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General Information

If you have any financial queries please visit the Student Funding Office in No1 on The Square, call the office on 01506 418181 (select 'option 2') or send an email to studentfunds@west-lothian.ac.uk.

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

1 What is an EMA?

It is a weekly payment of £30.00 for students who are aged 16 and up to 18 continuing in full-time or part-time further education after reaching compulsory school leaving age.

2 Who will be entitled to an EMA?

The conditions of the EMA are:

- you must have turned 16 by 30 September 2024. If you turn 16 between 1 October 2024 and 29 February 2025 you can be considered for an EMA from January 2025.
- the household income must be below the income thresholds detailed below
- you must be attending a non-advanced further education course at College
- you must meet the residency requirements.

3 What are the income thresholds for EMA?

The financial assessment will be based on income received during the tax year ended 5 April 2024.

£26,884.00 or below £30.00 per week
(for families with more than 1 dependent child in the household)

£24,421.00 or below £30.00 per week
(for families with a single dependent child in the household)

Documentary evidence of income will be required to support your application.

4 For how long can EMA support be available?

Payment of an EMA will normally be restricted to a maximum period of three years. It will be available for students aged 16 and up to 18 years of age providing household income does not rise above the threshold. A new application is required each year.

5 Is there help available for travelling and course expenses?

You can apply for help with travel by applying for an NEC travel card at [Homepage - YPTS \(freebus.scot\)](http://Homepage - YPTS (freebus.scot)).

You can apply for help towards study expenses, books, tools and protective clothing through a Further Education U18 Study Bursary.

6 How will I be paid?

Payments will be made fortnightly in arrears directly into the nominated bank account of the student.

The EMA can only be paid for each full week's attendance within term time. Payment cannot be made for the short term-time holidays which include the October break, Christmas and Easter.

7 Attendance requirements

The student must normally have 100% attendance for their full-time course to receive each week's payment. **Part payment for part attendance will not be made.** Students who start college in August intake can self-certificate for 15 days of absence within the academic year, for short courses students can self-certificate for 7.5 days. Students will not be able to use these self-certificate absences consecutively at the start of their course. Absences will be counted by the Student Funds Office using the register. Where medical evidence is available the student can still receive payment for a maximum of 4 weeks of absence within the academic year. Medical evidence can include medical certificates, appointment cards/letters or evidence of medication. **A doctor or dentist appointment will only merit a half day absence.** 4 weeks maternity leave is allowed (6 weeks if a caesarean birth) and 2

weeks paternity leave. The student funds office must be notified of this by email to continue payment throughout this time. After the 15 or 7.5 days self-certified absence, where evidence is not given for an absence, the payment will be held. In this situation the Student Funds Office will take into consideration the student's engagement on the course and payment may be released.

8 Learning Agreements

A Learning Agreement is an agreement between the student and the College that explains what is expected in terms of attendance, conduct and progress.

To be eligible for an EMA you must have had a learning Agreement authorised with the College.

9 What age must I be to get study expenses?

You cannot receive a study expense Bursary if you are under 16 on 30 September 2024.

Christmas leavers

Students who turn 16 between 1 October 2024 and 29 February 2025 do not generally qualify to leave full-time education until Christmas 2024. As a result they are not eligible for study Bursary assistance until January 2025.

Bursaries

1 What is a bursary?

A bursary is a financial award given to a student at the discretion of the College to help maintain students in their education beyond their statutory school leaving date. An award can include allowances that cover a student's maintenance, travel and study costs. The bursary fund is cash limited and is subject to availability.

2 Who qualifies for a bursary?

The student must satisfy the residential requirements. This means you must have been ordinarily resident in the British Islands throughout the three years preceding the start date of your course. You must also have been ordinarily resident in Scotland on the start date of the course. There are a number of special cases in relation to residency requirements. You should seek guidance from the Student Funding Office within No1 on The Square at West Lothian College if you are in any doubt.

3 Which courses are eligible for bursary support?

A student should normally receive bursary support for one course of study to gain a vocational qualification provided that the student has not previously received financial support for a full-time course beyond the age of 18.

This applies to courses up to but not including Higher National Certificate level.

Applicants who have previously received either a mandatory or discretionary award from public funds will be considered by the College on an individual basis.

4 What period does a bursary cover?

The bursary is calculated to cover the duration of the course eg the number of weeks at College including any short holidays. It is not intended to cover the student during the summer months.

