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# FAQ

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What documents can be used to prove a career break for return grants, especially in situations where the career break involved long-term personal childcare or parental leave that was not formally recorded by the employer or the student office?

The solution below applies to two groups of situations:

- **Employee and long-term personal care provided to a child**
- **Student (especially if studies were not interrupted) and parental leave or long-term personal care provided to a child**

## How a career break can now be documented

For these cases, the following pair of documents can be used:

- **A sworn statement by the applicant** confirming that they personally cared for a child until the start of compulsory preschool education and that this care was the reason for the career break. The statement must include the **child's name, surname, and date of birth**.
- **A copy of the child's birth certificate, ID card, or passport** showing the date of birth.

This combination of documents is fully acceptable according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) and meets the requirements stated in the Specific Rules (Chapter 8.2.2 – unit “Contribution for childcare or care for a close person”).

## What this means for you

Thanks to this clarification, it is now possible to document a career break even in cases where no other official documents exist.

**It remains the case that proof of receiving parental allowance is not considered a relevant document by MŠMT. However, the period during which applicants cared for a child, but were no longer on maternity or parental leave, can legitimately be documented with a sworn statement and a copy of the child's birth certificate.**

I still don't understand. I'm only returning in October, so is there any point in applying if I submit at the end of the deadline? Yes, it definitely makes sense. The call will be open until November 3, 2025, at 12:00 PM, and all applications submitted by this deadline will be evaluated.

I don't understand, will the evaluation take place before the application deadline?

No, the evaluation process will begin only after the application deadline, i.e., after November 3, 2025.

Do I understand correctly that the Charles University Return Grant is a one-time call that will not be repeated in the coming years?

Yes, the grant competition will be single-round. However, if the allocation for return grants is not exhausted, the management of Charles University may decide to announce another round, although this is not expected.

Hello, thank you for trying to answer the questions. I would also like to ask about the overlap with similar GAČR Return grants. Their announcement will take place in November, i.e., after the application deadline for this grant call. Is it expected that this grant can be declined if the GAČR Return grant is awarded?

The applicant may decline the return grant, which will allow the next application in line to be considered.

The principal investigator of the return grant is not authorized, during the implementation of the return grant, to receive other funding for identical activities financed from different sources. Specifically, he/she may not act as a principal investigator (e.g., in specific university research, GA ČR Return Grants, etc.) in another grant with the same focus, nor participate in mobility with the same objective funded from another source. It is not permitted to combine the costs of the return grant under this call with support provided within the GA ČR Return Grant project group, for which financial resources are provided by GA ČR.

Hello, please clarify whether the grant application must be submitted in English or if Czech is sufficient?

The return grant application must be submitted only in English, and the entire grant administration throughout the implementation period will also be conducted in English.

Is it expected that we resolve all this within 2 weeks? Is there any consideration of postponing the start of the application intake?

The start and end dates of the grant competition are set to ensure that even three-year grants can be implemented after the evaluation process. A significant postponement of the grant competition schedule would severely limit the possibility of implementing three-year grants.

Also, when will the tender documentation be available? Thank you.

The Rector's Measure announcing the grant competition should be available by the end of September, but no later than October 1, 2025. We are currently finalizing the preparation of the Applicant Methodology (working title), which will include all conditions and rules contained in the Rector's Measure, as well as practical advice and recommendations, and further explanations of certain obligations. We aim to publish this methodology on the project website ( <https://opp.cuni.cz/OPP-145.html> ) by September 26, 2025, at the latest.

Do only employees qualify for the grant, or can PhD students also apply?

Eligible applicants for the grant competition are principal investigators of research projects, i.e., researchers returning to a research career after a career break, who meet the following criteria:

- a. The principal investigator is, at the time of submitting the return grant application, a student in a doctoral study program or has previously completed such a program and holds a Ph.D. (or its equivalent), and
- b. Is currently on a career break (this must be documented by the applicant with confirmation from the relevant authority or similar), or no more than 12 months have passed since the end of the career break to the date of submitting the return grant application (the applicant must provide documentation confirming that the career break ended no more than 12 months ago).

Do I have to be enrolled in a study program at the time of application? / What if my studies are interrupted? Can I apply during the interruption?

