**University of Worcester Pension Schemes - Staff FAQs**

1. **How do I join a workplace pension scheme?**

As your employer the University must enrol and make an employer’s contribution for all staff who are aged between 22 and the state pension age, earn at least £10,000 a year and normally work in the UK. If you meet these criteria you will be enrolled in the relevant pension scheme for your role.

1. **Which pension scheme will I be enrolled in?**

The University operates four pension schemes for new staff and will consider which scheme is most suitable for your role. Your admittance to the scheme will depend on the rules of the scheme, your contract, earnings and age. The schemes are:

Local Government Pension Scheme ([LGPS](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/worcestershirepensionfund/info/4/employee-members)) – for Professional Services and non-teaching roles.

Teachers Pension Scheme ([TPS](https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/public/contact-us/member-contact-us.aspx)) – for roles which are predominantly teaching.

National Employment Savings Trust ([NEST](https://www.nestpensions.org.uk/schemeweb/nest.html)) – is available to UW Worcester Wolves players.

NHS Pension Scheme ([NHS Pensions](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-pensions)) – is available for individuals who are already members of the NHS Pension Scheme and are now employed in an eligible role in our Medical School.

Note: Universities Superannuation Scheme ([USS](https://www.uss.co.uk/for-members/thinking-about-your-future/start-taking-your-benefits)) – the University continues to operate USS for a small number of existing staff who are already USS members. The University does not offer USS to new staff.

1. **Can I leave the pension scheme after the University has enrolled me?**

Before deciding to leave the pension scheme we would encourage you to consider the benefits that the pension scheme offers. You may also find it helpful to take independent financial advice to help you plan your future finances.

If you still wish to leave the scheme you will need to follow the “opt-out” process for the scheme in which you have been enrolled. If you wish to receive a refund for any contributions deducted from your salary the opt-out process will need to be completed within the deadline set by the pension scheme provider, please refer to the scheme website as the rules vary for each scheme:

LGPS members: Complete [form](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/worcestershirepensionfund/info/4/employee-members/19/want-opt) and send to UW payroll.

TPS members: Opt-out online at [MyPensionOnline](https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/faqs/my-pension-online/my-pension-online.aspx) or download forms from [TPS](https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/working-life/work-events/opt-in-and-opt-out.aspx) website.

USS: Opt out or withdrawal forms can be found on [USS](https://www.uss.co.uk/for-members/leaving-or-already-left/thinking-of-leaving) website

NEST: Opt out online on [NEST](https://www.nestpensions.org.uk/schemeweb/memberhelpcentre/opting-out/how-to-opt-out.html) website

NHS: Complete [form](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2021-05/SD502%20%28V22%29%2005.2021.pdf) and send to UW payroll

1. **Why does the University auto-enrol staff every three years?**

If you have [opted out](https://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk/about-pensions/pensions-basics/automatic-enrolment/opting-out) of the pension scheme that the University enrolled you in, or stopped paying contributions, the University is required to automatically enrol you back into the scheme at a later date (normally three years after opting out or stopping contributions), provided that you are an [eligible jobholder](https://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk/about-pensions/pensions-basics/automatic-enrolment/joining?moreInfo=1) at that time. The Payroll & Benefits Manager will contact you to tell you the contributions payable and to give you the options available to you, which will include opting out if this is your preference.

1. **How much will I pay into my University pension scheme?**

Once you are enrolled into a pension scheme your contributions will be automatically deducted from your salary each month. In addition, the University will also make a contribution to the scheme based on your earnings..

The contribution rates depend on how much you are paid. Please refer to the scheme website for up to date rates:

LGPS members: See [WCC web page](https://www.lgpsmember.org/toj/thinking-joining-how.php)

TPS members: See [TPS web page](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Ccopa1%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CO66E1BGT%5CEach%20year%20the%20salary%20range%20is%20reviewed%20and%20payroll%20notify%20change%20of%20rates%20where%20necessary)

USS members: See [USS web page](https://www.uss.co.uk/for-members/youre-a-new-joiner/what-youll-pay)

NEST members: See [NEST web page](https://www.nestpensions.org.uk/schemeweb/nest/my-nest-pension/contributions-and-fees.html#:~:text=The%20minimum%20contribution%20set%20by,of%20your%20take%2Dhome%20pay.)

NHS member: See [NHS Pensions web page](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/member-hub/cost-being-scheme)

1. **Can I transfer previous pension contributions into my University pension?**

Before transferring existing pension funds, you are advised to take independent financial advice so that you fully understand any financial implications.

If you have an existing pension which is eligible for transfer into LGPS or TPS you may request a transfer of previous pension funds within 12 months of joining the University pension scheme. The rules and process vary so please refer to the relevant website for up to date guidance.

