



Keeping In Touch (KIT) Guidelines

For Managers and
Team Leaders of parents

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As Manager or Team Leader supporting the transition of your staff on parental leave we offer the following guidelines to support you. Some people experience a sense of isolation during periods of parental leave, so we encourage you to stay in touch with those that you manage.

Staff on parental leave may not be present at RMIT but they are very much a part of RMIT and should have every opportunity to connect and feel engaged and supported throughout their long term parental leave and in respect of how they want to be contacted and kept informed.

The most important work relationship a staff member often has is with their manager, you represent RMIT in many ways role modeling your duty of care to others who are experience life changing circumstances.

Manager Tips

Prior to leaving points to consider:

Recruitment activity to backfill long-term absence may need to be instigated well in advance i.e. 2 months prior to staff member leaving to ensure time for appropriate candidate sourcing, induction and handover activities.

When a staff member is planning to take leave for a significant period (eg. 26 to 52 weeks) to address family care responsibilities, you should meet with the staff member a few times well before the scheduled date of leave to discuss:

- how the work will be managed in their absence and how to mitigate any adverse impact on the staff member's career progression.
- how much contact they would like during their leave and by what channel, ie mobile, e-mail (note that ideas and circumstances change for some parents when on leave and they may revise how much contact they wish to have)
- agree how the staff member would like to be kept informed of any changes or impacts to their work area while they are away and preliminary discussion regarding a return-to-work support action plan.

For academic and vocational staff the return to work plan could include teaching and/or research allowances, to minimise adverse impact on the staff member's career progression.

If possible allow staff member to keep their laptop or tablet if they have one especially if they have no other mechanism to keep in touch.

During Parental Leave

A staff member may initiate the communication by sending you an update on their new family addition. If the staff member has not instigated any communication, as per the discussion with your staff member and within agreed timeline, contact them after the child's birth or adoption to check in and see how they are progressing. Once again reconfirm with them if and how they would like to be communicated with if something of interest to them needs to be communicated, since new parents may feel differently from before they went on parental leave.

Staying Connected

RMIT encourages staff, managers and colleagues to stay connected and maintain communication while away on long-term parental/carer leave by:

- Understanding their preference around the level of contact that will suit their needs.
- Keeping them informed of relevant changes or inform them of important meetings and developments through email or by phone or face to face.
- Encourage visiting the workplace and/or attending meetings, functions e.g. morning teas, farewells and celebrations
- Keeping in contact whilst on parental leave for instance around opportunities for continuation of career development
- Encourage accessing professional development opportunities through RMIT's professional development program while on parental leave. (Time to attend professional development can be added to the staff member's parental leave. Attendance of professional

development while on parental leave needs to be discussed with the manager).

- Accessing 'paid' 'keep in touch days' during their 'unpaid' portion of parental leave.
- If they currently have a laptop or tablet then you can consider if you can allow to keep it as a means of staying in touch with RMIT and your team.
- If a promotion opportunity comes up for the staff member whilst they are on leave do not make an assumption either way that it may or may not interest them. Give them a call or email and ask them – they will appreciate it regardless.
- Seek ways to make sure any Portfolio/ College or group updates, ie business planning or major procedural or structural changes proposed are communicated effectively.
- Manage your expectation that the staff member to be checking their work email regularly
- If the University makes a decision that is likely to have a significant effect on the status, pay or location of the staff member's substantive position, the University and immediate manager will ensure that the staff member is kept informed of those changes and is given the opportunity to discuss these changes.
- Keep staff on a work group's email network so they receive relevant work based information.

Keep in touch days

Your staff member on parental leave has up to 10 paid days they are entitled to use to come into RMIT to keep connected while on leave and support their transition back to work. These days

may be used to attend events / restructure meetings / seminars / professional development / meetings with colleagues and management / integration back into the team days prior to the official return to work date.

They are entitled to have up to 10 days of Keep In Touch days within the unpaid parental leave period to undertake work related activity, attend events / restructure meetings / seminars / workshops / meetings with colleagues and management / integrating back into the team days.

These dates need to be pre-approved and agreed with you to support their transition back to RMIT and may be taken at any time during your unpaid parental leave portion of parental leave.

Up to 10 'keeping in touch days' may be worked and remuneration for the hours worked will be made where you advise HR Payroll via email of the days/hours worked.

Please note: Keeping in touch days do not break the continuity of the period of your staff's parental leave and therefore does not alter the end date of your parental leave.

If your staff are undertaking keep in touch related activities during paid parental leave, additional paid leave credits will be added to their paid maternity leave provision. This will be made where your supervisor advises HR Payroll via e-mail of days/hours worked.

If you have any further questions about Keeping In Touch with staff on parental leave please contact the Manager Assist team on 9925 0600.

Inform them of any KIT Day Events that RMIT may be running during their leave. You can find these on the developMe portal.

Encourage the staff member to attend a KIT event by RMIT so they can meet other staff members on parental leave and maintain their connection with the University. Don't be concerned or offended if they chose not to attend though, timing has to be right for these kinds of events!

If you would like the staff member to use some of their KIT days to attend an important meeting or workshop then give them as much notice as you can (min. 2 weeks ideally) so they can find some childcare support. If they are bringing their child/ren into the workplace please try to see if there is somewhere private that they can feed the child if they need to, or heat up a bottle, or change a nappy.

You can also provide information on parenting rooms at RMIT.

8 weeks prior to parental leave being complete

No later than 8 weeks prior to the staff members' return to work you feel that your attempts to connect with them have not been responded to and you have genuine concern for the carer's wellbeing please contact Manager Assist on 9925 0600.

At least 8 weeks prior to the staff member returning to work you need to contact them to discuss the role as well as their capacity, and what the plan

is for their successful return to RMIT. Some staff members will contact you and for others you may have to reach out to. Don't make assumptions about what they want, ASK THEM. Some useful questions to ask may be:

- What are your thoughts on the hours you would like to return to after parental leave? Would you like to come back full time, or what FTE % would suit you best?
- Have you been able to secure childcare for that capacity? If not, have you investigated the RMIT associated childcare centres provided?
- What flexibility would help you to return successfully to our team?
- What other requirements can I help set up for you prior to your return?
- This may be a mobile breastfeeding room for expressing milk, a laptop to enable flexible working, L&D funding to attend return to work workshops or one-to-one coaching, funding for academic support, less teaching responsibilities.
- Would you like to come in for a few hours in the week leading up to your return to touch base with the team, get your desk ready and spend some time with us before Day 1? You can use a KIT day if you haven't used all KIT days.

Upon Return

Ensure on the first day of the staff members' return you meet with the carer and take them through any

changes to the team / department / their role / desk space / technology.

Have a discussion about your expectations and ask them to vocalise any expectations they have of you as the manager? Ensure this is done in a friendly manner bearing in mind that most parents are feeling vulnerable on their first week of return despite how they appear on outside.

Check in with them weekly for the first 6 weeks, questions you may ask include:

- How are you settling into the new routine?
- How are feeling about the role?
- What can I / the team do to support your transition back to work?
- Is there anything else you need from me / RMIT / your colleagues to support you?
- What are you enjoying most about returning to work?
- What are you finding the most challenging about the transition to working parenthood?

If a promotion opportunity comes up for the staff member in their first few months of return do not make an assumption either way that it may or may not interest them. Schedule a meeting or casual catch up and ask them. They will appreciate it regardless.

Most importantly remember that things change with new parents and to be flexible and often situations may not all be in the parent's control.