

Claim closure

Northern Ireland staff only - please use the Universal Credit National Insurance guidance for Claim closure and reclaims

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Considering claim closure

Claim closure (otherwise known as award ends) is when a claimant is no longer entitled to Universal Credit (UC), and we will consider closing their claim.

There can be several reasons for considering the closing of a claim including the following circumstances:

- fails to book Initial Evidence Interview
- fails to attend their Initial Evidence Interview
- fails to attend their Habitual Residence Test
- fails to attend their First Commitments Meeting
- fails to attend their Initial Gateway Intervention (where the claimant has reported self-employment at the start of a new claim)
- hasn't accepted their Claimant Commitment within 7 days
- hasn't done annual verification
- has had a previous claim closed down by specialist team colleagues (after establishing a risk to identity details using the claim closure reason 'Has been flagged for identity or security reasons')
- has reclaimed but not booked the First Commitment meeting
- withdraws their claim
- moves abroad

- has passed away
- has suffered bereavement of:
 - a partner
 - child
 - person for whom they were the carer
 - non-dependants in some circumstances
- moves into full-time education
- is in legal custody or a prisoner
- fails their Habitual Residence Test
- fails to provide evidence
- fails to review their details
- has been matched to an incorrect National Insurance number
- has capital over £16,000
- isn't eligible or entitled (new claim)
- has their claim suspended for 30 days
- has a nil award due to earnings
- is the ineligible partner once part of a couple whose joint claim has been split into single claims (for more information, see Ineligible partner)
- did not meet requirements of Universal Credit claim review (UCR), when closing a claim, this is only for use by UCR staff

These are examples and not a full list.

Before closing the claim

Checks must be made in order to consider whether the claim should be closed immediately or deferred:

- is there a history of complex needs?
- has the claimant accepted their claimant commitment?
- were the appointment details correct on Diary management tool
- has there been a Mandatory Reconsideration?
- does a duplicate claim exist?
- is there a recent journal entry to explain the circumstances? If there is a journal entry, checks must be made to see whether the claimant has made contact (if there is an appointment, depending on the circumstances, the appointment can remain booked and the claim remains open)

These are examples and not a full list.

Claims not to be closed

Universal Credit claims must not be closed when:

- the claim been referred to a specialist team
- they are with specialist teams or suspended
- a claimant fails to attend a Personal Security Number only appointment

Claimant fails to book their Initial Evidence Interview

If the claimant has failed to book their Initial Evidence Interview (IEI), checks must be made to determine if:

- the claimant has complex needs and may need support to book the appointment
- they made their declaration
- there are any other outstanding appointments
- the claimant has accepted an auto-generated claimant commitment

To ensure that a claimant receives their first payment of UC on time, they are encouraged to book their IEI at the earliest opportunity.

If a claimant fails to book their IEI, their claim remains open for 1 calendar month from the date of their declaration. The claimant is automatically prompted 7 days after the date of declaration to book their appointment. If no further contact is made, the claim is closed 1 month from the date of their declaration

To ensure the claim is not closed too early if no further contact is made, the claim is closed **1 calendar month plus 1 day** from the date of their declaration.

If the claimant re-books the appointment within that time but fails to attend again, the 1 calendar month will still count from the date of declaration. See Fail to attend.

Claimant fails to attend their Initial Evidence Interview, Initial Gateway intervention (or Habitual Residence Test)

If a claimant fails to attend their:

- Initial Evidence Interview
- Initial Gateway intervention (where they have reported self-employment at the start of a new claim)
- Habitual Residence Test appointment

The claimant is notified to make contact to book another appointment. If there is no contact, their claim is closed **1 calendar month plus 1 day** from their date of declaration.

If the claimant re-books the appointment within that time but fails to attend again, the 1 calendar month will still count from the date of declaration. See Fail to attend.

If claim closure is to be deferred, a review date is set to make sure the claim closure is reconsidered. There is no set policy on how long claim closure can be deferred or how many times. Discretion is applied in each case depending on the individual circumstances.

Claimant fails ID verification due to an identity or security concern

The claim closure reason 'Has been flagged for identity or security reasons' must not be selected as this is for the use of specialist teams only.

Claimant fails the Habitual Residence Test

A decision maker considers whether a claimant has failed the Habitual Residence Test (HRT). A claim must not be closed until the decision maker has given the claimant the opportunity to provide all the evidence to enable them to make the decision.

