



Parental Accommodation Policy

The Oden Institute recognizes that its graduate students may start (or add to) their families while enrolled in their graduate program and is committed to providing necessary support and accommodation. To assist students in balancing the demands of their academic and parental responsibilities, the Institute provides four types of accommodation for qualifying CSEM students in the cases of childbirth or adoption. Faculty are encouraged to remain flexible in their expectations so that students can meet the demands of graduate study while adjusting to the new demands of their parental role.

Eligibility

To be eligible for parental accommodation, student must be

- 1) pursuing a master or doctoral degree;
- 2) enrolled full time (9 credit hours in Fall/Spring, 3 credit hours in Summer);
- 3) in good academic standing (3.0 minimum GPA); and
- 4) making normal progress toward the degree.

Types of Accommodation

Options are not mutually exclusive – students may request an Academic Accommodation in conjunction with GRA/TA/Leave of Absence Accommodation

1. **Academic Accommodation**

Eligible students will be granted a one-semester extension of the academic milestones required to fulfill the requirements of their degree. The extension may include coursework, qualifying exams, proposals, committee meetings, presentations, and any other required academic responsibilities. After the approved accommodation period, students are expected to resume progress toward degree completion.

2. **GRA Accommodation** (*allowing for continuation of student's employment*)

Some graduate students may be able to carry out modified research duties following the birth or adoption of a child – thereby continuing progress towards the goals of their research, meeting the requirements of the external funding agency, and remaining in compliance for reporting effort on federal grants, if applicable. Modified duties may include: scholarly research and literature compilations, data processing and analysis, scientific writing (manuscript or thesis writing, manuscript preparation), or preparation of other scientific communication materials (e.g., lectures or poster presentations).

Students should discuss the feasibility of a GRA accommodation with their research supervisor. The Parental Accommodation Request must describe the work in detail, define a work product, and include a method for evaluation of the work by the research supervisor during the period where modified duties are granted. Supervisors are encouraged to be flexible to allow for remote work as part of the accommodation plan. The research supervisor will be responsible for verifying that the proposed duties are within the scope of work outlined in the grant that funds the graduate student's appointment.



2. **GRA Accommodation (cont.)**

In the event that a flexible GRA work arrangement is deemed appropriate, it is recommended that the student and supervisor complete a Flexible Work Arrangement Form (<https://hr.utexas.edu/current/fwa>) to ensure that both the supervisor and the student understand the terms of the temporary arrangement.

3. **TA Accommodation** (*allowing for continuation of student's employment*)

The Institute strongly encourages faculty to provide non-TA support for graduate students during the semester in which they receive a parental accommodation. If this cannot be done, students may request to be appointed to TA positions whose duties can be done in flexible environments and on flexible schedules. Flexibility regarding the distribution of specific TA duties within a semester is strongly encouraged for supervisors of students with an approved parental accommodation. The student and Graduate Adviser (or TA supervisor) should agree to review these TA duties on a periodic schedule to ensure that work is being completed in a timely and satisfactory manner. Examples of such duties may include: generating or proofreading exams, homework sets, or exam review materials; preparing detailed solution keys to problems; grading or grade-book maintenance; and assisting students with course content through email correspondence. Students should check with the Graduate Coordinator for information about available TA positions that may be appropriate for parental accommodation. Because of limited TA options within the Institute, it may not be possible to identify flexible TA positions for students requesting parental accommodation.

In the event that a flexible TA work arrangement is deemed appropriate, it is recommended that the student and supervisor complete a Flexible Work Arrangement Form (<https://hr.utexas.edu/current/fwa>) to ensure that both the supervisor and the student understand the terms of the temporary arrangement.

4. **Leave of Absence**

In some cases, a complete break from all academic and employment responsibilities may be the most appropriate option for new doctoral student parents. In these cases, the student may wish to apply for a Leave of Absence from the Graduate School.

Option 1: Students not yet admitted to candidacy submit the Authorization for Leave of Absence form; the decision whether to grant the leave is left to the discretion of the CSEM Graduate Adviser and Graduate Studies Committee.

Option 2: Students who have been admitted to candidacy must submit the Petition for Leave of Absence form accompanied by a letter from the CSEM Graduate Adviser to the Graduate School Dean specifying the reason(s) for the leave.



4. Leave of Absence (cont.)

Students on an approved Leave of Absence are guaranteed readmission and may reenter the graduate program by submitting an application for readmission (application fee waived). A student on leave may not use any University facilities nor is the student entitled to receive advice from any member of the faculty. A student on leave is not enrolled and therefore cannot be employed as a GRA or TA during the semester of the approved leave.

