Customers Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Centenary Bank
A member of Centenary Group

PHASING OUT OF CHEQUES IN MALAWI

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

These answers reflect the Bills of Exchange (Amendment) Act, 2026 and the public notice issued by the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) and the Bankers Association of Malawi (BAM).

- **11 September 2026**: the Act was published in the Gazette and came into force.
- **29 September 2026**: cut-off date. Only cheques issued on or before this date can still be processed.
- **11 March 2027**: end of the six-month transition period. After this date no cheque will be accepted, processed or cleared, whatever date is on it.

A. ABOUT THE CHANGE

Q1. Why are cheques being phased out?

Parliament passed the Bills of Exchange (Amendment) Act, 2026, which removes cheques as a payment instrument in Malawi. The aim is to move the country to safer, faster and more efficient electronic payments, with less exposure to fraud and forgery.

Q2. What is changing, and when?

Banks have stopped issuing new cheque books. Only cheques issued on or before 29 September 2026 can still be processed, and only until 11 March 2027. After that date no cheque will be accepted. The Act was approved by the President on 6 September 2026 and published in the Gazette on 11 September 2026, when it took effect.

Q3. Why is 29 September 2026 the cut-off?

The Reserve Bank of Malawi set 29 September 2026 in their public notice as the cut-off for cheques that banks may still process during the transition. All banks are applying the same cut-off.

Q4. Are cheques completely out of use now?

Not yet. Cheques issued on or before 29 September 2026 can still be processed until 11 March 2027. No new cheques may be issued. After 11 March 2027, cheques will no longer be accepted.

B. CHEQUES YOU HOLD OR HAVE ISSUED

Q5. Can I still use my existing cheque book?

Only for cheques you issued on or before 29 September 2026. Do not issue any new cheque from unused leaves, whatever date you write on it. Cheques issued after 29 September 2026 will not be accepted.

Q6. What should I do with my unused cheque leaves?

Return unused cheque books and leaves now to your branch for safe destruction. Until then, keep them secure, because unused leaves can be misused if lost or stolen.

Q7. Can I deposit a cheque I received?
Yes, if it was issued on or before 29 September 2026 and you present it before 11 March 2027. Deposit it as early as possible. Normal clearing takes 3 days, and banks cannot accept, process or clear any cheque after 11 March 2027.

Q8. I presented a cheque on or before 29 September 2026. Will it still be processed?
Yes. Cheques presented on or before 29 September 2026 continue to be processed by banks until 11 March 2027. If you have not yet received the funds, ask your branch for the status.

Q9. What happens if I miss the deadline?
After 11 March 2027, banks will not accept, process or clear any cheque, whatever date is on it. Ask the person who issued the cheque to pay you another way, such as a bank transfer.

Q10. What about post-dated cheques?
Post-dated cheques (cheques dated after 29 September 2026). Contact the person who issued or received the cheque and agree another payment method as soon as possible.

Q11. What about back-dated cheques?
Back-dating a cheque is not allowed and has regulatory consequences if discovered. Ask the person to pay you another way.

C. ALTERNATIVES TO CHEQUES

Q12. What can I use instead?
- o Electronic funds transfers (EFTs)
- o Internet banking (Flex-online)
- o Mobile banking (Cente-mobile app and USSD)
- o ATM cards and Point-of-Sale (POS) payments
- o Mobile money transfers

Q13. Do I need a special account to use these options?
No. These services are available to standard current account holders. You may need to register for internet banking or mobile banking, and your branch can help you do this.

Q14. How can businesses pay suppliers, rent or salaries?
Use bank transfers, internet banking or mobile banking. Agree the payment method with your suppliers and landlords, and check the account details before sending money. For salaries or paying many people at once, internet banking is available, ask your branch about the other options available.

Q15. How can businesses receive payments?
Share your account details so customers can pay by transfer, and ask your branch about POS and mobile money options. Cheques issued on or before 29 September 2026 can still be deposited until 11 March 2027. No cheque can be accepted after that date.

