

GET PAID £30 A WEEK TO BROADEN YOUR PROSPECTS

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Today, as thousands of young people from across the South West receive their exam results and begin making plans for their future, some may be thinking of leaving school in favour of earning much needed cash. But staying in full time education could earn them money, too – and help broaden future prospects.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) can put up to £30 a week - £1,500 a year - in the pockets of 16 to 19 year olds while they gain qualifications that will increase their chances of finding the job they really want. At the same time, their families can continue to access other benefits.

Funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the organisation responsible for ensuring the delivery of high quality education and training for young people and adults, EMA was introduced to remove financial barriers to education, particularly for those from lower income households, and it has already helped thousands of South West students make the grade.

Malcolm Gillespie, LSC Regional Director for the South West explains: “Every year many young people leave education after their GCSEs in the belief that they simply cannot afford to stay on. That means their potential may not be truly realised.

“It’s a personal loss and a loss to the region’s economy. By removing some of the financial pressure, EMA provides the opportunity to carry on in full time education and take advantage of a wide range of academic or vocational courses at a school or college.”

“Our message is: apply now and you can still be in time to receive your first weekly payment by the beginning of term.”

The size of allowance available depends on income but households in England with annual earnings of £30,810 or less will generally be eligible. The weekly allowance is paid at three levels: £30, £20 or £10. Students can also earn bonuses worth up to £500, in reward for good progress and attendance on their course and can still work part time without affecting their EMA payments.

In most cases EMA is paid for two years but it can be for three, depending on the course. Eligible studies include GCSE retakes, GNVQs and NVQs, as well as AS and A2s.

For further information or to get an application form, call 0800 121 8989 or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

What are the key features of EMA?

- Weekly payment bands of £30, £20 and £10 per week, depending on household income.
- Intermittent bonus payments depending on the programme of learning.
- Available for both academic and vocational study, up to Level 3, which can include courses such as basic skills GCSE retakes, GNVQs, NVQs, as well as AS and A2s.
- No other household benefits are affected.

- Young people can still have a part-time job.

Who is eligible?

- Young people are eligible to receive or to continue receiving EMA in the EMA year 2008/09 providing:
- They will already be 16, 17, 18 or 19 on the 1st September 2008;
- From households where the combined family income is less than £30,810
- They are participating in full-time further education (as defined in EMA guidance) up to and including Level 3, or LSC funded e2e or a Programme led Apprenticeship

They must be:

- a person who is 'settled' in the UK, and been ordinarily resident in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Mann for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
- a national of any European Union (EU) country (including Gibraltar), or the spouse or civil partner or child of an EU national, and been ordinarily resident in the European Economic Area (EEA) for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
- an EEA migrant worker, Swiss National or Turkish Migrant Worker, or the spouse, civil partner or child of any of the above, who has Indefinite Leave to Remain in the
- UK, and who is ordinarily resident in the UK at the start of the learning programme, and has been ordinarily resident in the EEA throughout the three year period prior to that; or recognised as a refugee by the UK Government, or the spouse or civil partner or child of a refugee, have been granted Humanitarian Protection, or have EU Temporary Protection.
- If a young person lives overseas as part of a family serving with HM Forces or the Ministry of Defence in Germany or Cyprus, they should call Service Children's Education on (0049) 2161 908 2525 for further advice.

Application

Evidence of an applicant's household income for the previous tax year and proof of the individual's operational bank account are required.

Eligible applicants will receive a Notice of Entitlement explaining how much they will receive once they have enrolled and started attending their learning programme.

EMA Contract

Once enrolled, the student must attend all course sessions and sign an EMA Contract with their school or college. The contract sets out what is expected in terms of attendance, coursework and progress.

14-19 area prospectuses

14-19 area prospectuses are an on-line resource which provide information for young people on all learning courses and programmes available in each local area. They can be viewed via the national portal at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/prospectus. From 2008, learners will be able to access information on the new Diplomas being delivered in their area, through the on-line prospectuses.

LSC

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

All public enquiries regarding EMA please contact: 0800 121 8989 (some mobile operators may charge for calls made to this number) or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

Media enquiries, please contact:

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