Full Graduate School Leave of Absence policy:

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence>

Accommodation Request Process

It is the responsibility of the student to inform their research supervisor and the CSEM Graduate Adviser of any anticipated accommodation needs as early as possible. The Parental Accommodation Request form must be submitted prior to the onset of the semester in which the accommodation is requested.

After consulting with their research supervisor, students should submit the Parental Accommodation Request form to the CSEM Graduate Advisor. The request will be reviewed for approval by the CSEM Graduate Advisor, subject to final approval from the Oden Institute Director.

University Policies (FMLA / Parental Leave)

Students often have questions about the following federal and university policies – please note that these policies are generally intended to provide protections to full-time employees and don't typically cover student employees. They are included here for reference.

Family and Medical Leave Act

The [Family and Medical Leave Act](#) (FMLA) is an unpaid leave which provides job protection and insurance premium sharing for eligible employees for serious medical conditions. In order to be eligible for FMLA, an employee must have been employed by the state of Texas for a total of at least twelve (12) months, and have worked at least 1,250 hours during the twelve-month period prior to the commencement of the requested leave.

Most graduate student employees (employed as a 20 hr/wk GRA or TA) do not qualify for FMLA.

Parental Leave

The University of Texas at Austin has a [Parental Leave policy](#) intended to cover employees who are ineligible for FMLA.

Students employed in positions that require student status as a condition of employment are NOT covered by the University's Parental Leave Policy.



Other accommodations

Fellowship Accommodation

Students supported by a Oden Institute Fellowship (CSEM Fellowship, NIMS Fellowship, O'Donnell Fellowship, Sarofim Fellowship) may be eligible for the continuation of their fellowship support during the semester the accommodation is requested. Students should contact the Graduate Coordinator to discuss options based on their particular fellowship and accommodation request.

Students supported by a Graduate School Fellowship or external fellowship should consult with the awarding department/agency.

Lactation room

The Oden Institute will make a room available in the Peter O'Donnell Building (POB) to be designated as a lactation/quiet room upon request. Students should contact the Graduate Coordinator for access.

Additional considerations

Complications/Amendments to plan

In the case that unforeseen complications related to pregnancy/delivery arise after an Accommodation Request has been made, the student may request review of and adjustments to the original request. Students should communicate with their supervisor in a timely manner to discuss modifications to the plan.

If medical conditions indicate that additional accommodations may be necessary, students should contact Services for Students with Disabilities and the Office for Inclusion and Equity to determine what additional accommodations are reasonable.

Insurance – COBRA

Students who elect to take a Leave of Absence with a subsequent break in GRA/TA employment may be eligible for COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act), which provides a temporary extension of medical, dental and/or vision coverage at group rates in instances where coverage under the plan would otherwise end. If a student loses eligibility for university insurance coverage, the HR Service Center will send them a COBRA Election Notice and application after their insurance terminates (last day of the month in which they separate.)

International Students

International students may have to satisfy additional requirements and are strongly encouraged to consult in advance with the International Office about possible visa implications of utilizing any of the parental accommodations detailed above.



The University of Texas at Austin

Oden Institute for Computational
Engineering and Sciences

Appeals

In the event that a student's request for accommodation is denied by the CSEM Graduate Advisor, the student may appeal to the Oden Institute Director. If the request is denied by the Director, the student may make a final appeal to the UT Vice President for Research.



Parental Accommodation Request

Student Name _____ EID _____ Date _____

Semester entered CSEM Program _____ Expected grad date _____

Supervisor name _____ Funding source _____

Semester of requested accommodation _____

Accommodation requested:

(check all that apply)

- Academic Accommodation
- GRA Accommodation
- TA Accommodation
- Leave of Absence

Explanation of need for accommodation (childbirth/adoption, expected dates, etc.)

[Empty box for explanation of need for accommodation]

For Academic/GRA/TA accommodation, complete applicable sections on back of form.

Signatures

Student name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Graduate Adviser _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Final approval

Karen Willcox Date
Director, Oden Institute for Computational Engineering and Sciences

Parental Accommodation Request

(pg 2)

Academic Accommodation

(describe proposed modifications of academic requirements and timeline for completion)

GRA Accommodation

(describe proposed modifications to research duties)

If applicable:

I verify that the proposed duties outlined above are within the scope of work outlined in the grant funding this student's appointment

Signature of research supervisor

Date

TA Accommodation

(describe proposed modifications to TA duties)