

Work, Study and Family Responsibilities Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) In Australia today it is increasingly acknowledged that family responsibilities directly impact on employment and educational opportunities. Within the context of higher education, it is clear that such responsibilities have a significant impact on the educational opportunities of students and the employment opportunities of staff.

(2) Under the New South Wales [Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 No 48](#) (as amended), it is unlawful to discriminate against a person in education or employment on the grounds of family responsibilities or carers' responsibilities.

(3) The University of Newcastle is committed to providing an accessible, supportive and flexible environment for all staff and students, including those with family responsibilities.

Section 2 - Family Responsibilities

(4) The University recognises that:

- a. family responsibilities impact on all aspects of an individual's life and are not confined to the 'private' sphere. The ways in which such responsibilities impact on work and education mean that they are the concern of the University as a whole;
- b. family responsibilities affect both women and men;
- c. families are diverse. 'Family' is defined by the University in an inclusive way, and includes same sex and de facto partners. The University also recognises the wide kinship and family networks of many cultures, and wants to be sensitive to cultural differences in the implementation of its family-friendly policies;
- d. students and staff should have access to the same educational and employment conditions regardless of their family responsibilities; and
- e. leave and benefits should be reasonably provided to accommodate the roles of students and staff with respect to these family or carer responsibilities.

(5) There is no precise information concerning the number of members of the University community who are responsible for young children. However, the figure is likely to be high. It is known that within the Australian population at large, more than one-third of the mothers of pre-school age children and one-half of those with school age children are currently in the workforce. Further, as women's participation in education increases, so does the likelihood that they will remain in paid employment after the birth of children. It is also important to note that over 95 per cent of the fathers of young children in Australian society are in paid employment.

(6) Whilst the University recognises that family and carer responsibilities are undertaken by both men and women, it is also aware that the burden of child care remains in practice primarily with women. The provisions for children on campus (see [Managing Family Responsibilities](#) for more information) are thus part of the University's affirmative action for women.

Section 3 - Care of Children

(7) The University of Newcastle is committed to:

- a. supporting and providing child care facilities for students and staff;
- b. an understanding that child care facilities should be available to meet a range of needs, for example, vacation care, temporary or emergency care, and that these facilities should be readily available and easily affordable to those who want them; and
- c. providing facilities which are accessible to those who are accompanied by children.

(8) This includes, where practicable, provision for ramp entrances to buildings throughout the campuses, and for baby change facilities and rooms for expressing breast milk in selected locations.

(9) The University also recognises the occasional need for students to bring children to attend classes, and for staff to bring children to work. For example, a parent may have a babe in arms, child care arrangements or plans may have fallen through, or it may be a 'pupil-free day' in schools. In these instances, students must seek permission from the lecturer or tutor concerned. Before making such a request, students should bear in mind the size of the tutorial room and whether or not they can ensure that the class is not disrupted by the child.

(10) Permission to bring children to class is at the discretion of the lecturer, though any reasonable request should be treated sympathetically. No staff should be expected or requested by other staff to take care of children. Students and staff should note that there are some areas, such as workshops and laboratories, which are intrinsically hazardous and to which children may not be admitted.

(11) Staff should seek approval from the relevant Head of School/Department to bring children to work, but such requests should be treated sympathetically.

(12) The University recognises the occasional need for staff and students to take their children into the libraries, food outlets, sporting facilities or any other non-teaching areas subject to any regulations which may apply in those areas.

Section 4 - Policies for Staff with Family Responsibilities

(13) The University of Newcastle provides a range of policies to support the needs of staff with family responsibilities.

- a. Personal Leave. The University provides for a staff member, other than a casual staff member, to take up to 25 days paid personal leave in any 12 month period in the event of the following:
 - i. sickness, which is illness, injury or incapacity;
 - ii. caring for a family member / member of the household suffering from an illness, injury or incapacity;
 - iii. compassionate needs;
 - iv. bereavement;
 - v. unforeseen emergency; or
 - vi. attending significant cultural events of relevance to the staff member.
- b. Maternity/Parental Leave: Parental leave enables both male and female staff to care for a child (biological or adopted) during the first year of life. Parental leave incorporates maternity, paternity and adoption leave. Maternity and adoption leave provide periods of paid leave. The University grants to mothers returning to work after maternity leave, two paid half hour breaks per day for the purpose of breastfeeding or expressing milk. This benefit is available until either breastfeeding ceases or the child is one year old, whichever is the sooner.

- c. Purchased Leave Scheme for Professional Staff Members. The University has implemented a purchased leave scheme to provide flexibility for staff with family responsibilities and for staff who wish to extend their leave options for personal reasons. The scheme allows staff to have between two and eight weeks paid absence in addition to the normal four weeks annual leave, with a commensurate reduction in the total salary rate for the twelve month period.
- d. Return to Work, Following parental leave, on a part-time basis for a defined period.
- e. Job sharing. Job share arrangements may be available to staff on a time defined basis.
- f. Flexible Working Arrangements including flex time for Professional Staff.

(14) Approval must be obtained from the designated manager in accordance with the relevant policy for each of the arrangements. Policies are available on the [Policy Library](#).

(15) For more information contact your supervisor, Human Resource Services, the Equity Diversity and Inclusivity, Dean of Students, or the University Health Service.

Section 5 - Acknowledgement

(16) In preparing this policy, acknowledgement of source documents is given to the University of Technology, Sydney.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Martin Sainsbury Chief People and Culture Officer martin.sainsbury@newcastle.edu.au
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Class" - When referring to a class attended by Students, a class is any teaching and learning activity of a course. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Campus" - means any place or premises owned or controlled by the University, but may also specifically refer to a designated operating location such as the Callaghan Campus.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Lecturer" - All teaching academics including lecturers (of all levels), sessional academics and conjoint academics.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Supervisor" - Staff members with direct supervisory responsibility for other staff within the workplace (a Supervisor may also be member of Senior Management, with duties as an Officer as defined in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, or any replacing legislation).