CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY

POLICY ON MATERNITY LEAVE AND PERINATAL SUPPORT

1. PREAMBLE

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) recognises maternal health, child survival, and family welfare as vital conditions for staff well-being, gender equity, workplace productivity, and organizational integrity across its academic and non-academic communities.

The University is committed to supporting female employees by providing adequate time, healthcare protection, job security, and financial continuity prior to and following the birth or legal adoption of a child, ensuring an inclusive environment that respects maternal rights.

This Policy establishes the University's institutional framework, eligibility criteria, leave entitlements, nursing provisions, and return-to-work guarantees governing Maternity Leave for female staff members across all campuses.

The Policy is intended to operate consistently with the Constitution and Labour Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Public Service Rules, Anambra State public service directives, the University's enabling statutes, regulations, conditions of service, and relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) Maternity Protection Conventions.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- grant paid maternity leave to eligible female staff upon pregnancy, childbirth, or legal adoption;
- protect the physical health, psychological well-being, and nutritional support of working mothers and infants;
- guarantee security of employment, seniority, continuous service, and promotional prospects during maternity absence;
- provide clear administrative protocols for requesting, approving, and documenting maternity leave;
- establish flexible nursing breaks and workplace accommodations for nursing mothers upon their return to duty;
- protect female employees against gender-based discrimination, career penalties, or adverse treatment arising from pregnancy or maternity; and
- promote a supportive, gender-sensitive, and family-friendly organizational culture within the University.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies across all campuses, faculties, directorates, and operational units of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, and covers:

- all confirmed full-time female academic staff;
- all confirmed full-time female administrative, technical, and professional staff;
- female junior staff on full-time pensionable appointments; and

- female staff on fixed-term academic, research, or professional contracts of at least twelve (12) months duration.

Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as authorising unapproved absences, fraudulent medical claims, misrepresentation of pregnancy status, or non-compliance with University academic continuity and administrative clearance requirements.

4. ENTITLEMENT AND ELIGIBILITY TERMS

4.1 Duration and Pay Entitlement

An eligible female employee shall be entitled to twenty (24) weeks of fully paid Maternity Leave. The leave may commence up to four (4) weeks prior to the expected date of delivery, with the remaining period taken post-delivery. During approved Maternity Leave, the employee shall receive full basic salary and all regular statutory allowances.

4.2 Adoption Leave Provisions

A female employee who legally adopts a child under one (1) year of age shall be entitled to twelve (12) weeks of fully paid Adoption Leave, commencing from the official date of placement of the child.

4.3 Service Continuity and Promotional Rights

The period of approved Maternity Leave shall count fully as continuous service for pension calculations, step increments, sabbatical leave eligibility, and promotional assessment. Maternity absence shall not be used as grounds for delaying or denying legitimate career progression.

5. APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCEDURES

An employee requesting Maternity Leave must submit a formal written application through her Head of Department/Unit to the Registrar (Human Resources) at least four (4) weeks prior to the expected date of departure. The application must be accompanied by a valid medical certificate issued by a recognized government health institution or the University Health Services stating the expected date of confinement.

In cases of premature delivery or sudden medical emergency, notification must be communicated to the Department within forty-eight (48) hours of the event, followed by formal documentation upon stabilization.

6. SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND STILLBIRTH PROVISIONS

Where medical complications arise during pregnancy or following delivery, an extension of sick leave may be granted upon recommendation by the University Health Services Director in accordance with Public Service Rules. In the unfortunate event of a stillbirth or neonatal loss after 24 weeks of gestation, the employee shall remain entitled to up to eight (8) weeks of post-event paid recovery leave.

7. NURSING BREAKS AND WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

Upon resumption of duty, a nursing mother shall be granted two (2) hours of daily nursing breaks (or one hour twice daily) without deduction from salary or annual leave entitlements for up to six (6) months post-delivery. Heads of Department shall ensure reasonable scheduling adjustments to accommodate nursing breaks.

8. PROTECTION FROM RETALIATION AND DISCRIMINATION

No female employee shall be dismissed, demoted, subjected to adverse performance evaluation, or denied legitimate professional opportunities on the grounds of pregnancy, childbirth, nursing responsibilities, or utilization of Maternity Leave under this Policy.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES

Female staff members exercising maternity rights shall:

a. provide authentic medical certification and timely written notifications to the Registry;

b. coordinate with their Heads of Department to ensure proper handover of teaching, clinical, administrative, or research duties prior to departure; and

c. submit formal resumption notices to the Registrar upon completing approved leave periods.

10. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

The University Management shall:

a. ensure prompt, objective, and non-discriminatory processing of all maternity leave applications;

b. arrange appropriate teaching relief, temporary administrative cover, or workload adjustments during staff maternity leave;

c. maintain safe working environments for pregnant and nursing employees, shielding them from hazardous chemical, biological, or radiological exposures; and

d. establish clean, hygienic, and dignified lactation facilities on campus.

11. GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE OVERSIGHT

The Registry (Human Resources Division), in collaboration with the University Health Services and relevant Deans/Directors, shall monitor compliance with this Policy and submit an annual Maternity and Perinatal Support Report to the Vice-Chancellor.

12. PUBLICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

This Policy shall be published on the official University website and staff portal, and incorporated into staff recruitment packages. The University shall maintain an official policy control record detailing approval dates, effective dates, and scheduled reviews.

13. REVIEW AND REVISION

This Policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years or earlier where mandated by amendments to the Public Service Rules, national labor legislation, or University Council directives. Every review shall be formally documented and approved.



Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr

Vice Chancellor **Date:** 24/10/2026