

If your baby is born more than four weeks before your due date, you must notify HR in writing within 14 days after the birth.

Availing of this extended maternity leave does not in any way affect your right to take additional maternity leave.

Hospitalisation: If your baby is hospitalised, the period of maternity leave or additional maternity leave may be postponed. Please speak with Human Resources if you find yourself needing to consider this option.

If you have a stillbirth, miscarriage or neonatal death (where a baby lives for up to 28 days after birth) any time after the 24th week of pregnancy, or if your baby has a birth weight of at least 500 grammes, you are entitled to full maternity leave. You should send a letter from your doctor with a Maternity Benefit Form confirming the expected due date, the actual birth date and the number of weeks gestation. Please send this form to the Department of Social Protection. Your HR Partner will help support you during this time and with this application.

For any of the exceptional circumstances outlined above, there are helpful supports available for staff during and following such difficult experiences and periods. Please speak to Human Resources.

Returning to Work

You must supply written notification of your intention to return to work, and the expected date of return to the Human Resources Department and Head of Department/Nominee. This must be supplied no later than **4 weeks** prior to the expected date of return.

Support for Staff Returning from Maternity Leave

To help you in the transition back to work, RCSI offers further support to staff returning from maternity leave.

Workshop: This one-day workshop, facilitated by an external specialist, is attended by women from various organisations and gives you an opportunity to think through issues such as setting boundaries, time management, and the practical and emotional aspects of returning to work. Please contact staffdevelopment@rcsi.com for more information.

Breastfeeding: Breastfeeding mothers will be accommodated without loss of pay (up to 2 years after giving birth), to either a one-hour break where suitable facilities are provided or a reduction of working hours. This one-hour break can be divided into shorter periods if required.

Breastfeeding room locations in St. Stephen's Green and Beaumont are listed below:

- 1st floor, 123 St. Stephens Green - across from Exam Hall
- In No 26 York Street
- 1st floor in Beaumont Smurfit

RCSI breastfeeding facilities provide mothers with a quiet, safe and comfortable environment to express milk during working hours.

Academic Staff Returning from Maternity Leave

RCSI recognises the specific challenges for academic staff returning from maternity leave in restoring their research activities and trajectory. In recognition of this, RCSI has specific support available for research-active academic staff as follows:

- Immediately on return from leave, you may be relieved from any lecturing duties for a period of up to 6 months in order to concentrate on consolidating your research activity following the significant period of leave.
- You and your Head of Department should agree a plan for the research activities that will be undertaken during this period of protected time.
- The cover provided during this period is expected to be based on the need to cover educational (teaching and examination) duties only, where those duties arise in the first six months following return from leave.

If you intend to avail of this opportunity, you are required to discuss and confirm your interest with your Head of Department / Line Manager at least six weeks before your return to work date.

Your Right to Appeal

Should any element of the Maternity Leave / Additional Maternity Leave be refused or you feel that the legislation has not been adhered to you have the right to appeal.

You should appeal to your HR Partner in writing in the first instance clearly explaining the reason you believe the decision made was incorrect.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your appeal, you have the right to raise your concerns with the Director of Human Resources whose decision upon appeal is final.

Getting Further Help

The Human Resources Department is available to support any member of staff in understanding the content of this policy and procedure and making an application.

Information in relation to entitlements of fathers to Maternity Leave in the case of the death of the mother can be obtained from the **Human Resources Department**.

For additional information on staying safe in the workplace during pregnancy, the Health and Safety Authority website has a list of [Pregnant at Work FAQs](#).

Policy Review

The Human Resources Department will ensure that this policy will be monitored and kept under review.