

Students: eligibility, conditionality and student income

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Eligibility

Receiving education

It is a basic condition of Universal Credit entitlement that a claimant should not be receiving education. Most people receiving full time education are expected to be supported by their parents, (as a qualifying young person if in a benefit unit), or by using any available student income such as a loan or grant.

It is important that Universal Credit does not duplicate support available from other sources so a full time student cannot usually get Universal Credit unless they are one of the exception criteria.

Students who may claim Universal Credit

There are exceptions where a claimant in education can claim Universal Credit.

Young people up to age 21 in full time non-advanced education only

A young person who is without parental support, including those who have left Local Authority care (care leavers), will be able to qualify for Universal Credit if they are on a full time course of non advanced education or training which started before they reached 21 or reaches age 21 whilst undertaking the course. They can remain on Universal Credit until:

- the end of the academic year in which they reach 21
- the end of the course if earlier.

Others that are receiving full time education

A student may be able to qualify for Universal Credit whilst on a full-time course if they are:

- students with a child or children in their benefit unit. This includes lone parents, couples, adopters and foster carers, and where either both of them or just one of them is a student
- disabled students who have Limited Capability for Work and are getting any of the following:
 - Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment,
 - Attendance Allowance
 - Armed Forces Independence Payment
- students over the qualifying age for Pension Credit or in couple cases where their partner is under that age
- a student who is living with a partner and they're eligible for UC.

Other full time education

If a student is receiving full time education and does not meet an exception criteria they will not meet a basic condition of Universal Credit entitlement.

Any claimant who is doing any other full time course that does not meet the “receiving education” definition, will still be treated as “receiving education” and not entitled to UC if the course is incompatible with their work related requirements.

To continue to receive Universal Credit the student must meet all of their conditionality requirements and meet the work related activities set including availability for work if that requirement applies.

They need to be prepared to rearrange or stop the study to complete work activities or take up work and they must not restrict their availability.

Break in a full time course of education

A student in full-time education may continue to get Universal Credit for a period that they take a break in their course if they:

- have taken a break from their course with the agreement of the education provider because they are ill or are caring for someone
- have recovered from an illness, or stopped caring for someone within the last year but have not yet returned to their course and they are not eligible for a grant or student loan during this period.

Part time education

A student in part time education may qualify for Universal Credit if they can meet the conditions of entitlement and their work related requirements.

Conditionality

Work related requirements for full time education exceptions

The following students who are able to claim UC must be placed in the No Work-Related Requirements regime (NWRR):

- a young person up to the age of 21 in non advanced education and without parental support
- a qualifying student receiving education where student income is being taken into account

Where the qualifying student in full time education does not have student income taken into account they must be placed in the Labour Market regime based on their other circumstances (i.e. as if not in full time education) and they will be expected to meet their work related requirements. .

Breaks in the Full Time course

Where a break in the course has been agreed and the student income is withdrawn/suspended, the claimant must move to the Labour Market regime that fits their other circumstances.

If the student income continues during the break or part of the break then No Work Related Requirements must continue to be applied during this period.

Any relaxation of work-related requirements will not apply during any long vacation (usually the summer holiday) when the claimant must be placed in the Labour Market regime based on their circumstances as if not in full time education.

Part Time Courses

Part time students, including post graduate degree students (with or without student income), do not need to meet the above Full time education exception criteria. They are eligible for Universal Credit and will be placed in the Labour Market regime that fits their circumstances.

However, they are expected to meet all their work related requirements including availability, and must manage any course attendance and work outside of this time.

Where the course is work related the coach may consider it a suitable work preparation activity.

Work preparation requirement

Courses of education and training can be treated as a work preparation requirement if the work coach is satisfied that the course will help the claimant move into work. The time spent on the course can be deducted from the hours of work search the claimant is expected to do.

