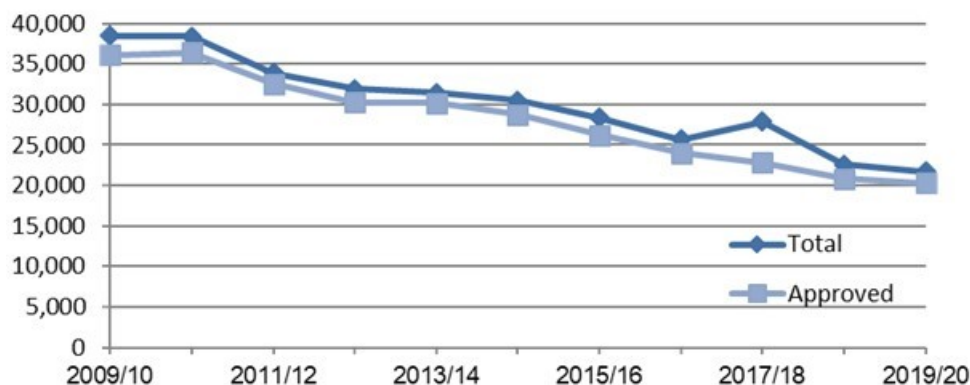




## Education Maintenance Allowances Awarded in Wales, 2019/20

30 September 2020  
SB 30/2020

**Chart 1: Trends in applications and approvals by academic year**



Note: In 2017/18, a number of candidates who were no longer eligible for EMA were incorrectly included in the total applications figure. Care should therefore be taken when comparing this data point with any other years

### In 2019/20:



Of approved EMA applications,



8,840 (43.6%) from 16 year olds

7,865 (38.8%) from 17 year olds

3,575 (17.6%) from 18 year olds and over

Source: Student Loans Company

### Main points

- The number of both applications and approvals has shown a downward trend since 2010/11; this corresponds with demographic trends
- In 2019/20, 20,280 (93.3 per cent) of applications received were approved, 775 (3.6 per cent) were rejected and 635 (2.9 per cent) were incomplete
- Of the approved applications, 10,050 (49.6 per cent) were from first year claimants

### About this bulletin

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a scheme providing young people who wish to continue in education after school leaving age with an incentive to earn awards through good attendance and achieving agreed objectives.

The data included here are obtained from Student Loans Company (SLC). Unless otherwise stated, figures are for the 2019/20 academic year, at the end of August 2020.

### In this bulletin

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## Policy and operational context

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a scheme providing young people who wish to continue in education after school leaving age with an incentive to earn awards through good attendance and achieving agreed objectives. [Changes to this scheme were introduced from September 2011.](#)

The scheme is available to 16 to 18 year olds but entitlement may be extended to 19 and 20 year olds if they have not already received 3 years of EMA. For more information on eligibility, see the [Notes](#) section.

Trends in applications and approvals for EMA provided in this release should be considered against the context of trends in the eligible cohort (of mainly 16 to 18 year olds), their participation in education and training, and their household income levels (since EMA is means-tested). In general, demographic trends have shown a decline in this age cohort since mid-2008. Student numbers for 2015/16 to 2018/19 are taken from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR). From 2019/20 onwards, the figures are estimates based on pupil numbers in maintained schools or further education.

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20(e)	2020/21(e)	2021/22(e)
64,190	60,845	59,715	57,130	58,005	59,630	61,485

(e) Estimate

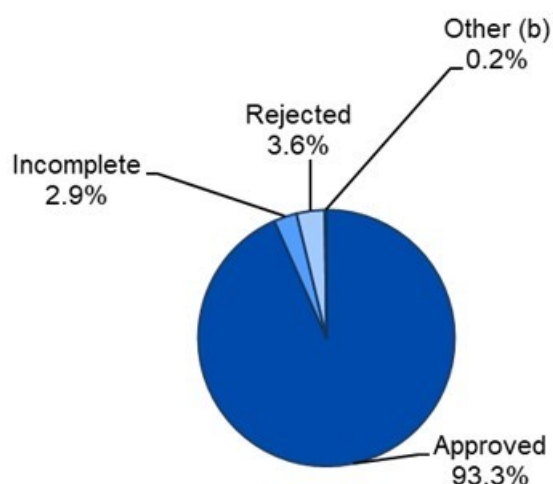
Note that these projections are for Further Education Institutions and maintained secondary and special schools, counting full time students with at least a 10 week expected duration. Independent schools are excluded.

