



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

To:

Further and Higher Education Institutions in Wales  
Registered EMA/WGLG (FE) learning centres  
The Student Loans Company  
UCAS  
NUS Wales  
Children's Commissioner for Wales

May 2017

Dear Colleague

**EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (EMA) AND WELSH GOVERNMENT  
LEARNING GRANT (FURTHER EDUCATION) (WGLG (FE)) SCHEMES FOR  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/18.**

This Information Notice provides details for the EMA and WGLG (FE) schemes for AY 2017/18.

**ENQUIRIES**

If you have any queries about EMA and/or WGLG (FE) or this Information Notice, please contact the Higher Education Division, Welsh Government - email [studentfinancedivision@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:studentfinancedivision@wales.gsi.gov.uk). We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request. A copy of this Information Notice can be downloaded in [Welsh](#) or [English](#).



## Student Finance Wales Information Notice (SFWIN 01/2017)

### i. **EMA and WGLG (FE) schemes 2017/18**

For AY 2017/18 the awards and income thresholds for the means-tested FE schemes will be maintained at AY 2016/17 levels. The Student Loans Company (SLC) will continue to administer applications, as part of its Student Finance Wales (SFW) service, on behalf of the Welsh Government

SFW provides a bilingual customer service and can be contacted on 0300 200 450. Application forms and guidance notes for AY 2017/18 are available to download via the SFW website. Application packs have been distributed to those schools and colleges who administer the schemes. Information about the schemes is available via the SFW website:

[www.cyllidmyfyrwycymru.co.uk/ab](http://www.cyllidmyfyrwycymru.co.uk/ab)  
[www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/fe](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/fe)

### ii. **Electronic Verification of Household Income (VHI) - 2017/18**

SFWIN (03/2016)<sup>1</sup> explained how SLC would administer eligible returning students as part of their electronic VHI assessment for AY 2016/17. Similar administrative arrangements for returning students will continue in AY 2017/18, as follow:-

**EMA and WGLG (FE) returning students who started their course(s) after academic year 2015/16.** In AY 2017/18, this cohort of returning students will be subject to an electronic VHI assessment as part of SLC's sample checking process to verify household income. SLC will write to selected returning students who will need to complete a financial assessment form with details of household income for the prior financial year (i.e. 2015-16).

**EMA and WGLG (FE) returning students who started their course(s) prior to academic year 2015/16.** In AY 2017/18, SLC will continue to manually sample check this cohort of returning students to verify household income, requesting them to provide paper evidence of income for the preceding financial year (i.e. 2016-17).

If a returning student starts a new/different course in AY 2017/18 or their personal status changes (e.g. from a dependent student to an independent student) the applicant may be subject to an electronic VHI assessment. If such a change occurs, SLC will write to students to explain the process.

New and returning students will still be able to request an in-year reassessment if there has been a permanent reduction in income since their initial application.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/media/195736/student-finance-wales-information-notice-03-2016-pdf-e.pdf>

iii. **EMA and WGLG (FE) Mandatory Learning Agreement Template Forms - Extenuating Circumstances**

The Welsh Government recognises that there are young people and adults who may have extenuating circumstances, which may unavoidably affect their attendance whilst they are studying, for example, young/adult carers who provide unpaid care to family members who are ill or disabled.

We have already taken positive steps and strengthened SLC's EMA and WGLG (FE) guidance for schools and colleges, acknowledging the important role of young/adult carers with unpaid caring responsibilities for attendance purposes.

To build on these positive steps the SLC has modified its mandatory EMA and WGLG (FE) learning agreement templates for AY 2017/18. The change provides an option for students to disclose voluntarily if they have an extenuating circumstance, which may unavoidably affect their attendance. The aim is to support students who are considered vulnerable and may be at risk of not participating.

SLC has also developed a system change for its secure online Learning Centre (LC) portal. The aim of the change is to provide a visual reminder when a student has reported an extenuating circumstance via their learning agreement, helping schools/colleges to consider all circumstances when making informed decisions about authorised and non-authorised absences for the purposes of **EMA and WGLG (FE)** support. SLC's 2017/18 Learning Centre guidance will be updated to reflect the changes.