

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

Al Ain University



جامعة العين
AL AIN UNIVERSITY

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5

Al Ain University Maternity and Paternity Support Policies

Official Maternity Leave Policy for Staff

Al Ain University (AAU) provides a comprehensive maternity leave for its female employees. Currently, female staff are entitled to **60 calendar days of maternity leave**, in line with UAE labor law aau.ac.ae. This leave is **fully paid for the first 45 days and half-paid for the remaining 15 days**, according to the policy aau.ac.ae. This marks an improvement from AAU's earlier policy of 45 days maternity leave (which had applied after one year of service) scribd.com. The updated 60-day leave ensures new mothers have more time to recover and care for their newborns with financial support. After the formal maternity leave period, **additional unpaid leave can be granted** if the mother experiences health complications from pregnancy or childbirth, as permitted by UAE regulations (e.g. up to 45 days of extended leave with medical documentation) legaladviceme.com. These maternity provisions apply to all full-time female faculty and staff at AAU. For students who become mothers, there is no explicit "maternity leave" policy in the student handbook; however, the university would accommodate **necessary breaks in study** through its leave of absence or deferment procedures on a case-by-case basis (no formal published policy was found specific to student maternity leave in the sources reviewed).

♦ 6. i. Types of Leaves

I. Annual Leave:

Faculty members are entitled to a fifty-six-day annual leave which includes the summer leave as well as the winter break.

II. Maternity Leave:

1. The female worker shall be entitled to a maternity leave of (60) sixty days, according to the following:
 - a. The first (45) forty-five days with full wage.
 - b. (15) fifteen additional days right after maternity leave with half wage. (if needed).

Maternity

<https://aau.ac.ae/uploads/editor/source/handbooks/2017/aau-faculty-handbook-2017-2018-en.pdf>

VI. Sick Leave:

In accordance with the provisions of the UAE Labor Law, AAU faculty members are granted a sick leave of no more than ninety days, consecutive or intermittent, for each year of service. The faculty member shall be required to submit a medical report issued by a hospital. The sick leave will be divided as follows:

- a) Fifteen days – Paid
- b) Thirty days – Half-paid
- c) The rest – Unpaid

All leaves, except for the annual and maternity leaves, are subject to the provisions of the substitute class schedule. All classes cancelled must be made up.

II. Maternity Leave:

Faculty members are entitled to a forty-five-day maternity leave in accordance with the provisions of the UAE Labor Law.

Maternity Policy

Maternity leave or maternity leave is one of the fundamental rights of women, and an important pillar of the UN childcare recommendations, and interest varies from country to country,

إجازة الوضع

المادة (53) *

1. تُمنح الموظفة المعينة في وظيفة دائمة إجازة وضع براتب إجمالي لمدة ثلاثة أشهر.
2. تُمنح الموظفة ولمدة أربعة أشهر من تاريخ الوضع ساعتين يومياً لإرضاع وليدها وذلك وفق الآلية التي تحددها اللائحة التنفيذية.
3. لا يجوز للموظفة الجمع بين إجازة الوضع والإجازة بدون راتب.

Provisions of maternity leave

<https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/jobs/types-of-leaves-and-entitlements-in-the-private-sector/maternity-leave>

A working woman is entitled to a maternity leave of 45 day's including the time before and after delivery. If the woman has completed one year of continuous employment for the same employer, she is entitled to full pay during maternity leave; otherwise, she is entitled to half pay.

In addition, after delivery, the woman is entitled to two additional breaks each day, with each break not exceeding half an hour for nursing her child. The woman is entitled to such breaks for 18 months following the date of delivery and is entitled to full pay.

Updated on 31 Aug 2020

Parental leave

<https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/jobs/types-of-leaves-and-entitlements-in-the-private-sector/parental-leave>

Employees of the private sector are entitled to a parental leave of 5 working days from the day of the birth of their child to six months. The parental leave is a paid leave that can be applied for by both mother and father of the baby.

It was introduced after H. H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, approved the amendments to the Labour Law in August 2020.

The UAE is the first Arab country to grant parental leave to employees in the private sector.

Maternity and paternity leave

<https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/jobs/working-in-uae-government-sector/maternity-and-paternity-leave>

Female employees in a permanent position in the federal government are entitled to 90 days' maternity leave and male employees are entitled to 3 days' paternity leave. Leaves vary for the employees of local governments.

