

The Highland Council – Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Terms & Conditions – 2025/26

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 ensure 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 approximately 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. Adhering to terms of the learning agreement

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

2. Attendance

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 per week.

3. Informing us about changes

Students must inform their Learning Centre of any changes of address, contact details or changes in circumstances which may affect their eligibility for an award.

4. Giving bank account details on time

Payments can only be authorised if working bank details have been provided on time. Bank Account details must therefore reach us no later than 10 working days prior to the payment date.

5. Attendance and Payments

You will only receive an EMA payment for those weeks where 100% attendance has been maintained.

Absences should be notified to your Learning Centre within the time limits stated below:

- a. Lateness: Up to 2 late attendances per term/block might be permissible
- b. Absence: A maximum of 5 per period (see Appendix 2 for term dates/blocks) might be allowed

6. Lateness

- Lateness is considered a failure to meet 100% attendance.
- Up to 1 late per week may be accepted, with a maximum of 5 per period (see Appendix 2 for term dates/blocks).
- Acceptance is at the discretion of the Learning Centre.
- More than 1 late in a single week may trigger non-payment for that week.

7. Payment Schedule

- Your EMA award will be paid fortnightly in arrears.
- Payments are made directly into your bank account.
- No payments will be made for holiday weeks.

8. Self-Certified Absence

- A maximum of 5 days of self-certified absence (for medical reasons only) may be accepted per term/block.
- After this, only a doctor's certificate or medical absence authorised by a doctor will be accepted.

9. Notification of Absence

- Absences must be reported to your Learning Centre before or on the first day of absence.
- If the absence continues, you must continue to notify your Learning Centre.

10. Supporting Documentation

- Relevant documentation to support your absence must be submitted to the Learning Centre by the student, parent, or carer within 10 days of returning.

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 continue.*

12. Holidays During Term Time

- Students who go on family holidays during term time will not receive EMA payments for the weeks they are away.

13. Work Experience

You can continue to receive EMA payments if:

- The work experience is pre-arranged
- It is an integral part of your course
- It takes place during term time
- It is unpaid

14. Exclusion

- If you are formally excluded from the Learning Centre, your weekly payments will be suspended during the period of exclusion.

15. Exams

- You must attend all scheduled exams, including prelim exams, as per your Learning Agreement.
- The Learning Centre may withhold weekly payments for non-attendance.
- *Individual circumstances will be considered before a decision is made.*

16. Study Periods and Study Leave

- Study periods leading up to exams count as attendance if they occur during term time.
- Attendance will not be counted during scheduled SQA Higher Grade, Intermediate level, or equivalent exams if:
 - You are on study leave, and
 - You have more than five days of self-certified absence

This will trigger non-payment indefinitely.

17. S6 Leavers

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).

They are not eligible to remain in school beyond this point.

18. Overpayments

Any overpayment of your EMA award will be:

- Recovered from your weekly payments until the full amount is repaid, or
- An invoice will be issued for the amount owed.

19. Checking Payments

You must check with your own bank to confirm:

- When and what EMA payments have been made to your account
- For which period the payments apply
(Refer to the payment schedule – Appendix 1)

If payments have not been received, contact your Learning Centre.

20. Security for Enquiries

For security reasons, successful applicants making enquiries must provide:

- Date of birth
- Name of the Learning Centre they attend

Additional information may be requested, such as:

- Scottish Candidate Number (SCN)

- Bank account details

21. Appeals

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

Refer to the EMA payment appeals procedure in Appendix 3.
It is the student's responsibility to check their payments.

Activity Agreement Participants

Participants should always review the following terms with their Personal Advisor or Activity Agreement Coordinator:

- Terms 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 19, and 21

Important Notice

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

Need Help?

If you have any queries:

- Contact your Learning Centre first
- Then contact the EMA Unit: 01349 886659

Appendix 1: Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Payment Timetable for 2025–26

Week Ending	Last Date Learning Centre to Process Authorisations (Thurs)	Process Date for EMA Unit (Monday)	Payment Dates (Friday)
11 Jul 2025		28 Jul 2025	01 Aug 2025
18 Jul 2025		11 Aug 2025	15 Aug 2025
25 Jul 2025		25 Aug 2025	29 Aug 2025
01 Aug 2025			
08 Aug 2025			
15 Aug 2025			

Start of School academic Year 2025-26 (Begins 18 Aug 2025)