New staff who are existing members of USS will be enrolled in TPS or LGPS as appropriate.

NEST provides the option to transfer existing pension funds in. See [NEST webpage](https://www.nestpensions.org.uk/schemeweb/nest/my-nest-pension/transfer-your-pension-pots.html).

1. **What happens to my contributions if I am not being paid?**

If your pay is reduced during periods of absence your pension contributions may also be reduced, for example during periods of unpaid parental leave, nil-pay sickness absence, authorised unpaid leave or strike action. You may be able to make additional pension contributions (APCs) to reduce the impact on your pension funds. Under some circumstances the University may continue to make employer contributions, for example during parental leave. Please refer to the scheme website for full details, including the time limits for applying to pay APCs.

LGPS members: [see LGPS](https://www.lgpsmember.org/arm/already-member-absence.php) website

TPS members: [see TPS](https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/working-life/life-events.aspx) website

USS members: See [USS webpage](https://www.uss.co.uk/for-members/life-events/absence-from-work)

NEST members: [see NEST](https://www.nestpensions.org.uk/schemeweb/nest/saving-for-my-future/managing-life-changes.html) website

NHS Pension members: see [NHS Pensions webpage](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/member-hub/increasing-your-pension/additional-pension)

1. **Can I pay extra contributions into my pension fund?**

Yes, you can choose to pay higher contributions if you wish. The University is not obliged to match the additional payments that you choose to make, and the employer contributions will continue to be based on your pay. Please refer to the scheme website for full details:

LGPS members: see [LGPS webpage](https://www.lgpsmember.org/arm/already-member-extra.php)

TPS members: see [TPS webpage](https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/working-life/paying-in/increasing-your-pension.aspx)

USS members: see [USS webpage](https://www.uss.co.uk/for-members/your-pension-explained/investment-builder)

NEST members: see [NEST webpage](https://www.nestpensions.org.uk/schemeweb/nest/saving-for-my-future/what-kind-of-retirement-do-I-want/growing-my-pension.html)

NHS Pension members: see [NHS Pensions webpage](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/member-hub/increasing-your-pension)

1. **Can I have a break from paying into my pension?**

If you are suffering financial hardship and would like to request a temporary reduction in making pension contributions, please contact your pension provider who will discuss the options that are available under the Scheme.

1. **Can I transfer my pension to another employer if I leave the University?**

You may be able to transfer your University pension to your new employer if the new scheme rules allow it. If you are not able to transfer your pension you may be able to defer (freeze) it. When you leave University employment, the University’s Payroll and Benefits Manager will notify your University pension provider and the pension provider will contact you to explain the options available.

1. **Can I ask for an up to date statement or estimate of my future pension funds?**

Your pension provider will normally provide an annual statement with these details however you can request an estimate during the year to help you plan. You may be able to view an up to date statement of your pension benefits online or by contacting your pension provider.

1. **When can I retire?**

There are many things to consider when thinking about retiring and it is advisable to take independent financial advice as well as checking your options with your pension provider. You can choose to retire and take your pension benefits **in full** when you reach your “normal pension age” or you may be able to take all or some of your pension before you reach normal pension age under some circumstances – see below for retirement before normal pension age and phased/flexible retirement FAQ.

1. **What is my normal pension age?**

Normal Pension Age is linked to your State Pension Age (https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age) and is the age at which you can take the pension you have built up in full. If you choose to take your pension before your Normal Pension Age it will normally be reduced, as it's being paid earlier. If you take it later than your Normal Pension Age, it's increased because it's being paid later.

1. **Can I retire before normal pension age?**

You may be able to take your pension before normal pension age if you meet the rules of the scheme, for example if you are between age 55 and 75 (between 57 and 75 from 06/04/2028) and have paid into the scheme for at least two years. Choosing to take your pension early is likely to reduce the benefits payable to you and the University will not make up the reduction in benefits or bear the costs. You are advised to contact your pension provider for an estimate of the impact an early retirement will have on your pension fund and to take independent financial advice.

1. **What is phased or flexible retirement?**

Phased or flexible retirement provides a gradual move into retirement by reducing your hours of work which some people find beneficial. This option is normally available from age 55 (age 57 from 06/04/2028) if you have been paying into the scheme for at least two years and is subject to the University agreeing to change the terms of your contract. If you are considering a phased or flexible retirement option you are advised to contact your pension provider for an estimate of the impact it will have on your pension fund and to take independent financial advice.

1. **How do I request phased or flexible retirement?**

Each scheme is slightly different, so please check the rules of your pension provider carefully to ensure that you are fully informed about any longer-term financial impact on your pension funds.