As mentioned in the Welsh Government Guidance 'Further education: coronavirus' (First published 24 March 2020), EMA payments for eligible learners continue during the COVID-19 pandemic with learner absence for reasons of illness, self-isolation or college closure all treated as authorised absences.

This has not affected numbers receiving EMA (the numbers in this bulletin). It has resulted in more EMA paid out.

## Applications received by current work stage

Chart 2: Applications received by current work stage (a)



As at 31st August 2020, 93.3 per cent of applications received had been approved and 3.6 per cent had been rejected. 2.9 per cent were incomplete (either 'missing information' such as no date of birth included or 'missing evidence' such as no birth certificate attached). There are very few in the 'Other' category this year.

(a) Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

(b) These include applications that are in one of the following workstages: assessed; awaiting rejection; data capture incomplete; failed assessment; validated; verified (as defined by SLC)

Table 1: Applications by current work stage (a)

Application current work stage	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18 (e)	2018/19	2019/20
Approved	26,245	24,025	22,790	20,855	20,280
<i>of which received at least one payment</i>	25,820	23,650	22,435	20,640	20,085
Rejected	1,020	815	905	875	775
Incomplete (b)	1,030	780	910	855	635
Other (c)	30	15	3,265	25	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,330</b>	<b>25,635</b>	<b>27,870</b>	<b>22,610</b>	<b>21,730</b>
<i>of which are renewals (d)</i>	14,840	13,190	15,885	11,485	11,025

Source: Student Loans Company

(a) As at 31st August

(b) These include applications that have "missing information" (e.g. no date of birth included) or "missing evidence" (e.g. no birth certificate attached)

(c) These include applications that are in one of the following workstages: assessed; awaiting rejection; data capture incomplete; failed assessment; validated; verified (as defined by SLC).

(d) Applicants who also applied for an allowance in previous academic year

(e) In 2017/18, a number of candidates who were no longer eligible for EMA were incorrectly included in the other and total applications figure. Care should therefore be taken when comparing this data point with any other years.

## Approved applications by household income threshold

**Table 2: Approved applications for a £30 award by household income threshold (a)**

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Household threshold level</b>					
£0 to £20,817	19,780	19,445	17,575	15,860	15,230
£0 to £23,077	6,465	4,585	5,210	5,000	5,050
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,245</b>	<b>24,030</b>	<b>22,790</b>	<b>20,855</b>	<b>20,280</b>

Source: Student Loans Company

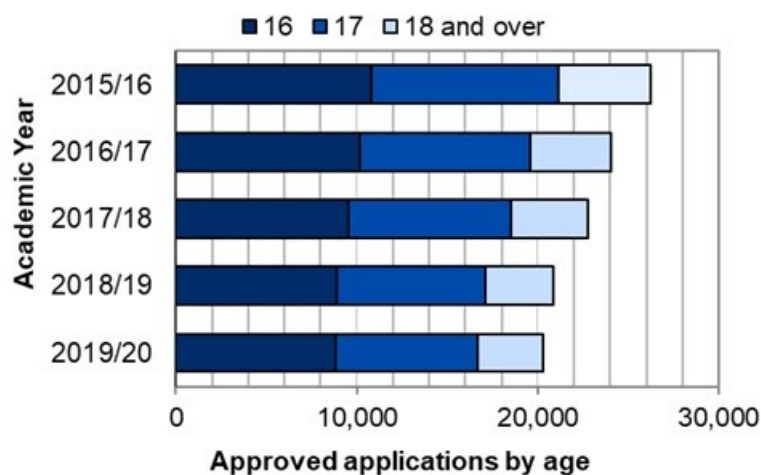
(a) Figures as at 31st August

There are two different household income thresholds, which are based on the student's family circumstances. See [Notes](#) page for more information about household income criteria.

In 2019/20, the numbers approved using the lower threshold fell by 630 (4.0 per cent). The number approved from the higher threshold rose by 50 (1.0 per cent).

