

Hello Physics grads,

Regarding the university's response to COVID19 many grad assistants (TAs, PAs, RAs) are expected to continue the work of the university and not expected, at this time, to telecommute or work from remote sites. Knowing this, I thought it might useful to share some of the hard-fought paid leave policies that exist for grad assistants from the current Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures document (below). TLDR: If you're a grad assistant you have paid sick time and paid vacation time that has been accruing since the start of your first appointment.

<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/>

Leave Benefits

Sick Leave Credit Allocation

At the beginning of each appointment period Employees will be credited with an allocation of sick leave time, regardless of appointment percentage. The number of hours credited to an employee's sick leave allocation depends on the length of the appointment period as follows:

1. Employees appointed for an academic or calendar year will be credited with ninety-six (96) hours to their sick leave allocation;
2. Employees appointed for one (1) semester will be credited with forty-eight (48) hours to their sick leave allocation;
3. Employees who are appointed for other periods of time shall be credited with a sick leave allocation based on the formula of eight (8) hours of sick leave credit for each thirty (30) days (or portion thereof) of their appointment.

Unused sick leave shall accumulate as described below from appointment period to appointment period only within the same department and in the same title. Sick leave shall be used in 15-minute increments for project assistants, and in one-hour increments for teaching and research assistants. At the beginning of each appointment period, the number of sick leave hours credited to the employee's sick leave credit bank under 1, 2, and 3, above, shall be supplemented to the following extent by unused sick leave carried over from the employee's immediate previous appointment:

1. At the beginning of an appointment period any combination of sick leave carry over and newly accredited sick leave shall not exceed ninety-six (96) hours.
2. In the event that an individual has a break in appointments in the same department and title between one academic year and the next, or a break of less than two (2) weeks duration at other times during an academic year, sick leave carry over as outlined above shall be provided.

Sick Leave for Employees

Employees may use time in their sick leave bank for reasons including but not limited to: personal (physical or mental) illness, bodily injuries, maternity, or exposure to contagious disease: (1) which requires the employee's confinement; or (2) which renders the employee unable to perform assigned duties; or (3) where performance of assigned duties would jeopardize the employee's health or recovery. In the event the University has reason to believe that an employee is abusing the sick leave privilege or may not be physically fit to return to work, the University may require a medical certificate or other appropriate verification for absences covered by this Section.

Employees may use accrued sick leave for personal medical and dental appointments which cannot be scheduled at times other than during scheduled work hours. To qualify for use of sick leave under this Section, employees must give the University three (3) days advance notice of appointments except when emergency conditions prevail.

Sick Leave for Care of Family Member

Employees may use accrued sick leave for temporary emergency care of ill or injured members of the immediate family, or for other family emergencies, for a limited period of time to permit the employee to make other arrangements. Immediate family is defined as, and limited to: the spouse, the spouse equivalent residing in the household of the employee, parents, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, children, stepchildren, grandchildren, foster children, brothers (and their spouses), and sisters (and their spouses) of the employee or spouse, and other relatives of the employee or spouse residing in the household of the employee. Use of sick leave for the purposes of this Section is limited to five (5) work days for any one illness or injury; however, the use of sick leave may be extended to cover unusual circumstances provided prior approval of the immediate supervisor is obtained.

Funeral Leave

Where death occurs in the Employee's immediate family (as defined above), sick leave may be used to attend the funeral and/or make necessary arrangements. Sick leave shall normally be used during the seven (7) calendar day period immediately following the death. Where mitigating circumstances require a postponement in funeral arrangements, sick leave may be used at an appropriate later date for directly related purposes. Use of sick leave for death in the immediate family for the purposes of this Section is limited to a total of three (3) work days, plus required travel time not to exceed four (4) work days.

Use of Sick Leave Credits

An Employee's sick leave bank will be charged for time that an employee does not perform their required duties for any of the reasons outlined in above, unless other acceptable arrangements are made including but not limited to:

1. The Employee obtains unpaid peer substitute coverage acceptable to the employee's immediate supervisor and the department chair; or
2. The Employee makes arrangements with their immediate supervisor to fulfill the required duties through other acceptable means; or
3. The Employee can fulfill the required duties at a different time and the employee's immediate supervisor agrees to permit the employee to perform those duties at a different time.

In the event that an Employee fails to perform their required duties because of any of the reasons outlined above, and the employee has exhausted their sick leave allocation, any days missed shall result in the employee being removed from the payroll for such missed days.

Unused sick leave hours will not be paid out at the end of the appointment.

Substitutes

A Teaching Assistant or Project Assistant using sick leave under this section are not required to find substitutes for that time. The employee shall be responsible for notifying the Department as soon as possible after the need to use sick leave is determined.

Nothing in this section shall preclude the Department from asking the Teaching Assistant or Project Assistant for assistance in identifying a substitute.

Leave of Absence Without Pay

Upon written request to their immediate supervisor, Employees may be granted leave without pay at the sole discretion of the appointing Department/ Program and Dean/Director for any reason for a period of time not to exceed the employee's unexpired term of appointment.

Parental Leaves Without Pay

Employees shall be granted leave without pay following childbirth or adoption as follows. A requesting employee shall submit written notification of the duration of the leave to their immediate supervisor at least four (4) weeks prior to the anticipated date of birth or adoption.

Employees on a semester or academic year appointment shall be granted leave without pay for any consecutive number of days up to the end of the semester or summer session in which the birth or adoption occurs. If the Employee's appointment extends beyond the semester in which the birth or adoption occurs, they shall be granted, upon request, leave without pay for the entire next semester or that portion of the next semester which allows the employee a six-week period following childbirth or adoption during which the employee does not have work responsibilities. The Employee may take any additional part of the next semester as leave without pay subject to the review and approval of the appointing Department and Dean/Director.

Employees on an annual basis appointment shall be granted leave without pay for a period of time up to, but not exceeding, six (6) months, and not to extend beyond the duration of the appointment.

Family Medical Leave

The University recognizes the provisions of the Family Leave Act, s. 103.10, Wis. Stats., and the Federal (U.S.) Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, where applicable.

Return to Work

Employees on an unpaid leave of absence may return to work prior to the expiration of the leave only upon receiving the express approval of their immediate supervisor and the chair/director of the appointing Department and Dean/Director.

Such leaves shall not extend the duration of an Employee's appointment.

Vacation

Project and Research Assistants appointed on an annual pay (A-basis) appointment shall earn paid vacation pro-rated based on a full-time rate of one-hundred and eighty (180) hours per fiscal year⁴. The scheduling of vacation is subject to the approval of the supervisor and must be taken during the period of the appointment. If an employee voluntarily terminates their employment prior to the original end date of the appointment and has used anticipated vacation time, the employee may be given the option of reimbursing the University by working up to the number of hours taken that were not yet earned. The hours shall be worked before the employee terminates their appointment. If the employee chooses not to work these hours or is involuntarily terminated for cause, an adjustment shall be made in the employee's final paycheck to reimburse the University for the time that was taken but not yet earned.

Vacation leave shall be used in 15-minute increments for project assistants, and in one-hour increments for research assistants.

Unused vacation hours will not be paid out at the end of the appointment.

Solidarity, and stay safe.