

UCDMA001 Part A Sanctions  
Workbook  
Topic 04 – Reasons for  
Sanctions

May 2016

## Timing

It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete this topic.

## Learning Objectives

When you complete this topic you will be able to:

- state the different sanction levels
- list the sanctionable doubts; and
- state the fixed duration of each sanction

## Learning Points

This topic covers the following areas:

- sanctions
- sanction levels

## Reasons for Sanctions

In the Introduction we found out that sanctions aim to act as a deterrent to non-compliance with work-related requirements.

Research shows that they play a vital role in encouraging claimants to comply with requirements that are designed to help them move into or prepare for work.

The Universal Credit sanctions regime is designed to encourage engagement with these requirements.

Claimants should be told about the consequences of non-compliance. They will also be told about how they could receive tougher sanctions for repeated non-compliance.

As you have already discovered, each Universal Credit claimant will fall into one of four conditionality groups. The groups define the work-related requirements that can be imposed on them.

Remember, it is a condition of entitlement to Universal Credit that a claimant must accept a Claimant Commitment. The Claimant Commitment sets out clearly defined and sustained work-related requirements, and the consequences of non-compliance.



More information on The Claimant Commitment and the Work Related Groups can be found in Topic 01 and Topic 02.

## Sanctions and Reduction Periods

When a claimant is sanctioned in Universal Credit there will be a reduction in the amount of the amount payable.

## Sanction Levels

To support the Universal Credit sanctions regime there are four levels of sanction. These are:

- higher level sanctions
- medium level sanctions
- low level sanctions
- lowest level sanctions



UC DMA002 Sanction Length Workbook will cover the following in more detail:

- reduction amounts and when they can take effect from
- sanction periods
- the escalation process for repeated non-compliance

## Higher Level Sanctions

Higher level sanctions will only apply to claimants who are subject to the all work-related requirements.

A higher level sanction will be imposed on claimants who:

- cease paid work or lose pay through misconduct
- cease paid work or lose pay voluntarily without good reason
- fail to apply for a particular vacancy without good reason
- fail to take up an offer of paid work without good reason

The fixed durations for higher level sanctions are 91 days, 182 days and 1095 days. The sanction duration increases in length with repeated non-compliance.



For eligible 16-17 year olds, the fixed durations are 14 days and 28 days.

There will be exceptions to these fixed periods for pre-claim failures. These are failures which occur before a claimant applies for Universal Credit:

- failure to take up an offer of paid work for no good reason
- ceasing paid work or losing pay through misconduct
- ceasing paid work or losing pay voluntarily for no good reason

In these cases the sanction period may be reduced:

- where the employment was for a fixed period, such as a short term contract
- where there has been a gap between the date of failure and the date of claim

Because pre-claim failures are those that occur before a claim is made, a claimant who is re-awarded Universal Credit following a pre-claim failure cannot be sanctioned because of the way their employment ended.



Claimants have two options for returning to Universal Credit. They can either make a fresh claim or if within 6 months of payment of Universal Credit ceasing they can notify a change in their circumstances and their Universal Credit can be re-awarded without them having to make a claim.

## Medium Level Sanctions

Medium level sanctions will apply only to claimants who are subject to all work-related requirements.

A medium level sanction will be imposed on claimants who, without good reason, fail to:

- undertake reasonable work search action
- be able and willing immediately to take up paid work (or more paid work, or better paid work)

The fixed durations for medium level sanctions are 28 days and 91 days.



For eligible 16-17 year olds, the fixed durations are 7 days and 14 days.

## Low Level Sanctions

Low level sanctions will apply to claimants who are in:

- the all work-related requirements group
- the work preparation and work-focused interview group



Claimants who are subject to Work Focused Interview group are subject to lowest level sanctions

You have already found out what kinds of action may be specified as a work preparation requirement. If you need to refresh your memory, refer to Topic 03.



Please note that at no point should a claimant be sanctioned for not participating on a Youth Contract work experience opportunity. The only reason that claimants may be sanctioned whilst participating is for gross misconduct.



A low level sanction will be imposed on claimants who, without good reason, fail to:

- undertake specified work search action
- comply with a work preparation requirement
- comply with a work-focused/work search interview requirement
- comply with a requirement to provide evidence or confirm compliance
- comply with a connected requirement relating to interviews and verification compliance including the provision of information and evidence
- comply with a requirement to report a specified change of circumstance (this will relate to failure to report the loss of a job)

There are two components to a low level sanction. The first component is an open ended period. The second component is a fixed period of 7, 14 or 28 days.

You have already read about how to calculate the open ended period.



This will equally apply to eligible 16 and 17 year olds.  
However, the fixed period will be 7 days only and will not apply to the first failure.

## Lowest Level Sanctions

A lowest level sanction will apply to claimants who are subject to work-focused interview requirements only.

A lowest level sanction will be imposed on claimants who, without good reason, fail to participate in a work-focused interview.

A lowest level sanction will be open ended until:

- the day before the date the claimant meets the compliance condition i.e. attends, or agrees to attend, a work-focused interview, or
- the day before the date the claimant moves to the no work related requirements group, or
- the day the award terminates



This will also apply to eligible 16 -17 olds.

## Recoverable Hardship Payment

A Recoverable Hardship Payment is an extra payment that a claimant or couple can apply for if their Universal Credit is reduced by a sanction or penalty.

They must show they cannot meet their household's immediate, basic and essential needs because of the sanction or penalty. It is the claimant's responsibility to prove hardship and to show they have made every effort to improve their household's circumstances.

Claimants subject to a lowest sanction and single 16 and 17 year old claimants have no access to hardship.

If a claimant reports hardship, it is also relevant to explore other means of supporting the claimant by Personal Budgeting Support.



Further information about Recoverable Hardship Payments and Personal Budgeting Support can be found in 'Understanding Universal Credit'.



The Sanctions Hub is a central information source to assist you when considering sanctionable failures.

This could include identifying, referring, explaining and notifying a sanction decision.

The Sanctions Hub contains integral links to KM which will allow you to quickly access the overviews and steps needed when considering sanctions.

For Sanctionable Failures relating to Fail to Attend for claimants in the All Work Related Requirements (AWRR) Intensive Work Search and AWRR Light Touch conditionality regime see the Fail To Attend Overview.

## Summary

In this topic you have learned about:

- sanctionable failures
- sanction levels; and
- fixed durations of sanctions

## End of Topic