22 Aug 2025	29 Aug 2025	04 Sep 2025	08 Sep 2025	12 Sep 2025
5 Sep 2025	12 Sep 2025	18 Sep 2025	22 Sep 2025	26 Sep 2025
19 Sep 2025	26 Sep 2025	02 Oct 2025	06 Oct 2025	10 Oct 2025
03 Oct 2025	10 Oct 2025	16 Oct 2025	20 Oct 2025	24 Oct 2025
17 Oct 2025	24 Oct 2025	30 Oct 2025	03 Nov 2025	07 Nov 2025
31 Oct 2025	07 Nov 2025	13 Nov 2025	17 Nov 2025	21 Nov 2025
14 Nov 2025	21 Nov 2025	27 Nov 2025	01 Dec 2025	05 Dec 2025
28 Nov 2025	05 Dec 2025	11 Dec 2025	15 Dec 2025	19 Dec 2025
12 Dec 2025	19 Dec 2025	01 Jan 2026	05 Jan 2026	09 Jan 2026
26 Dec 2025	02 Jan 2026	08 Jan 2026	12 Jan 2026	16 Jan 2026
09 Jan 2026	16 Jan 2026	22 Jan 2026	26 Jan 2026	30 Jan 2026
23 Jan 2026	30 Jan 2026	06 Feb 2026	09 Feb 2026	13 Feb 2026
06 Feb 2026	13 Feb 2026	20 Feb 2026	23 Feb 2026	27 Feb 2026
20 Feb 2026	27 Feb 2026	06 Mar 2026	09 Mar 2026	13 Mar 2026
06 Mar 2026	13 Mar 2026	20 Mar 2026	23 Mar 2026	27 Mar 2026
20 Mar 2026	27 Mar 2026	02 Apr 2026	07 Apr 2026	(Tue) 10 Apr 2026
03 Apr 2026	10 Apr 2026	16 Apr 2026	20 Apr 2026	24 Apr 2026
17 Apr 2026	24 Apr 2026	30 Apr 2026	05 May 2026	(Tue) 08 May 2026
01 May 2026	08 May 2026	14 May 2026	18 May 2026	22 May 2026
15 May 2026	22 May 2026	28 May 2026	01 Jun 2026	05 Jun 2026
29 May 2026	5 Jun 2026	11 Jun 2026	15 Jun 2026	19 Jun 2026
12 Jun 2026	19 Jun 2026	25 Jun 2026	29 Jun 2026	03 Jul 2026
26 Jun 2026	03 Jul 2026	09 Jul 2026	13 Jul 2026	17 Jul 2026

Please note the following

- No payments are made for holiday weeks.

- This payment schedule applies to all Learning Centres, including:
 - Schools
 - Third sector providers
 - Home-taught students
 - Activity agreement participants
- Some Learning Centres have attendance for 52 weeks of the year.
- Payments are made in arrears and are only issued according to this fixed timetable.

Appendix 2

Schools, Home Taught & Third Sector

TERM	From	To
Term 1	18 August 2025	10 October 2025
October Break		
Term 2	27 October 2025	23 December 2025
Christmas & New Year Break		
Term 3	7 January 2026	2 April 2026
Easter Break		
Term 4	20 April 2026	2 July 2026

Learning Agreement (Previously Activity Agreement) Students Block Dates – 2025/26

BLOCK	From	To
Block 1	07 July 2025	17 August 2025
Block 2	18 August 2025	12 October 2025
Block 3	13 October 2025	21 December 2025
Block 4	22 December 2025	05 April 2026
Block 5	06 April 2026	05 July 2026

Important Notice – EMA Payment Appeals

Please make a note of the following:

- Payment appeals for the week beginning 01/06/26 – 08/06/26 must be submitted by 26/06/26.
Appeals submitted after this date will be automatically refused.
- Payment appeals for the weeks beginning 15/06/26 and 22/06/26 must be submitted and dealt with in the next academic year (2026–27), specifically in August 2027.
Appeals submitted after August 2027 will be automatically refused.

Appendix 3: Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Payment Appeals Procedure

If your weekly EMA payment is not made 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.

Appeals Process

- 1. Initial Discussion**
You must first discuss any concerns or issues with your Learning Centre (e.g. guidance teacher, personal advisor).
- 2. Written Notification**
If payments are withheld, students must be notified in writing of the reasons. A copy of this notification should be kept on file for record-keeping.
- 3. Submitting an Appeal**
If no agreement is reached, the Learning Centre must submit a written appeal outlining the reasons.
This must be submitted within 14 days to the Learning Centre.
- 4. Notification of Appeal Outcome**
Once an appeal has been heard and a decision made, the student must be notified in writing of the outcome.
- 5. Escalation to Area Office**
If the appeal is resolved within the Learning Centre to the student's satisfaction, the case should be forwarded to the Area Education, Skills & Support Office for review by an Area Education Manager.
This must be done within 28 days of payments being stopped.
- 6. Final Decision**
The Area Education Manager will consider the appeal within 14 days of receiving the appeal letter and will notify the applicant, school, and EMA Unit of the final decision.
- 7. Backdated Payment**
If your appeal is successful, you will receive a backdated payment.
The decision of the Area Education Manager is final.

Area Education Office Contact Details

Mid – Easter and Mid Ross

County Buildings
Dingwall

IV15 9QN
Telephone: 01349 886607

North – Caithness and Sutherland

Drummuie
Golspie
Sutherland
KW10 6TA
Telephone: 01408 635286

South – Inverness, Inverness East and Badenoch, Strathspey, Ardersier, Nairn

Headquarters
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
Telephone: 01463 702750

West – Skye, Lochalsh, Wester Ross and Lochaber

Fingal Centre
Viewfield Road
Portree
Isle of Skye
IV51 9ET