

MANAGEMENT

# MATERNITY/ PARENTAL LEAVE AAU

A guide for the meetings with  
your employee  
- during 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

## 03 DURING LEAVE

### WHAT

Your employee has been on maternity/parental leave for a longer period of time now, and he/she will soon be returning to the workplace. As a manager you must therefore offer your employee a meeting before he/she returns. You can give your employee the opportunity to have the meeting online, over the phone or at the workplace.

You revisit some of the topics you and your employee had in your meeting before the employee's maternity/parental leave, while at the same time discussing the imminent return to work.

### WHEN

The meeting must be held no later than 5 weeks before your employee returns.

### WHO

The leave-parent and primary manager.

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Before the meeting, we recommend that you revisit the notes and agreements you and your employee made before the maternity/parental leave.

In addition, we recommend that you prepare before the meeting by carefully going through the questions and this guidance and 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

During the meeting, you focus on the employee's needs and the opportunities Aalborg University offers to ensure the employee the best return. Try to make a back-to-work plan for your employee.

It is also your opportunity as a manager to acknowledge your employee's choices and priorities, follow up on his/her career wishes and communicate what has happened in the workplace during his/her absence.

As with the meeting before your employee's maternity/parental leave, it is important that you are open, responsive and flexible in relation to meeting potential new wishes and needs, as it is crucial for your employee's experience of having a strong professional position and motivation for his/her work. This benefits both your employee as well as Aalborg University.

### 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

- Reassure your employee that exciting tasks await him/her when returning.
- Recognize the competencies a maternity/parental leave gives your employee and feel free to highlight the value of them when he/she returns.
- Do not share all the challenges you have experienced during your employee's absence, but feel free to mention changes relevant to your employee.

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

## 04 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING DURING LEAVE

How has your maternity/parental leave been?

It can be nice for both you and your employee that he/she shares his/her experience of being on maternity/parental leave, as there may be many things that have changed for your employee during that period.

There might have been unforeseen challenges that have given him/her a new perspective on his/her work life, or he/she might have learned new skills that are important when he/she is back at work.

Furthermore, allow your employee to share, if he/she felt it was good to have a bit of time away from work, while it might have given him/her greater insight into what is important to him/her, where his/her strengths are, and what he/she enjoys doing the most.

As a manager, you will find that some employees have dedicated themselves 100% to their family life, while others have used their maternity/parental leave to acquire new skills or cultivate personal interests that they would like to share with you. As a manager, it is important not to have any expectations about how your employee has prioritized the leave period, and you have to recognize both ways of taking maternity/parental leave, even if you had imagined it differently.

Help questions:

- Have you experienced any challenges during your maternity/parental leave?
- What competencies do you feel you have gained during your maternity/parental leave?
- Has your maternity/parental leave changed anything for you, personally and/or professionally?

How has it been to be away from your work/research?

Here, your employee can give you insight into how he/she has experienced being away from his/her work/research. He/she might have missed some of the challenges, the colleagues or just the former everyday life.

The leave period might also have given rise to some concerns regarding his/her work tasks/research that he/she would like to share with you.

As a manager, it allows you to create greater confidence in your employee's return, when you get familiar with his/hers thoughts and concerns.

Help questions:

- Has anything challenged you in terms of being away from your work tasks/research?
- Have you experienced anything good from being away from your work tasks/research?

# 05 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING DURING LEAVE

Have you been satisfied with the collaboration with your manager?

Before your employee's maternity/parental leave, you discussed how you as a manager could best help your employee before and during the maternity/parental leave, as well as how your communication should be. This is your opportunity to get feedback on how your employee has experienced the collaboration. Be curious if you could have done something better and if so, how.

You can as manager also share your experience, including whether you have experienced challenges or positive experiences with your cooperation during the leave.

#### Help questions:

- As a manager, have I met your needs before and during your maternity/parental leave?
- How have you experienced our communication?
- Could I and we have done anything differently and how?

