

MANAGEMENT

MATERNITY/ PARENTAL LEAVE AAU

A guide for the meetings with
your employee
- after 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 AFTER LEAVE

WHAT

Your employee has been back from maternity/parental leave for approximately two months, and as a manager you must invite your employee for a meeting, where you discuss how he/she has experienced coming back to work and the possible challenges he/she might have met. It is also your opportunity as a manager to follow up on the agreements and talks you had before and possibly during your employee's maternity/parental leave.

WHEN

The meeting must be held no later than 8 weeks after your employee has returned to work.

WHO

The leave-parent & primary manager.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Before the meeting, we recommend that you revisit the notes, agreements and the return-to-work plan you and your employee made before and possible during the maternity/parental leave. Equally, we recommend that you prepare for the questions for this meeting and read the guidance below.

As a manager, you can easily make assumptions on behalf of your returning employee, because you have a presumption about how they will thrive best, especially in relation to the childbearing parent/adoptive parent, who in many cases has been away for a long time. Try to avoid this by sticking to the open questions.

DURING THE MEETING

During the meeting, you focus on the employee's experience of being back at work and how your back-to-work plan has worked for him/her.

As with the other meetings with your employee on leave, it is important that you are open, responsive and flexible in relation to meeting any wishes and needs, as it is crucial for your employee's experience of having a strong professional position and motivation for his/her work.

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

- Find a colleague who can help your employee in the beginning.
- Make sure that there are exciting tasks for your employee, so that he/she gets the experience of being valued after the leave period.
- Highlight a few areas where your employee has done well after he/she has returned.

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

04 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING AFTER LEAVE

How has it been to return to work/your research after your maternity/parental leave, both personally and professionally?

Here, you and your employee look at how your employee has experienced his/her return to work after maternity/parental leave.

Some find it challenging to return from maternity/parental leave because they expect that they can get straight back to how things were before they left. It might also be that your employee's ambitions and values have changed (which does not necessarily mean that they have been weakened by them becoming a parent, but they might have changed). Your employee may also need to share any new personal needs and challenges that have become apparent after he/she has been back at work for a few months.

Equally, a lot may have happened in the workplace while your employee has been away. Maybe he/she has come back to new colleagues or different work tasks, or he/she has come back to a changed organisation or new cultural circumstances, all of which can have an impact on your employees well-being and motivation for work. Listen carefully to his/her thoughts and considerations.

To keep your employee's motivation high, you are also welcome to give him/her feedback, if you think he/she has done a good job after returning. You may also have observed challenges with your employee that you would like to articulate; you may have observed that he/she is not thriving in his/her position why it is necessary to change some areas, to the extent possible at the time.

Help questions:

- Do you enjoy being back at work?
- Is there anything that has been different than you expected?

How has the return-to-work plan we prepared before and possibly during your maternity/parental leave worked for you?

Before your employee's maternity/parental leave and possibly also during the maternity/parental leave, you and your employee talked about what his/her initial return to work should look like and how you would both ensure that he/she were professionally up to speed and personally having the best return possible. Return to this plan to evaluate whether it has gone as expected. Has your employee received the right introductions to the team, is he/she working on the right tasks, is he/she prioritizing the right tasks etc.?

Help questions:

- Did you get the right introduction to the team and your working tasks/research?
- Is there something that did not go as you expected?

05 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING AFTER LEAVE

Have you been able to get back into your work/research properly?

You and your employee can take stock of how he/she is getting back into the work tasks/research and any potential new areas of work.

Perhaps your employee is now completely up to speed and would like to discuss how to take his/her work tasks one step further. There might also be areas where your employee does not yet feel he/she are completely up to speed and where he/she wants help from either you or a colleague.