5 What will the bursary consist of?

According to the needs of the individual, the bursary may include sums to cover the costs of:

- a maintenance allowance
- dependants' allowance when appropriate
- allowances for study expenses, necessary books, instruments, tools and special clothing
- necessary and reasonable travelling expenses.

6 How much will I receive as a bursary?

The National Policy and Recommended Rates for FE Bursaries provides an agreed basic rate for each category of bursary. The actual amount paid to you depends on your personal circumstances.

The basic allowance is shown as a weekly rate for guidance only. Bursaries are paid in **fortnightly** instalments in arrears.

A student under 18: a study expense bursary will be awarded to a student who is under 18 at the start of his/her course. This is the date the course commences rather than the date the student starts the course.

A Care Experienced Student: If a student is currently or has ever been in care/looked after by their local authority then they will be eligible for the Care Experienced Bursary at a rate of £225 per week paid weekly.

A parentally supported student: a bursary will be awarded to a student who on the start date of his/her course has reached the age of 18 but is under 25. This is the date the course commences rather than the date the student starts the course.

Standard (at home) Allowance	£99.35
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Higher (away from home) Allowance	£125.55
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A self-supporting student: A bursary will be awarded to a student

who on the start date of his/her course is aged 25 years or over/has supported themselves for three years/is married. This is the date the course commences rather than the date the student starts the course.

Self-supporting

£125.55

Standard Allowance

The Standard Allowance is payable to all students living in the parental home. Dependent students will be assumed to live in the parental home if this is within reasonable daily travelling distance of the College. Therefore, any student who has moved out of the parental home but does not qualify as self-supporting will have their bursary assistance restricted to the standard (at home) rate maintenance if his/her parental home is within reasonable daily travelling distance of West Lothian College.

Higher Allowance

- The higher allowance will be paid to all married students living in the matrimonial home.
- The higher allowance will be paid to all widowed, divorced or separated students living out with the parental home.
- The higher allowance will be paid to self-supporting students not living in the parental home

7 Dependant Adult Allowance

Students can receive this allowance if they have care, financial or legal responsibilities for an adult dependant. This allowance is £67.55 per week and is subject to a means test. A dependant allowance can only be considered when the adult dependant's weekly income is lower than £67.55 – claims of eligibility for a dependant allowance must be supported by documentary evidence.

8 Will I be able to claim travelling expenses?

To be eligible for assistance with travel necessarily incurred in

attending an approved course of study, students must live in one of the areas listed on page 8.

Students under the age of 22 years on the start date of their course are not eligible for assistance with travel and must apply for the NEC travel card at [Homepage - YPTS \(freebus.scot\)](http://Homepage - YPTS (freebus.scot)), this will allow free travel on all buses throughout Scotland.

For all other students, eligibility for assistance with travel will be means tested and is dependent upon the level of contribution expected from the student and/or their parents/spouse/partner/legal guardian.

Travel arrangements are as follows:

<p>Addiewell Armadale Bathgate Blackburn Blackridge Broxburn Carmondean Deans East Calder Edinburgh Fauldhouse Harthill Kirknewton Knightsridge Mid Calder Polbeth Pumpherston Seafield Stoneyburn Uphall Station West Calder Whitburn</p>	<p>A One-Ticket bus pass will be provided and renewed four weekly.</p>

Any area of Livingston not mentioned in the above table will not be entitled to travel.

If your town has not been mentioned above, you will receive travel expenses as part of your bursary award if you are over the age of 22.

9 How will my bursary be assessed?

Any bursary payable will be reduced on a pound for pound basis for unearned income received in excess of £24.19 per week. If you have an income, other than the bursary award **whilst you are attending College** give full details e.g. Universal Credits, Legacy Benefits (IS/ESA), Working Tax Credits, gross income from pensions, bank and building society accounts, trust funds etc.

If you are under the age of 25 on the start date of your course and do not qualify as a self-supporting student (see page 12) then your bursary calculation will also be subject to a parental contribution. Your parents/legal guardians will be asked for details of their income in the application.

In the assessment of the parental contribution the income taken as the starting point is the gross income of the applicant's parent(s) to 5 April 2024.

The two scales of parental contribution applicable are detailed below.

