

Work search activities

Work search activities can be:

- required – with failure to carry out those activities resulting in a potential reduction in the payment of Universal Credit
- voluntary – with no reduction in the payment of Universal Credit if these specific activities are not carried out (but see Expected hours)

There are two sub-categories of work search activity. A general requirement to take all reasonable action and particular, specific actions accepted on the Claimant Commitment.

All work search should be for the purpose of obtaining paid work, more paid work or better-paid work. Work search activities include:

- carrying out work searches
- making applications
- creating and maintaining an online profile
- registering with an employment agency
- seeking references
- any other actions which reasonably increase the likelihood of obtaining employment

All work search activities must be SMART.

In order to satisfy the 'All reasonable action' aspect above, claimants must do either of the following:

- spend at least their Expected hours (35 hours if they are expected to take up full-time work) taking action for the purpose of finding paid work (work-related activities), minus any relevant deductions
- prove that they have taken all reasonable action to find paid work despite the actual number of hours spent being lower than the expected number of hours per week; and that action gives them the best prospects of obtaining work

Time spent undertaking agreed work preparation activities (which may include agreed hours of voluntary work) and any hours they are already engaged in paid work should be deducted from their overall expected hours of work related activity. This then gives a residual number of hours that they should be engaged in work search.

The work search activities set must be the most effective activities which, when undertaken, give the claimant the best possible chance of getting paid work quickly.

How long any particular activity will take will vary according to each claimant's individual circumstances but each case must be judged in line with their capability.

Limitations on work search activity

Where the claimant has other responsibilities (for example child care) or conditions, for example, health the number of hours required to work search is adjusted according to their Expected hours.

Claimants that are in-work must not be expected to spend longer looking for work than the difference between their current hours of work and the hours they are expected to work.

If a claimant has done all they can reasonably be expected to do to find work and that has taken them less than their expected hours, that is acceptable and the claimant should be treated as complying with their requirement.

Work search and preparation – SMART activities

Work search and work preparation activities agreed on the Commitment must be SMART. That means:

Specific	Clearly state the claimant's precise job goals and the specific activity they will take to give them the best chance of finding and securing a job. For example, generic job descriptions such as 'driver' must be avoided and more specific terms such as "bus driver", "HGV driver" or "van driver".
Measurable	For work search activities to be undertaken regularly, how many and how often must be specified.
Achievable	Any activities set must be achievable. Activities that are clearly beyond the claimant's capabilities or that are simply unreasonable must not be included.
Realistic	Job requirements and work related requirements must be realistic, taking into account the claimant's skills, experience, capabilities etc. and the local Labour Market
Time bound	Activities must be time bound and will be reviewed at appropriate points. Activities may: be regular, for example weekly and reviewed within work search reviews, or be one-off, time bound and reviewed within work search interviews or work search reviews

Evidence

A claimant has to provide information and / or evidence if requested in order to show they are able to comply with the rules relating to work-related requirements.