Claimants have a minimum of 1 calendar month from the date of request to provide evidence before the claim is closed. Claims are only closed if it is:

- a single claim and the claimant has failed the HRT
- a couple claim and both claimants have failed the HRT

Claimant fails to provide evidence

A claimant must be given 1 calendar month (or a longer period if considered reasonable) to provide information or evidence in connection with their new claim.

The month starts from the date the claimant is notified that the evidence is required. This means the date the claimant completed the declaration. If they fail to provide the evidence, their claim is closed **1 calendar month plus 1 day** from the date the evidence was requested.

If further evidence is required for a new claim and the claimant is notified, consider whether the remaining time of the original month allowed to provide evidence is reasonable or whether that period should be extended.

If the claimant fails to provide evidence of their identity following an IEI and fails biographical questions, the claim cannot be closed until **1 calendar month plus 1 day** after the request for evidence was made.

If a claimant has or reports a change of circumstances and is asked to provide evidence, they have 14 days from the date it was requested to provide it. This period may be extended to allow the claimant time to comply with the request. If they fail to provide the evidence, the claim may be fully suspended.

Where evidence cannot be provided because it no longer exists or cannot be obtained, the claimant is deemed to have satisfied the request.

If the claimant still fails to provide the evidence after the time limit or suspension, their claim will be closed.

Claimant fails to book their First Commitments Meeting

The claimant has 1 month from the date of claim to book a First Commitments Meeting. If they do not, and they do not have complex needs, the claim is closed following the same process for failing to book the Initial Evidence Interview.

If a claimant has a complex need that means using the service presents barriers, they must be contacted by their preferred method of contact.

Claimant fails to attend their First Commitments Meeting

If the claimant fails to attend their First Commitments Meeting and does not have complex needs, their claim must be closed the day after the appointment. The termination date is the date of declaration and the claimant will be notified that their claim has been closed.

If a claimant has a complex need that means using our service presents barriers they must be contacted by their preferred method of contact.

Claimant fails to accept the Claimant Commitment

A claimant is required to accept their claimant commitment to complete their UC claim. If they do not accept their commitments, there is no entitlement to Universal Credit.

For auto-generated Claimant Commitments, a claimant is reminded to accept this within 7 days of receiving the prompt. For tailored Claimant Commitments, a claimant is required to accept this within 7 days of their First Commitments Meeting

If they don't accept the claimant commitment and do not have complex needs, their claim must be closed the day after. The termination date is the date of declaration and the claimant will be notified that their claim has been closed.

A claimant who refuses to accept their claimant commitment can ask for a cooling-off period or a second opinion.

If a claimant has a complex need that means using the Service presents barriers, they must be contacted by their preferred method of contact.

Claimant fails to complete their annual review

Annual verification applies to claimants who have remained in the Intensive Work Search and Light Touch regimes continuously for 12 assessment periods from the start of the assessment period when they were allocated to their regime. This could be from new claim or following a change in regime.

They must re-declare the circumstances of their claim to verify that the claim details held for them are still correct. If they fail to review their circumstances within the allocated time, their claim will be closed and they will be notified of their right of appeal.

If a claimant has a complex need that means using the Service presents barriers, they must be contacted by their preferred method of contact.

Universal Credit claim review (UCR) staff may now use the claim closure reason 'did not meet requirements of UCR' when closing a claim, recording the reason for its use. This closure reason is only to be used by the Universal Credit claim review (UCR) Team.

Nil award due to earnings or other income

Most cases in which earnings or other income exceed UC entitlement will close automatically.

However, certain exceptions apply (for example, telephone claims or when a claimant receives a 'nil' award due to earnings or other income during their first assessment period).

If the 'Consider closing claim' to-do is generated, the Business as Usual process must be followed.

Claimant requests claim to be withdrawn

Claims must not be closed if they are with specialist teams or suspended.

Requests ideally should be made in person or via the Journal. Telephone requests can be made but there will be no audit trail. A note must be made in the claimant history of the date and time the request was received - then the claim can be closed from that date.

Both members of a joint claim must request and confirm if a joint claim is to be closed at claimant's request.

Closing the claim

If the claim is to be closed, all outstanding appointments must be cancelled. The claimant will receive a decision notification that the claim has been closed including consideration of their appeal rights. A journal note entry is added to this effect.

Duplicate accounts (claims)

If there is more than 1 active Universal Credit account with a matching National Insurance number, a prompt will be sent to check both accounts. If the duplicate account is an error, the older of the live accounts should remain live. If fraud is suspected, a referral must be made.