

October 2011



Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

Education options for unemployed people

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



Key Providers

Vocational Education Committees (VECs) administer secondary and adult education including: maintenance grants and funding for third-level education. For further information visit: www.vec.ie

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.

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, e.g. an adult dependant payment.

PAYMENT ON VTOS

- You will receive the equivalent of your Social Welfare Payment – €188.00 for a single person.
- You will receive a training bonus of €20 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 free childcare places under the Childcare Employment and Training Support (CETS) scheme.
- There are no course fees.

If on JB/JA you will no longer have to 'sign-on'.

APPLYING FOR VTOS

- Contact your LES, Library, VEC or www.vtos.ie

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.

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)

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

BTEA and Secondary Benefits

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

- Fuel Allowance
- Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement

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.

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

BTEA

APPLYING FOR BTEA

- ❑ Before you apply for BTEA you will need written confirmation from the college offering you a place on the course. When you receive confirmation fill out the BTE1 form and return it along with the written confirmation to your local Social Welfare office (SWO). The form is available at www.welfare.ie or from your local SWO.

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 on JB/JA. It is **NOT** payable for the 3-month summer period between academic years unless on work experience. BTEA participants who are not employed during the summer may be entitled to claim JB/JA.
- ❑ 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 covering 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 affect your BTEA payment as long as you maintain your full-time student status but it could affect your secondary benefits.

You will not receive a Student Maintenance Grant while on BTEA. However you may qualify for support towards the Student's Services Charge and Tuition Fees (up to €2,000). For further information contact your local VEC. Website: www.vec.ie

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

Springboard

The Springboard programme is aimed at unemployed people who have previously been employed in construction, manufacturing or other sectors of the economy.

This programme provides part-time higher education places. The courses range from certificate to master's degree levels – Levels 6 to 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Courses are offered in information and communications technology (ICT); the green economy and qualifications for the bio-pharma-pharmachem sectors.

In order to qualify for Springboard, you must:

- Be in receipt of a Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance or One-Parent Family Payment
- or
- Be signing for social insurance credits
- and
- Have a previous history of employment
- and
- Be actively seeking and available to take up employment.

Costs

No course fees or charges are payable by participants for the duration of time that they are unemployed. If a participant takes up full-time employment, fees will still be paid for the year they find work.

Self Employed

If you have been self-employed and are signing for credits you are eligible to participate on Springboard.

Social Welfare Payments

You will continue to receive your existing Social Welfare payment while participating on Springboard.

How to apply

Applications for the Springboard programme can only be made online through the website: www.bluebrick.ie/springboard

Part-time Education Option

You may take on part-time study and retain your Jobseeker's payment.

- ❑ 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 letter with you when you go to your local Social Welfare office.

Back to College Initiative

This scheme allows people receiving a Jobseeker's Payment for at least 3 months an opportunity to go back to college. This scheme is mostly aimed at people under 35 who do not have a Leaving Certificate or equivalent. There are no tuition fees and the person keeps their Jobseeker's Payment subject to the approval of the Department of Social Protection. For a full list of college places visit: www.qualifax.ie

Grants and Financial Assistance


There is a wide range of funding available for people looking to return to education. These include VEC Scholarships and the Higher Education Grant Scheme. 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.

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



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For further information contact the INOU.

 01 856 0088

 welfareinfo@inou.ie

 redundancy@inou.ie

websites: www.inou.ie

www.redundancy.ie