Universal Credit

WS017 Initial Work Search Interview

Facilitator Led Brief
v11.5

Department for Work and Pensions

Contents

The following table details all the topics and timings for WS017

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Total duration of all topics		**344**

Important Information:

Please note that not all job roles are required to complete every topic within this module.

The next page has full details of which topics are required by each Job Role.

The Universal Credit Learning Journey has a full list of all the learning modules required for each Job Role and the order in which they should be delivered/completed.

This can be viewed on the LDO Support Site.

Job Role	Learning Required	Duration
Work Coach Work Services Manager System & Process Support	All Topics	344 minutes
Demand Management Officer	Topic 01	20 minutes

Show Slide 01 – WS017 Initial Work Search Interview

Before delivery of this module you should familiarise yourself with the contents of the Facilitators Preparation Pack.

Module Aims and Objectives

Show Slide 2 – Module Aims and Objectives

Aims

The aim of this module is to provide you with the knowledge to conduct an Initial Work Search interview (WSI), record information on the Work Services Platform (WSP) and produce the relevant Claimant Commitment and Commitment Pack.

Objectives

By the end of this module, with the aid of any reference material, you will be able to:

- state what the four main Conditionality Groups are
- introduce the All Work Related Requirements (AWRR) Claimant Commitment
- explain how the AWRR Claimant Commitment affects eligibility to Universal Credit
- explain what information is required for pre-interview preparation
- determine the claimant’s job goals and skills for claimants in the AWRR Conditionality Group
- diagnose the claimant’s capability and circumstance for claimants in the AWRR Conditionality Group
- set work search activities, work preparation actions, and other work related activities for claimants in the AWRR Conditionality Group

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Show Slide 3 – Aims and Objectives (Cont)

- state why continuing work coach engagement is so important, especially for claimants reporting a health condition

- state how you will set the right balance with requirements that keep claimants engaged but which reflect a clear understanding of the claimants circumstances
- state some of the skills you will use to identify what additional support a claimant needs to ensure their success in their preparation for and search for work
- state what tools are available to you, to help you signpost or advice a claimant regarding support they will need to help them achieve their goals
- set the attendance requirements

Show Slide 4 – Aims and Objectives (Cont)

- state the benefits of setting up a Universal Jobmatch account
- gather and record the information required from the claimant on the Work Search Platform (WSP)
- explain the requirements for committing to the steps on the Claimant Commitment
- explain the sanctions that may be applied if the claimant fails to complete the steps on their Claimant

Commitment

- state the action to take if a claimant does not accept their Claimant Commitment
- explain how to produce a Claimant Commitment
- state the information required to complete a Commitment Pack
- state the action required if a partner under 18 joins the household

Topic 01
Overview of Conditionality

Show Slide 5 – Topic 01 Overview of Conditionality

Show Slide 6 – Topic Aims and Objectives

Aims

The aim of this topic is to check your understanding of Universal Credit and Conditionality Groups.

Objectives

By the end of this topic, with the aid of any reference material, you will be able to:

- list the four main conditionality groups
- state which claimants are part of the Light Touch Regime

Show Slide 07 – Overview

Universal Credit is designed to ensure that, for people who can, work is still the best route out of poverty and an escape from benefit dependence. The aim of Universal Credit is to support claimants to find work, more work and to increase their earnings.

The conditionality regime refocuses the relationship between the claimant and the Department. The relationship must be centred on a ‘contractual’ concept that provides a range of support, in return for claimant’s meeting a clear set of responsibilities.

The sanctions regime underpins the relationship and encourages compliance. A key element of the relationship is about helping the claimant to take responsibility for preparing for work, finding work and taking up more and better paid work.

The Claimant Commitment is at the heart of this personalised approach. Compliance with requirements, such as active work search and engagement with the Department, increases the chances that claimants find work more quickly than they would otherwise.

The Universal Credit approach ensures there is clarity about claimant requirements and consequences.

The Claimant Commitment will address this, setting out all requirements and consequences in one place, ensuring claimants understand what they have to do.

Note

The Claimant Commitment details the actions a claimant is required to take related to their conditionality.

Conditionality Groups

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Show Slide 08 – Conditionality Groups

All claimants are placed in one of four main conditionality groups, and the policy aims for each group will differ. The groups are:

- No Work-Related Requirements group
- Work Focused Interviews Only group
- Work Preparation group
- All-Work Related Requirements group

We will look at the All Work Related Requirement group in detail throughout this learning.

