

EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (EMA) - 2014/15

THE LITTLE BOOK OF EMA

All you need to know
for academic year
2014/15

www.nidirect.gov.uk



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What is EMA?

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a **weekly payment of £30 to help 16-19 year olds** with the costs of further education. Payments are made every 2 weeks as long as you meet your school or college's attendance requirements.

Who is this little book for?

For students

- aged 16-19 years old and are staying on at school or college from September 2014 in Northern Ireland

For parents

- we've included a section to help answer questions you may have about EMA.

What if...

I'm already getting EMA?

- You won't have to complete another application form.
- We'll contact you about your future EMA by post.
- You can go to www.nidirect.gov.uk for more information on EMA for continuing students.

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Should I apply?

You could get EMA if **all** of the following apply to you:

- **your 16th, 17th, 18th or 19th birthday falls on or between 2 July 2013 and 1 July 2014 and you are continuing in further education from September 2014.**

- **you meet our nationality and residency rules**

If you are a UK citizen who normally lives in the UK you should be eligible for EMA.

- **you attend an approved school or college in Northern Ireland**

This must be full-time at school or a minimum of 15 guided hours per week at college, studying an eligible course and attending all classes.

and your household income is:

- **£20,500 or less**

or

- **between £20,501 and £22,500** and there's **at least 1 other** young person in your household who qualifies for child benefit, other than you.

Your parents will need to send evidence of their income and any other child dependants in your household.

What if...

I have received EMA before?

Although there's a maximum number of EMA payments you can get, you might still be eligible this year. We'll contact you soon to let you know if you're still eligible.

What if...

I'm not a UK citizen?

You may still be able to get EMA. You can find out if you meet our nationality and residency rules by checking the guidance notes that accompany the application form.

What if...

I'm not financially dependent on my parents/guardians?

We'll need details of **your** income, and the income of your partner (if applicable).

You can't get EMA if you've been approved to receive a Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Bursary or a Department for Employment and Learning Further Education Award.

What could I get?

You could get £30 a week. Your eligibility for EMA payments is based on your household income. We'll ask for evidence of this income when you fill out the application form.

Annual household income	Weekly EMA entitlement
£20,500 or less	£30
Between £20,501 and £22,500 and there's at least 1 other dependant eligible for child benefit in your household, other than you.	£30
Between £20,501 and £22,500 and there are no other dependants eligible for child benefit in your household, other than you.	£0
£22,501 or more	£0

Performance bonus

As well as your weekly EMA entitlement, you might also get bonus payments of £100 in January and June.

How can I apply?

Applying for EMA is quick and easy. Just complete and return an EMA application form. Forms will be available from March 2014.

You can get an application from:

- your school or college
- www.nidirect.gov.uk
- your local Jobs and Benefits Office
- Careers Service Northern Ireland

Alternative Formats

You can order forms and guides in Braille, large print or audio by emailing us your name and address along with your message about what format you require to brailleandlargefonts@slc.co.uk or you can telephone us on **0141 243 3686**.

Please note, the above email address can only deal with requests for alternative formats of forms and guides.

What happens next?

You need to complete and return your EMA application form with the evidence we need



If you can't send the evidence we need right away, return your form without it. We'll contact you to get the evidence.



We'll assess your application and send you an Award Letter



If we need further information or evidence to complete our assessment we'll contact you before you get your Award Letter



You need to sign Part 1 and Part 2 of your Learning Agreement with your school or college



What is a Learning Agreement?

This is an agreement between you and your school or college. There are two parts of the Learning Agreement that you need to sign

Learning Agreement Part 1

This part sets out the acceptable attendance for your course. You'll commit to attending the timetable defined by your school or college.

Learning Agreement Part 2

This part sets out the learning objectives and goals that you must achieve to be eligible for bonus payments.



Your school or college need to tell us that you've been in attendance



We'll pay your EMA into your bank or building society account

How will I get paid?

All EMA payments will be paid directly into a bank or building society account in your name.

If you haven't already got an account set up, you should do so while you apply for EMA.

Bonus payments are normally made in January and June.

Before we can make payments:

- you must agree and sign both parts of your Learning Agreement with your school or college; **and**
- your school or college must tell us you have been in attendance.

If your school confirms to us that you've been in attendance then we may text you to let you know about your EMA payment.

SMS

What if...

I want to change my bank or building society details?

You can update your details by calling us on 0300 200 7089.

We can't pay you until you've signed your Learning Agreement and your college has confirmed that you're in attendance!

What if I need someone to help manage my finances?

If you need the help of a third party we'll ask for details as part of your application. You'll need to send evidence that the person you've nominated is authorised to act or hold funds on your behalf.

What if my circumstances change?

You need to tell us straight away if any of your details change, for example:

- your household income
- your school or college
- your course
- your contact details
- your bank details

If your circumstances change you should

call us: **0300 200 7089**

email us: **ema_ni@slc.co.uk**

and we'll tell you what action you'll need to take.

Information for parents

To work out if your son or daughter is entitled to EMA we need to know your household income for tax year 2013-14. We've put together some questions and answers about providing your income details.

What does my son/daughter need to do?

They need to:

- send back the completed form attaching all evidence
- wait for an Award Letter to be received by post
- sign their Learning Agreement with their school or college
- follow the school or college attendance rules
- check their bank or building society account for EMA payments being made.

Whose income is taken into account?

We take into account the income of the following people the student normally lives with:

- parent(s)
- step-parent(s)
- guardian(s)
- mother's partner or father's partner

We don't take into account the income of adult brothers or sisters or of parents, step-parents or guardians who don't normally live with the student.

What if my income has dropped since tax year 2013-14?

You should complete the application form with your current income details as they are now. However you'll need to attach your financial year 2013-14 evidence and up to date evidence of your current financial situation and how this has changed.

What if I don't have any financial evidence for tax year 2013-14?

In cases of self employment, we understand that a confirmed Self Assessment may not be available until later on, in this case we'll accept the Self Assessment SA032 form for tax year 2012-13 or a letter from an accountant.

If my son/daughter gets EMA will it affect my benefits?

EMA will not affect any benefits currently paid to your household.

Can my son/daughter's EMA payments be paid to me?

EMA is awarded to the student so payments must be made into the student's bank or building society account. In some exceptional circumstances we would pay EMA into your bank account, and you should contact us to discuss this. Our contact details are on the next page.

What if there are dependants in the household other than the applicant?

Read the information on page 3.

Key dates

- **30 September 2014** - To be eligible for backdated payments, to the start of term, you must apply before this date.
- **31 March 2015** - We must receive your application before this date for you to be eligible for EMA in academic year 2014/15.
- **31 August 2015** - You must have completed your application, by sending all information and evidence, before this date for you to be eligible for EMA in academic year 2014/15.

You should return your completed application with all appropriate evidence as soon as possible. If you can't give us the evidence we need straight away, return your form without it. You'll still have to provide evidence and we'll contact you for this.

How can I contact you?

If you need more help or information:

- go to www.nidirect.gov.uk
- email ema_ni@slc.co.uk
- call us on **0300 200 7089**