

UNIVERSAL CREDIT INFORMATION SHEET

What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a payment to help with your living costs. It is paid on a monthly basis.

You may be able to get Universal Credit if you are on a low income, out of work or you cannot work.

Eligibility

You may be able to get Universal Credit if:

- You are on a low income or out of work
- You are 18 or over (there are some exceptions if you are 16 to 17)
- You are under State Pension age (or your partner is)
- You and your partner have £16,000 or less in savings and/or assets (such as a second home) between you.
- You live in the UK

The number of children you have does not affect your eligibility for Universal Credit, but it may affect how much you get.

If you live with your partner

Your partner's income and savings will be taken into account, even if they are not eligible for Universal Credit.

If you are 18 or over and in training or studying full-time

You can make a new claim for Universal Credit if any of the following apply:

- You live with your partner and they are eligible for Universal Credit
- You are responsible for a child, either as a single person or as a couple
- You are in further education, are 21 or under and do not have parental support, for example you are estranged from your parents and you are not under local authority care

If you are moving from Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

You can make a new claim for Universal Credit if you are in full-time education and all of the following apply:

- You are entitled to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

- You have already been assessed as having limited capability for work
- You make a new claim before your ESA ends or as soon as you are notified that your ESA claim has ended

If you are 16 or 17

You can make a new claim for Universal Credit if any of the following apply:

- You have medical evidence and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment
- You are caring for a severely disabled person
- You are responsible for a child
- You are in a couple with responsibility for at least one child and your partner is eligible for Universal Credit
- You are pregnant and it is 11 weeks or less before your expected week of childbirth
- You have had a child in the last 15 weeks
- You do not have parental support, for example you are estranged from your parents and you are not under local authority care

If you are studying full time

You can also make a claim if you are in full-time education and any of the following apply:

- You do not have parental support and you are not under local authority care
- You have limited capability for work and you are entitled to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- You are responsible for a child
- You are in a couple with responsibility for a child and your partner is eligible for Universal Credit

If you are in a couple and one of you is State Pension age

You and your partner can claim Universal Credit as a couple if one of you is under State Pension age and is eligible for Universal Credit.

When you both reach State Pension age your Universal Credit claim will stop.

You may be able to apply for Pension Credit or other benefits as a couple when your Universal Credit stops. Ask your Jobcentre Plus work coach what other benefits you could be eligible for.

What you will get

Your Universal Credit payment is made up of a standard allowance and any extra amounts that apply to you, for example if you:

- Have children
- Have a disability or health condition which prevents you from working
- Need help paying your rent

How much Universal Credit you get will depend on your earnings.

Your circumstances are assessed every month. Changes in your circumstances can affect how much you are paid for the whole assessment period – not just from the date you report them from.

The benefit cap may limit the total amount of benefit you receive.

Standard Allowance

Your Circumstances	Monthly Standard Allowance
Single and under 25	£344.00*
Single and 25 or over	£411.51*
In a couple and you are both under 25	£490.60* (for you both)
In a couple and either of you are 25 or over	£596.98* (for you both)

* Rates have been temporarily increased by the Universal Credit (Extension of Coronavirus Measures) Regulations 2021/313.

Extra amounts

You may get more money on top of your standard allowance if you are eligible.

If you have children

If you have 1 or 2 children, you will get an extra amount for each child.

If you have 3 or more children, you will get an extra amount for at least 2 children. You can only get an extra amount for more children if any of the following are true:

- Your children were born before 6 April 2017
- Other exceptions apply

You will get an extra amount for any disabled or severely disabled child – no matter how many children you have or when they were born.

How much you will get	Extra monthly amount
For your first child	£282.50 (born before 6 April 2017) £237.08 (born on or after 6 April 2017)
For your second child and any other eligible children	£235.83 per child
If you have disabled or severely disabled child	£128.89 or £402.41
If you need help with childcare costs	Up to 85% of your costs (up to £646.35 for one child and £1,108.04 for 2 or more children)

You might get the extra amount if you start caring for another child, depending on when they were born and how many children you have.

If you have a disability or health condition

How much you will get	Extra monthly amount
If you have limited capability for work and work-related activity	£343.63
If you have limited capability for work and you started your health-related Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance claim before 3 April 2017	£128.89

If you get the severe disability premium you may also be entitled to an extra 'transitional protection' payment if you are moving to Universal Credit.

If you care for a severely disabled person

How much you will get	Extra monthly amount
If you provide care for at least 35 hours a week for a severely disabled person who receives a disability-related benefit	£163.73

This is on top of any extra amount you get if you have a disabled child.

Housing costs

You could get money to help pay your housing cost. How much you get depends on your age and circumstances.

The payment can cover rent and some services charges.

If you are a homeowner, you might be able to get a loan to help with interest payments on your mortgage or other loans you have taken out for your home.

How your earnings affect your payments

If you are employed, how much Universal Credit you get will depend on your earnings. Your Universal Credit payment will reduce gradually as you earn more – for every £1 you earn your payment reduces by 63p.

There is no limit to how many hours you can work.

