



**The College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa
(COSECSA)**

Trainee's Parental Leave Policy

1. Purpose

This policy aims to provide clear guidelines and support for trainees at the College of Surgeons of East, Central, and Southern Africa (COSECSA) to ensure that trainees are not disadvantaged in their training due to pregnancy, child adoption or childbirth. The policy outlines the procedures for maternity leave and support available, enabling the trainees to balance their academic responsibilities with their maternity needs without undue hardship.

2. Scope

This policy applies to

- Any trainee who becomes pregnant during her studies
- Any applicant who is pregnant at the time of application
- Any applicant who is to become a parent

3. Definitions

- **Trainee:** Any individual enrolled in a COSECSA training program.
- **Maternity Leave:** A period of absence from training granted to a female trainee due to pregnancy, childbirth, or adoption.
- **Paternity Leave:** A period of absence from training granted to a male trainee due to childbirth, or adoption
- **Primary Caregiver:** The person primarily responsible for the care of a newborn or adopted child.

4. Maternity Leave Entitlements

- **Eligibility:** All female trainees, regardless of the stage of their training, are entitled to maternity leave.
- **Duration:**
 - Trainees are entitled to a maternity leave of up to 14 weeks, with at least 6 weeks to be taken after the birth of the child.
 - In cases of adoption, trainees are entitled to 14 weeks of leave starting from the date of adoption.
- **Extension:**
 - Trainees may request an extension of maternity leave due to medical complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. Such requests must be supported by appropriate medical documentation.

Any additional leave required beyond the 14-week period may be granted as unpaid leave, subject to approval.

5. Paternity Leave Entitlements

- **Eligibility:** All male trainees, regardless of the stage of their training, are entitled to paternity leave.
- **Duration:**
 - Trainees are entitled to a maternity leave of up to 2 weeks to be taken after the birth of the child.
 - cases of adoption, trainees are entitled to 2 weeks of leave starting from the date of adoption.
- **Extension:**
 - Trainees may request an extension of paternity leave due to medical complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. Such requests must be supported by appropriate medical documentation.
 - Any additional leave required beyond the 2-week period may be granted as unpaid leave, subject to approval.
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6. Notification Requirements and Approval

- Any trainee or applicant who has their pregnancy confirmed must notify their Program Directors, Country Representatives and the Registrar's office by submitting a formal written notice and a medical certificate confirming the expected delivery date, intent to adopt and proposed leave dates, at least 30 days prior to the commencement of maternity leave.
- A trainee who is undertaking a programme under scholarship sponsorship has the responsibility of informing their sponsor of any change of circumstance through COSECSA secretariat.
- Applicants can apply for deferred entry; however, approval is subject to the requirements and limitations of the program of study. If granted, the deferral period will not exceed one year.
- The trainees will be officially notified of the approval of their maternity leave request after their eligibility has been evaluated. This notification will clearly state the length of the maternity leave, start and end dates, and any additional.

7. Early Labour

If labour occurs earlier than expected, the start and end dates of maternity leave can be modified accordingly through official documentation.

8. Adoption

Adoption of child is also grounds for requesting maternity leave. Parents may need time off to meet appointments related to the adoption process or to bond with a recently adopted child. The same guidelines and procedures apply in these cases.

9. Continuation of Training

- **Training Time:**
 - The period of maternity leave will not count towards the minimum required training time.
 - Trainees may need to extend their training period to compensate for the time taken during maternity leave, ensuring they meet all the requirements of their program. The additional time will need to be done following graduation in order to be considered as having completed the program and final certificate issued at the completion of that period.

- **Examinations:**
 - Trainees on maternity leave during scheduled examination periods may defer their examinations to the next available session without penalty.
 - There will not be special accommodations for rescheduling examinations due to maternity leave, Examinations must be taken in the next seating.

10. Return to Training

- **Return Plan:**
 - Trainees are required to submit a return-to-training plan to their training supervisor and the relevant COSECSA department at least 4 weeks before the end of their maternity leave.
 - The return plan should outline the trainee's intent to resume training, and any adjustments needed to accommodate their return.

- **Support:**
 - COSECSA and affiliated training institutions will provide reasonable accommodations to support trainees returning from maternity leave, including flexible training schedules where possible.

11. Health and Safety Considerations

- **Risk Assessment:**
 - Upon notification of pregnancy, a risk assessment will be conducted to identify any potential health and safety risks in the training environment.
 - Adjustments will be made to the trainee's duties to mitigate any identified risks.
- **Breastfeeding:**
 - Trainees returning from maternity leave who are breastfeeding will be provided with appropriate facilities and time for breastfeeding or expressing milk during training hours.

12. Financial Considerations

- **Stipends and Allowances for sponsored trainees:**
 - Trainees will continue to receive their stipends and allowances during the 14 weeks of maternity leave, subject to the length of the training not changing.

13. Confidentiality

All information related to maternity leave, including medical documentation, will be treated as confidential and shared only with individuals who need to know to implement this policy.

14. Appeals and Grievances

- **Right to Appeal:**
 - Trainees have the right to appeal any decision related to their maternity leave or return to training plan.
 - Appeals should be submitted in writing to the relevant COSECESA Registrar through the Secretariat within 30 days of the decision.
- **Grievance Procedure:**
 - Trainees who feel that their rights under this policy have been violated may file a grievance following the COSECESA grievance procedure.

15. Policy Review and updates

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to ensure it remains relevant and meets the needs of trainees and complies with relevant regulations. Any changes will be communicated to all trainees.

16. Contact Information

For any questions or additional support regarding this policy, students should contact the registrar's office or their country representatives.