

# Gender Equality in Academia and Research

## Maternity Cover Fund and Return to Work policy (UK)

In Queen's University Belfast (QUB) (UK), all Schools have return to work policies, which are funded by the Schools and, where feasible, allow for either a six month teaching free period on return from maternity leave, or a greatly reduced teaching load. This policy began in Science, Engineering and Technology Schools in QUB and has since expanded. It began following on from a recommendation in the Women's Forum Report on Gender Imbalance at Queen's (May 2000) and was implemented shortly thereafter. This policy aims to ensure that mothers-to-be can take their maternity leave without worrying about how their leave impacts on others, and that they have time to readjust to work on their return and focus on research activities without teaching pressures. This policy also extends to female and male staff taking adoption leave. These policies have received strong praise and positive feedback from academic staff within SET Schools in QUB.

A Maternity Cover Fund is also in place across the University and is comprised of money reclaimed through Statutory Pay Credits and a contribution from University funds. The fund provides assistance to Schools and Directorates to ensure that the essential work of all members of staff who take maternity leave is covered so that they can enjoy anxiety-free maternity leave. The Maternity Cover Funds are administered and managed centrally by the Personnel Office and claims can be made through an online application which is then reviewed by a Maternity Cover Fund Group. Replacement teaching costs are estimated at a faculty level and come out of Schools budgets. The Fund enables women across the university, not only academics, to take maternity leave without worry about work, and enables the manager/department head to apply for funds to employ substitutes to carry out the mother's work while she is on leave. The outcome of this Fund and policy is a 100 % maternity leave return rate for QUB since 2011.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

- [Queen's Gender Initiative](#)
- [Maternity and Adoption Leave at Queen's University Belfast](#)
- [Presentation](#) by Denise Price at Learning and Dissemination Seminar on Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Higher Education Institutions (9 September 2016)

- [Full description on EIGE's compendium of good practices](#)
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