- **Parentally supported students – 18 or over but under 25 on the start date of your course**

The contribution scale is applied to parentally supported student bursaries.

If gross parental income is £24,276.00 a contribution of £45.00 is assumed. The contribution increases at a rate of £1.00 per £9.00 balance of income thereafter up to a threshold of £50,977.00 where it will change to £1.00 for every £6.50 eg:

Gross Income	Contribution
Less than £24,275.00	Nil
£24,275.00	£45.00
£31,745.00	£875.00
£49,664.00	£2,866.00

After the contribution has been assessed it will be reduced by £152.00 in respect of each child (other than the award student) dependent on the parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

Where other dependants are similar award students, only one contribution is assessed for the family and it is divided among the students and deducted from the individual awards.

- **Self supporting**

If you are married or living with a partner your award will also be subject to a spouse/partner contribution. You will be asked for details of your spouse/partner and his/her income in the application.

A student's assessed award is reduced by the amount of contribution which the spouse/partner is considered to be able to make towards the student's expenses.

In the assessment of the spouse/partner contribution, the income taken as the starting point is the gross income of the spouse. If the gross income is £20,643.00 a contribution of £45.00 is assumed. The contribution increases at the rate of £1.00 per £9.00 balance of income thereafter, up to a threshold of £50,977.00 where it will change to £1.00 for every £6.50.

Gross Income	Contribution
Less than £20,643.00	Nil
£20,643.00	£45.00
£27,933.00	£855.00
£35,538.00	£1,700.00
£50,568.00	£3,370.00

After the contribution has been assessed it will be reduced by £152.00 in respect of each child (other than the award student) dependent on the spouse.

Where other dependants are similar award students, only one contribution is assessed for the family and it is divided among the students and deducted from the individual awards.

Examples

- **Parentally supported students:**

$$42 \text{ weeks} \times \text{£}99.35 = \text{£}4,172.70$$

If the student's parental income was £24,275.00 or less the sum of £4,172.70 would be payable in full.

However, if the parental income was £31,745.00 for example, a contribution of £875.00 would be expected and a maintenance allowance of £3297.70 would be paid (£4,172.70 - £875.00).

- **Self-support student (25 or over) married and living in the marital home:**

$$42 \text{ weeks} \times \text{£}125.55 = \text{£}5,273.10$$

However, if for example the partner's income was £27,933.00 and the student has two children, the contribution would be as follows:

$$\text{£}27,933.00 = \text{£}855.00 \text{ contribution}$$

$$2 \text{ children} = \text{£}152.00 \text{ per child}$$

Therefore an amount of £304.00 would be deducted from the contribution $\text{£}855.00 - \text{£}304.00 = \text{£}551.00$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{The calculated allowance would be } & \text{£}5,273.10 - \text{£}551.00 \\ & = \text{£}4,722.10 \end{aligned}$$

Please note that these are simple examples of how a bursary might be calculated. The level of award payable will depend on the student's individual circumstances.

10 How do I qualify as a self-supporting student?

A self-supporting student must have:

- no parent living; or
- attained the age of 25 years on the start date of your course for which the bursary application is made; or
- been married or lives as an unmarried partner prior to the commencement date of the course for which the bursary application is made.
- supported himself or herself out of earnings from full-time employment or benefits for any three years preceding the commencement date of the course for which the bursary application is made. We will require documentary evidence such as three years p60s or a letter/screenshot from HMRC.

Periods that may be counted as part of the three years are:

- any time during which a student had the care of a person (adult or child) dependent on them and/or was in receipt of sickness, DLA or maternity benefits
- periods during which the student was in receipt of DWP benefits i.e. Universal Credits, Legacy Benefits or training under government sponsored course.

The onus is on the student to provide documentary evidence to prove they have self-supporting status. If there is not sufficient evidence to prove this, then West Lothian College will consider that student under one of the other categories of support.

11 What happens if I am receiving benefits?

Income Support/ESA - Students on these benefits can normally stay on the benefit and receive bursary support for equipment and travel only. If you are receiving ESA you need to check with the DWP that you can stay on it while studying.

Before submitting your bursary application you must have form BUR6 (can be requested by emailing studentfunds@west-lothian.ac.uk) completed by the DWP/Jobcentre Plus confirming your eligibility to receive such support.

If you are in any doubt about your eligibility you should seek advice from the Student Funding Office within No1 at The Square at the College.

