

Work Allowance and Earnings Taper rate: calculating earnings: Guidance

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Calculating the amount of earnings

All earned income including self-employed earnings, benefits treated as earnings and earnings relating to an ineligible partner, are taken into account in the relevant assessment period when determining entitlement to Universal Credit.

For information about reporting earnings, see Real Time Information and Self-reported earnings.

Work Allowance

The Work Allowance is the amount some households are allowed to earn before the amount of Universal Credit they receive is affected.

To be eligible for the Work Allowance, the claimant or partner must either have:

- responsibility for a child or qualifying young person (see Who is responsible for a Child)
- Limited Capability for Work or Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Activity

Foster carers are not treated as being responsible for a child and as such are not entitled to a Work Allowance in Universal Credit.

There are two set levels of the Work Allowance used in the calculation of earnings in the assessment period:

- Higher amount when there are no housing costs included or they receive Housing Benefit because they live in supported accommodation
- Lower amount when housing costs are included, or they receive Housing Benefit because they live in temporary accommodation

For amounts see monthly rates guidance

A change in the Work Allowance rate is treated in the same way as other changes of circumstances. The Work Allowance rate at the end of the assessment period is the one that applies for the whole assessment period.

When the Work Allowance rate changes due to uprating (the first Monday following 6 April), the increase takes effect from the assessment period that starts on or after the day the uprating occurs.

The Work Allowance is deducted before the Earnings Taper rate is applied.

Earnings Taper rate

The Earnings Taper is the rate at which Universal Credit will gradually reduce as earnings increase. The Earnings Taper rate is 55%

Only earnings above the Work Allowance level are subject to the Earnings Taper rate.

Earnings (or where eligible, earnings above the Work Allowance rate) are multiplied by 55% to give an amount to be taken into account against the Universal Credit award.

Unreimbursed work expenses

When a claimant is working or starts work, they may have some one-off costs to pay that their employer will not reimburse them for. This might be for a uniform, travel, licenses or equipment etc.

These unreimbursed work expenses may be offset against the claimant's Universal Credit payment.