

MANAGEMENT

MATERNITY/ PARENTAL LEAVE AAU

A guide for the meetings with
your employee
- before maternity/parental leave

Management



AALBORG
UNIVERSITET

02

ABOUT THE MEETINGS

At Aalborg University, meetings are held with all employees (VIP and TAP), men as well as women, both before and after long-term maternity or parental leave of more than 12 weeks. In addition, employees are offered a meeting during maternity or parental leave before returning to work.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETINGS

- Helps to retain employees in a phase of life that may give rise to opt-out of an academic career
- Creates dialogue between manager and employee about work-life balance
- Ensures a good transition from work to maternity/parental leave and from maternity/parental leave to work
- Challenges gender stereotypes and increases the incentive to take parental leave regardless of gender

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WHAT

When your employee announces a maternity or parental leave for a period of more than 12 weeks, either in connection with pregnancy or adoption, you as the manager are responsible for inviting your employee for a meeting before the leave period begins.

Remember, that also you must hold a Pregnant-APV with the parent giving birth. You decide whether to hold the Pregnant-APV in continuation of this meeting or at another time but inform your employee about your decision. You can read more about the Pregnant APV [here](#).

WHEN

The meeting must be held no later than 10 weeks before the employee's maternity/parental leave begins.

WHO

The leave-parent and primary manager.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Before the meeting, we recommend that you as a manager consider how you create a work environment that recognizes your employee's new and changed needs, so he/she is comfortable coming to you before, during and after the maternity/parental leave.

Furthermore, we recommend that you prepare before the meeting by carefully going through the questions and this guidance orient yourself with Aalborg University's offers for employees who return after extended maternity/parental leave of more than 12 weeks. You can read more about this [here](#).

DURING THE MEETING

The meeting is based on your employee's well-being (especially the childbearing parent), as well as the expectations and thoughts you both might have about the time up to and during your employee's maternity/parental leave. Your expectations and thoughts may vary from your employee's, and it is therefore important that you create an open meeting. In this way, you help to ensure the best conditions for your cooperation both before, during and after maternity/parental leave.

AFTER THE MEETING

After the meeting, you as the manager are responsible for making notes and agreements journaled on your employee's personnel case (case group 221) with limited insight to only the manager and employee.

3 ADVICES

- As a manager, you can advantageously prepare a few areas where your employee is doing a good job. It will give him/her a sense of security and recognition of his/her competencies.
- As a manager, you should not share concerns about handling and covering tasks while your employee is away. It will only create insecurity for your employee.
- Involve as much as possible your employee's wishes in the transition from work to maternity/parental leave.

You will find the template containing questions for the meeting before maternity/parental leave [here](#) for resp. the birth parent/adoptive parent and co-parent. Below is a guide that elaborates what the various questions from the template can cover.

04 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING BEFORE LEAVE

[FOR BIRTH PARENT ONLY]

Do you feel that your pregnancy is preventing you from performing your tasks at work?

During a pregnancy, physical discomfort can occur, which prevents your employee from performing her work tasks as usual. She might suffer from nausea, pain or the like, which affects her in her daily workday. It can help your employee that you are familiar with how she is feeling and what thoughts she is having about being able to do her job until her maternity leave begins.

As a manager it is important that you recognize the possible physical discomfort, and ask your employee how you can help to ensure the best working conditions before her maternity leave.

What expectations do you have for the time leading up to your maternity/parental leave in relation to your work tasks/your research, time-frames and the transition to your maternity/parental leave, personally and professionally?

You and your employee touch upon what expectations your employee has about the time before he/she goes on maternity/parental leave and during pregnancy (the birth parent). Having to go on maternity/parental leave can lead to new concerns and needs for your employee, and many experience uncertainty in relation to whether they can provide what is expected of them, what will happen with their work tasks/research, whether there will be a substitute, and if so who this person will be.

Furthermore, your employee might be engaged in an exciting work area or in a crucial period of his/her research and therefore worry about whether and how the time up to maternity/parental leave affects this.

In addition, it is your opportunity to touch upon the tasks your employee is working with right now, including whether they should be prioritized differently, adjusted or put on hold in the coming period. Your employee might need your guidance on how to do this best, or maybe he/she will need help from colleagues on some specific tasks. In relation to this, remember to talk about how you can best ensure a good transition to the upcoming maternity/parental leave, and how and when to hand over tasks to a possible substitute.

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05 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING BEFORE LEAVE

As a manager, it is important to be listening to your employee's thoughts and concerns. Some employees think a lot about the time leading up to their maternity/parental leave, both personally and professionally, while others do not think very much about it.