## Approved applications by age

**Chart 3: Approved applications by age (a)**



(a) Figures as at 31st August

In 2019/20, 43.6 per cent of all approved applications were from 16 year olds, up from 42.5 per cent last year. This is in line with an increase in the 16 year old demographic. 38.8 per cent of all approved applications were from 17 year olds and the remaining 17.6 per cent of approved applications were from 18 and over.

Relating this data to the LLWR data referred to in 'Policy and operational context', almost half (49.0 per cent) of 18 year old learners received EMA whilst almost one-third (32.9 per cent) of 16 to 17 year olds received EMA.

## Approved applications by learning centre type

**Table 3: Approved applications by age, learning centre type and gender (a)**

	2018/19				2019/20			
	16	17	18+	Total	16	17	18+	Total
<b>Further education college:</b>	<b>5,985</b>	<b>5,710</b>	<b>3,385</b>	<b>15,085</b>	<b>6,170</b>	<b>5,545</b>	<b>3,210</b>	<b>14,925</b>
Males	3,065	2,895	1,720	7,680	3,185	2,795	1,665	7,650
Females	2,920	2,815	1,665	7,400	2,985	2,750	1,545	7,275
<b>Secondary school:</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>2,325</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>5,255</b>	<b>2,465</b>	<b>2,150</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>4,830</b>
Males	1,180	985	105	2,270	1,090	915	105	2,105
Females	1,520	1,340	125	2,980	1,380	1,240	105	2,725
<b>Other learning centre:</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>525</b>
Males	125	130	100	360	130	115	110	355
Females	55	70	40	160	70	55	40	165
<b>All learning centres:</b>	<b>8,870</b>	<b>8,235</b>	<b>3,755</b>	<b>20,855</b>	<b>8,840</b>	<b>7,865</b>	<b>3,575</b>	<b>20,280</b>
Males	4,375	4,010	1,930	10,310	4,405	3,825	1,880	10,110
Females	4,495	4,225	1,825	10,545	4,435	4,040	1,690	10,165

(a) Age as at 31st August

Source: Student Loans Company

- 14,925 students attending further education colleges had their applications approved, accounting for 73.6 per cent of all approved applications.
- 4,830 students attending secondary schools had their applications approved, accounting for 23.8 per cent of all approved applications.
- The remaining 525 (2.6 per cent) approved applications were for students attending other learning centres (Special schools, Independent schools and Grammar schools).
- Reflecting demographics, the number of age 16 approved applications were at near parity with the previous year, despite larger decreases in approved applications from other age groups.

## Approved applications by gender

**Table 4: Approved applications by gender (a)**

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>All Learning Centres:</b>	<b>26,245</b>	<b>24,025</b>	<b>22,790</b>	<b>20,855</b>	<b>20,280</b>
Males	12,830	11,785	11,250	10,310	10,110
Females	13,415	12,245	11,540	10,545	10,165

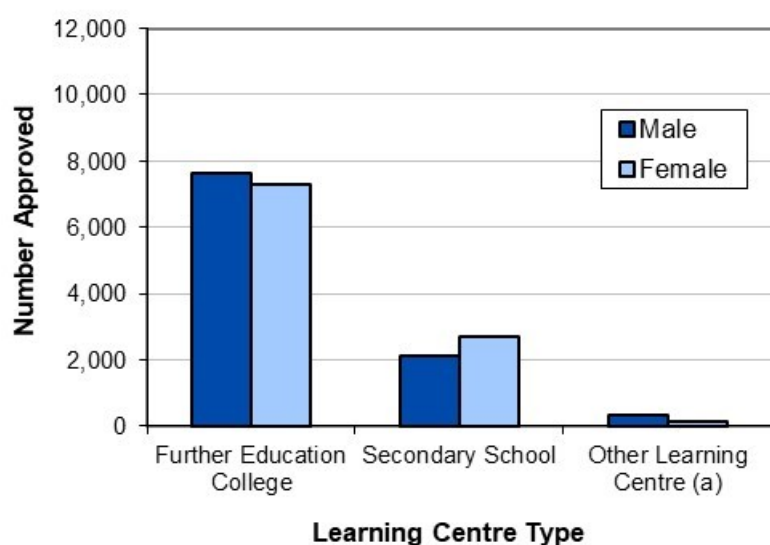
(a) Figures as at 31st August

Source: Student Loans Company

Just over half of approved applications were from females. Since 2013/14 the percentage from females has fallen slightly from 52.0 per cent to 50.1 per cent in 2019/20. Last year's 50.6 per cent was similar to the proportion of 16 to 18 year old females in full- or part-time education in 2019<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Source: 'Participation in education by age group and gender' (table EDUC0060) on StatsWales.