The applicant (i.e., the principal investigator) can be a PhD student.

A PhD student is a person enrolled in a doctoral study program (full-time or part-time) at Charles University.

What exactly does it mean that less than a year has passed since the end of the career break? Does this refer to the start of the grant implementation (i.e., earliest February 1, 2026), or the actual submission of the application?

This requirement relates to the date of submission of the return grant application in the IS Věda system. The applicant must provide documentation confirming that the career break ended no more than 12 months before the application submission date.

Surely receiving parental leave doesn't automatically mean someone is on a career break (since one can work with any workload during parental leave)? That only applies to maternity leave. My son is 1.5 years old, so I was on maternity leave more than 12 months ago. How do I prove the career break? / I'd like to add to this question. What counts as the end of a career break? I returned to the faculty on September 3, 2024, but I received parental leave until December 31, 2024. Is the end of my career break considered the return to the faculty or the end of parental leave?

A career break is a period of at least 180 calendar days (no maximum duration is set), during which the applicant was unable to fully engage in R&D activities due to maternity or parental leave, long-term caregiving, or long-term illness.

- The average workload in R&D during the career break must not exceed 0.3 FTE.
- In any given month, the workload must not exceed 0.5 FTE.

Therefore, parental leave can be considered a career break if the above conditions are met. The career break ends when the applicant fully returns to their R&D activities.

Hello, I still don't understand whether the grant is intended for people who are currently on parental leave. I'm returning in June 2026. Can I apply for a grant that starts in June 2026?

Yes, you can. However, as of the date of application, the career break requirement must be met – a minimum of 180 calendar days. Furthermore another condition must be met that at the time of submitting the return grant application, the applicant is currently on a career break (this must be documented by confirmation from the relevant authority or similar, or a document from the faculty's HR department), or no more than 12 months have passed since the end of the career break to the date of application submission.

Does the flat rate provide the same funding for someone in the social sciences as for someone in the natural sciences? Will applications be evaluated together?

The costs for the unit activity "Return Grant – Principal Investigator" primarily include personal costs for the principal investigator and flat-rate costs. The specific amount of flat-rate costs is not fixed; it is included in the rate set by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) per productive hour of the principal investigator. This rate is the same for all applicants, differing only based on whether the principal investigator is classified as a junior or senior researcher according to the call definition.

All applications submitted by the deadline will be evaluated in a two-round process. The first round will assess formal criteria and eligibility. Applications accepted in the first round will proceed to the second round, which will evaluate the substantive content. In this round, applications will be assessed by two reviewers selected based on their expertise to match or closely relate to the research focus of the return grant.

Could you please repeat what is included in the flat rate? (Salary, employer contributions, travel costs, etc.) Thank you. / I'd like to add to that – does the flat rate also include materials? Equipment time?

The flat-rate costs included in the unit cost for the principal investigator may cover, for example, expenses for materials, minor equipment, translations, conferences, etc. The amount ranges from CZK 75 to CZK 94 per hour, depending on whether the principal investigator is classified as junior or senior. For a full-time workload (1.0 FTE), this corresponds to approximately CZK 11,000–14,000 per month.

**Example:**

- Principal Investigator = Junior, rate: CZK 575 per productive hour
- $575 \times 180 = \text{CZK } 103,500/\text{month}$
- A flat rate (expenses for consumables related to research, etc.) will be CZK 13,500 per month.
- Then CZK 90,000 remains for personnel costs.

- That means: CZK 90,000 / 1.3522 (social security and health insurance contributions) = CZK 66,558 gross salary. For help with calculations, we recommend contacting faculty coordinators.

Investments are not allowed within return grants.

Is it possible to apply for the grant if I was employed on a grant with a 0.2 FTE workload during parental leave?

Yes, you can still apply for the return grant.

It is permitted for a researcher on a career break to simultaneously perform R&D activities at Charles University under an employment contract with a maximum of 0.3 FTE per month, averaged over the number of months of such work. However, the workload in any given month must not exceed 0.5 FTE.

The month in which the researcher begins R&D work at Charles University during the career break is counted from the start date of the work. The month in which the researcher ends this work is counted until the end date.

