EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (EMA) TERMS & CONDITIONS 2026/27

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

You have been granted an EMA as shown in the enclosed letter of award. The award is subject to the terms and conditions below and it is in your own interest to read these notes carefully and comply with the instructions. Failure to do so may result in delays or loss of payment(s).

PAYMENTS

SCHOOL APPLICANTS

If your Learning Centre is a school, you must make sure you have completed a Learning Agreement with your school before any payments will be made to you. This is your responsibility.

LEARNING AGREEMENT (PREVIOUSLY ACTIVITY AGREEMENT)
If you are on an Action Plan, you will need to complete a Learning Agreement with your Advisor.

1st PAYMENT
Your first EMA payment will be authorised by your Learning Centre and will be tied to the cut-off dates for authorising that are shown on the payment schedule in this document. Learning Centres authorise payments approx. 8 days before a payment date. If you are due any backdated money, this will normally be paid on the first date you are paid.

Terms and Conditions

1. You must adhere to the terms of the Learning Agreement (attendance, attainment, behaviour and attitude) or EMA payments will be stopped immediately.

2. You must attend your Learning Centre as per the Learning/Activity Agreement – e.g. for those at school this will normally be for a minimum of 21 hours of guided learning per week.

3. Any changes to your learning or agreement must be agreed with your Learning Centre. Failure to notify and agree changes will affect payments to you.

4. Students must inform their **Learning Centre** of any changes of address, contact details or changes in circumstances **within 5 working days of the alteration**. Changes to your **Bank Account** details must be given directly to the **EMA Unit** in **writing 7 working days prior to the payment date**.

5. You will only receive an EMA payment for those weeks where 100% attendance has been maintained. Absences authorised by your **Learning Centre** will be accepted.

6. **Lateness is regarded as not adhering to 100% attendance.** Up to 1 late per week may be accepted; up to a maximum of 5 per period (See appendix 2 for term dates/blocks) might be permissible but at the discretion of the Learning Centre. Therefore more than 1 late being recorded in 1 week might trigger non-payment for that week.

7. Your award will be paid to you **fortnightly in arrears** and will be **paid directly into your bank account**. Payment will not be made to you for holiday weeks.

8. **A maximum of 5 days self-certified absence** (medical reasons only) may be accepted in a term/block). (See appendix 2 for term dates/blocks) Thereafter only a doctor's certificate or medical absence authorised by a doctor will be accepted.

9. Absence should be **notified to your Learning Centre before or on the first day of absence** and students **should continue to notify their Learning Centre** of absence if it continues.

10. Relevant documentation to support the **reason for absence must be submitted** by the student/ parent/carer **to the Learning Centre within 10 days of coming back to your Learning Centre**. Failure to do so will trigger non-payment **indefinitely**. (Individual circumstances will be considered before a decision is made)

11. Long-term sick leave will be monitored by the Learning Centre. Individual circumstances will be considered before a decision is made on whether payments are to continue.

12. Students who are absent from the Learning Centre to go on family holidays during term time will not receive EMA payments for the weeks they were away on Holiday.

13. You can continue to receive EMA payments if you are on work experience providing the work experience is a **pre-arranged and an integral part of the course**. The work experience should take place during term and should not be waged.

14. If you are formally excluded from the Learning Centre your weekly payments will be suspended during the period that you are absent from Learning Centre.

15. You must attend all scheduled exams including prelim exams as per your learning agreement. It will be at the **discretion of the Learning Centre** either to withhold weekly payment for non-attendance of exams. (Individual circumstances will be considered before a decision is made).

16. Study periods leading up to exams will be counted as attendance as long as this is in term time. Please note attendance will be monitored by the Learning Centre prior to study leave. Therefore any un-authorised absence or self-certified absence over 5 school days in that term will trigger non-payment and payments will be jeopardised.

17. S6 students leaving school at the end of the academic year (exam period) will only be paid until the end of the SQA exam period (usually mid June) as they are not eligible to remain in school.

18. Any overpayment of EMA award will be recovered either from weekly payments until all monies owing are paid in full or an invoice will be issued.

19. **You** must check with your own bank in the **first instance** to ascertain when/what EMA payments have been paid into your bank account for the relevant period. (Please refer to payment schedule Appendix 1) If payments have not been paid **please contact your Learning Centre.**

20. For security reasons, successful applicants who call to make any enquiries must provide their date of birth, name of Learning Centre they attend. Sometimes additional questions might be required such as SCN number or bank account details before information can be provided.

21. If your weekly EMA payment is not paid because you are deemed to have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the scheme, you have the right to appeal the decision. Please refer to EMA payment appeals procedure attached Appendix 3. **(It is the responsibility of the student to check payments)**

Activity Agreement Participants

(Activity Agreement participants should always check terms 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 19 and 21 above with their personal advisor or the Activity Agreement Coordinator)

EMA payments will be stopped if you do not comply with the above conditions.

If you have any queries, please **contact your Learning Centre in the first instance** and there after the EMA Unit on (01349) 886659.