Use a benefits calculator to see how increasing your hours or starting a new job could affect what you get.

The work allowance

You can earn a certain amount before your Universal Credit is reduced if you or your partner are either:

- Responsible for a child or young person
- Living with a disability or health condition that affects your ability to work.

This is called a ‘work allowance’. Your work allowance is lower if you get help with housing costs.

Your circumstances	Monthly work allowance
You get help with housing costs	£293.00
You do not get help with housing costs	£515.00

If your employer has put you on temporary leave (‘furlough’)

If you are on furlough because your employer has no work for you, you can get up to 80% of your wages paid through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, up to a monthly limit of £2,500. Your employer takes care of this.

If your payment stops because your earnings increased

As your income increases, your payment will reduce until you are earning enough to no longer claim Universal Credit. Your payment will then be stopped. You will be told when this happens.

If your earnings decrease after this, you can claim Universal Credit again.

If you receive your last payment 6 months ago or less, you can restart your old claim by signing in to your Universal Credit account. You will need to report any changes in your circumstances. If you are eligible for Universal Credit, your

payments will restart with the same monthly assessment period you had previously.

If you received your last payment more than 6 months ago, you will need to make a new claim for Universal Credit. You can make a new claim by signing in to your Universal Credit account. You will not be paid on the same date as your previous claim. It usually takes around 5 weeks to get your first payment.

Surplus earnings

If your monthly earnings are more than £2,500 over the amount where your payment stopped, this becomes 'surplus earnings'.

Your surplus earnings will be carried forward to the following month, where they count towards your earnings. If your earnings (including your surplus earnings) are then still over the amount where your payment stops, you will not get a Universal Credit payment.

If your earnings fall below the amount where your payment stopped, your surplus decreases. Once your surplus has gone, you will be able to get a Universal Credit payment again.

You will need to reclaim Universal Credit every month until your earnings have reduced enough to get another payment.

You can talk to your work coach for more information about surplus earnings.

The statement in your online journal will show your work allowance and when the surplus reduces.

If you separate from your partner

If you are part of a couple that claims Universal Credit together, any surplus earnings will be divided equally between you if you separate.

You will then need to re-apply individually, with your part of the surplus earnings counting towards your earnings.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse you do not take on any surplus earnings from your partner. Talk to your work coach to make sure your partner's surplus earnings are not divided between you.

If you are self-employed

You can carry over a loss (as well as a surplus) to the following month. A loss will be deducted from your next month's earnings.

How you are paid

Universal Credit is paid once a month, usually into your bank, building society or credit union account.

Your payment can include an amount for housing, which you will usually need to pay to your landlord.

If you are not able to open a bank, building society or credit union account, call the Universal Credit helpline to arrange a different way of getting paid.

Your first payment

It usually takes around 5 weeks to get your first payment.

If you need help with your living costs while you wait for your first payment, you can apply for an advance.

The wait before your first payment is made up of a one month assessment period and up to 7 days for the payment to reach your account.

Payment dates

After the first payment, you will be paid on the same date of every month.

If your payment date is on a weekend, you will be paid on the working day before.

You will get a monthly statement that tells you how much Universal Credit you are going to get.

Call the helpline straight away if your payment does not arrive on time. The helpline number is 0800 328 5644.

If you live with a partner

If you both claim Universal Credit, you will get one payment each month for your household.

How often you are paid can affect your Universal Credit

If you are paid once a month on the same date and nothing changes in your earnings, then your Universal Credit amount should stay the same.

Your Universal Credit can be affected if you receive no wages or more than one set of wages during the assessment period. This could happen if:

- You are paid weekly, every two weeks or every 4 weeks
- Your monthly payment date changes, for example you get paid on the last working day of each month

If your monthly payment date changes

You will need to sign into your online account to check how much your next monthly payment will be. If it looks like you will get paid too much or too little Universal Credit, ask your work coach to move your wages into another assessment period.

If you are paid weekly, every 2 week or every 4 weeks

You will be told if your earnings are too high and whether you will need to reapply to continue to get Universal Credit.

How often you are paid by your employer	The impact
Every 4 weeks	Once a year, you will get 2 sets of wages in one assessment period
Every 2 weeks	Twice a year, you will get 3 sets of wages in one assessment period
Every week	Four times a year, you will get 5 sets of wages in one assessment period

How to claim

An application for Universal Credit has to be made online.

You have to apply as a couple if you and your partner live together. You do not need to be married.

The Universal Credit team might telephone you after you have sent your application if they need more information or if you cannot verify your identity online.

Note: You cannot claim Universal Credit and tax credits at the same time. If you get tax credits, they will stop when you or your partner applies for Universal Credit.

What you need to apply

You will need:

- Your bank, building society or credit union account details (call the Universal Credit helpline if you do not have an account)

- An email address
- Information about your housing, for example how much rent you pay
- Details of your income, for example payslips
- Details of any savings and any investments, like shares or a property that you rent out
- Details of how much you pay for childcare if you are applying for help with childcare costs

If you do not provide the correct information when you apply it might affect when you get paid or how much you get.

