

# 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](http://www.vec.ie)

 [www.qualifax.ie](http://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 programmes are full-time (30 hours per week) and are 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 a dependent spouse, civil partner or co-habitant of an eligible person for at least 6 months.

### PAYMENT ON VTOS

- You will receive the equivalent of your Social Welfare Payment – €188.00 for a single person.
- You will not receive a payment if you are signing on for PRSI 'credits' only.
- 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.
- If you work part-time or casually during your studies, this will not affect your payment.
- Travel and meal allowances are paid.
- 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](http://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)

 You may also qualify for BTEA if you are on a qualifying Social Welfare payment e.g. One Parent Family payment. You must be in receipt of the qualifying Social Welfare payment **immediately** before you start the course.

### 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:

- been made statutorily redundant **and**
- an entitlement to a Jobseeker's Benefit payment

 You can apply for BTEA more than once depending on the type and level of the approved course.

## 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](http://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 €300 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.

**The Student Grants Scheme** is divided into maintenance grants and fee grants. You cannot get the BTEA and the maintenance grant. However to be assessed for a fee grant you must submit a student grant application form. A fee grant helps towards your student contribution (formerly the students services charge). For further information contact your local VEC – [www.vec.ie](http://www.vec.ie)

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

## Springboard

The Springboard programme is aimed at unemployed people who have previously been employed in construction, manufacturing or other sectors of the economy. If you are on short-time working and getting a Jobseeker's payment this counts as being unemployed.

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-pharmaceutical 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 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](http://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.

## Education, Training and Development option

Under this option you may continue to get your Jobseeker's payment while attending certain education, training or development courses.

To qualify you must be getting a Jobseeker's payment or signing on for credits for at least 6 months **and be**

- At least 21 years of age **or**
- Between 18-20 and out of the formal education system for at least 2 years

## 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.



Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

For further information contact the INOU.

 01 856 0088

 [welfareinfo@inou.ie](mailto:welfareinfo@inou.ie)

 [redundancy@inou.ie](mailto:redundancy@inou.ie)

websites: [www.inou.ie](http://www.inou.ie)

[www.redundancy.ie](http://www.redundancy.ie)