

Universal Credit – The Basics

Universal Credit is a new benefit for people aged between 16 and 64. You may be eligible to receive this if you're on a low income or out of work. It shall be replacing most of the existing means-tested benefits for people of working age, its paid monthly, or twice a month for some people in Scotland.

If you live in Northern Ireland, go to Universal Credit Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/universalcredit>).

Universal Credit will replace the following benefits:

Child Tax Credit

Housing Benefit

Income Support

income-based Jobseeker's Allowance

income-related Employment and Support Allowance

Working Tax Credit

Universal Credit is being introduced in stages across the UK. You do not need to do anything until you hear from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about moving to Universal Credit, unless you have a change in circumstances.

You may be able to receive Universal Credit if:

You're out of work or on a low income.

You're 18 or over (there are some exceptions if you're 16 to 17).

You're under State Pension Credit qualifying age (<https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age>) or your partner is.

You and your partner have £16,000 or less in savings between you.

You live in the UK.

Use a benefits calculator (<https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>) to check what benefits you could get if you're not eligible for Universal Credit.

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

You are unable to claim Universal Credit if you have three or more dependent children and you've not claimed Universal Credit in the last 6 months. You can apply for Child Tax Credit (<https://www.gov.uk/child-tax-credit>) instead.

If you are aged 16 or 17, you can make a new Universal Credit claim if any of the following apply:

You have limited capability for work or you have medical evidence and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment.

You're caring for a severely disabled person.

You're responsible for a child.

You're in a couple with responsibility for at least one child and your partner is eligible for Universal Credit.

You're pregnant and it's 11 weeks or less before your expected week of childbirth.

You've had a child in the last 15 weeks.

You do not have parental support, for example you're estranged from your parents and you're not under local authority care.

If you're in training or studying full-time you can make a new Universal Credit claim if any of the following apply:

You live with your partner and they're eligible for Universal Credit.

You're responsible for a child, either as a single person or as a couple.

You're disabled and entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and have limited capability for work.

You're in 'non-advanced education' (for example studying for A levels or a BTEC National Diploma), are 21 or under and do not have parental support.

The amount of Universal Credit that you will receive depends on your family circumstances and what other income and savings you have. Your Universal Credit payment is made up of a standard allowance and any extra amounts that apply to 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 (<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-your-earnings-affect-your-payments>).

Your circumstances are assessed every month and what you're paid may change.

The benefit cap (<https://www.gov.uk/benefit-cap>) may limit the total amount of benefit that you receive.

Universal Credit is claimed from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Claims normally have to be made online although there are some exceptions when a claim over the phone will be allowed, for instance because you have problems with reading or writing or are unable to use a computer. Call 0800 328 5644 if you cannot claim online.

To claim online, you'll first need to set up an online Universal Credit account at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit.