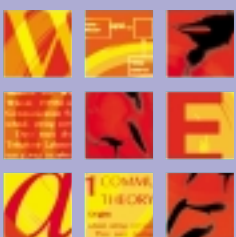




For versions in larger print or other languages contact Regional Office or www.wea.org.uk



WEA



Learning for Life

Services for Learners

A Guide to Financial and Other Entitlements

The Workers' Educational Association is committed to Equality and Diversity

■ Services for Learners

This leaflet is designed to give you essential information about what to expect when you start a WEA course.

■ Where to get more information

You can get more information:

- By talking to staff in your Regional Office (see back page)
- From our brochures and other leaflets
- By talking to your local branch or local organiser
- By talking to your tutor, if you are already on a course
- From our website at www.wea.org.uk.

You can also ask for the information in larger print, or for the information to be read to you. Some information is available in other languages.

Requests for help will be treated confidentially by all our staff. If you do not want to ask your tutor directly, you can speak to your local organiser - your tutor will have contact details – or your Regional Office.

■ Fees

Some courses are free - for example, courses that help with literacy and numeracy. All courses are free if you are aged 16-18 on 1st of September 2008.

You are entitled to develop literacy and numeracy skills FREE of charge. Ask about having an assessment of your skills, about free courses and about taking a National Certificate.

If your course is not free, you may still be entitled to help towards it through **fee remission**. You will usually need to be “settled” in the UK, or be the spouse, civil partner or child of someone who is settled.

The main groups of settled people are:

- British or EU citizens, or people with Right of Abode in the UK
- EEA migrant workers previously settled in the EEA. (The EEA is the European Economic Area. It includes the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and their Overseas Territories.)
- Refugees or those with Leave to Remain or Humanitarian Protection

- People who have lived legally in the UK for the past three years (but not as full-time students).

If you are seeking asylum and are receiving National Asylum Support Scheme (NASS) or have been legally in the UK for more than six months, you may also get fee remission.

In most cases, you will also need to be:

- Legally resident in the UK for 3 years when the course starts (although there are a few exceptions so you may need to ask), and
- On a means-tested benefit - or be the dependant of someone who is.

Eligible benefits are listed on our Enrolment Form. They include Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Working Tax Credit (if your household income is below £15,050 p.a.) and Pension Guarantee Credit. Non means-tested benefits such as Disability Living Allowance do not automatically qualify you.

You will need to declare your residency status and provide evidence of your benefit when you enrol. If you are not sure of your status, ask your tutor or Regional Office for help.

Courses that are not funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) do not qualify for fee remission. For example, if you are on a university level course, you will need to approach your partner university for help with fees and other items, and not the WEA.

■ Financial support

If you are on benefit or a low income you may be able to apply for financial support towards:

- Tuition fees (if you are not eligible for fee remission)
- Exam or accreditation fees
- Travel to and from your class
- Essential books, equipment or field trips, as set out in the course details
- Childcare (providing you are using registered childcare)
- Travel to and from your childcare provider.

It is best to apply early as funds are limited. You can apply for help for up to three courses in each academic year. There are some upper limits on childcare and other costs, which change annually. To get help, you will normally need to meet the residency requirements and show proof of benefit. If you are *not* on benefit, but are on a low income, you may get help if you can show proof that your gross household income is below £15,050 p.a. – bank statements or wages slips will do. You will also be asked to sign a supporting declaration of your income. If your income is *above* £15,050 p.a. you may still get help if you are suffering financial hardship. The £15,050 p.a. threshold may also change in the year, so do ask if you think you may qualify.

If you are seeking asylum and are 19 or over you will not normally qualify for financial support, except for some tuition fees.

If you receive financial support, you must:

- Let us know straight away if your circumstances change.
- Refund the money if you leave without good reason.
- Return books and equipment at the end of the course if asked.

Learning support

If you have a disability or a learning difficulty, we will do our best to provide specialist staff and resources to help you succeed on your course.

Here are some examples of help:

- An assessment to find out what your needs are
- Help getting round the building
- Extra help in the classroom, e.g. someone to sign or take notes
- Extra time in exams or assessments
- Equipment such as hearing induction loops or magnifiers
- Extra help or tutorials for English, Maths or study skills.

We are still learning about the best ways to help, so the important thing is to discuss your needs with your tutor and tick the box on the Enrolment Form to say you need additional support.

The person you speak to may need to pass on your details to your tutor or to other staff. For example, we may need to involve staff who can sign, or who

are language or benefit specialists. In some cases, we may suggest that we talk to other organisations who may have helpful knowledge about your disability or difficulty.

If we need to talk to someone else on your behalf, we will ask for your permission first. The only exception is where there is a likelihood of someone being harmed - for example, for child protection purposes.

We will also keep you informed about what is happening, and discuss any follow up action with you. If at any stage you are unhappy, let us know straight away. Contact your Regional Office, or use one of the methods described on page 7. You can also ask to see our Confidentiality Policy.

■ During the course

We have a Learner Code of Conduct to enable everyone to get the most out of learning with the WEA. It is based around our policies and should be displayed in your classroom.

