

CB Semi-structured interview script

For remote interviews with intermediaries who help claimants/beneficiaries

0. Preparatory call

Thank you for contacting me by [Email/SMS/Telephone].

Firstly, can I check where you read or heard about my research?

Thank you. Just to repeat what you have probably read already, I am [redacted], but also a volunteer at [redacted].

I would like to interview you to hear people's experiences of using the online Universal credit system - the good, the bad and the ugly! Whether that is computer and internet access, using a phone or other computer, interacting with DWP and whether you get help with it.

As a [redacted] researcher I want to develop digital tools that might assist citizens access welfare benefits they are entitled to.

First can I just check how you claim Universal Credit?

Do you claim UC, currently or in the past?

Approximately when did that start?

Do you do that online or by telephone?

Do you live in a rural or urban area?

Which country of the UK is that in?

Is that a single or joint claim with someone else in the household?

Were you on so-called legacy benefits previous to that (like JSA, ESA)?

Are you have any health conditions or disabilities I should be aware of? Or any other concerns or worries about speaking with me today?

What I would like to do is undertake a short discussion with you maybe 30 minutes but it could be longer, to hear your views and experiences of accessing Universal Credit online. But I need to explain what that might involve and give you an opportunity to ask questions. If you still want to proceed I will need to ask you to agree to take part, and then we can arrange a time for the discussion.

If you take part, I will compensate you for your time after the interview - £10 for up to 30-40 minutes or £20 if it is more than that – at most just over an hour. The quickest way to provide that to you would be an Amazon e-gift card if you use Amazon and email. Otherwise I can post a Love2Shop gift card instead. Those can be used at Argos, Boots, Iceland, Matalan and Wilco and the like, but I would then need your postal address.

So getting back to what the research involves and how I would handle your data.

Have you read the Information Sheet?

That explains that you can ask me questions any time and that your participation is voluntary, and you can stop taking part at any time. Importantly, apart from completing a consent form and our correspondence, the information we discuss during the interview will be anonymous – neither your name or anyone else's names should be mentioned, but I do need to record the audio, so I can listen to what you say carefully and transcribe it afterwards. This will be anonymous and will be used in my analysis, in things I write and stored for future use. All your data will be kept with full confidentiality. You can opt in to be being kept informed of my research.

Are you still happy to take part?

If so, please read, agree and sign my consent form. I have a paper version I can send or there is an online version.

What is your full name / email address?

Once you have done that, shall I get back in touch with some suggested days/times for our discussion?

When might suit you?

In advance:

- Explain research, aims and process, discuss and answer queries
- Identify preferred interview channel (telephone, MS Teams, Zoom, other)
- Send information sheet and consent form
- Discuss and answer queries
- Receive back consent form
- Schedule interview appointment

On the day:

- Charge headphones
- Check audio recorder batteries and storage capacity
- Check phone fully charged
- Paper and pencil for notes
- Print interview script
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Set up laptop and desk and workspace:

- Close windows/doors to cut noise
- Music off
- Position audio recorder and phone near laptop speakers on a soft cloth
- Prepare stopwatch
- Phone on silent
- Release secondary screens and close high memory-usage applications
- Write participant name and details on hand notes
- Set laptop firewall to silent.

1. Introduction

Hello, thank you for agreeing to share your experiences of making and managing Universal Credit claims online.

Are you happy to continue?

I am now going to put you on speaker and start my recorder:

- *[Start recording on audio recorder]*
- *[Start MS Teams recording, if used]*
- *[Start stopwatch]*

Thanks for agreeing to take part in my research. As I said I received your consent to participate and have checked your understanding and answered any questions you had, confirmed with you this is voluntary, that we are recording it, how the data will be used and protected, and that you've read the Information Sheet. We also agreed you would prefer an Amazon e-gift voucher after completing this interview which will be sent to your email address by university administrators. That will be at least £10, but might be £20 if we take longer.

I received your consent and wondered if any further questions had arisen that you would like to ask?

I have a series of questions but they are flexible and open-ended, so I can learn about what you think is important and why. I am interested in using Universal Credit online for both new claims and ongoing claim management.

I don't want to know any personal information that identifies you or other people.

Let me just recap some things you mentioned previously... [you were on legacy benefits... previously|were working previously], first claimed UC at the start [when]. You claim online. You are currently a claimant, [not working|working full|part time]. It is a [single|joint] claim and you have [no] dependents, and you live in an [urban|rural] area – in [region, country].

Is that all correct?

2. First claim

When you first claimed UC, did you get any help to make the claim? If so, what help, who from?

Did you have everything you need to make the claim? Documents, information, etc? Where do you keep all those?

Was it straightforward? How did the identity validation go?

How long did you have to wait for the first payment? / Did you have any delays.

3. Technology

Now some things about your method of access?

Do you use a phone or something else to access the internet and UC? How do you find that?

Where is that? Do you ever use public computers?

Do you have internet broadband at home?

Do you have mobile data on your phone?

Do you use the internet for other things? Such as?

Do you get alert messages by email or SMS? Why?

Do you ever miss messages? Has that caused any problems?

Did you have an email address before claiming UC?

How do you remember your login details?

4. UC day-to-day

How often do you log onto UC? Was that more often in the past?

What commitments do you have now? Were they different earlier this year? What did you have to do?

Did/do you have to do job search? How much time does that take? How do you do that? Does that cause any problems?

Do you have to provide fit notes? How often? How do you do that?

Do you get other training or support? What is that and who provides it?

Are your payments every 4 weeks?

Have you had to report “change of circumstances”? What were those (new job, address, income, etc) and how did you do it (Journal entry)? Did you have any problems or were there any mistakes?

Have you ever been sanctioned? Why was that?

Have you used the advanced payment loan option? Is the repayment deducted automatically?

Have you had to make a complaint or appeal?

Have you been defrauded?

5. Assistance with UC (select from these qs to suit previous ans)

Do you discuss UC with other people... queries, compare experiences and so on? Who?

Have you ever had benefits advice? Who from, how, where?

Does anyone log in on your behalf? How do they do that with your details?

Do you use the call centre?

Do you get help from DWP phone line or Jobcentre coach or CA?

Did you check you were receiving the right amount and everything you were entitled to? Did they make any mistakes?

Is there any help you need but don't get?

Have you ever had to raise a complaint?

What would make claiming UC easier for you?

Would you like other ways to interact with UC rather than the website only? E.g. other channels?

You mentioned you are [a mental health services user]. Does UC being online make it harder or easier for you than if it was say a paper thing or you have to go to the JobCentre?

Have you had any F2F assessments or discussions? Did you make notes or how did you remember what was said?

6. COVID-19

What has changed before/during lockdown?

Has anything become easier?

7. Extra?

Option: If you know other people on UC, how do they cope with doing UC online | doing all this job search.

Option: Do you know anyone who has been defrauded through UC such as someone else taking their money somehow?

8. Closure and debrief

That's all my questions, but I wondered if there is anything else that occurred to you, or you think is relevant, or would like to add?

I will be using the transcripts of these interviews in my research, together with data from surveys and workshops, to inform the design and trial of a prototype. All data will be anonymous. I will keep you informed of how my work progresses. I will turn off recording now.

[Stop all recording and timing]

Thank you again.

Afterwards:

- Copy/download to laptop
 - Audio recording
 - MS Teams recording (if used)
- Add participant to lookup-sheet
- Update these notes with any amendments, creating a new version
- Write/email interviewee to thank them and provide debrief again