After maternity leave (this September), I started working at 0.2 FTE. Does that mean if I increase to 0.5 FTE in February, I can apply for the grant?

Increasing your workload is not a requirement for submitting a return grant application. On the contrary, there is a maximum allowed workload in R&D during the career break, which is 0.30 FTE.

During the implementation of the return grant, the principal investigator must have a workload of 0.50 to 1.00 FTE for the grant.

And one last question – a maximum workload of 0.3 FTE during the career break was mentioned. In the case of a successful grant application and a planned postponement of its implementation, for example by one year, is it possible to have a higher workload during that year, such as 0.5 FTE?

No, it is assumed that the postponement of the implementation would be tied to the end of the career break, meaning that the grant implementation would begin immediately after the career break ends. In that case, the rule applies that the permitted workload in R&D at Charles University during the career break is on average a maximum of 0.3 FTE, and in no month may the workload exceed 0.5 FTE.

Can the supporting expert team consist only of people from Charles University or also from other institutions?

Members of the supporting expert team must be employees of Charles University. During the grant implementation, employment contracts or agreements (DPČ) for these team members must be documented.

Can the grant be used to pay research participants?

If by “participants” you mean members of the supporting expert team, then yes — personal costs for this team are part of the return grant application. The supporting expert team must have their work on the grant specified in an employment contract, i.e., with an allocated workload. Costs for the supporting expert team are calculated and reported using so-called productive hours.

This means that extraordinary bonuses are not allowed.

Is a project manager considered a member of the technical team? Can financial resources be allocated for them?

No, this is not possible.

Other members of the supporting expert team may include professional, technical, or other relevant staff who contribute to the implementation of the return grant under the leadership of the principal investigator. These individuals are not returning from a career break.

Specifically, this may include:

- Ph.D. students (enrolled in full-time or part-time doctoral programs at a university),
- Technical staff (those who ensure the operation of infrastructure or perform specialized tasks related to the grant, but do not conduct research — administrative and research staff are not considered technical staff),
- Researchers (those who create or expand knowledge, typically by designing or conducting activities involving the development of new knowledge, processes, methods, and systems, and applying scientific concepts and theories. For this call, researchers must have at least a master's degree and be employed by the institution, working in R&D).

If a team member drops out, can the remaining funds be used for flat-rate expenses like sequencing?

No, these two types of costs are tracked separately in the return grant.

- The flat rate is calculated based on the productive hours of the principal investigator (ranging from CZK 75 to CZK 94/hour depending on junior/senior classification, i.e., approx. CZK 11,000–14,000/month for a 1.0 FTE).
- Costs for the supporting expert team are reported based on their allocated workloads.

However, it is possible to replace the team member with a new one or redistribute their workload among remaining team members. If a team member is not replaced, no costs are incurred for that person, and therefore such costs cannot be claimed.

Is the mentor expected to secure funding from other sources to match a 0.2 FTE workload? Or is the mentor listed on the project with a 0.2 FTE without financial compensation? Can a mentor be listed without any workload?

The mentor is not funded from the grant and will be approved by the faculty as part of the implementation of the mentoring scheme at Charles University. According to the mentoring scheme, the mentor is not remunerated and therefore does not need to have a workload at Charles University.

The stated maximum workload of 0.2 FTE is informative, intended to help the principal investigator plan realistically, knowing that the mentor will not be fully available but will provide expert guidance and methodological support during the research and achievement of the grant's goals.

How important is diversity in mentors throughout a career? Is it better to choose someone thematically close who has already supervised me, or someone new, perhaps from another department?

There is no requirement that the mentor must be from a different department than the principal investigator. However, minimum qualification requirements are set for mentors:

- Must be a senior researcher (more than 7 years since obtaining a Ph.D. or equivalent),
- Must have adequate experience in the field of the return grant.

The mentor provides methodological and expert support, may assist with planning project steps, but is not the project leader and is not funded from the return grant.

Is the mentor's work considered voluntary? Do I understand that correctly?

Yes.

Can the mentor be listed as a co-author on publications?

The mentor's role is to provide methodological and expert support to the principal investigator. They are not the project leader and do not directly participate in the research or outputs of the return grant. Therefore, they should not be listed as a co-author on publications.

