School of Ocean and Earth Science
Return to work guidelines for Staff returning from maternity/adoption/caring / shared parental leave

(version 08/03.2021)

These guidelines have been put together to assist both Line managers and Staff returning to work after a period of long-term leave. The first few days or weeks returning to work from maternity/adoption/caring leave can be difficult. Returning members of Staff may experience a range of emotions from feeling relieved to be back in a working environment to feeling apprehensive or overwhelmed about transitioning back to a working environment. There may also be anxiety surrounding breastfeeding or childcare arrangements, especially in the first few months. This *return to work guidance* has been designed to provide the framework for returning staff to get back up to speed and support their transition back to work. The return to work plan must be discussed between the staff member and their line manager, and the work plan will be flexible and readjusted depending on how the individual is adapting . It is possible to speed things up or down or make other reasonable adjustments at any time if that feels like the right way to support the return.

Before returning to work there are a few things you should think about and put in place to ease your transition back:
- Discuss with your line manager options surrounding a **phased-return to work (**use of KIT days, holiday allowance), **flexible** or **part-time working. Flexible working explained**.
- Use the Ask HR service to arrange any contractual changes to your working patterns.
- You will have accrued your holiday allowance whilst on our period of leave, and you can use any unspent time to ease your transition back to work.
- You can also use any of your unspent Keep-in-touch (KIT) days to ease the transition back to work.
- Inform your line manager and HR in advance of the date you will be returning to work.
- Arrange a face-to-face meetings (these can be online using MS Teams, Zoom or a similar platform) with your line manager prior to your anticipated first week back to discuss adjustments, H&S arrangements and any other matters you would like to raise.

Line managers have responsibilities in supporting your return to work. Your line manager will::
- Assess the volume and timing of your workload and discuss with any relevant person(s) (HoD, Programme lead, Technical Management Group) how reasonable adjustments (e.g. phased return to work, flexible or part-time working; change in duties or tasks; workstation or working equipment) will be implemented to support your transition. Any adjustments will be discussed with you and amended as necessary.
- Support you with any reasonable adjustments to your work to aid a smooth and less stressful transition back to work.
- Inform you of any notable changes in expectation, work practice or *modus operandi* that may have taken place in the School during your absence.
- Explain any changes to your role, responsibilities and work practices where applicable.
- **Create a return-to-work plan.** Your line manager **will work with you to** develop a *Return-to-work plan* with you that incorporates a **workload strategy** and what you will be doing where and when, so you know what to expect. This workload plan is intended to be flexible

and should be adjusted as needed to aid a smooth transition back to work. Divide the workload into achievable tasks to prevent overwhelm.

- Schedule regular meetings to discuss your return-to-work plan and ensure you are reintegrating well . Let them know what you are finding helpful and difficult, and suggest reasonable amendments to your return-to-work plan if necessary.

Returning to work:

- **Wellbeing and First Aid room:** Irrespective of your circumstances the Wellbeing room (251/01) is a comfortable, warm and safe place available for you to use at any time. You can use it to take a rest, tending to children's needs, as well as for breastfeeding/expressing milk. It is equipped with a comfortable, reclining chair with a footrest, facilities for cleaning and hand washing, as well as a small fridge/freezer for you to store milk or ice packs until the end of the day.
  Further [breastfeeding and baby change facilities](#) can be found on Highfield Campus.
- We have **Baby change facilities** in the Disabled Toilets at NOCS, and there are **highchairs** in the canteen.
- **Breastfeeding support:** You can choose to continue with breastfeeding or to express milk when you return to work, as it is up to you to decide how long you would like to breastfeed. For more information, please see the SOES breastfeeding support leaflet.
- Contact your line-manager, mentor and/or the SOES Wellbeing Officer ([Moira MacLean](#)) to discuss how you are getting on.
- **Prayer room:** The prayer room is available to all staff and students within NOCS

- The University of Southampton has a [Parent's and Carers Network (P&CN)](#) that you can join with useful links and information.

Welcome back checklist and Return to work plan guidance for line managers:

Name of person returning to work:
Line manager:

Getting ready for a returning member of staff
- ☐ Building security informed/access control validated
- ☐ Desk/equipment set-up
- ☐ Identify return date and any changes to work hours
- ☐ Flexible working/phased return agreement in place (if applicable)
- ☐ Contract updated to reflect changes in working hours (if applicable)
- ☐ Develop and agree return-to-work plan
- ☐ Share back to work plan so that everyone involved knows what to do and when
- ☐ Arrange health and safety re-induction (if required)
- ☐ Arrange any new training or training refreshers (if required)
- ☐ Schedule First day welcome back and further update meetings
- ☐ Inform of organisational changes and changes in practices and policies

Return to work plan should include:

- ☐ Changes in workload allocation (consider changes in working hours, flexible working, holiday)
- ☐ Time to refresh skills where needed
- ☐ Time to get up to speed on process or project changes
- ☐ Set achievable tasks and objectives
- ☐ Opportunity for informal feedback to rebuild confidence
- ☐ Informal reviews every two weeks (or at agreed time intervals) to check against goals and make any necessary adjustments to keep things running smoothly.
- ☐ Formal review and objective setting within two months after return