Q16. Can I still make large payments?
Yes, through electronic transfers. Ask your branch about transaction limits, fees and processing times.

D. RECURRING PAYMENTS: STANDING ORDERS AND DIRECT DEBITS

Q17. How do I replace recurring cheque payments?
Ask your branch about standing orders or direct debits, and tell the people you pay about the change.

Q18. What is the difference between a Direct Debit and a Standing Order?
A Direct Debit is an instruction from you allowing a third party to collect money from your account, usually for variable or recurring payments. A Standing Order is an instruction you give your bank to make fixed, regular payments to a named beneficiary.

Q19. How do I set up a Direct Debit?
Complete and sign a mandate authorising the third party you wish to pay. A Direct Debit can only be set up with your written authorisation. The third party submits the signed mandate to the bank for processing.

Q20. What happens if I do not have enough money, and how will I know if a Direct Debit fails?
The transaction will fail and the bank may charge a penalty fee for the unsuccessful transaction. The bank, through your Relationship Officer/Manager or branch, will notify you if a Direct Debit fails. Make sure the money is in your account before the due date.

Q21. Can I cancel or change a Direct Debit?
Yes. You can cancel or amend a Direct Debit at any time by contacting the bank. A stop-payment charge will apply.

Q22. How long does a Direct Debit take, and what if it falls on a weekend or holiday?
A Direct Debit typically takes three working days to clear. If it is due on a weekend or public holiday, it will be processed on the next working day.

E. ACCESS TO CASH

Q23. Will I still be able to withdraw cash without a cheque?
Yes. Personal current account holders can access cash through teller withdrawals (by presenting a National ID or a valid passport for foreign nationals), ATMs, bank agents, and mobile money channels. You can also register for an ATM card to withdraw cash from ATMs.

Corporate and business account holders can transfer funds through the Bank's digital platforms for withdrawal via mobile money channels or consider opening a petty cash account and obtaining an ATM card for cash access.

We encourage all customers to make use of the Bank's digital payment services for convenient transactions.

Q24. Are there withdrawal limits?
Yes. ATM and mobile money withdrawals are subject to daily limits. Ask your branch for the current limits.

Q25. Can someone else withdraw cash on my behalf?
No. Cash withdrawals must be made in person by the account holder for security reasons.

F. COSTS, SAFETY AND SUPPORT

Q26. Will electronic payments cost me anything?
Fees vary by channel and amount. Please check our tariff guide.

Q27. Are electronic payments safe?
Yes, if you use the bank's official channels. Electronic payments are also easier to trace than cheques, which can be forged or altered. Never share your PIN or password, and always check the recipient's details before paying.

Q28. What should I do if an electronic payment fails?
Contact your branch or Relationship Officer/Manager or Call Centre immediately for assistance and follow-up.

Q29. Can I reverse an electronic payment I made by mistake?
No. Report the error to your branch immediately, and always check the recipient's details before you send money.

Q30. I am not used to digital banking. What should I do?
Visit your nearest branch. Our staff will give you step-by-step guidance on using the digital options, practical demonstrations and help to register.

Q31. Will elderly and rural customers be supported?
Yes. All customers, including the elderly and those in rural areas, can use alternative payment channels. Any specific support required including customer education is available at your nearest branch.

Q32. How can I share my concerns or questions about the change?
Contact your branch or your Relationship Officer/Manager or the Call Centre. We use your feedback to improve our guidance and to clear up questions.

Q33. Where can I get more information?
Contact your Relationship Officer/Manager, visit any branch, contact the Call Centre or use the bank's official communication channels.

WHAT TO DO NOW

- Check any cheques you have issued or received.
- Confirm the deadlines with your branch.
- Start using an alternative payment method well before **11 March 2027**.

Centenary Bank is regulated by the Registrar of financial services.
Deposits are protected by the Deposit Insurance Corporation.
Head Office: Ekistics House, P.O. Box 31567, Convention Drive City Centre, Lilongwe

Call 358 toll free
www.centenarybank.co.mw
info@centenarybank.co.mw