Help questions:

- Do you worry about being away from AAU?
- What tasks would you like to complete before your maternity/parental leave?
- What do you prefer that happen to your work tasks/your research during your maternity/parental leave?
- What does the best transition to your maternity/parental leave look like for you?

What do you need from your manager leading up to your maternity leave?

You and your employee can touch upon what expectations he/she has for you as a manager in the period before the maternity/parental leave. It might for example be necessary with increased communication about work tasks/research, and you therefore decide to have more status meetings in the coming period.

Help questions:

- Do you want us to increase our communication up to your maternity/parental leave, e.g. with more status meetings?
- How can I best help you in the coming period?

What expectations do you currently have of your time on maternity leave, personally and professionally?

Where the first questions have evolved around the time leading up to your employee's maternity/parental leave, you now focus on what expectations and thoughts your employee has about the time on maternity/parental leave and on becoming a parent, both personally and professionally.

Your employee may expect that his/her maternity/parental leave will strengthen him/her professionally and personally. This gives you as a manager the opportunity to recognize the skills one can learn during a maternity/parental leave, such as being more effective, prioritizing one's time better, becoming better at handling pressed situations and the like.

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06 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING BEFORE LEAVE

You might also experience that your employee expects to find it difficult to leave his/her work/research, and some employees might wish to keep some degree of involvement in their work/research during their leave, in which case, you can talk about the extent and how it can be done best. Of course, this might change during the maternity/parental leave. It is important that you as a manager do not at any time express that you expect your employee will work during his/her maternity/parental leave. In addition, having employees who look forward to prioritizing their family life for some time is just as okay.

Help questions:

- Do you expect your maternity/parental leave to strengthen you in some areas?
- Are you looking forward to your maternity/parental leave?
- What do you think will challenge you during your maternity/parental leave?
- What does the optimal maternity/parental leave look like for you?

What are your thoughts on being away from your professional role/research?

Here you and your employee focus on what it means for him/her personally and professionally to be away from his/her work tasks.

Your employee might worry about how it affects him/her professionally to be away from his/her work tasks/research, or whether it affects his/her career development, responsibilities or the like.

You can also talk about what thoughts both you and your employee have about how the work tasks should be handled while he/she is away.

Help questions:

- What does it mean for you to be away from your work tasks/research?
- Do you worry about what happens to your tasks/research during your maternity/parental leave?

How much contact do you expect to have with your manager during your maternity/parental leave?

You and your employee can talk about whether and to what extent you should communicate during the maternity/parental leave. This can of course change along the way, but focus on what your employee finds most likely at the moment. Some might like to have short check-ins with their manager on a regular basis, while others prefer to have one meeting during their maternity/parental leave.

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07 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING BEFORE LEAVE

You can also ask if your employee would like to be informed when there are changes in the team or if he/she would like to be invited to special meetings, seminars and presentations where your employee can participate with his/her child on the sideline.

Help questions:

- Would you like to be informed about changes in your team or with tasks/research?
- Would you like to be invited to professional events such as relevant meetings, seminars or presentations?

How would you like to be contacted during your maternity/parental leave?

If your employee wants contact during his/her maternity/parental leave, it is relevant to cover how this contact should take place. Your employee might prefer that the communication takes place via his/her private email rather than the work email or he/she might like to be called by phone or receive an SMS with the option to call back. It will differ from employee to employee what they prefer.

What are your thoughts on returning to work after your maternity/parental leave and Aalborg University's offer regarding a partially teaching- or research-free semester, extending the term of your postdoc or assistant professor role and increasing your opportunities for flexible working conditions? (Requires a minimum of 12 weeks leave)

For both you and your employee, it can be relevant to talk about what expectations your employee has for the time after the maternity/parental leave. This can of course change along the way, but focus on what your employee finds most likely at the moment regarding work tasks, working hours, needs and the like.

In addition, you must discuss whether your employee has considered using Aalborg University's offer for employees who return after an extended maternity/parental leave of over 12 weeks. Depending on your employee's employment, you can discuss the possibility of:

- A partially teaching- or research-free semester
- Extending the positions as postdoc or Assistant Professor by up to one year
- Increased opportunity for flexible working conditions

You can read more about the offers [here](#).

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08 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING BEFORE LEAVE

As a manager, you can also ask if your employee is concerned about whether the use of the above offers affects his/her career opportunities, research or development. It can help you to better support your employee in his/her career ambitions and development.

Help questions:

- Do you think about your career opportunities for when you return after maternity/parental leave?
- Do you have any thoughts about your working hours for when you return after maternity/parental leave?
- Are you worried about returning after your maternity/parental leave?
- Have you made any considerations about whether you want to make use of Aalborg University's offer for employees who take a long-term maternity/parental leave?

09 BEFORE LEAVE

SUMMARY AGREEMENTS