**Chart 4: Approved applications by learning centre type and gender, 2019/20 (a)**



There were similar proportions of approved applications from males and females in further education colleges. In secondary schools, the female proportion was higher (56.4 per cent). 525 approved applications were from students attending other learning centres, over two-thirds (68.3 per cent) of which were from males.

(a) "Other learning centres" comprises of Special schools, Independent schools and Grammar schools.

## Approved applications by year claiming EMA

**Table 5: Approved applications by year claiming EMA (a)**

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Year claiming EMA:</b>	<b>26,245</b>	<b>24,025</b>	<b>22,790</b>	<b>20,855</b>	<b>20,280</b>
First	12,295	11,645	10,965	10,080	10,050
Second	9,935	9,025	8,650	7,950	7,540
Third	4,005	3,360	3,170	2,825	2,685
Fourth	10	0	*	0	0

Source: Student Loans Company

(a) Figures as at 31st August

\* small number that might otherwise be disclosive (not zero but below five)

In 2019/20, 10,050 (49.6 per cent) approved applications were from first year claimants, up slightly from 48.3 per cent last year. This reflects the increase in the 16 year old demographic.

# Notes

## 1. EMA eligibility criteria

Full criteria are at: [studentfinance.wales : ema](https://studentfinance.wales.gov.uk/ema)

### Student criteria

- Aged 16, 17 or 18 years old<sup>2</sup> on 31st August at the start of the academic year
- Has a bank or building society current account
- Meets the nationality/residency criteria

### Course criteria

- Studying full-time at a school; or studying at least 12 guided hours a week at a recognised further education institution
- Studying an academic or vocational course up to and including level 3 (eligible academic or vocational course include GCSEs, A-Levels, BTECs, NVQs, GNVQs and Basic Skills courses)
- Studying an eligible course that lasts at least 10 weeks

### Household income criteria

- Evidence of household income in the prior tax year determines whether a student will be eligible for an EMA
- There are two different household income thresholds, which are based on the student's family circumstances. Students will not be able to receive EMA if their household income is above the threshold levels

Family circumstances	Household income threshold
There is one dependent child in the household	£0 - £20,817
There are one or more dependants aged 16 or under in the household	£0 - £23,077
There are one or more dependants aged 20 or under in full-time education or training and eligible for child benefit in the household	£0 - £23,077

## 2. Data source

EMA applications and payments are administered by the [Student Loans Company](#) (SLC). Data held on EMA students is entered by SLC staff onto an administrative database for the purpose of assessing and paying EMA to students. This data is also stored in a management information data warehouse for the purpose of management reporting, operational performance reporting, audit of processes, statistics, future policy planning and forecasting.

### Data collection

The data in this release were collected via the SLC management information system and were extracted on 1st September 2020. All information is based on applications received by 31st August 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> Entitlement may be extended to 19 and 20 year olds if they have not already received 3 years of EMA.

## **Validation and verification**

Processes and systems which enable customer and application assessment data to be held electronically are subject to periodic audit and integrity checks. SLC Internal Audit ensures that the processes governing data entry and application assessment are adhered to. Data integrity validation rules are used to identify and correct errors in data. Management Information extracted from SLC systems are subject to quality assurances prior to distribution: statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with the SLC before tables are published.

## **Publication**

Once the data has been finalised, the release is compiled and the key points and commentary are drafted. The release is independently checked and a final sense check is carried out by the relevant statistician prior to publication on the website.

## **Disclosure control and confidentiality**

All the figures are rounded to the nearest 5 for confidentiality. Where figures have been rounded there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total.

