

UW-Madison Department of Chemistry
Childbirth Policy

The goal of our Childbirth Accommodation Policy is to encourage more women to enter and complete the Ph.D. program or undertake postdoctoral research in the Department of Chemistry at UW-Madison, and to provide a climate of support for women who choose to have children while in the department in one of these capacities. Please contact Matt Sanders, executive director, for details.

A.16 .1 Ensure a Safe Pregnancy

The goal of this component of the policy is ensure a safe working environment for pregnant students and postdocs. To this end it is essential that the expectant mother, her research advisor, and the executive director of the department meet at an early stage to develop a plan. As soon as the pregnancy is confirmed by a doctor, the woman should inform, on a highly confidential basis, her research advisor and the executive director so that a meeting can be scheduled to begin planning.

The pregnant student or postdoc, the research advisor, and the executive director will look for safe ways to progress towards the Ph.D. or to continue postdoctoral research during pregnancy. In the case of students, with enough advance notice the group can consider the advisability of making an RA rather than TA appointment, and/or making a TA appointment that minimizes chemical exposure. In terms of research, options that may need to be considered include alternatives to working in a synthetic chemistry lab, such as computer work, spectroscopy, library work, review and paper writing, working on graduate requirements such as seminars, proposals, second-year report, etc.

It is recognized that each case will be different and that creative problem solving will be required to make the needed accommodations. When a plan is agreed upon, the Executive Director will provide a written summary of the plan so that the agreement will be clear to all concerned.

A.16 .2 Paid Accommodation Time, Requirement Extension, and Infant Care

This component of the policy is designed to help new mothers by reducing academic and financial hardships associated with pregnancy and childbirth. The Chemistry Department will provide the graduate student (on an RA appointment) or postdoc mother with 12 weeks of paid accommodation time for childbirth. Every effort will be made to assure continuation of health insurance and visa status during this period. The student or postdoc must apply to the executive director for this paid accommodation time, ideally six months prior to the expected birth. The leave will ordinarily begin at the time of birth, but other proposals will be considered. Some of the accommodation time may be taken on a part-time basis (for example, 8 weeks of full-time and 8 weeks of half-time leave).

All academic requirement deadlines will be extended by a semester for the new mother.

Pregnant students and postdocs are encouraged to confer with their advisor and the executive director of the department in order to ensure that any necessary accommodations to facilitate infant care can be made in advance.