

EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (EMA)



Department for the
Economy
An Roinn
Geilleagair

www.economy-ni.gov.uk



Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

The little book of EMA

All you need to know
about EMA for academic
year **2026/27**

What is EMA?

Education Maintenance Allowance is a **weekly allowance of £30 to help 16, 17, 18 and 19 year olds** with the costs of further education.

Payments are made every 2 weeks as long as you continue to meet your school or college's attendance requirements.

Getting EMA won't affect any benefits you or your family already receive.

Read this guide to find out more about EMA

www.nidirect.gov.uk



Do you already get EMA?

You don't need to do anything, we'll contact you in spring about your EMA for 2026/27.

Applying

You need to meet the following requirements to be able to get EMA:

Age

Your 16th, 17th, 18th or 19th birthday falls on or between 2 July 2025 and 1 July 2026 and you are starting or continuing in further education from September 2026.

Course

You attend a post-compulsory further education course at 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.

Nationality and residency

If you're a UK citizen who normally lives in the UK you should be able to get EMA. If you're not a UK citizen you may still be able to get EMA, go to www.nidirect.gov.uk for more information.

Household income

The table below shows how much you can get based on your household income.

Annual household income	Weekly EMA entitlement
£20,500 or less	£30
£22,500 or less 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

We'll ask for information about your household income as part of your application. We'll need this information from each person you normally live with (apart from any adult brothers or sisters you might have). We may ask for evidence to confirm the household income details if needed.

You won't be able to get EMA if you've been approved to receive a Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Bursary or a Department for the Economy Further Education Award for the course you're applying for.

Applying

How do I apply?

You need to complete an application form.

You'll be able to get one from:

- your school or college
- www.nidirect.gov.uk

When do I apply?

Application forms will be available from spring 2026. You should return your application form as soon as possible, as far in advance of your course start date and no later than 31 August 2027.

Keep an eye on www.nidirect.gov.uk for updates about when to apply.

30 September 2026 - To be eligible for backdated payments, to the start of term, you must apply before this date.

31 August 2027 - You must have completed your application, sending all information and evidence, before this date for you to be eligible for EMA in academic year 2026/27.

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 won't be able to pay you until we get the evidence but this way we can make a start on your application earlier.



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 EMA Agreement with your school or college

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.

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 before we'll pay your EMA into your bank or building society account.

Getting 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 **in your name**, you should do so while you apply for EMA.

Before we can make any payments to you:

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

What if I have someone to help manage my finances?

EMA is awarded to you, so we pay it directly to you. However, if you have someone who's authorised to look after your finances for you we'll ask for more information and evidence for this as part of your application.

What if my circumstances change?

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

- If your bank details change
- If your contact details change
- If your household income changes
- If you change school or college

How do I contact you?

You can get in touch with us by calling **0300 200 7089** or by emailing **ema_ni@slc.co.uk**

Alternative Formats

All our forms are available in Braille, large print or audio format. To request these, email your name, address and details of the format you need to **brailleandlargefonts@slc.co.uk** or call **0141 243 3686**.