Maternity leave in the Federal government

As per Article 53 of [Federal Decree Law No.11 for the year 2008 on Human Resources in the Federal Government as amended by Federal Decree Law No. 9 for the year 2011, and Federal Decree Law No. 17 for 2016](#) (PDF, 300 KB), as amended, a female employee in a permanent position shall be granted maternity leave of three months with full salary.

After that, for 4 months from the date of the employee resuming work, she is entitled to 2 hours' reduced working hours to nurse her child either at the beginning or at the end of the working hours. Such breaks are fully paid for.

Maternity leave may not be combined with leave without pay.

As per Article 54 of the same law, a male employee who gets a child is entitled to paid paternity leave for three days during the month of the delivery if the delivery happens in the UAE.

Maternity leave in Abu Dhabi

Females are entitled to three months of fully-paid maternity leave. After the female employee resumes, she is entitled to two hours of daily leave for the first year after delivery to nurse her child.

Males are entitled to three days' paternity leave.

Maternity leave in Dubai Government

Maternity leave in Dubai Government is regulated by Decree No. 14 of 2017 Concerning Maternity, Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Childcare Leave for Female Employees of the Government of Dubai (PDF, 581 KB).

The decree grants female employee 90 days of maternity leave starting from the delivery date. She may also apply for her maternity leave up to 30 days prior to the expected date of delivery.

Annual leave and unpaid leave can be added to the maternity leave taking the maximum total number of days to 120.

After resuming work and for one year from the date of the baby's birth, the mother is entitled to 2 hours' reduced working hours to nurse her child, either at the beginning or at the end of the working hours. There is no nursing break for women during the month of Ramadan.

Where a female employee gives birth to a baby with special needs, she will be granted childcare leave for the period from the expiry date of the maternity leave to the date on which her baby completes one 1 year of age.

According to [Dubai Government Human Resources Management Law No. 8 of 2018](#) (PDF 9.52 MB), males are entitled to 3 days of fully paid paternity leave, to be taken within one month of the birth of the child.

Dubai Government Maternity Guidelines

[Dubai Government Human Resources Department](#) issued the [maternity guidelines](#) (PDF, 150 KB, Arabic) for employees of Dubai Government. The guidelines include medical tips for pregnant employees as well as information related to their rights and duties as provided by [Decree No. 14 of 2017](#) on Maternity, Miscarriage/Stillbirth, and Childcare Leave for Female Employees of the Government of Dubai.

Official Paternity (Parental) Leave Policy for Staff

AAU also supports new fathers with a paternity leave policy. Male employees (staff and faculty) are **granted 5 working days of paternity leave**, which is fully paid [aaau.ac.ae](#). This leave (often termed “parental leave” in UAE law) can be taken anytime within the first six months of the baby's birth [aaau.ac.ae](#). The introduction of an official paternity leave is a relatively recent reform – previously, AAU did not provide a dedicated paternity leave beyond ordinary emergency leave [aaau.ac.ae](#). By adopting the 5-day paternity leave policy, AAU aligns with national efforts to encourage fathers' involvement in early childcare. This benefit enables new fathers employed at the university to support their spouses and newborns during the critical first weeks after birth. (For students who become fathers, there is no specific paternity leave policy; they would use standard justified absence procedures if needed, as per academic regulations.) The establishment of paternity leave for staff demonstrates AAU's commitment to gender equity, ensuring that parenting responsibilities are acknowledged for both women and men.

VII. Paternity Leave:

The paternity leave is granted to staff members for five working days, effective from the baby's date of birth until 6 months.

Flexible Work Arrangements for Returning Mothers

AAU has instituted **flexible working arrangements** and supportive return-to-work policies to help new mothers transition back to their jobsaau.ac.ae. For example, after a mother returns to work following maternity leave, she is entitled to **reduced working hours for nursing** her infant. AAU's policy (consistent with UAE guidelines) allows a new mother up to **two hours off each workday for breastfeeding or childcare** upon her return, typically for the first months after childbirthaau.ac.ae. In practice, this can be taken as a shorter workday (arriving late or leaving early) or divided into nursing breaks, giving the mother flexibility to attend to her baby's needs. This benefit is currently provided for up to **one year post-birth** according to AAU's documentationaau.ac.ae, which exceeds the minimum national requirement and greatly supports mothers in continuing breastfeeding. In addition, AAU's HR policies encourage accommodating new mothers through options like adjusted work schedules or temporary task reassignments when feasible. These measures ensure that women can **comfortably return to their roles** without feeling forced to choose between their career and childcare responsibilitiesaau.ac.ae. For students who are new mothers, while no formal flexible academic schedule policy is published, the university is likely to offer accommodations (such as arranging make-up work or a lighter course load) individually to help them continue their education. Overall, AAU's flexible arrangements for returning mothers aim to create a family-friendly work environment that retains female talent and supports women's participation in the workforce.