■ The Learner Code of Conduct

When participating in WEA courses and activities, the following behaviour is expected of all staff, students and members:

- Act in a responsible way to safeguard your own health and safety and that of others (in line with the WEA Health and Safety Policy).
- Respect the different backgrounds, experiences and lifestyles of others.
- Act in ways which do not discriminate against people of different backgrounds (in line with the WEA Equality and Diversity Policy).
- Do not use language which could offend others, e.g. racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, or language offensive to people with a disability.
- If you feel you have been treated with a lack of respect, been harassed, or discriminated against, contact either your course tutor or the WEA Regional Director. They will follow this up with you.
- Comply with any other policies of your centre. They will be displayed in the classroom, if applicable.

Most policies are on our website www.wea.org.uk or can be obtained on request from your Regional Office.

The Code of Conduct is supported by the Learning Agreement set out on your Enrolment Form. Together, they form the basis for any disciplinary action that may be taken where people act against the Code.

If you are using computers, you will also be given a Student Computer Use Policy that sets out a code of conduct for using computers on WEA courses.

■ After the course

At enrolment and induction, you will be provided with information about where your course can lead next. Your tutor will also discuss this with you towards the end of the course.

Whether or not you have finished your course, we also invite you to consider becoming a WEA member or volunteer with the WEA. You can give us feedback or help take our work forward. Ask your tutor or your Regional Office for more details.

If you need more information or in-depth guidance than we can provide, we will refer you to other organisations. Here are the most useful:

- The national **learndirect helpline** can be contacted free on **0800 100 900** or at **www.learndirect.co.uk**. The helpline is open from 8 am until 10 pm and can give you local contact details and offer you telephone or email coaching and advice from a specialist career advisor. Advice is also available in some community languages.
- If you are over 20, and have not yet achieved the equivalent of five GCSEs at Grade C or above, you may qualify for help from your local **nextstep** service. Ask your tutor or your Regional Office. There is a **nextstep** location finder on the national site on <http://nextstep.direct.gov.uk>.
- If you are under 20, you can get help from your local **Connexions**. Ring the national line on **080 800 13-2-19**.

Our leaflet called *What Next?* can also help. It contains full contact details for both **nextstep** and for the **learndirect** services. It is updated every year, and can be obtained from your Regional Office or downloaded from our website on **www.wea.org.uk**. Your tutor should also have copies available.

■ Talking to us

We are always pleased to receive suggestions, compliments and complaints because they help us improve our service. There are four main ways you can help us. You can:

- Complete a short FREEpost or online survey form if asked.
- Complete the online learner satisfaction survey on our website.
- Take part in a short telephone interview if asked.
- Contact our **Suggestions Line** on **0800 013 1903**, or email us at **suggestions@wea.org.uk** if you have ideas for improvement.
- Make a formal complaint if you feel there has been a problem.

If you take part in a survey, we guarantee to keep your identity confidential, unless you formally agree otherwise.

If you do not want to be contacted by anyone for surveys, there is an 'opt out' box in the small print at the bottom of your Enrolment Form. If you tick this, no one should contact you.

You can register a formal complaint by telephone, letter, fax or email. Ask for a copy of our **Complaints Procedure** from your Regional Office, or download it from our website.

When complaining, give as much information as you can, including times, dates, places and names. Either telephone your Regional Office, who will take down details, or write to or email your Regional Director.

You should get a first response within one week of receipt of your complaint, and a fuller response within the next four weeks.

If you are not happy with the response given by the Regional Director you can appeal in writing to the **General Secretary** at **Workers' Educational Association, Third Floor, 70 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4HB**.

You can expect an acknowledgment of your complaint within 7 working days. The General Secretary will investigate further and get back to you as soon as is reasonable.

Summary of **Standards of Service**

Our standards of service are our minimum - we aim to do more.

We can promise:

- A commitment to giving you impartial information and advice
- A commitment to equal opportunities and diversity
- Confidentiality - your personal information will not be shared with other organisations unless you give permission first (unless there are legal reasons for doing so)
- A response to requests for information and advice within 7 working days at the most
- A referral to other individuals or organisations where this will be helpful to you.

You can help us by letting us know what you think of us. You can:

- Complain! Ask for a copy our Complaints Procedure, or download it from our website.
- Complete surveys and questionnaires for us if asked.
- Suggest improvements by ringing our Suggestions Line on 0800 013 1903 or email us on suggestions@wea.org.uk.
- Become a WEA member or volunteer.
- Remember to tick the 'opt out' boxes on your Enrolment Form if you do not want to be contacted for surveys.

If you would like more information about anything in this leaflet, contact your Regional Office below.

Cover photos: Courtesy of Moonman and www.craftspace-touring.co.uk

■ Regional **contact details**

Workers' Educational Association
www.wea.org.uk/Contact/index.html

Workers' Educational Association, Third Floor, 70 Clifton St, London EC2A 4HB
Registered Company Number: 2806910, Registered Charity Number: 1112775