What are your expectations of returning to work/your research, both personally and professionally?

It may be difficult for your employee to put into words what he/she expects after a maternity/parental leave. There may also be a fear of saying something wrong or inappropriate that is not in line with your expectations as a manager.

To help your employee, you can ask whether he/she expects to be able to continue in the work track he/she left before his/her maternity/parental leave. Many use maternity/parental leave as a thinking break. It is therefore not unusual that your employee expects that there will be changes in eg. his/her work tasks/research, his/her working hours, his/her position or the like. It may also be that he/she has some special expectations for how work should balance with his/her family life.

As a manager, you can therefore ask about your employee's wishes and ambitions at the moment. Some want a strong focus on their development and their next career step when they return, while others desire less responsibility for a period after maternity/parental leave. The starting point is what is most important to your employee and how you together find the best solutions.

If you and your employee have previously discussed potential new career opportunities or his/her professional development after the end of the maternity/parental leave, it is ideal that you also revisit this.

Ask your employee if previously stated wishes are still current? And if so, how to move on from here? Your employee may also want to revisit this at the meeting when he/she has returned to the workplace.

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## 06 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING DURING LEAVE

### Help questions:

- Do you have any special expectations regarding your work tasks/research, your working hours or your positions when you return?
- Is there anything you want to do differently than before your maternity/parental leave?

Do you want to make use of Aalborg University's offer to employees returning from leave regarding a partially teaching- or research-free semester, extension of the postdoc or assistant professor course and increased opportunity for flexible working conditions?

During the meeting before the employee's maternity/parental leave, you covered what thoughts he/she had at that time in relation to returning to work.

Among other things you spoke about Aalborg University's offers in relation to returning after a longer leave period, including the right to a partially teaching- or research-free semester, extension of the postdoc or assistant professor course and increased opportunity for flexible working conditions. You can read more [here](#).

It is ideal to revisit this and confirm whether the wishes before the maternity/parental leave are still valid. If your employee would like to make use of the offers, you must plan how this is done.

### Help questions:

- What does an optimal everyday life look like for you after your leave period?
- Can our offer help you?

What do you need during your initial return, both personally and professionally?

Here, you and your employee can discuss explicitly how your employee's first days/weeks back from maternity/parental leave should be. For example, it might be a good idea to schedule a meeting with your employees' team where they can update him/her on activities. Your employee might also want to have more status meetings with you at the beginning so you can discuss tasks, catch up and so on. Your employee might also have some personal needs when he/she comes back, e.g. if his/her family has any special needs that should be taken into consideration. Please, write down an overall plan for your employee's initial return which you and your employee can use as a basis for planning.

### Help questions:

- Should I set up a meeting with your team?
- How often should we talk together during your return?
- Are there any special needs that we need to take into account during your return?

# 07 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING DURING LEAVE

[In collaboration with manager] How will the resumption of your work/research take place for the first period of time after your maternity/parental leave?

When your employee returns, he/she must have time to get back to his/her work/research. Together, you can decide which tasks have first priority when he/she returns, and whether there are areas your employee would like to start with.

You can share your suggestions on how the handover should take place, especially if a substitute has taken care of your employee's work areas during the leave period. Be aware that your employee may have some concerns about whether he/she will return to the same tasks as before, or whether there will be changes.

## Help questions

- Do you have any worries about resuming your work/research?
- What tasks would you like to start with first when you return?
- Are there any areas that are particularly important for you to prioritize?

[Update from manager] What changes have there been at the workplace since you went on maternity/parental leave that are significant for you?

Finally, as a manager, you must update your employee about the changes that have taken place while he/she has been away. There might have been changes in the team with new colleagues, colleagues who have stopped or have changed teams. Also, there might have been other priorities in tasks or general structural changes. You can also ask your employee if he/she has any questions about the team, colleagues or other structural issues

# 08 DURING LEAVE

## SUMMARY AGREEMENTS