Explainer: How companies in Middle East approach diversity, equality and inclusion?

Current efforts are not limited to just hiring, but also include investing in developing female talent to build up diverse pipelines, opines Maliha Jilani, member of the global social impact practice and partner at Heidrick & Struggles (Dubai)

Why is diversity, inclusion and equality (DI&E) important to the economy?

Increasing the diversity of the workforce by boosting female labour participation will likely improve the region's competitiveness. Access to a wider talent pool will help to fill gaps in industries like technology, while the inclusion of more varied and diverse perspectives can be key for businesses to thrive and survive in the current landscape.

Many studies have shown that diversity drives innovation and the development of new solutions, so welcoming more women to the workforce will strengthen the region's competitive position.

How are businesses and companies in the Middle East approaching DI&E?

One big advantage the Middle East has is a rich cultural footprint. With various markets welcoming expatriates to the talent pool, we're already fortunate to leverage the diversity that comes from different nationalities and experiences. As for gender diversity, we're seeing more company-led efforts and initiatives. This includes flexible working arrangements and maternity policies that encourage and support women to enter, stay, and return to the workforce.

International, as well as local companies in the Middle East are increasingly building gender equality into their hiring and promotion process. Unconscious bias training is also being implemented. Additionally, more companies are paying attention to planning for the future. Current efforts are not limited to just hiring, but also include investing in developing female talent to build up diverse pipelines.

Diversity, equality and inclusion efforts must be driven at the top and it's promising to note that many boards are putting female representation high on the agenda and taking steps to nurture women in their workforce. It's likely that we'll see this trajectory continue as organizations strive toward balancing their teams with more diversity.

What are the challenges impacting DI&E in regional organizations?

One of the challenges that we see both in the region and the global landscape is developing women to grow and take on senior positions. While there is a relatively strong pipeline of female talent available, their participation substantially decreases higher up the ranks. So, what we need to do is identify ways to keep women in the workforce, enabling them to grow in their careers.

This is where mentorship can play an important role, providing women with supportive female leaders that they can look up to as role models to learn from. And beyond mentorship, promising female talents will also benefit from sponsorship.

Essentially, having advocates who will represent their voices and influence change on their behalf. To grow the female talent pool and effectively help them rise to the C-suite, the combination of mentorship, sponsorship and female role models will be critical to ensuring they are visible at every level.

What tools can you use to practice diversity and equality in an organization?

Incorporating diversity and equality into an organization's DNA is not a straightforward task. There are four principles that form an effective framework to promote DI&E in an organization.

1. Purposeful leadership: Leaders must connect efforts to strategic business priorities and outcomes. The executive leadership team plays the most important part to lead, role model, and be key sponsors of the DI&E efforts.

2. Personal change: Leaders may need to address blind spots and change some personal behavior to foster an inclusive culture. For example, being part of an employee resource group that an executive does not immediately identify with can be a great way for the leader to get insight into the experience of underrepresented employees.

3. Broad engagement: Leaders should quickly engage the entire organization by role modelling and encouraging new ways of behaviour that will create a sense of belonging for all.

4. Systemic alignment: Across levels, inadvertent systemic preferences and biases, and non-inclusive practices and policies must be identified and removed.

How can companies in the region speed up the process of being more diverse and inclusive?

While progress has been made over the years to improve gender diversity in the Middle East through company-led initiatives and also through government mandates (For example, in 2021, the UAE Security and Commodities Authority issued a mandate that listed companies must have at least one woman on their board of directors) for the region to truly achieve diversity, there is more work to be done.

Organizations need to commit to more inclusive practices to empower women with the time and opportunity to join or return to the workforce and be able to commit to upskilling programs. For example, according to McKinsey's Women at Work Middle East report, the lack of access to childcare can hinder women from working after becoming mothers as they are often the primary family caregiver.

Additionally, PwC's 2022 survey on MENA Women in Work reveals that 94 per cent of women prioritise work-life balance and training and development opportunities. Hence, it's clear that to attract and retain capable women, organisations need to set the tone of promoting diversity from the top of the organisation, embed diversity and inclusion strategies throughout the organisation, and hold the management accountable for delivering on these strategies.

