



**UCDMA023  
Universal Credit  
Sanctions Review  
Case Studies –  
Service Centre**

**v10.2(Rev)**

# Topic 01

## Introduction



# Module Aims and Objectives

This workshop aims to provide you with an opportunity to explore communicating sanction decisions effectively.

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

- Explain the key and cultural messages about sanctions
- Explain the background to the event
- Take the required action to reduce the number of calls received to re-book appointments
- Demonstrate how to effectively and positively communicate the message about the claimant's responsibilities for receiving payment of Universal Credit and the reason why a reduction (sanction) in their Universal Credit payments may be made if they don't fulfil their responsibilities.

# Oakley Review

Oakley made recommendations around three main themes:

- Making sure we communicate well and that claimants understand how sanctions work and their responsibilities
- Clarifying the jobcentre/provider responsibility so claimants are clear on who they should be engaging with and what activity they should be carrying out when they are in receipt of JSA and taking part in the work programme
- Making sure that the safeguards in place meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

The Department recognised the importance of telling claimants about sanctions for all benefits, including Universal Credit.

This workshop gives you the opportunity to discuss and practice the skills and behaviours that you use when you explain sanctions with claimants.

# Why we have Sanctions

Benefit sanctions are a longstanding part of the benefit system and encourage claimants to engage with the support on offer.

Sanctions help claimants understand the seriousness of their search for work. They are there to improve and increase the level of claimant compliance.

We need to understand how sanctions work, so that we can apply them fairly and explain them clearly.

We should explain sanctions whenever possible so that claimants become more aware of their role and responsibilities while claiming Universal Credit.

# Topic Summary

In this topic you have learned:

- about the key and cultural messages about sanctions
- the background to the event
- how to effectively and positively communicate the message about the claimant's responsibilities for receiving payment of Universal Credit and the reason why a reduction (sanction) in their Universal Credit payments may be made if they don't fulfil their responsibilities.

## **Topic 02**

### **Case Studies**



# Topic Aims and Objectives

This topic aims to give you the opportunity to display the skills and behaviour required to communicate with the claimants about sanctions, as recommended in the Oakley Review.

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

- identify the messages that should be communicated to the claimant
- demonstrate the behaviours and skills that you use when you talk to claimants about sanctions
- demonstrate effective and positive communications about the claimant's responsibilities for receiving payment of Universal Credit and the reason why a reduction (sanction) in their Universal Credit payments may be made if they don't fulfil their responsibilities.



# **Case Study 1**

## **Anthony Brown**



# Case Study 1 – Details

Mr Anthony Brown, age 28, is in the All Work Related Requirements Conditionality group, intensive regime.

At Mr Brown's regular worksearch review on 18 February 2015, he is asked to attend a work focussed interview (WFI) on 02 March 2015 at 2:30pm.

This is noted on his Claimant Commitment which also advises him to contact his Work Coach immediately if he is unable to attend the WFI.

The importance of attending this interview has already been fully explained to Mr Brown. Before leaving the office, the Work Coach is confident Mr Brown understands the consequences of not attending this interview.

However, he fails to attend his WFI and does not contact his Work Coach.

The Work Coach was unable to contact Mr Brown so sent him a UC212 to ask him to contact the office to arrange another appointment and to give his reasons for not attending his work focussed interview on 02 March 2015.

Mr Brown contacts Universal Credit on 09 March 2015.

# Case Study 1 – Gathering the Evidence

## Question 1



When Mr Brown contacts the office on 9 March 2015 what questions do we need to ask him?

## Question 2



The office wasn't closed on that day and other claimants managed to attend your office, so does Mr Brown have good reason for not attending the office?

# Handout 1 – UC96



# Case Study 1 – Explaining the Decision

Mr Brown's case was referred to the Decision Maker and they decided no Good Reason was given and he was sanctioned. UC96 was issued to him. Mr Brown rings to ask for an explanation.

## Question 3



How would you explain the decision?

## Question 4



Anthony Brown wants to know more about Recoverable Hardship Payments.  
How would you explain them to him?

## Question 5



How will you know if Anthony has understood this explanation?

## **Case Study 2**

### **Elaine Cooper**



## Case Study 2 – Details

Miss Elaine Cooper age 28 is in the All Work Related Requirements Conditionality group.

She fails to attend her Work Search Interview on 20/07/2015.

A letter is sent to Miss Cooper asking her to contact the service centre as soon as possible to arrange another interview, and to explain why she didn't attend on 20/07/2015.

Miss Cooper contacts the office on 23/07/2015 before she receives the failed to attend letter. Another appointment is arranged for the following week, which she subsequently attends.

Miss Cooper says that she forgot to attend the interview on 20/07/2015.

# Case Study 2 – Gathering the Evidence

## Question 1



When Miss Cooper contacts the office on 23/07/15, she says that she forgot to attend her interview on 20/07/2015. What questions will you ask her?



# Case Study 2 – Explaining the Decision

The interview was re-arranged and Miss Cooper attended that one, as required.

In Miss Cooper's case no Good Reason was given for failing to attend the interview and she was sanctioned.

As this is Elaine's second low level sanction within the previous 12 months, her Universal Credit payments will be cut by 16 days (2 days before she contacted the office and a fixed period of 14 days).

## Question 2



How would you explain the decision?

## Handout 2 – UC96



# Case Study 2 – Additional Evidence

As part of the basic explanation, you reminded Miss Cooper that if she had additional information she could tell you and it would be sent to the Decision Maker, for them to reconsider the decision.

Miss Cooper tells you that she forgot about the interview because her 3 year old daughter has been very poorly and she had to take her to the hospital. While she was at the hospital she lost track of the time. She says that she has no partner or anyone else she can rely on to look after her daughter.

## Question 3



What other questions would you ask her?

## Question 4



What else can Miss Cooper do?

## **Case Study 3**

### **Claire Thomas**



## Case Study 3 – Details

Mrs Claire Thomas is in the All Work Related Requirements Conditionality Group, Intensive Work Search Regime.

Her Claimant Commitment states that she must look for work for 35 hours per week.

On 15 June 2015 Mrs Thomas attends a rearranged Work Focused Interview, where she is given a work preparation requirement to email an updated CV to her Work Coach by 18 June 2015, so they can discuss it at her appointment on 22 June 2015.

The Work Coach explains to Mrs Thomas that if she does not comply with this requirement, her Universal Credit payments could be affected.

Mrs Thomas attends the Work Focused Interview on 22 June 2015 but she failed to email the updated CV on 18 June 2015. Mrs Thomas said the reasons for not updating her CV were that she wasn't confident to do so without checking the internet for the latest guidance. She was going to write the CV on 17 June 2015, but lost her internet connection that day and she still has not been able to get online at home.

She accesses the internet at the office and researches then prepares a new CV.

In addition, when the Work Coach examines Mrs Thomas's work search activity it becomes clear that between 09 June 2015 and 22 June 2015, Mrs Thomas has not done everything that she could reasonably do in either week to search for work.

# Case Study 3 – Decision

The DM decides that sanctions should apply for both failures.

Mrs Thomas did not have good reason for failing to carry out a Work Preparation Activity, updating her CV.

She also failed to take all reasonable action to look for work.

Mrs Thomas has had 2 previous sanctions, both were for Failure to Attend.

The period of the reduction of Universal Credit payments can be affected by previous same level sanctions, but only those with a failure date over 13 days before the current failure happened.

There was a low level sanction on 12 June 2015. As this was less than 13 days before the current failure (18 June 2015), the Decision Maker disregarded it when they decided on the length of the current sanction.

The current failure, therefore, attracts another fixed period of 14 days, plus the open-ended period of 4 days (from 18 June to 21 June 2015).

The sanction for failure to take all reasonable action to look for work is Mrs Thomas's first medium level sanction. Therefore, the reduction period will be 28 days.

This means that 46 days will be added to her Total Outstanding Reduction Period (TORP).

# Case Study 3 – Explaining the Decision

Mrs Thomas asks for a basic explanation of the 2 decisions.

## Question 1



What will you say to Mrs Thomas to explain the 2 decisions?

## Question 2



How will you ensure that Mrs Thomas understands what you have told her?

## Question 3



In this case, Mrs Thomas had a compliance condition.

What do you have to consider when you set the compliance condition?

## **Case Study 4**

### **Ayub Patel**





# Case Study 4 – Details

## Part One

Ayub Patel, age 37, worked as a builder.

