

Education Maintenance Allowance Guidance for Colleges AY 2023-24



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FAO:	Principals of Scotland's colleges and the general public.
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Education Maintenance Allowance Guidance for Colleges AY 2023-24

Introduction

1. This document sets out guidance on the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) programme for colleges in Academic Year (AY) 2023-24. This publication builds on existing guidance both by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Scottish Government.

Background

2. The EMA programme aims to provide a financial incentive to young people from low-income households to remain in education beyond the minimum school leaving age. This programme is available on the same terms to students who remain in school and to those who go to college.
3. Within the Scottish college sector, SFC manages the programme on behalf of the Scottish Government.
4. SFC acts as the agent of the Scottish Government under a separate agreement from its other activities. EMA funds do not form part of the Scottish Government's grant-in-aid to SFC. The programme is subject to separate regulations from other student support funds and there are separate reporting requirements for both colleges and SFC.

EMA Programme

5. The EMA programme provides a weekly term-time allowance for students from low-income households who are at college studying non-advanced courses on either a full or part-time basis. It can be allocated to students aged 16-19 years old (inclusive), although as set out in [SFC's FE Bursary Guidance](#) college students who are aged 18 when they begin their course should normally be offered an FE bursary.
6. The household income of the young person will determine their eligibility for an EMA. Details of income thresholds and other eligibility criteria can be found in Part 1 of the Scottish Government's 'EMA Scotland Guidance and Processes' document for 2023-24, which we will separately email to college Student Support Administrators.
7. For both the full-time and part-time EMAs there is a single award available of £30 per week. Once students have been assessed and deemed to meet the requirements, they will be eligible for this payment. Full details of the application assessment process are available in Part 2 of the EMA Scotland Guidance and Processes document for 2023-24.
8. Students must have a 100% agreed attendance to receive the weekly payment, and any absences authorised by the college should be treated as a day of attendance. Colleges

are reminded that authorised absences are permitted and that they may exercise flexibility when considering the attendance criteria for vulnerable students. This flexibility should be considered on a case-by-case basis and be part of the learning agreement.

9. Colleges should also note that the previous flexibilities around COVID-related attendance issues have been removed for AY 2023-24.
10. Detailed guidance on attendance is set out in Part 1, pages 11-19 and pages 23-24 of the EMA Scotland Guidance and Processes document for 2023-24.
11. These funds are available to all college sector bodies funded by SFC, with the following exceptions:
 - Shetland and Orkney Colleges will receive payments from, and report to, their respective local authorities for EMAs.
 - Sabhal Mòr Ostaig does not currently have any relevant activity for EMAs.

Policies and Guidance

12. The EMA Scotland Guidance and Processes document governs the use of EMA funds. This document is prepared and updated regularly by the Scottish Government; with input from SFC, colleges, local authorities, and schools.
13. The Scottish Government has provided the final version for AY 2023-24 and this document will be emailed directly to student support contacts in colleges. The terms of this document cover both the school and college sectors to ensure consistency across Scotland.
14. This guidance covers both full-time and part-time EMA provision. Colleges are reminded that, for students to be eligible for a part-time EMA, they should be:

On a course that is eligible for SFC funding, as detailed in [SFC's Credit Guidance](#).

- On a course that leads to a recognised qualification, meets an employer's need or is a formal access course. Students on leisure courses and taster courses are not eligible for SFC funding or an EMA. Students on evening or weekend courses may be eligible for a part-time EMA but only where they meet the above criteria and where their attendance on the course is monitored.
- On a course with a duration which is less than the full-time definition. The minimum course duration is 1 hour.
- Claiming an EMA from one source and for one course only. Colleges are asked to make explicit to students when they apply that they should not claim an EMA for more than one course at a time, or at more than one college or at a school and a college simultaneously. Colleges should also inform students that SFC monitors

enrolments to identify students making dual claims. If students are found to be making dual claims, they will be liable to repay any EMA that is over-claimed to the college. Colleges should have systems in place to recover this money from students under these circumstances.

15. Students claiming part-time EMAs are not eligible for travel or study costs.
16. Criteria for the residential eligibility for EMA in colleges are set out in [The Education Maintenance Allowances \(Scotland\) Regulations 2007](#), [The Student Support \(Scotland\) Regulations 2022](#), and [The Education \(Fees and Student Support\) \(Miscellaneous Amendment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#). Colleges should also note the residency criteria set out in Annex A of the Scottish Government's EMA Scotland Guidance and Processes Document.
17. Colleges are reminded that Scottish-domiciled students studying in the rest of the UK (rUK) are not eligible for EMA. Similarly, under the revised regulations, students domiciled in the rUK (England, Wales, or Northern Ireland) but studying in Scotland are not eligible for EMA in Scotland.

