

## **Sector-based work academies**

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The sector-based work academy (sbwa) scheme is to help people who are ready to start a job, and need support to learn the skills and behaviours that employers in particular industries look for. Placements are designed to help claimants build confidence to improve their job prospects and enhance their CV, whilst helping employers in sectors with current local vacancies to fill them.

The scheme runs in England and Scotland. It is available to claimants aged 18 or over from day 1 of their claim. Sector-based work academy placements are intended for those relatively close to the labour market who don't have problems with numeracy, literacy or general employability skills. Participants are subject to all existing requirements for their labour-market regime whilst on the sbwa and remain on Universal Credit throughout.

Placements last up to 6 weeks and offer claimants training and work experience in a particular industry or area of work, for example retail, care, hospitality. The type of sbwa on offer will vary according to the local labour market. Placements are built around genuine current vacancies and consist of 3 elements:

- pre-employment training (PET)
- a work experience placement (WEP)
- a guaranteed job interview (GJI) – including for an apprenticeship, with an employer in the sector. In exceptional circumstances where the employer is unable to offer a GJI due to 'fair and open' recruitment policies, support should be given to help the claimant through the employer's recruitment processes

With the exception of the GJI, which cannot be held before the PET, the 3 elements can run in any order or be blended depending upon employer needs.

The employer or training provider may run an open day to promote the opportunity. Attendance at an sbwa open day is wholly voluntary.

### **Conditionality**

The decision for a claimant to participate in an sbwa is voluntary. Once they agree to start, some claimants may be required to complete certain elements. It is important the correct version of the referral letter is used, so claimants are aware of any mandatory requirements and the sanction consequences of not meeting those requirements.

The scheme is open to Universal Credit claimants and once they agree to participate, claimants in the:

- **Intensive work search regime** – are required to complete the PET and GJI
- **Light-touch regime** – if able to participate without jeopardising their existing work commitments, can attend an sbwa on a voluntary basis for example by attending part-time. The training provider will need to confirm that skills funding is available for in-work claimants, as this is not always the case
- **Work-preparation regime** – are required to complete the PET only
- **Work-focused interview regime** – can participate in an sbwa on a wholly voluntary basis

All sbwa must contain a WEP, which is available on a voluntary basis, but claimants are encouraged to take part wherever possible. Claimants will not be sanctioned if they decide not to take up the WEP opportunity.

Claimants in the intensive work search regime and work-preparation regime can be sanctioned if they fail to maintain standards of behaviour and are asked to leave because of gross misconduct. This applies at any time during their placement, including the WEP.

Claimants in the intensive work search regime who refuse a reasonable offer of a job or an apprenticeship following the GJI, may be sanctioned.

### **Compliance condition following an open-ended sanction**

The claimant should be encouraged to re-engage with the sbwa.

If a low-level sanction has been applied and the original sbwa is no longer running, an appropriate compliance condition is considered, for example a new requirement for a referral to another sbwa or training opportunity.

### **Other information**

A guide for employers on the sbwa scheme is available on GOV.UK:

[Sector-based work academies: employer guide](#)

Guidance on sbwa and other back-to-work schemes for JSA and Universal Credit claimants can also be found on GOV.UK:

[Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit back to work schemes](#)