



Ill health retirement for leavers

Retiring early due to ill health if you're no longer paying in to USS

If you have an illness or condition that stops you from working, you could be eligible to take your benefits early.

If you're eligible to retire early due to ill health, you'll get the benefits you built up to when you left USS (including any [pension increases](#)) and they won't be reduced due to early payment.

If you're suffering from a serious health condition and only have a limited time to live, we may be able to convert (or commute) your pension and pay all your benefits as a lump sum.

To be eligible for ill health retirement you must:

- Be under the Normal Pension Age
- Suffer from a long-term illness in the view of USS
- Have paid into USS for at least two years if you left the scheme prior to 1 April 2022 (if you left after this, then this won't apply) OR have made a transfer payment into USS from a personal pension scheme.
- Be unable to do any job, or any job with any employer that would pay more than 10% of the salary of your former role.

You'll find more on when you may and may not be eligible, what we'll need from you, and how it all works below.

When you'll be eligible

If you have a long-term medical condition that means you couldn't carry out your last role before leaving USS, or any other role that would likely pay more than a small fraction of your former role, you may be eligible to retire due to ill health before you reach Normal Pension Age.

As a guide, a small fraction would be around 10% or less than the salary of your former role.

What you'll get

You'll broadly get the benefits you built up to the date you left USS, plus any [pension increases](#) since then. This will include an annual income and a one-off, tax-free (up to a HMRC limit) cash lump sum. Your benefits won't be reduced due to early payment.

Any Investment Builder savings

Any Investment Builder savings you have will remain in your savings pot unless you choose to take them. You may have these savings if you previously earned above the salary threshold (once the Investment Builder was introduced in October 2016), made additional contributions or transferred other pension savings in. Visit [taking your benefits and savings](#) for more on how you can take these savings.

Money Purchase AVCs with Prudential

If you have Money Purchase AVCs with Prudential, you have similar options as you do with any savings left in your Investment Builder pot. Visit our [MPAVCs](#) page for more information.

Applying for ill health retirement

What you need to do

[Contact us](#) to begin the process, we'll then send you the forms to complete. A medical report from your doctor will be needed for your application.

Part one of the form will need to be completed by you and part two by the doctor responsible for your medical care. Part three is optional if you have access to an occupational health practitioner.

What happens next

Once we have all the information, your application will be reviewed by our medical panel who meet weekly. If they require any more medical information, we'll be in touch. We'll then consider all the information and, with input from our medical experts, will consider whether to approve your application.

Rest assured that our medical panel is made up of experts – your application will be looked at by at least one doctor from the panel.

Approving your application

All ill health retirement applications require the approval of USS – only members who meet the eligibility criteria will qualify.

When reviewing your application, we must be satisfied that you're suffering from long term ill health based on your medical evidence and the opinion of our medical panel. By long term we mean at least five years, or the time you have left to the [Normal Pension Age](#), whichever is more.

If your application is approved, your benefits will normally be payable from the date of approval.

If your application is rejected

You can appeal. To do this you'll need to write to us within six months of the date that your application was rejected. Make sure you include any new medical evidence that might support your appeal.

Your appeal will go back to our medical panel first. If their decision doesn't change, we'll get an independent review from an appropriate specialist in your illness. The specialist will usually meet with you and produce their independent medical report. Your application will then be considered by a member of our medical panel who hasn't yet reviewed your case. They'll consider all the evidence, including the independent specialist's

report, and give their opinion. We'll then consider all the information and input from our medical experts and determine if you've met the criteria.

Whether or not you choose to appeal, you can reapply after six months with an updated medical report. This will be treated as a new application.

If you die while getting an ill health pension

If you die, whether it's before or after the Normal Pension Age, your spouse or civil partner will still be entitled to a pension. They'll also get a cash lump sum as part of your life cover if you die within the first five years of ill health retirement.

Make sure you keep your **Expression of Wish** up to date to tell us who you wish to receive any lump sum. Log in to [My USS](#) to complete online or [download](#) a copy to print and return to us.

Visit [what happens when you die](#) for more information.

If your condition changes or you get another job

If your health improves enough so that you return to work or you take a new job, your circumstances will be reviewed to ensure you're still eligible.

Serious ill health retirement

If you're suffering from a serious health condition and have a life expectancy of less than 12 months, we may be able to pay all your benefits as a lump sum to help support you and your family through this difficult time. Take a look at our [serious ill health factsheet](#) for more information.

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