



Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

January 2010

Education options for unemployed people

This leaflet outlines ways in which you can take up education opportunities and retain your Social Welfare Payment



Introduction

This leaflet outlines ways in which you can take up education opportunities and retain your 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/Jobseeker's Allowance 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 / CE / JI / Carer's Allowance / Disability Allowance 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 eg 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 their Social Welfare payment and return to approved full-time education through either a second level (eg 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.

- You will not receive the Maintenance Grant.
- Courses in private institutions are not covered under the BTEA scheme.

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 6 months **or**
- 18 or over, out of formal education for at least 2 years and in receipt of a Jobseeker's Payment for 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 12 months [9 months if you are assessed and approved for the BTEA scheme by FÁS under the National Employment Action Plan or a Facilitator from the Department of Social and Family Affairs


or

- Aged 18-20 and out of formal education for 2 years and be in receipt of JB/JA for at least 12 months
- For the third-level post-graduate option you must be 24 years of age or over.


 You may also qualify for BTEA if you are in receipt of other types of Social Welfare payments.

BTEA and Secondary Benefits

If you qualify for the BTEA, you will keep any secondary benefits you already have including: ● Fuel Allowance ● Rent/Mortgage Interest Supplement

 You may access the BTEA immediately if you:


- Have worked for 2 years or more **and**
- Have been made 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.

APPLYING FOR BTEA

- Most applications are made through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Visit: www.cao.ie for further information.
- 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.
- 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.


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 Jobseeker's Payments. 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 an unemployment 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.
 - Your BTEA payment is not effected by any maintenance grant that you may receive
-  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

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


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

 You may also be able to take up education, training or development courses not normally covered by the BTEA by contacting the Jobs 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.

 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.ie
www.fetac.ie	www.hetac.ie
www.vec.ie	www.bluebrick.ie



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