

Going abroad

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Claimants must be in Great Britain (GB) on the day the Universal Credit claim was submitted. Claimants who travel abroad or have come back from abroad on the same day the claim is submitted may be eligible for Universal Credit.

If a claimant is unable to accept a claimant commitment and fails the good reason test because they are abroad on holiday, they will be required to make a new claim on their return to GB. This is because they do not have entitlement to Universal Credit if they are not available to accept their claimant commitment.

Temporary absences abroad

It is a general requirement that a claimant must be in GB to be entitled to Universal Credit but there are circumstances when a person is still entitled to Universal Credit whilst temporarily being absent from GB.

Claimants should notify Universal Credit of the intention to go abroad but this may not always happen especially if they are in the No Work Related Requirement group or the Working Enough work group. Claimants can go abroad on holiday for any reason for up to one month, but they must still satisfy their work related requirements on the claimant commitment.

When the claimant exceeds the period abroad of 1 month, Universal Credit are notified after the event and the reason for the trip abroad does not fall under the circumstances when 1 month can be extended, the assessment period in question must be reduced to nil. This prevents the claimant terminating their claim and having to make a new one.

There is no limit to the number of periods of up to 1 month allowed abroad each year. This is to reflect what was allowed within Tax Credits and so is aimed at working claimants, although this is available to all claimants.

An absence can be extended and in some specific circumstances work-related requirements may be 'switched-off'. If these exceptions do not apply, the claimant must still satisfy their work-related requirements and meet their claimant commitment.

Absences of less than one month do not require a referral to a decision maker unless the claimant has failed to comply with a requirement of the agreed claimant commitment.

If the claimant is abroad when they make a claim for Universal Credit but return within the first assessment period, they will be awarded Universal Credit from the date of declaration. If the claimant fails to provide evidence of the period abroad when asked, the claim will be closed after 14 days.

If a claimant goes abroad, they are treated as being abroad from the beginning of the assessment period in which the day after they left the UK falls.

The claim can be closed if there is no engagement or evidence provided by the claimant.

Although the law states that a claim for Universal Credit must be made from within GB, due to the design of the Universal Credit system, where a claim has been made from outside GB, Universal Credit will still be payable where the claimant returns to GB before the end of the first assessment period.

When a child or qualifying young person goes abroad, see When additional amounts for a child will not be paid

Circumstances where the 1-month period can be extended

The 1-month extension period can be applied in the following circumstances:

- bereavement
- medical treatment
- a claimant who is a mariner or continental shelf worker
- crown servants or those serving in HM Armed Forces

Bereavement

If a close relative dies abroad and it is unreasonable to expect the claimant to return to GB within the month, we can consider extending the absence for up to 2 months.

A close relative is a:

- partner
- child or qualifying young person the claimant is responsible for
- a close relative of the claimant, their partner, child or qualifying young person for whom the claimant or their partner is responsible

If the claimant can provide evidence of the death, their work-related requirements can be switched-off whilst they are abroad.

For further information, see Switching-off work availability and work-related activities

Medical treatment

If a claimant is receiving medical treatment or is accompanying their partner, child or a qualifying young person who is receiving such treatment, we can consider extending the absence for up to 6 months.

If the claimant can provide evidence of this, their work-related requirements can be switched-off whilst they are abroad.

For further information, see Switching-off work availability and work-related activities

Mariner or continental shelf worker

If a claimant is a mariner or continental shelf worker, we can consider extending the absence for up to 6 months.

Crown servants or those serving in HM Armed Forces

Crown servants or persons serving in HM Forces who are posted overseas do not have to meet the basic requirement to be in GB if they are:

- carrying out their overseas duties, and
- were habitually resident in the UK immediately before the first posting (or the first of consecutive postings)

If a partner accompanies a joint claimant, they also do not need to meet the basic requirement to be in GB. However, they must still satisfy their work-related requirements and meet their claimant commitment whilst they are abroad.

Holidays

For Labour Market conditionality purposes, there is no concept of a holiday either at home or abroad. Being on holiday is not a good reason for not carrying out work search, work preparation or availability requirements.

A claimant who is on holiday must continue to meet their work-related requirements as set out in their claimant commitment.

For claimants in the Intensive Work Search regime, they must be prepared to end their absence abroad (even if currently abroad) to attend a job interview or take up a job offer.

They will still need to produce evidence of their work search and complete other activities documented in their claimant commitment.

If a claimant is unable to attend a mandatory appointment such as a Work Search Review, the work coach can use their discretion to rearrange this if they decide the claimant is still available for work and able to undertake their work-related requirements.