Administrative costs

18. Colleges can claim funds for administrative costs. Two different types of payments for administrative costs will be made to colleges each year:
 - A flat rate payment of £8,000 will be made to all colleges participating in the programme in April 2024.
 - A further payment of £15 per accepted EMA student will be paid after student totals have been received in the data returns that are submitted twice annually, in February and July 2024.
19. Colleges should submit claims for administrative costs as part of the EMA claims process.
20. The EMA administrative funds are ring-fenced for EMA-related expenses and colleges should be able to demonstrate evidence of spend against their allocation. Colleges are asked to report annually on spend on EMA administrative costs (see [Annex C](#)).

Authorised signatures

21. Returns claiming funds must be signed by a relevant authorised signatory before being sent to SFC. This signatory will normally be the Principal/Chief Executive Officer or a nominated deputy. In recognition that many staff continue to work remotely or on a hybrid model, colleges may continue to submit their monthly returns by sending an email from the authorised signatory's college email address to EMAReturns@sfc.ac.uk by the usual monthly deadline. The authorised signatory should include the following text in their authorisation email to SFC:

“I approve the EMA claim made by (college name) for the amount of (£XXX).”

22. Colleges are required to complete and return the pro-forma response ([Annex B](#)) to EMAReturns@sfc.ac.uk, giving an update of the details of authorised signatories, by 1 December 2023. There can be up to four separate signatories. If you would like to amend these signatories at any point, please contact Ken Johnston in SFC's Finance Directorate (contact details are provided at the end of this document), as soon as possible.
23. The year-end statement is a declaration of each college's EMA spend within the AY, and it must be agreed and signed by the Principal/Chief Executive Officer. SFC's EMA Team will circulate regular reminders and information on submitting monthly and annual returns throughout the year.

Conditions of grant

24. EMA funding for colleges has specific conditions as set out below.

General

25. Students cannot claim an EMA for more than one course at a time, or at more than one college or at a school and a college simultaneously.
26. Students must sign a declaration agreeing that the college can recover any overpayment of EMA funds.
27. SFC will recover any overpayment of EMA funds from colleges at the earliest opportunity.
28. Colleges are required to comply with [The Student Support \(Scotland\) Regulations 2022](#), [The Education \(Fees and Student Support\) \(Miscellaneous Amendment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#), the EMA Scotland Business Model, National Guidance and other policy documents and updates as issued by SFC and/or the Scottish Government in operating the EMA programme.

Use of funds

29. EMA funds, for both students and college costs, are ring-fenced and should only be used for the purpose(s) for which they are allocated within the EMA programme.

Data returns and quality

30. Monthly data returns should be sent to SFC in good time (see [Annex A](#) for process timetable) as no ad-hoc payments will be made outside the monthly payment schedule. Therefore, colleges that delay making their returns and/or claims will not receive a payment until the following payment run.
31. Colleges are also required to agree and sign-off an AY-end data return. The return will include the information for the full AY and will be issued by SFC in September 2024.
32. It is the college's responsibility to ensure that data is submitted on time and quality requirements are met. Any delay and subsequent non-payment by SFC for a particular month should not lead to students being disadvantaged.
33. SFC's EMA Team will circulate regular reminders and information on submitting monthly and annual returns throughout the year. Colleges should also refer to the EMA Guidance and Processes document.

Audit requirements

34. EMAs will require a separate audit on the basis of the signed AY-end statement. The audit cycle is on an AY basis.
35. An audited year-end statement for the period August 2023 to July 2024 should be sent to SFC by 27 September 2024.
36. The audit procedures are currently being reviewed. Any changes will be communicated to colleges and incorporated into the audit guidance, due to be published in summer 2024.

Acceptance of grant

37. Colleges are asked to complete and return a signed copy of the funding offer pro-forma ([Annex B](#), parts 1 and 2) by 1 December 2023 to indicate they accept the offer of EMA funds and the conditions attached to them. The pro-forma should be sent to EMAreturns@sfc.ac.uk and colleges should retain a signed completed copy of these documents for their records.

Additional information required by the Scottish Government

38. In the past, the Scottish Government has requested additional information from colleges about provisional awards made to students. This was the [Annex C](#) form in previous guidance. We have been instructed by the Scottish Government that this information is no longer required and therefore we are not requesting this form.
39. Details on how colleges use the administrative funds they receive are still required and the copies of this form to be completed can be found at [Annex C](#). The returns are also scheduled in the timetable in [Annex A](#). Colleges should submit [Annex C](#) by 29 March 2024, so SFC can collate responses and return to the Scottish Government in April 2024 (we will issue a reminder at the start of March 2024).