Eligibility

When a claimant makes a claim in an area delivering Universal Credit their circumstances will determine whether they are eligible to claim Universal Credit.

Eligibility for Universal Credit will vary from region to region. Some claimants will be eligible only if they are single and fall into the AWRR Conditionality Group. Others for example will be eligible if they are part of a couple.

If a claimant has a change in circumstances they will remain on Universal Credit regardless of the initial eligibility criteria.

However their Conditionality Group and therefore their responsibilities may change according to the circumstances.

Light Touch Regime

The Light Touch Regime refers to claimants in the AWRR Conditionality Group who require only a ‘light touch’ to motivate and encourage them to increase their earnings as quickly as possible and become independent from Universal Credit.

Claimants in the Light Touch Regime will have earnings between the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) and the Conditionality Earnings Threshold (CET). This includes claimants with:

- individual earnings above their AET
- no individual earnings and in a household with earnings above the AET
- individual earnings below the individual AET but in a household with earnings above the household AET.

Show Slide 09 – Light Touch Regime

The Light Touch Regime includes:

- each claimant in this group having a Claimant Commitment, which sets out clear expectations to increase their earnings and is tailored, as far as possible, to their specific circumstances
- the requirement for claimants to maintain a record of the steps they have taken to try and increase their earnings
- maximising out IT services (particularly Work Services Platform (WSP) and Universal Jobmatch) to automate, as far as possible, the monitoring of a claimant's activity against their set expectations

It is mandatory for claimants in the light touch regime to participate in 2 Work Search Interviews (by telephone) at day 1 and week 8 in the regime, only re-arranged as face to face when phone contact is unsuccessful or the claimant has failed the security validation. The timing for a light touch interview is 30 minutes.

Participation in these interviews is the only mandatory requirement within the regime - with potential use of sanctions for non-compliance.

Once a claimant reaches their individual or household AET work search and availability requirements are suspended – legally they cannot be applied; and light-touch regime policy means that work preparation activity is set as voluntary actions.

Claimants are placed in the Light Touch regime **only** where it is reasonable to expect them to earn more, based on their personal circumstances.

We deliver the light touch regime to:

- set out expectation for claimants to increase their earnings – ensuring they understand what is expected of them
- get claimants to think about their best opportunities to find more or better paid work – the quickest and most realistic route to earning more
- agree the steps the claimant should consider taking to achieve their goals i.e. any voluntary actions that would help them to progress to earning more

Further information on the Light Touch Regime can be found by entering 'Light Touch' into search in About Universal Credit

Current AET rates can be found in About Universal Credit.

The upper earnings threshold is the number of hours they are expected to be available for employment (using a maximum of 35 hours for this calculation) x the National Minimum Wage.

For claimants in the Work Focused Interviews Only or Work Preparation Conditionality Groups it is 16 hours x the National Minimum Wage.

Topic Summary

Show Slide 10 – Topic Summary

In this topic you have learned:

- what the four main conditionality groups are
- state which claimants are part of the Light Touch Regime

Topic 2
Purpose and Pre-Interview Preparation

Show Slide 11 – Topic 2 Purpose and Pre-Interview Preparation

Show Slide 12 – Topic Aims and Objectives

Aims

The aim of this topic is to explain the role and responsibilities of the Work Coach when preparing for and conducting the Initial Work Search Interview.

Objectives

By the end of this topic, with the aid of any reference material, you will be able to:

- state the purpose of the Initial Work Search Interview (WSI)
- outline the role of the Work Coach during the Initial WSI
- explain the structure of the Initial WSI
- identify key areas for pre-interview preparation

Show Slide 13 – Purpose of the Initial WSI – All Work Related

The purpose of the Initial WSI is to:

- set requirements that, if complied with, give the claimant the best possible prospects of finding paid work, taking into account their capability and circumstances. Requirements must be set in line with legislation, guidance and agreed national/local journeys
- ensure the claimant understands the requirements they must meet and the consequences (sanctions) of any failure to comply
- ensure the claimant is committed to complying with their requirements and motivated to find work

Slide 12 outlines the purpose of the Initial WSI. The following slides give further detail of the role of the Work Coach in the Initial WSI.