On 26/08/2014 he was dismissed from his job due to misconduct.

On 17/09/2014 he claim Universal Credit. He is placed in the: All Work Related Requirements, Intensive Regime group.

His assessment period runs from 17th of one month until the 16th of the following month.

On 07/10/2014 the DM imposes a higher level sanction, after determining that Mr Patel was dismissed from his job due to misconduct. Letter UC140 is issued to Mr Patel the same day

The sanction length is 91 days minus the days that Mr Patel did not claim:

(27/8/14 to 16/9/14 = 21 days)  $91 - 21 = 70$  days

The sanction runs from the first day of the assessment period.

Therefore the period of sanction runs from 17/09/2014 to 25/11/2014.

# Case Study 4 – Explaining the Decision

Ayub contacts you and asks why his benefit has stopped.

## Question 1



How would you explain the sanction and what Mr Patel's options are?

# Case Study 4 – Additional Sanction

## Part Two

On 01/05/2015 Ayub failed to apply for an appropriate job notified to him by his Work Coach.

On 12/05/2015 the DM determined that Mr Patel failed to apply for a vacancy without good reason and imposed a higher level sanction.

## Question 2



How long will the sanction last?

Explain where you will find the information.

## Question 3



How do you explain the length of the sanction (especially that it is longer than the last one)?

# Case Study 4 – Change of Circumstances

## Part Three

Ayub Patel declared a change of circumstances when he found work as a builder on 09/05/2015. His UC award ended because of the earnings he received.

He ceased work on 20/06/2015, but despite attempts to find work he had not found another job, so he notified the change of circumstances within five days and Universal Credit was re-awarded.

As Ayub's UC was re-awarded the assessment period is the same as before, that is from 17th of one month until the 16th of the following month.

Ayub attends a work search review on 25/06/2015.

During the interview the Work Coach asked him about the reasons that his last job ended.

Ayub explained:

I took the job, even though it was a lower wage than I wanted because I was told there would be plenty of overtime. I was there for 3 weeks and no overtime was offered. I asked the manager about it and he said it was not usual for overtime this time of year, though there could be some early next year. I explained I'd taken the job on the basis that there was plenty of work and overtime was guaranteed, but he got shirty with me and said if I didn't like it I should get something else. I was so annoyed at being messed about I left.

# Case Study 4 - Explaining TORP

## Question 4

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What do we need to advise Ayub in relation to the previous sanction?

## Question 5

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How will you explain the Total Outstanding Reduction Period (TORP)?

# Case Study 4 – Another Sanction Imposed

## Part Four

On 01/07/2015 Mr Patel failed to apply for an appropriate job notified to him by his Work Coach.

On 07/07/2015 the DM determined that he failed to apply for a vacancy without good reason and imposed a higher level sanction.

UC140 Letter is sent to Ayub giving him full details of the decision and how his Universal Credit payments will be affected.

## Question 6



How long will the sanction last?

# Case Study 4 - Explaining the new TORP

## Question 7



What will the new TORP be?

## Question 8



Where will you get the information to determine the TORP?

# Case Study 4 - Options

## Question 9

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Ayub is unhappy that his Universal Credit payments have been affected for so long.

How would you explain the length of the sanction to Ayub?

## Question 10

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What can he do now?

What options would you explain to him?



# Topic Summary

In this topic you have:

- worked through a number of case studies, to demonstrate communicating the message about conditions of entitlement and the claimant's responsibilities to claimants effectively.

## **Topic 03 Summary**



# Module Aims and Objectives

This workshop aims to provide you with an opportunity to explore communicating sanction decisions effectively.

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

- Explain the key and cultural messages about sanctions
- Explain the background to the event
- Take the required action to reduce the number of calls received to re-book appointments
- Demonstrate how to effectively and positively communicate the message about the claimant's responsibilities for receiving payment of Universal Credit and the reason why a reduction (sanction) in their Universal Credit payments may be made if they don't fulfil their responsibilities.

# Module Summary

In this module you have learned:

- what the key and cultural messages are about sanctions
- the background to the event
- how to take the required action to reduce the number of calls received to re-book appointments
- how to effectively and positively communicate the message about the claimant's responsibilities for receiving payment of Universal Credit and the reason why a reduction (sanction) in their Universal Credit payments may be made if they don't fulfil their responsibilities.