APPENDIX 1: EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

PAYMENT TIMETABLE FOR 2026-27

Week Ending		Last Date Learning Centre to Process Authorisations (Thurs)	Process Date for EMA Unit (Monday)	Payment Dates (Friday)
10 Jul 2026	17 Jul 2026		27 Jul 2026	01 Aug 2026
24 Jul 2026	31 July 2026		09 Aug 2026	14 Aug 2026
07 Aug 2026	14 Aug 2026		24 Aug 2026	28 Aug 2026
Start of School academic Year 2026-27 (Begins 17 Aug 2026)				
21 Aug 2026	28 Aug 2026	03 Sep 2026	07 Sep 2026	11 Sep 2026
4 Sep 2026	11 Sep 2026	17 Sep 2026	21 Sep 2026	25 Sep 2026
18 Sep 2026	25 Sep 2026	01 Oct 2026	05 Oct 2026	09 Oct 2026
02 Oct 2026	09 Oct 2026	15 Oct 2026	19 Oct 2026	23 Oct 2026
16 Oct 2026	23 Oct 2026	29 Oct 2026	02 Nov 2026	06 Nov 2026
30 Oct 2026	06 Nov 2026	12 Nov 2026	16 Nov 2026	20 Nov 2026
13 Nov 2026	20 Nov 2026	26 Nov 2026	30 Nov 2026	04 Dec 2026
27 Nov 2026	04 Dec 2026	10 Dec 2026	14 Dec 2026	18 Dec 2026
11 Dec 2026	18 Dec 2026	31 Dec 2026	04 Jan 2027	08 Jan 2027
25 Dec 2026	01 Jan 2027	07 Jan 2027	11 Jan 2027	15 Jan 2027
08 Jan 2027	15 Jan 2027	21 Jan 2027	25 Jan 2027	29 Jan 2027
22 Jan 2027	29 Jan 2027	04 Feb 2027	08 Feb 2027	12 Feb 2027
05 Feb 2027	12 Feb 2027	18 Feb 2027	22 Feb 2027	26 Feb 2027
19 Feb 2027	26 Feb 2027	04 Mar 2027	08 Mar 2027	12 Mar 2027
05 Mar 2027	12 Mar 2027	18 Mar 2027	22 Mar 2027	26 Mar 2027
19 Mar 2027	26 Mar 2027	01 Apr 2027	05 Apr 2027	9 Apr 2027
02 Apr 2027	09 Apr 2027	15 Apr 2027	19 Apr 2027	23 Apr 2027
16 Apr 2027	23 Apr 2027	29 Apr 2027	04 May 2027 (Tue)	07 May 2027
30 Apr 2027	07 May 2027	13 May 2027	17 May 2027	21 May 2027
14 May 2027	21 May 2027	27 May 2027	31 May 2027	04 Jun 2027
28 May 2027	04 Jun 2027	10 Jun 2027	14 Jun 2027	18 Jun 2027
11 Jun 2027	18 Jun 2027	24 Jun 2027	28 Jun 2027	02 Jul 2027
25 Jun 2027	02 Jul 2027	08 Jul 2027	12 Jul 2027	16 Jul 2027

Please note:
No payments are made for holiday weeks.
This payment schedule is for all Learning Centres – schools, third sector,
home taught and activity agreements, some of which have attendances for 52 weeks of the year.
Payments are made in arrears and are only made to this fixed timetable.

APPENDIX 2: Term & Block Dates 2026/27

SCHOOLS, HOME TAUGHT & THIRD SECTOR TERM	From	To
Term 1	**17 August 2026**	**09 October 2026**
October Break		
Term 2	**26 October 2026**	**22 December 2026**
Christmas & New Year Break		
Term 3	**6 January 2027**	**25 March 2027**
Easter Break		
Term 4	**12 April 2027**	**1 July 2027**
Summer Break		
Learning Agreement previously Activity Agreement Students **BLOCK**	**From**	**To**
Block 1	**06 July 2026**	**16 August 2026**
Block 2	**17 August 2026**	**11 October 2026**
Block 3	**12 October 2026**	**20 December 2026**
Block 4	**21 December 2026**	**04 April 2027**
Block 5	**05 April 2027**	**04 July 2027**

APPENDIX 3:

Education Maintenance Allowance

Payment Appeals procedure

If your weekly EMA payment is not paid because you are deemed to have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the scheme, you have the right to appeal the decision.

1. You must discuss any concerns or issues with your Learning Centre (example guidance teacher, personal advisor) **in the first instance**.
2. If payments are withheld students must be notified to the reasons why in writing (copy of this should be kept on file) or record of meeting held.
3. Once notification of the above has been received if the student wishes to appeal the decision made by the Learning Centre they must submit in writing outlining their reasons for appealing the decision. This must be submitted within 14 days to the Learning Centre.
4. Once the appeal has been heard and decision made then the student should then be notified in writing of the decision.
5. If the appeal cannot be resolved within the Learning Centre to the student's satisfaction then they should write to their local Area Education, Culture & Sport Office for the attention of the Area Education Manager within 28 days of payments being suspended. They should then give the reasons for appealing the decision.
6. The Area Education Manager will consider appeals within 14 days of the receipt of the appeal letter and will notify the applicant, the school and the EMA Unit of the final decision of the Area Education Manager.
7. If your appeal is successful you will receive a backdated payment. The decision of the Area Education Manager is final.

The Highland Council, Area Education Office Addresses:-

Area Education Office - Mid
Easter and Mid Ross
County Buildings
Dingwall
IV15 9QN
Tel: 01349 886607

Area Education Office - North
Caithness and Sutherland
Drummuie
Golspie
Sutherland
KW10 6TA
Tel: 01408 635286

Area Education Office - South
Inverness West, Inverness East and Badenoch,
Strathspey, Ardersier, Nairn
Headquarters,
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
Tel: 01463 702750

Area Education Office - West
Skye, Lochalsh, Wester Ross and Lochaber
Fingal Centre
Viewfield Road
Portree
Isle of Skye
IV51 9ET
Lochaber area office Tel: 01397 781410
Portree office Tel: 01478 613697

Please make a note of the following.

- Payment appeals for any week beginning **01/06/26 - 08/06/26** should be submitted for appeal by **26/06/26**. If an appeal is submitted after this date the appeal will be refused automatically.
- Payment appeals for week beginning **15/06/26** & **22/06/26** must be submitted for appeal and dealt with at the next academic year of 2026-27 "August 2027". If an appeal is submitted after August 2027 the appeal will be refused automatically.