The Role of a Work Coach in the Initial WSI

Show Slide 14 – The Role of a Work Coach in the Initial WSI - AWRR

During the Initial WSI a Work Coach will:

- introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the interview
- check the claimant has been placed in the correct Conditionality Group
- cover the core elements

Show Slide 15 – The Core Elements of an Interview

The interview will cover the core elements leading to a set of requirements to be recorded in the Claimant Commitment. These are:

- information gather and diagnosis of claimant circumstances
- identifying the work a claimant is expected to look and be available for
- establishing work search requirements
- establishing work-preparation requirements

- establishing on-going contact requirements

Show Slide 16 – The Role of a Work Coach in the Initial WSI

- put in place a strong compliance regime that is appropriate for each individual claimant
- create an individually tailored Claimant Commitment
- ensure the claimant understands the consequences of not complying with their Claimant Commitment
- ensure the claimant accepts the Claimant Commitment
- take the necessary action when a claimant does not accept their Claimant Commitment
- determine the appropriate Interventions for the claimant i.e. attendance requirements, which includes subsequent interviews and Work Search Reviews

These activities will be considered in more detail, later.

Show Slide 17 – Outputs from Initial WSI

The outputs from the Initial WSI are:

- the Claimant Commitment
- the Commitment Pack

Lead a 10 minute discussion around the statement below:

'Each time a new work related activity is set, the claimant must be informed about the consequences of non compliance and the benefits of compliance.'

Ensure the following is brought out:

- compliance with requirements increases the claimants chances of gaining employment or increasing their earnings
- sanctions are in place to encourage claimants to do what is reasonable to look for work
- there will always be a consequence of failing to meet a requirement
- cultural change for Work Coaches/Assistant Work Coaches to fully explain the impact of non compliance and the benefits of complying
- for sanctions to work the **potential** sanction should be communicated clearly to the claimant when setting requirements. The Claimant Commitment should set out the potential sanctions and it is expected that the Work Coach will discuss this and ensure the claimant understands

- the claimant needs to be clear on why sanctions are a part of Universal Credit, how they work and what they need to do in order to avoid a sanction
- where escalation has occurred an explanation of the overall sanction period outstanding should be provided to the claimant
- an explanation of the options and support available to the claimant including reconsideration and Recoverable Hardship Payment and Personal Budgeting support
- if the claimant has multiple sanctionable failures, each failure should be explained to the claimant

We will now look at the Pre-Interview Preparation and the Introduction and Information Gather for the Initial WSI. The other elements are covered in later topics of this learning.

Show Slide 18 – Pre-interview Preparation

The use of the Initial WSI Checklist is not mandatory, although it is recommended that it is used in order to be certain that all relevant actions are completed before the interview finishes.

Refer the participants to Handout 01 – Initial WSI Checklist. Inform participants that completing this

checklist is not mandatory.

Any Sanctionable failures which occurred on or after 22 October 2012 may impact on the current Universal Credit Claim.

Why is it important for you do the pre-interview preparation?

Thorough pre-interview preparation will help to consider the key points and approach for the interview by:

- **identifying and addressing any outstanding issues from previous claims**
- **noting any JSA sanctions imposed for failures occurring on or after 22 October 2012 this will also need to include ESA sanctions imposed for failures on or after 03 December 2012 for those with limited capability for work (LCW)**
- **identifying if the claimant needs to be referred early or re-referred to any mandatory provision they were participating in**

- **establishing if the claimant has any special/individual requirements that you would have to accommodate**

- **considering the key points for the interview**

This list is not exhaustive.

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Show Slide 19 – How to Start and Complete the Interview on WSP

Before you start the Initial WSI, in the claimant record on WSP:

- select Appointment History from the Navigation menu on the left hand side. This will show a list box in the claimant record.

- select hyperlink ‘to load appointment records click here’ within the list box, this will bring up a list of all booked appointments for the claimant

- open the appointment (double select/click)

- from the Ribbon select - Start Appointment. The status of the appointment will be updated to Started and the Actual Start date and time will be populated automatically. The appointment record must be left open whilst all other actions are completed in WSP

To close the appointment record on WSP:

- select Complete Appointment button on the Ribbon. The status of the appointment is set to completed and the Actual End date and time will be populated automatically. The Actual Duration will also be calculated by WSP and displayed in minutes
- select Save and Close button on the Ribbon

Topic Summary

Show Slide 20 – Topic Summary

In this topic you have learned:

- the purpose of the Initial Work Search Interview
- the role of the Work Coach during the Work Search Interview
- the structure of the Work Search Interview
- key areas for pre-interview preparation