If you wish to reduce your hours of work to access a phased or flexible retirement you could discuss this with your manager in the first instance to see whether your proposal is viable.

If you decide to proceed with a request for a reduction in working hours, you should detail your request in writing to your Head of School / Department for their consideration via the University’s Flexible Working policy. Your Head of School / Department will need to assess whether the proposed reduction in hours is going to affect service delivery and the work can be reorganised effectively etc.  The University will also need to consider any impact on your duties and your job description will probably be reviewed to reflect the revised arrangements; it may also be necessary to review the type of contract you are employed on depending on the confirmed changes to your duties / role.

Any subsequent reduction in working hours will be a permanent contractual change which will also affect your pay and possibly your annual leave entitlement.

Each scheme will have slightly different rules and you are advised to check the correct order in which you should apply for flexible retirement and make the flexible working request and the timescales required.

1. **What happens if I don’t want to retire when I reach my normal retirement age?**

If you continue to work beyond your normal pension age your retirement and payment of pension funds will be deferred. Your pension will then be paid when you leave pensionable service in the future or when you reach age 75.

Your pension fund is likely to increase due to you taking your pension benefits at a later date. Each scheme is slightly different so please check the rules of your pension scheme for the options available and procedure to follow. You may also wish to request an up to date estimate of your pension benefits and take independent financial advice before making your decision.

1. **Do I need to resign when I retire?**

It will depend on the type of retirement you take and the rules of the scheme. To take your pension benefits **in full** you will normally need to be “out of pensionable service” and therefore if you are taking voluntary retirement you will need to tender your resignation, stating that you wish to retire and giving your contractual notice to your manager.

1. **Can I take a “break in service” to access my pension benefits?**

To access your pension benefits in full it is likely that the rules of the scheme will require that you are “out of pensionable service” i.e. not employed in the job which your occupational pension relates to (see question 18 above). Except for members of the NHS Pension scheme however, a break is not usually needed to access any phased or flexible retirement benefits. Each scheme has slightly different rules though and so you are advised to check your pension scheme rules before advising the University of your intentions.

1. **Can I return to work at the University after I have retired or continue to work after I start taking my pension benefits?**

The University’s Payroll and Benefits Manager will notify your pension provider of your earnings if you have a new job at the University after retiring or are continuing to work after taking pension benefits. It is advisable to check the rules of your pension scheme as you may need to complete a Certificate of Re-employment or other declaration. It is advisable to notify your pension provider of any employment after retirement or taking your pension benefits to ensure that the correct pension payments are made to you.

1. **Is my pension affected if I am made redundant?**

The rules of each pension scheme are slightly different so you are advised to check with your pension provider on how redundancy affects your pension. If you are aged 55 or over at the time of redundancy (aged 57 from 06/04/2028) the rules of the scheme may require you to take your pension benefits. Your pension benefits may be reduced if you are below your normal pension age and it will depend on the rules of the scheme at the time of redundancy.

1. **What is ill health retirement?**

Ill health retirement may be considered if you are too ill to work, for example if illness prevents you from being able to do your job permanently (subject to assessment by an authorised medical professional). The rules of each scheme are slightly different so you are advised to check with your pension provider and to speak to the HR Business Partner for your school/department if you would like the University to consider ill health retirement. Your HR Business Partner may be able to explore alternative options to ill health retirement, for example a reduction in hours. If this is not possible it is advisable to request an estimate of benefits and take independent financial advice before making any decisions about ill health retirement.

1. **Will my pension be paid to my surviving family after I die?**

The benefits available and rules of each scheme are slightly different so you are advised to check with your pension provider on what benefits will be paid, and to whom, after you die. For example, an eligible partner or child may be entitled to a lump sum or pension benefits if you die in service; nominated beneficiaries can be provided to the scheme and can be updated at any time, the applicable scheme can be contacted to request the relevant form to action this. Certain conditions and limits may apply, for example upper age limits and your length of membership in the scheme. If you pass the upper age limit for a death in service payment you may wish to consider taking out separate insurance. It is advisable to contact your pension provider to clarify what your survivors will be entitled to and to take independent financial advice before making decisions about further life insurance.

**Pension scams**

**Pension scams are prevalent in the UK and are increasingly sophisticated and difficult to spot. The Pension Regulator provides helpful** [**advice**](https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/pension-scams) **on how pension scams work, the warning signs and how you can avoid being scammed. We recommend that you take a few minutes to read the** [**2 page leaflet**](https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/-/media/thepensionsregulator/files/import/pdf/16423_pensions_consumer_leaflet_screen.ashx) **for further information.**