

DWP staff as Claimants: Guidance

Contents

Introduction

Principles

New claims made on or after 21 February 2024

Existing DWP Claimants on or after 21 February 2024

Accessing DWP records

DWP staff using Departmental IT systems to access their online Universal Credit claim

Service Centre staff

Existing Universal Credit claimants who start working for the DWP

Introduction

Universal Credit is a single monthly payment that replaces existing benefits including Working Tax Credits. With the rollout of Universal Credit, a number of DWP staff could become Universal Credit claimants. Also, as new staff are recruited into DWP, some may already be claiming Universal Credit.

This guidance provides information regarding DWP staff claiming Universal Credit.

See also [DWP Employees Who Are Universal Credit Claimants](#).

Principles

DWP staff who are claimants of Universal Credit (UC) are treated the same as other UC claimants by the department. Equally, the department treats staff claiming UC exactly the same as any other DWP staff.

For DWP staff members who claimed UC prior to 21 February 2024, the individual member of staff decided if they wished to identify that they are a UC claimant. Line managers did not need to know which of their staff had claimed UC and there is no marker or other indication on the UC record that identifies them as a member of DWP staff.

A member of staff had the flexibility to choose which office they attended for a face-to-face interview, as do all claimants within reason. The appointment booking system allocated the jobcentre based on a claimant's postcode, but this could be changed to an alternative jobcentre. At any time, DWP staff can request an alternative agent to administer their claim and ask to be seen in a discreet area of the office. Requesting any changes remains the responsibility of the claimant.

DWP staff are subject to the same travel expenses rules as other claimants. A claimant who requests to attend a different office to the one allocated to them for UC is not eligible to make a claim for expenses.

New claims made on or after 21 February 2024

DWP staff who make a new claim for Universal Credit (UC) can, if they wish, ask for their claim to be handled by the new dedicated Staff as Claimants team. As UC is a household benefit, this service will be extended to a partner of the DWP staff member included on the claim, if the DWP staff member decides to opt to use the dedicated team.

If the DWP staff member wishes to use this service, just before submitting their new claim for UC they should call the Staff as Claimants team on 0800 121 4649. During this call, the DWP staff member should submit their UC claim and the Staff as Claimants agent will then assign the UC claim to their team. This will ensure that any action taken on the claim is completed by the dedicated team. This number will also be available for the DWP staff member to use throughout the claim journey, though most contacts will be digital.

As with all UC claims, most interactions will be online or by phone, but exceptionally, where a face-to-face appointment is required, the jobcentre office location can be discussed and agreed before the appointment is made.

DWP staff claiming UC are required to meet the usual conditionality regimes and work-related requirements, like any other UC claimant.

If a DWP staff member claiming UC ask for an increase or decrease in working hours, this is considered in the same way as requests from any other member of staff. UC claimants will not be treated more or less favourably than other staff.

See DWP Employees Who Are Universal Credit Claimants if the employee asks for support to increase their earnings.

Policies for staff to take up additional or secondary employment are in place and are sufficiently flexible to support arrangements for staff who claim UC.

DWP staff claiming UC are subject to the same sanctions as any other UC claimant. Any issues resulting from non-compliance are dealt with through the reconsideration, appeal and complaints process.

A DWP member of staff not complying with the UC regime is dealt with in the same way as any other claimant would be. Disciplinary and grievance procedures cannot be considered.

Any DWP member of staff found guilty of committing UC benefit fraud will be handled under current standards of behaviour guidance.

Existing DWP Claimants on or after 21 February 2024

DWP staff currently claiming UC, and those making reclaims, will continue to have their claim handled using the existing procedures in the short term. They will be invited to have their UC claim handled by the dedicated team in the future. They

should not contact the dedicated team until they are invited to use the new service; this will happen in an incremental way in due course.

Accessing DWP records

The following applies to all DWP staff and is taken from the existing DWP Standards of Behaviour Procedures:

“You must not under any circumstances access, or attempt to access, your own DWP records or the records of friends, family members or ex-partners on any departmental computer, paper file or benefit system, irrespective of your motivation.

You must not access the records of other customers including celebrities, even to find an address or birthday without authorisation and a legitimate reason.

Access without authorisation or legitimate reason is a disciplinary offence. Failure to comply is extremely serious. It will result in disciplinary action and can lead to dismissal. Staff can access their own record on the department’s Single Operating Platform (SOP) as part of the self-service function.”

DWP staff using departmental IT systems to access their online Universal Credit claim

The standard process to make and maintain a Universal Credit claim is by online self-service. If DWP staff wish to access their online accounts using the department’s IT systems, they must log out of their agent account and log in to their claimant account via GOV.UK.

Under no circumstances should a member of staff access their own account whilst logged in as an agent.

For more information see the DWP Acceptable Use Policy which sets out the conditions for official and personal use of DWP information technology.

Service Centre staff

DWP staff who claim Universal Credit must never work on any aspect of their own case even if the case has been allocated to them under case management principles. This also applies if the case belongs to a relative, friend, current team member or a colleague/previous team member/colleague you have worked closely with in the last 12 months.

In any of these circumstances the line manager must be informed immediately, and the case reallocated to a different member of staff within the same site. Cases should only be reallocated to a different site in extremely rare circumstances.

Staff are not obliged to inform their line manager they are claiming Universal Credit but must still request the case be reallocated.

If a member of staff is a Universal Credit claimant and does not want their line manager to know this, that person can be told that information has been received about a case that is not appropriate for them to handle.

If a member of staff who is a Universal Credit claimant accidentally accesses their own record or the record of someone they know, they must inform their line manager immediately.

Existing Universal Credit claimants who start working for the DWP

All the principles, guidance and procedures above apply to new and existing DWP staff and it remains up to the individual to decide whether or not to inform their line manager that they are a Universal Credit claimant.

If a member of staff is in a Labour Market regime that requires them to work with a work coach, this will continue.

For more information about DWP staff as claimants, see [DWP employees who are Universal Credit claimants](#).