12 What happens if I am receiving Universal Credit?

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit and have children or receive the Limited Capability for Work element you will remain on Universal Credit.

A bursary of £28.00 per week will be awarded and this **will not in most cases** affect the Universal Credit award.

13 When should I apply?

When you have been offered a place on the College course and accepted that place on my college a link will appear for you to apply for funding. **The closing date for applications is 6 October 2024** for courses starting in August 2024 and **1 March 2025** for courses starting in January 2025. Applications will be accepted after these dates but any money entitlement will not be backdated and will be awarded from the date the application was received.

PROCESSING YOUR APPLICATION CAN TAKE A MAXIMUM OF 4 WEEKS. IF YOU DO NOT HEAR FROM THE STUDENT FUNDING OFFICE WITHIN 4 WEEKS THEN YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CHECK.

15 How will I be paid my bursary?

The College will pay your bursary directly into your bank account. The first instalment will be paid on 6 September 2024 and then fortnightly after that as per payment schedule that you will receive with Award. **The first instalment will not be released until you accept the award. This can be done on My College once you have received your award by email.**

16 What are the conditions of the award?

The full conditions will be issued to you with your email of award. However, in general the following conditions must be met:

All bursaries are subject to satisfactory conduct, engagement and attendance of the student. The student must normally have 100% attendance/engagement for their full-time course to receive each week's payment. Students can self-certificate for 15 days of absence within the academic year for August start courses, 7.5 days for short courses, this cannot be used consecutively at the start of the course. Absence will be counted by the Student Funds Office using the register. Where medical evidence is available the student can still receive payment for a maximum of 4 weeks of absence within the academic year. Medical evidence can include medical certificates, appointment cards/letters or evidence of medication. A doctor or dentist appointment will only merit a half day absence. After the 15 days self-certified absence, where evidence is not given for an absence the payment will be held.

Payment will be made fortnightly on satisfactory attendance/engagement. If attendance/engagement are unsatisfactory, the student will receive a warning text. If there are further absences, the next payment will be held until the student contacts Student Funds. Care Experienced students receive payments weekly and will receive 2 warnings before payment is held.

- 4 weeks maternity leave is allowed (6 weeks if a caesarean birth) and 2 weeks paternity leave. The student funds office must be notified of this in writing to continue payment throughout this time.
- Absence for holiday purposes. As long as student is engaging and progress is up to date, the student may receive payment for up to 2 weeks.

- Any changes in income or other particulars relevant to the bursary should be notified to the Student Funding Team immediately. The student or any person acting on the student's behalf shall, at such

times as the College requires, provide information and documents necessary to exercise its functions.

- The College may revise the bursary at any time during its tenure and may suspend or terminate the bursary without further warning if the conditions of award are not complied with or if the college is not satisfied with the conduct or engagement of the student.

Additionally, bursary is subject to availability of funds.

17 What happens if I withdraw from my course?

It is the responsibility of the award students to notify the Student Funding Team immediately upon withdrawal from their course of study. The College is entitled to reclaim all money previously paid but, where progress and attendance have been satisfactory for at least 13 term time weeks, allowances are normally given up to the student's last date of (regular) attendance.

18 What happens if I am overpaid?

If a student is overpaid for any reason, the College will request repayment of the sum overpaid. The student will be obliged to pay the College the sum requested. **This means that when a student is overpaid, whether because of failure to report changes in circumstances or because of withdrawal from his/her course or for any other reason, the College has the right and duty to seek recovery and will normally do so.**

19 Is there an Appeals Procedure?

All students are advised, in the first instance, to discuss any grievance they have with a member of staff from the Student Funding Team. They provide any information or assistance required on appealing against bursary decisions.

20 What happens if I need further financial help?

In some circumstances students on bursaries find themselves in financial difficulties. The College may be able to give additional support from:

Further Education Discretionary Fund

This fund can provide extra support for students who need help with housing costs.

Please complete the online application.

This fund will be targeted at students in particular need.

Childcare Fund

For students married or living as part of a couple the Childcare Fund will pay a maximum of £40.00 per child per day and £20.00 per half day for timetabled classes only.

For lone parents the full cost of childcare will be paid for timetabled classes only.

Assistance can only be offered where the student is using a registered child minder, nursery or after school club and the provider will be paid directly.

Please complete the online application.