

Q. Last month I signed up to Universal Credit for the first time, after I was made redundant. I am looking for a new job but I'm not sure if there's anything more I need to do to ensure I keep getting Universal Credit?

A. When you apply for Universal Credit you'll agree a Claimant Commitment with your work coach. A Claimant Commitment is a record of the responsibilities that you have accepted to receive Universal Credit payments. Your claimant commitment will be updated each time you see your work coach.

When you agree to your Claimant Commitment you will be put into one of four work-related activity groups (sometimes called "conditionality" groups). These set out the tasks you're expected to complete in order to receive your full benefit payment. You can check which group you're in by logging into your Universal Credit account online and checking your Claimant Commitment. If you're not online, you will have been provided with a paper copy of your Claimant Commitment.

This will tell you which group you're in and what tasks you'll have to do regularly to get Universal Credit. These tasks could include writing your CV, signing up for job alerts or applying for vacancies.

In order to show how you have completed the to-do list set out in your Claimant Commitment, you should keep a record of the tasks you've completed and how long they took in your Universal Credit online journal, or in a diary if you're not online.

Some claimants, mainly those who have applied for Universal Credit for the first time since the outbreak of COVID-19, may not have a Claimant Commitment yet. Those who claimed before the outbreak, will have had their Claimant Commitment suspended during the outbreak and had no work-related requirements imposed.

From 1 July The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has said it will be calling all claimants to help them to prepare for work, so people should expect to be contacted to set up the Claimant Commitment. They do not need to contact the Department for Work and Pensions in the meantime.

The DWP has said that they will take a common-sense approach to work-related requirements and that those who are shielding, have childcare responsibilities because of COVID restrictions, etc. will have their Claimant Commitment tailored to reflect their circumstances.