Further information

40. Please contact Ken Johnston, Funding Policy Officer, tel: 0131 313 6562, email: kjohnston@sfc.ac.uk



Richard Maconachie FCCA

Director of Finance

Annex A

Payment of EMA Funds to all Colleges

41. The payment dates for Academic Year (AY) 2023-24 are set out in the table below. Colleges should complete EMA online returns for each month, and these should be with SFC within the allotted time. Failure to make the return in time sets the risk of non-payment of funds (see paragraphs 30-33). Colleges can email scanned copies of the signed return to EMAreturns@sfc.ac.uk, or follow the email authorisation process described at paragraph 21.
42. College claims for EMA payments to students will be made in arrears.

Payment Schedule

43. The schedule detailing payment and data return dates is set out in the table below. This is based on the turnaround time for data and payments as set out in the EMA Scotland Business Model and to fit with SFC's standard monthly payment schedule.
44. Timetable of EMA returns and payments between all colleges and SFC for AY 2023-24

Description	Period end date	Monthly return due to SFC	SFC payment to College	Notes
Aug claim period	25/08/23	30/08/23	16/09/23	
Sept claim period	29/09/23	04/10/23	14/10/23	
Oct claim period	27/10/23	01/11/23	14/11/23	
Nov claim period	24/11/23	29/11/23	16/12/23	
Dec claim period	29/12/23	08/01/24	16/01/24	
Jan claim period	26/01/24	31/01/24	14/02/24	

Description	Period end date	Monthly return due to SFC	SFC payment to College	Notes
Feb claim period	23/02/24	28/02/24	14/02/24	
Feb headcount return	29/12/23	28/02/24	14/02/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment on receipt of first head count (biannual data) return with student numbers*. • Paid for student registrations from August to December.
Main admin payment to colleges		03/04/24	14/04/24	
Mar claim period	28/03/24	03/04/24	14/04/24	
Information required by Scottish Government		29/03/24		Returns due to SFC with details on use of admin fees (Annex C)
April claim period	26/04/24	01/05/24	14/05/24	
May claim period	31/05/24	05/06/24	16/06/24	
June claim period	28/06/24	03/07/24	14/07/24	
July claim period	26/07/24	31/07/24	14/08/24	
July headcount return and admin claim	26/07/24	31/07/24	14/08/24	<p>Payment on receipt of second head count (biannual data) return with student numbers.</p> <p>Paid for student registrations from January onwards</p>
AY-end data return to be signed off by college		27/09/24		Data return to be signed-off by college Principal and returned to SFC with College Audit Certificate. Should

Description	Period end date	Monthly return due to SFC	SFC payment to College	Notes
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include 5% spot checks carried out by college.

** Please note that the data return will be kept open for student numbers only until the February claim is due, to allow colleges to reflect as accurate numbers as possible at this time.*

45. ******Please note that these dates may be subject to change.

Annex B (Part 1)

EMA Funding Offer, Pro-Forma Response Part 1

To be received by SFC no later than Friday 1 December 2023

ACCEPTANCE OF EMA CONDITIONS OF GRANT

College name

.....

I agree to the EMA conditions of grant for AY 2023-24 (August 2023 - July 2024), as set out in SFC's EMA grant letter 2023-24. I note that as part of these conditions, I will receive payment of administration costs for EMAs, which will be used for EMA-related expenditure only.

Signed

.....

Principal/Chief Executive Officer (or principal designate or equivalent)

.....

Name (please print)

.....

Position

.....

Date:

Please return by 1 December 2023 to: EMAreturns@sfc.ac.uk.

Annex B (Part 2)

EMA Funding Offer, Pro-Forma Response Part 2

To be received by SFC no later than Friday 1 December 2023

EMA CLAIMS AND PAYMENTS - AUTHORISED SIGNATORIES FOR 2023-24 ONWARDS

The following are authorised to claim EMA funds from SFC on behalf of

..... (insert name of College) from August 2023

Please inform SFC of any changes to these signatories as soon as possible.

Authorised signatories for claims:

Name:	Name:
Position: Principal/Chief Executive Officer	Position: Vice Principal/Director of Finance
Signature:	Signature:
Official email address:	Official email address:
Date:	Date:
Name:	Name:
Position:	Position:
Signature:	Signature:
Official email address:	Official email address:
Date:	Date:

Please return by Friday 1 December 2023 to: EMAreturns@sfc.ac.uk.

Annex C

Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAS)

Yearly Administration Breakdown 2023-24

Name of College:

The college should provide a breakdown of spend against the £8,000 administration allowance for Financial Year 2023-24 detailing how the allowance was used to support the processes set out in the EMA Scotland Guidance and Processes document.

Expenditure	Spend (£)
Printing costs for application forms/leaflets/posters, etc.	
Promotion costs of EMA (please specify below how EMA was promoted)	
Website update costs	
Staff costs	
Other costs (please specify)	
Total	

I certify that the entries on this form are accurate, and the payments on which they are based have been properly incurred.

Signed:

Date:

Position: Director of Finance or (please state)