



URDANETA CITY UNIVERSITY STRENGTHENS PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND SHARED CAREGIVING ROLES

In its continuous effort to uphold **Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls**, Urdaneta City University (UCU) has strengthened its **Policy on Maternity and Paternity Leave to Support Women's and Men's Participation**. The revised policy reinforces the university's commitment to creating a **family-friendly, inclusive, and gender-responsive workplace** that values both women's and men's roles in caregiving and family life.

Promoting Work-Life Balance and Equal Opportunities

The updated policy reflects UCU's dedication to **supporting faculty and administrative staff in balancing work and family responsibilities**. It recognizes that both mothers and fathers play vital roles in nurturing families, and that a supportive institutional framework is essential to achieving true gender equality.

Under the revised guidelines, UCU provides **comprehensive maternity and paternity leave benefits** in compliance with national labor laws, including the **Expanded Maternity Leave Act (RA 11210)** and the **Paternity Leave Act (RA 8187)**. The policy also extends leave privileges to **adoptive and foster parents**, ensuring inclusivity for all family structures within the university community.

Encouraging Shared Caregiving and Gender Equality

By emphasizing equal parental participation, the policy moves beyond traditional gender roles and encourages both women and men to **take active parts in child-rearing and family care**. This approach supports not only women's continued professional growth after childbirth but also men's involvement in early childcare — a vital step toward breaking societal stereotypes.

The **UCU Gender and Development (GAD) Office**, in partnership with the **Human Resource Management Office (HRMO)**, will oversee the implementation of the policy, ensuring that **employees who take maternity or paternity leave are not discriminated against** and that their career progression remains unaffected.

UCU President and administrators reaffirmed that "**family and career success are not mutually exclusive**"—our policies must make space for both." The strengthened parental leave policy exemplifies the university's role as a gender-responsive institution that nurtures not only academic excellence but also human dignity and equality.

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Flexible Work and Return-to-Work Support

To further support working parents, the university is institutionalizing **flexible work arrangements**, including reduced workloads, modified schedules, and temporary remote work options for employees returning from leave. A **Return-to-Work Program** will also be implemented to help employees transition smoothly back into their professional roles. Moreover, UCU ensures access to **health and wellness programs, counseling services, and lactation facilities**, as mandated by the **Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act (RA 10028)**. These initiatives create an environment where parents can maintain both productivity and well-being while fulfilling their family responsibilities.

Strengthening Commitment to SDG 5

This strengthened parental leave policy is part of UCU's broader institutional agenda to **mainstream gender equality in university policies, programs, and culture**. By enabling both women and men to share caregiving duties, the university advances the key targets of **SDG 5**, particularly in promoting equal opportunities for leadership, ensuring non-discrimination, and valuing unpaid care work.

Through this initiative, UCU continues to demonstrate that **gender equality is not just a principle—it is a lived practice** embedded in the university's governance, operations, and support systems for its employees.

A Model for Inclusive and Empowered Workplaces

By integrating gender sensitivity, inclusivity, and family welfare into its policies, **Urdaneta City University** stands as a model of how educational institutions can actively support the United Nations' global goals. The strengthened **Policy on Maternity and Paternity Leave to Support Women's and Men's Participation** underscores UCU's unwavering dedication to **empowering individuals, strengthening families, and building a culture of equality and care** within and beyond the campus.

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Policy on Maternity and Paternity Leave to Support Women's and Men's Participation

(Revised 2024)

I. Purpose

Urdaneta City University (UCU) is committed to building a **family-friendly, inclusive, and gender-responsive workplace** where all employees are supported in balancing professional and family responsibilities.

This policy promotes the well-being of new parents, encourages **shared caregiving responsibilities between women and men**, and ensures compliance with national labor standards, the **UCU Faculty and Administrative Manual**, and the **Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710)** in support of **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls**.

II. Scope

This policy applies to **all eligible faculty, administrative, and casual employees** of Urdaneta City University, regardless of marital status, gender identity, or type of parental arrangement (biological, adoptive, or foster care).

III. Policy Statement

UCU upholds the right of employees to **maternity, paternity, and parental leave** as part of its commitment to gender equality, work-life balance, and employee welfare.

The University shall ensure that:

- New parents receive adequate **paid leave and job protection**,
- Both men and women are **encouraged to participate equally in caregiving**, and

No employee experiences **discrimination or disadvantage** due to the exercise of these rights.