Can the mentor be from a foreign institution or only from the Czech Republic? Thank you.

There are no restrictions on the mentor's institutional affiliation. However, the mentor must meet the minimum qualification requirements:

- Senior researcher (more than 7 years since Ph.D. or equivalent),
- Adequate experience in the field of the return grant

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How will the need for a care allowance be documented?

It will be documented during the grant implementation, specifically in the activity reports. The documentation will include:

- A sworn statement by the principal investigator that they personally care for a child (before compulsory preschool education) or a close person in long-term poor health (as defined by §3(c) of the Social Services Act),
- The statement must include the name, surname, and date of birth of the child,
- A contractual document between the university and the principal investigator specifying the approval and amount of the care allowance, which will be paid regularly.

In case of an on-site audit, the following documents may be required:

For child care:

- Copy of birth certificate, ID card, or passport showing the child's date of birth,
- Document confirming preschool enrollment or use of child care services (with date of birth).

For care of a close person:

- Document confirming provision of care services,
- Application for care allowance,
- Decision granting care allowance,
- Sworn statement submitted to the Czech Social Security Administration (ČSSZ) confirming shared household,
- Decision granting long-term nursing care,
- Doctor's confirmation that personal care is still necessary after nursing care ends.

If my daughter starts preschool when the grant begins (she'll be 3 years old), am I not eligible for the care allowance? / I'd like to join the question about the care allowance. The text mentions compulsory preschool education, but you refer to starting preschool at age 3. If the child starts preschool at age 3, can I still apply for the allowance?

Yes, the care allowance for a child can be claimed for children under 5 years old who have not yet started compulsory preschool education.

The allowance is a motivational component of the return grant budget. It is intended to cover expenses incurred by the principal investigator due to:

- Personal care for a child (excluding maternity/parental leave) who has not yet started compulsory preschool education (i.e., under 5 years old by the end of August of the calendar year when compulsory education begins), or
- Long-term personal care for a close person in poor health (as defined by §22(1) of the Civil Code and §3(c) of Act No. 108/2006 Coll. on Social Services).

The allowance is granted after returning from a career break, when the principal investigator resumes R&D activities and can no longer provide care themselves.

The allowance is granted for each calendar month in which the conditions are met and the grant is being implemented.

If I'm receiving another grant (e.g., Primus) that covers my salary, can I apply only for the care allowance (to help me return to the Primus project)? / I'm the PI of a Primus project, which I paused due to maternity leave. I'd like to return to it, but I need help with child care. Can I use the Return Grant to partially fund this care so I can return to Primus?

No, this call is intended for research-focused return grants. The care allowance is only a supplementary activity and cannot be claimed independently.

If the principal investigator receives a care allowance from the Labor Office, can they also apply for the grant's care allowance?

No, that would be duplicate funding, which is not allowed.

Can the care allowance be used during international mobility to cover expenses abroad?

If you mean mobility expenses themselves, then no — each activity is funded according to its own unit cost rules.

If you mean expenses for child or dependent care during mobility abroad, the rules for the care allowance do not explicitly specify this. The key is to meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance.

The care allowance is granted for each calendar month in which the conditions are met and the grant is being implemented.

Can mobility be requested for teaching observation internships (i.e., not research)? / Can mobility be used for conferences?

Mobility is a motivational element supporting a faster restart after a career break. Its goal is to provide motivation, inspiration, and exchange of experience from international research environments.

Mobility must have a factual and logical connection to the research being conducted. The proposal will be evaluated as part of the return grant assessment.

The principal investigator will travel to a foreign institution based on a memorandum, invitation letter, or similar document between the Czech and foreign research institutions.

After completing the mobility, the principal investigator must submit a Mobility Report.

To be eligible for unit costs, the principal investigator must work at least 4 hours per day during the mobility.

Conference costs are included in the unit cost calculation for the "Return Grant – Principal Investigator" activity.

Can a team member also travel? For example, two people attending two conferences in one week — that's a month combined.

Mobility is only allowed for the principal investigator. For other team members, this activity is not an eligible expense under the return grant.



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