Income

Student income

Students in advanced education can normally receive financial support through various educational loans, grants and bursaries, which provide for their basic maintenance and living expenses. These include:

- loans
- loans and a combination of grants or bursaries
- grants and/or bursaries

The maximum amount of loan or grant available to the claimant is the amount taken into account when calculating a universal credit award whether or not they take up this maximum amount:

- starting in the assessment period in which they start the course or where the course is for two years or more an assessment period in which the second or subsequent academic year; and
- stopping with the assessment period in which the course ends or the long vacation starts

The long vacation is the longest vacation during a course that is intended to last for two or more years and is for a period of one month or more. There is no student income taken into account for assessment periods that fall wholly within the long vacation.

Student Loans

A student may receive a maintenance loan for living costs. The maximum amount available to the student is the amount taken into account and divided by the number of assessment periods for which the claimant has or is treated as having an income. A monthly disregard of £110 is applied. Any loan paid in respect of tuition fees is ignored when calculating how much to take into account.

The full amount of student loan should be taken into account if the claimant could receive a loan but does not apply for it.

Student Loan and a Grant

Where the student receives a loan and a grant, the grant income is disregarded in full, unless it includes an amount for:

- rent met through the housing element
- an adult or child dependent that are paid for in the Universal Credit award.

Student Grant but no loan

Where the student receives a grant only, some of the income may be disregarded if payment is:

- for tuition or examination fees
- for disability
- for maintaining a home other than that at which they reside during the course if not met through the housing costs element
- for books and equipment
- for travel expenses incurred for course attendance
- for childcare costs if not met through the childcare costs element
- to meet the needs of another person but not a joint claimant or child dependant
- for additional expenditure in connection with term time residential study away from the students educational establishment

Any grant income left to be taken into account attracts the £110 monthly disregard.

Period of Education

For advanced education a person is classed as in education from the date they start their course until the last day of the course or earlier if they abandon it or are dismissed.

Abandons or Dismissals

Where a student abandons or is dismissed from the course, they are no longer a student from that date.

The student income will stop from the date of abandonment and not taken into account within their award.

Postgraduate Loans

Financial support for postgraduate loans is different depending on where you normally live.

Students who live in England

The amount treated for maintenance purposes of a Postgraduate loan is 30% of the maximum available. For courses starting:

- on or after 1 August 2016 a maximum loan of £10,000 is available. Students studying for 2, 3 or 4 academic years will get their first half of the loan in the first year and the rest in the second year. Therefore, some claimants may have the amount divided over two academic years.
- on or after 1 August 2017, the maximum amount is £10,280 for the whole course, divided equally across each year of the course.

Students who live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

A postgraduate loan available to students who ordinarily lives in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland is calculated and taken into account the same way as a loan for an undergraduate student.

see GOV.UK for the funding available in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#)

Definitions

Full Time course

The term full time applies to the course itself and not to the student. It is usually decided by the educational establishment or based on the usual time spent studying by a student. A person who attends a full time course on a part time basis is still a full time student.

Meaning of receiving full time education

Receiving education means undertaking a full-time course of advanced education or undertaking any other full-time course of study or training at an educational establishment for which a student loan or grant is provided for the person's maintenance.

Meaning of advanced

A course of advanced education means a course of study leading to:

- a postgraduate degree or comparable qualification
- a first degree or comparable qualification
- a diploma of higher education
- a higher national diploma; or

any other course of study of a standard above:

- advanced GNVQ or equivalent
- a Scottish higher/advanced higher national qualification

Meaning of non-advanced

Non-advanced education is any qualification up to A level, or equivalent. Which includes:

- National Qualification Framework level 3 or the Scottish Qualification framework level 6
- General Certificate of Education Advanced level (A Level)

- AS Level
- Advanced Diploma
- National Diploma, Certificate or Award
- Level 3 NVQ, Award, Certificate or Diploma

Meaning of Postgraduate

The course they are studying must be in the UK, it can be part time or full time and lead to a master's qualification such as:

- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Art (MA)
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Master of Research (MRes)
- Master of Law (LLM)
- Master of Letters (MLitt)
- Masters of Fine Art (MFA)
- Master of Education (MEd)

This is not a full list.