You also have to verify your identity online. You will need some proof of identity for this, for example your:

- Driving licence
- Passport
- Debit or credit card

If you cannot verify your identity online

The Universal Credit team will telephone you to help you verify your identity.

Help with your application

If you need help with your application, ask straight away – the sooner you apply for Universal Credit, the sooner you will get your first payment.

There are two ways to get help with your Universal Credit application.

1. Universal Credit helpline.

Contact the Universal Credit helpline if:

- You cannot use digital services at all – this might be because of disability or your circumstances
- You have a question about your claim and cannot access your online claim

The number to call is 0800 328 5644, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

2. Swindon Carers Centre

Swindon Carers Centre can provide support in the early stages of your Universal Credit claim, from the online application, through to support with your application before your first full payment.

After you apply

The Department of Work and Pensions will make an appointment to talk to you, either over the phone or face-to-face.

If you have a disability or illness that affects your work

You may need a Work Capability Assessment to see how your disability or health condition affects your ability to work.

Depending on the outcome of your assessment you may be eligible for an extra amount on top of your standard allowance.

Terminal Illness

If you are terminally ill, you may get extra money for Universal Credit.

If you are making a new claim, you can declare this during your application. If you have already made a claim, you will need to report this as a change of circumstances.

If you have claimed Universal Credit before

You can sign into your account to make a new claim if you have claimed Universal credit at any time during the last 6 months.

If you stopped claiming more than 6 months ago, you will need to reapply for Universal Credit.

If you disagree with a decision

You can challenge a decision about your claim. This is called asking for mandatory reconsideration.

Get an advance on your first payment

If you need help to pay your bills or cover other costs while you wait for your first Universal Credit payment, you can apply to get an advance.

The most you can get as an advance is the amount of your first estimated payment.

How to apply

You can apply for an advance payment in your online account or through your Jobcentre Plus work coach.

You will need to:

- Explain why you need an advance
- Verify your identity (you will do this when you apply online or on the telephone with a work coach)
- Provide bank account details for the advance (talk to your work coach if you cannot open an account)

You will usually find out the same day if you can get an advance.

If you need help

Call the Universal Credit helpline if you need help applying for an advance payment.

How you pay back your advance

You start paying back your advance out of your first payment.

You can choose how many months you pay the advance back over. You must pay it back within 12 months. You do not pay interest on it – the total amount you pay back is the same.

Your responsibilities

You will be making an agreement called a 'Claimant Commitment' with your work coach.

What you need to do depends on your situation. You might need to do activities such as:

- Write a CV
- Look and apply for jobs
- Go on training courses

You will also need to do things like:

- Pay your own rent and other housing costs
- Report any changes in your circumstances

If you are claiming with your partner, you will each have a Claimant Commitment and set of responsibilities.

If you have children

If you are a single parent or the lead carer in a couple, your responsibilities will change as your youngest child gets older and will be tailored to your personal circumstances.

Age of your youngest child	Your responsibilities
Under 1	You do not need to look for work
Aged 1	You do not need to look for work. You need to have phone appointments with your work coach to discuss plans for moving into work in the future
Aged 2	You do not need to look for work. You need to have regular phone appointments with your work coach and do work preparation activities (for example, writing your CV)
Aged 3 or 4	Work a maximum of 16 hours a week (or spend 16 hours a week looking for work)
Aged between 5 and 12	Work a maximum of 25 hours a week (or spend 25 hours a week looking for work)
13 or older	Work a maximum of 35 hours a week (or spend 35 hours a week looking for work)

If you get support with childcare costs

You must:

- Report your childcare costs when you pay them
- Prove you have paid your childcare provider

You will need to show proof of:

- Your childcare provider for each child, for example an invoice or contract that includes the provider's registration number and full contact details
- The amount you paid and when you paid it, for example a receipt or bank statement

You can report childcare costs and provide proof that you have paid by signing into your Universal Credit account.

You will usually get the childcare amount in your next Universal Credit payment.

If you pay for childcare after it has been provided, you can claim up to 3 months of past costs at a time. There may be a limit to how much you get back if you claim for more than one month's fees at a time. Talk to your work coach for advice.

If you pay for childcare in advance, you can claim up to 3 months of advance costs at a time. You will be paid back in your monthly Universal Credit payments during the months the childcare is for.

If your payment is stopped or reduced

If you do not meet your responsibilities or what you have agreed in your Claimant Commitment, your Universal Credit could be stopped or reduced. This is called a sanction.

There are different levels of sanctions and they are decided based on what you did and how often.

You will get half a sanction if you apply with a partner and only one of you does not meet their responsibilities.

You can appeal a sanction if you think it is wrong.

Help if your payment is stopped or reduced

You can ask for a hardship payment if you cannot pay for rent, heating, food or hygiene needs because you received a sanction. You will repay the hardship payment through your Universal Credit payment – they will be lower until you pay it back.

You must be 18 or over.

You will have to show that you have tried to:

- Find the money from somewhere else
- Only spend money on essential

Call the Universal Credit helpline to ask for a hardship payment.