



Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

August 2010

Education options for unemployed people

This leaflet outlines many of the education options available to unemployed people



Introduction

This leaflet outlines a range of education options. You may be able to take up some of these options and still retain a Social Welfare payment.

Key Providers

Vocational Education Committees (VECs) are statutory education bodies that administer secondary and adult education by providing a wide range of services. VECs also administer maintenance grants and funding for third-level education. There are 33 VECs located around the country. Your local VEC can be found on the website: www.vec.ie

Colleges/universities provide third-level education and thousands of courses for students including places for unemployed people through initiatives such as part-time undergraduate and post graduate schemes.

www.Qualifax.ie provides a comprehensive list of courses and colleges on their website.

VTOS

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) is the main second-level adult education programme which allows unemployed people to keep their Social Welfare payment and return to education. VTOS is a full-time programme (30 hours per week) and run by the VEC.

The main courses available are Junior/Leaving Certificate Courses, Foundation Courses, Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Courses and Special Skills training. The range and content of courses vary. Contact your local VEC for more details. There are 5,000 annual places available nationwide on VTOS.

To be eligible you must be:

- Aged 21 or over **AND**
- In receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit(JB)/Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) for 6 months or signing on for credits for 6 months.

You may also qualify for VTOS if you are in receipt of other types of Social Welfare payments, including if you are in receipt of an adult dependant payment.

PAYMENT ON VTOS

- You will receive the equivalent of your Social Welfare Payment – €196.00 for a single person.
 - You will receive a training bonus of €31.80 if you have been in receipt of JB / JA or certain other Social Welfare payments for 12 months or more.
 - You will not receive a payment if you are signing on for PRSI 'credits' only.
 - If you work part-time or casually during your studies, this will not affect your payment.
 - Travel and meal allowances are paid at FÁS rates.
 - People on VTOS may qualify for some financial assistance towards costs e.g. childcare.
 - There are no course fees.
- If on JB/JA you will no longer have to 'sign-on'.

APPLYING FOR VTOS

- Contact your local LES, Library or VEC.
- Each VEC has a VTOS Co-ordinator who can assist you with information on suitable courses.

BTEA

Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is a scheme which allows unemployed people to keep a Social Welfare payment and return to approved full-time education through either a second level (e.g. Junior/ Leaving Certificate / FETAC Level 6), third level (Diploma/ Degree/Higher Diploma / HETAC) or a third-level post graduate option. You must apply and be approved for BTEA before you take up the course and also be in receipt of your Social Welfare payment for at least 3 months (2nd Level option) or 9 months (3rd Level option) immediately before starting the course.

Private institution courses are not covered.

QUALIFYING FOR BTEA

Second Level Option

To qualify for the Second Level option you must be:

- 21 years of age or over and in receipt of a Jobseeker's Payment for at least 3 months **or**
- Aged 18-20 and out of formal education for at least 2 years and in receipt of a Jobseeker's Payment for at least 3 months

Third Level Option

To qualify for the Third Level option you must be:

- 21 years of age or over and be in receipt of a Jobseeker's Payment for at least 9 months **or**
- Aged 18-20 and out of formal education for 2 years and be in receipt of JB/JA for at least 9 months
- Aged 24 or over (3rd Level Post-graduate course)

i If you are in receipt of other types of Social Welfare payments you may also qualify for BTEA

i You may also qualify for BTEA in other circumstances e.g. where a person previously did not complete their course and are returning to the second or subsequent year of their 3rd Level course. For further details contact the INOU.

BTEA and Secondary Benefits

If you qualify for the BTEA, you will keep any secondary benefits you already have including:

- Fuel Allowance
- Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement

i You may access the BTEA immediately if you:

- Have worked for 2 years or more **and**
- Have been made statutorily redundant **and**
- Have an entitlement to a Jobseeker's payment.

hand You can apply for BTEA more than once depending on the type and level of the approved course you are looking to do.

APPLYING FOR BTEA

- ❑ When you receive a letter offering you a college place, fill out the BTE1 form and return it to your local Social Welfare Office (SWO). The form is available at www.welfare.ie or from your local SWO.
- ❑ Contact the colleges directly to get course information. Area Based Partnerships, local VECs, and your Local Employment Services (LES) will be willing to help you.
- ❑ Most applications are made through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Visit: www.cao.ie for further information.

PAYMENT ON BTEA

- ❑ You will be entitled to the full rate of BTEA regardless of your current Social Welfare Payment. This allowance replaces your Social Welfare Payment
- ❑ The BTEA will only be paid for a 9-month academic year, for those in receipt of JB/JA. It is **NOT** payable for the 3-month Summer period between academic years. BTEA participants who are not employed during the Summer period may be entitled to claim a jobseeker's payment.
- ❑ BTEA will include any increases for a qualified adult and qualified children. A qualified adult is a spouse or partner who does not receive a Social Welfare payment in their own right.
- ❑ You will also receive an annual €500 education allowance which covers the cost of course materials.
- ❑ BTEA is payable in the same way as your current Social Welfare payment.
- ❑ If you work part-time or casually, this will not effect your BTEA payment as long as you maintain your full-time student status.

From September 2010 if you are starting a new course and receiving the Back to Education Allowance, you will not receive a Student Maintenance Grant. However, if you are currently receiving the Back to Education Allowance and the Student Maintenance Grant, you will continue to be eligible for both payments for the duration of your current course.

hand You will not have to 'sign-on' while on the BTEA

Grants and Financial Assistance

There is a wide range of funding available for people looking to return to education. These include:

- Maintenance Grant
- VEC Scholarships
- Higher Education Grant Scheme

hand Check out locally for further information about grants including banks and student unions etc.

i www.studentfinance.ie provides information on financial support for further and higher education.

i You may also be able to take up education, training or development courses not normally covered by the BTEA by contacting the Facilitator at your local Social Welfare Office.

Part-time Education Option

If you are a jobseeker, you can take on part-time study and retain your Jobseeker's payment. Although this option is not part of any return-to-education programme or course.

- ❑ You will need to be genuinely seeking work
- ❑ If you are offered a place on a course, you will need a letter from the college or school stating that the course is part-time. Make sure you bring this with you when you go to your local Social Welfare office.

i You may receive a BTEA if you participate in approved part-time education under the Back to Education Initiative.

Useful Websites

www.inou.ie	www.fas.ie
www.welfare.ie	www.education.ie
www.hea.ie	www.vtos.ie
www.qualifax.ie	www.studentfinance.ie
www.nightcourses.ie	www.gotocollege.ie
www.learning.ie	www.educationireland.ie
www.cao.ie	www.aontas.com
www.fetac.ie	www.hetac.ie
www.vec.ie	www.bluebrick.ie
	www.citizensinformation.ie



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For further information contact the INOU.

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websites: www.inou.ie www.redundancy.ie