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IV. Guiding Principles and Implementation Measures

1. Maternity Leave

- Eligible female employees are entitled to **paid maternity leave** consistent with the **Expanded Maternity Leave Act (RA 11210)** — **105 days with full pay**, extendable by **30 days without pay** upon request.
- **Solo mothers** are entitled to an **additional 15 days with pay** under **RA 8972**.
- Maternity leave may start at any point before or after childbirth as certified by a licensed physician.
- **Implementation Measures:**
 - HR shall coordinate with the employee's department to ensure continuity of work and avoid undue workload redistribution.
 - Employees shall be reinstated to the **same or an equivalent position** without loss of seniority, rank, or benefits.

2. Paternity Leave

- Eligible male employees are entitled to **seven (7) days of paid paternity leave** under **RA 8187**, applicable to the first four (4) deliveries of the legitimate spouse or common-law partner.
- UCU **encourages fathers and partners** to actively participate in early childcare and household responsibilities.
- **Implementation Measures:**
 - Supervisors shall provide flexible scheduling or short-term work adjustments for fathers.
 - The University encourages male employees to attend prenatal appointments and postnatal support activities.

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3. Adoption and Foster Care Leave

- Employees who legally adopt or foster a child are entitled to **parental leave benefits equivalent to maternity or paternity leave**, depending on their caregiving role.
- **Implementation Measures:**
 - HR shall require documentation (e.g., adoption papers or foster care certification) to determine eligibility.
 - Adoptive and foster parents shall receive the same rights to reintegration and flexible work arrangements.

4. Flexible Work Arrangements and Return-to-Work Support

- UCU supports **flexible work options** for employees transitioning back to work after parental leave, including:
 - Reduced or staggered working hours,
 - Temporary remote work arrangements, or
 - Modified teaching or administrative assignments.
- The University shall establish a **Return-to-Work Program** to help employees reintegrate smoothly.
- **Implementation Measures:**
 - HR shall coordinate return plans with supervisors.
 - Lactating mothers will have access to a **designated lactation room** in accordance with **RA 10028 (Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act)**.
 - Employees may access counseling or wellness programs to support adjustment to work-life balance.

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5. Supportive and Non-Discriminatory Environment

- No employee shall face discrimination, loss of opportunities, or performance bias due to pregnancy, parental leave, or childcare responsibilities.
- Department heads and supervisors must **foster a family-supportive culture** and are prohibited from penalizing employees who avail of leave benefits.
- **Implementation Measures:**
 - The HR Office and Gender and Development (GAD) Office shall conduct **orientation and awareness programs** to ensure understanding of parental rights.
 - Any reports of discrimination related to parental status shall be investigated under the **Anti-Retaliation Policy**.

6. Health and Wellness Support

- UCU shall provide access to **health and counseling services** through the University Clinic and GAD Office to support physical and emotional well-being during and after pregnancy.
- Information on **childcare services, breastfeeding support, and parental guidance** will be made available to all employees.
- **Implementation Measures:**
 - HR shall maintain partnerships with local healthcare and childcare providers.
 - The University Clinic shall conduct periodic seminars on family health, reproductive wellness, and responsible parenting.

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V. Application Process

1. Employees must notify their department head and HR in writing of their leave request at least **30 days before** the expected start of maternity, paternity, or adoption leave, except in emergencies.
2. The written notice must include:
 - Type and duration of leave requested,
 - Expected date of delivery or adoption, and
 - Medical or legal documentation (as applicable).
3. HR will review and confirm eligibility within **five (5) working days** of submission.
4. Upon return, the employee must notify HR and the department head **at least one week before resumption of duty** to finalize reintegration arrangements.

VI. Accountability

- The **Office of Human Resources (HR)** shall be responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.
- The **Gender and Development (GAD) Office** shall ensure that gender sensitivity and equality principles are integrated into the administration of parental leave.
- Supervisors and department heads are accountable for **ensuring compliance, supporting reintegration, and preventing any form of bias or retaliation.**
- Annual compliance reports shall be submitted to the Office of the President.

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VII. Review and Updates

This policy shall be **reviewed biennially (every two years)** by HR and GAD in consultation with legal counsel to ensure compliance with:

- National labor and gender laws,
- CHED Memorandum Orders, and
- The evolving needs of UCU's workforce.

VIII. Conclusion

Through this strengthened **Maternity and Paternity Leave Policy**, **Urdaneta City University** demonstrates its active commitment to **gender equality, family welfare, and employee empowerment**. By promoting **shared caregiving, flexible work, and non-discrimination**, UCU ensures that both women and men can fully participate in professional and family life — fulfilling the university's role as a **gender-responsive and family-centered institution** in support of **SDG 5**.

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