This includes efforts to provide a supportive environment and facilities for women in the office, implementing flexible/remote work arrangements, enhancing support for childcare or eldercare, and of course, creating structured mentorship and training programmes to support female professionals as they grow and advance in their careers.

If the private and public sector each continue to do their part and drives efforts to improve female representation, the expanded talent pool and increased diversity will undeniably contribute to a more resilient Middle East economy.

On-Campus Childcare and Nursing Support

AAU provides on-campus facilities to support parents, making the campus more family-friendly. Notably, the university has set up dedicated **childcare and nursing facilities** as part of its infrastructure. For instance, AAU's campuses include **diaper-changing stations**, a private **"Nursery Room" for mothers** to nurse or tend to infants, and even an on-site

Kindergarten[green.aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae/green). The **nursery room** offers a quiet, equipped space for breastfeeding or pumping, ensuring that lactating mothers (whether staff, students, or visitors) have privacy and comfort on campus. The availability of an **on-campus kindergarten** (daycare/preschool) is a significant support for working parents, as it allows staff or faculty to have their young children cared for nearby during work hours[green.aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae/green). These facilities were incorporated as part of AAU's policy of ensuring adequate campus amenities for maternity and family care. In fact, AAU has explicitly planned and **built these supports into new campus buildings** – adjustments to accommodate parents have been “made in full and are included in the design of the new buildings”[green.aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae/green). This means that recent campus expansions or renovations were designed with childcare and nursing needs in mind, reflecting a proactive approach to supporting women with children. In addition to physical facilities, AAU often organizes community events and awareness (for example, celebrating Mother's Day by recognizing new mothers on campus) to foster an inclusive, supportive atmosphere[aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae). The on-campus support systems like childcare and nursing rooms significantly help students and employees with family obligations, enabling women's continued participation in academic and professional life.

Public Documentation and Recent Initiatives

AAU's maternity and paternity support policies are **publicly documented** and accessible. The official **Staff Handbook and Faculty Handbook**, available on AAU's website, detail these leave entitlements and benefits for employees. For example, the **AAU Staff Handbook 2024–2025** (published online) clearly outlines the 60-day maternity leave policy and its conditions, as well as the 5-day paternity leave for staff[aau.ac.aeaaau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae/aaau.ac.ae). These handbooks and policy documents can be found in the Publications/Handbooks section of the AAU website, ensuring transparency for current and prospective staff. Moreover, AAU has showcased its commitment to parental support in its public reports related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. On the AAU SDG webpage for Gender Equality and Decent Work, the university highlights the existence of **family-friendly policies** – noting the flexible work arrangements, protected maternity leave, and nursing breaks that encourage women to **enter, stay, and return** to the workforce[aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae). Such information indicates that AAU not only implements these policies but also holds itself accountable through public disclosure.

In recent years, AAU has taken **new initiatives and reforms** to enhance gender equity in parental support. Following national labor law updates in 2021–2022, AAU extended its maternity leave from 45 days to 60 days and introduced paid paternity leave for the first time[scribd.comaau.ac.ae](https://www.scribd.com/aaau.ac.ae). These reforms were significant steps to better support female staff and promote shared parental responsibility. Additionally, the development of on-campus childcare (the kindergarten and nursery room mentioned above) is a recent initiative, aligning with the university's strategic plan to provide a supportive environment for women. By 2022, these facilities were integrated into the campus, demonstrating AAU's dedication to accommodating parents on campus[green.aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae/green)[green.aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae/green). AAU's leadership has also been active in celebrating and encouraging new mothers – for example, special recognition events for staff mothers signal an inclusive culture[aau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae). All of these efforts are well-documented through AAU's official channels (HR policy documents, university website news, and sustainability

reports), which ensures that the information is accessible to the public and the university community.

Overall, Al Ain University's maternity and paternity policies – from generous leave provisions to flexible work arrangements and on-site childcare – provide strong support for women's participation in academia and the workplace. These policies are **formally recorded and publicly accessible**, and they continue to evolve with national guidelines and the university's commitment to gender equality aau.ac.ae. Through transparent documentation and ongoing improvements, AAU illustrates its role as a family-friendly institution that empowers women by supporting them in their dual roles as professionals (or students) and mothers.