Your employee might also be experiencing challenges or dissatisfaction with parts of his/her research/work areas because he/she has been away for a long period of time. Maybe work tasks have changed so much that your employee no longer feels comfortable with them, or they do not match his/her skills and ambitions. Your employee might also be nervous about timeframes or the relevance of his/her research after the return. Discuss these concerns with your employee so you can find out if you need to make any adjustments. As a manager, you can help adjust the content of the tasks and time frames which, for your employee, can create both increased motivation but also confidence in the relevance of the work/research.

Help questions:

- Do you feel updated professionally?
- Are there any areas of your work or research that you need help with after your return?

Are you experiencing any challenges since returning to work in terms of eg. your work tasks/research, your position, your working hours?

At the meeting before and possibly also during your employee's maternity/parental leave, you looked at what your employee's expectations were for returning to work after maternity/parental leave. Following on from the questions above, you and your employee can look and see whether there is anything that is more challenging than expected. Maybe your employee is having difficulties finding the motivation for the current work or simply struggling in terms of time, or perhaps he/she feels that the current position does not correspond to the work tasks he/she currently has. As a manager make sure to be open towards your employee's thoughts which will help you assist your employee and his/her potential challenges.

A great deal of dissatisfaction or frustration from your employee may indicate that a change is needed to ensure the retention and development of your employee, and it may be necessary that you plan a follow-up meeting, where you only spend time on this.

Help questions:

- How can we best handle your possible challenges?
- Do you need us to make some changes here and now?

06 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING AFTER LEAVE

If you have taken advantage of what Aalborg University has to offer employees returning from maternity/parental leave, how is this working for you?

In connection with your employee's return to work, he/she may make use of one or more of Aalborg University's offers for employees returning from an extended leave. You now have the opportunity to discuss how it is going and whether your employee is getting the intended value from these offers.

If your employee has chosen a partially teaching- or research-free semester or extended his/her postdoc or assistant professor role, does he/she then experience that it provides better conditions for a good return to work and the necessary time to be updated professionally?

If you and your employee agreed on using the flexible terms, does it then make it easier for your employee to balance work and family life?

Help questions:

- Which parts of the offer work best for you?
- Does it make everyday life better for you?

Is there anything that should have been handled differently in terms of your return to work?

Perhaps both you and your employee have given it some thought as to how you could have handled your employee's return better. You may find that you should have prioritized differently than first assumed. Maybe your employee should have had more flexibility in relation to his/her working hours or work place to find the right balance.

As a manager, it can provide great insight to get feedback from your employee on how the time after the leave is experienced. There is no doubt that it will differ from employee to employee, but it can broaden your horizon and strengthen you in dealing with future employees going on maternity/parental leave.

07 GUIDANCE ON THE MEETING AFTER LEAVE

What are your expectations for the future in terms of your professional and personal development?

You and your employee can discuss your employee's expectations for the future and follow up on previous agreements. In this situation, it is important that you do not assume that your employee will not prioritize his/her career because he/she has become a parent. Therefore, ask openly about your employee's wishes and ambitions, and then plan his/her development. As a manager, you can prepare by mentioning some of the professional opportunities that exist for your employee based on his/her previously expressed wishes. If it is still relevant, you can talk about how you can work with it in the coming period.

Perhaps your employee is thinking about what his/her future working hours should look like. Some employees may want periods where they reduce their hours, while others don't, but in any case perhaps there are some personal wishes your employee has regarding working hours and conditions that need to be revisited.

Help questions:

- How do you see your development, personally and professionally?
- Do you want to focus on a specific area of development?
- Do you have any thoughts about your future working hours?

How can I as your manager best help you going forwards?

You and your employee can discuss how you as the manager can best assist your employee in the coming period. Your employee may need help prioritizing his/her work tasks/research differently, receive more feedback on his/her development and work/research, or a greater focus on how to reach the next step in their career. Or maybe your employee does not need anything specific from you professionally, but instead needs help finding the best solutions for him/her personally so that he/she can achieve a good work-life balance.

Help questions

- How can I best help you after your maternity/parental leave, professionally and personally?

08 AFTER LEAVE

SUMMARY AGREEMENTS