The following symbols are used in the tables:

- the data item is not exactly zero, but is less than half the final digit shown.
- . the data item is not applicable.
- .. the data item is not available.
- \* the data item is disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication.

## **3. Definitions**

### **3.1 Change in applicant circumstances**

The data represented in this release refer to applicants' most recent learning agreement. Therefore, if an applicant has attended more than one type of learning centre, to avoid double-counting they are only included under their most recent status.

## **4. Equal opportunities**

8,781 Equal Opportunities monitoring forms were received in 2019/20 which equates to a little over 40 per cent of all applications received. It is not known whether these applications have been approved, rejected or are currently being processed since the data are disassociated from the application process, and not all forms are fully completed.

The data as at 1st September 2020 show that, of the applications for which an equal opportunities form was completed:

- 9.5 per cent classed themselves as disabled;
- 88.5 per cent classed their ethnicity as white;
- 9.2 per cent made up the groups who were of mixed race, Asian or British Asian and 'Chinese or other ethnic origin'; and
- 2.3 per cent said they were 'Black or British Black'.

## Key quality information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, Comparability and Coherence.

### Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- officials in the Welsh Government;
- Other government departments;
- Further Education Institutions, Work-Based Learning providers, schools and local authorities;
- Wales Audit Office;
- students, researchers, academics and universities; and
- individual citizens, private companies, and the media.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- to inform and evaluate the education policy-making process in Wales; and
- to forecast future expenditure of student support schemes in Wales.

### Accuracy

Statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with the Student Loans Company before tables are published. The figures in this release reflect the final position as at the end of the 2019/20 academic year (31st August 2020), and are correct as at 1st September 2020.

Looking at previous years' data, it is possible to estimate how close provisional data are to final data. Below is a table showing the percentage increase/decrease seen between each month's update of approved applications, compared with final (end of August) figures, published in September:

#### Percentage change in the number of approved applications between provisional data (as at end of stated month) and final data (as at end of August)

Academic year	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
2012/13	2.4%	1.1%	0.5%	0.1%	-0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2013/14	3.6%	1.6%	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%	-0.2%	-0.3%	-0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
2014/15	4.3%	2.0%	0.9%	0.7%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
2015/16	7.5%	3.5%	1.7%	1.2%	0.4%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
2016/17	8.4%	3.6%	1.4%	0.6%	0.1%	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.5%	0.1%	0.0%
2017/18	3.9%	1.8%	0.5%	0.4%	-0.1%	-0.3%	-0.6%	-0.5%	0.1%	0.0%
2018/19	5.5%	3.1%	1.4%	0.9%	0.1%	-0.2%	-0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
2019/20	3.4%	1.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	-0.1%	-0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%

## Timeliness and punctuality

For academic year 2019/20, the first monthly publication on the number of EMA applications was released in December 2019, relating to applications up until the end of November 2019. Monthly updates during a given academic year are published as soon as possible on [StatsWales](#), a few weeks following the end of a given month, and according to a planned and pre-announced series of publication dates. Data in this release refers to final 2019/20 data.

## Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on StatsWales, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

## Comparability and coherence

Exceptionally, a student may continue to be eligible for EMA at 19 years of age. These are the approximate numbers of such students in recent years:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
275	210	250	285	275	255	230	175

A change in the Student Loans Company's procedure for renewing applications for existing students came into effect in academic year 2010/11. Caution should be used when comparing earlier years.

There can be a drop in approved EMA applications, often in the Spring of the academic year. This is due to the annual exercise carried out by SLC to sample check a proportion of those returning EMA applicants who have chosen to self certify their income and assess the application against the applicants' previous years income evidence. If the applicant later fails to provide evidence of household income (if requested) then they will be assumed to no longer be eligible for support.

Students meeting the eligibility criteria qualify for an award of £30 per week (this has not changed since 2011/12).

Northern Ireland and Scotland have their own EMA schemes. The EMA scheme in England has been cancelled and has been closed to new applicants since 1st January 2011. This scheme has been replaced by a [bursary scheme](#) which focuses on students from less wealthy households.

## National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in a letter in 2012, following a National Statistics assessment. These statistics last underwent a [full assessment](#) against the Code of Practice in 2010.

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- added more value by introducing the EMA Wales helpline number to the front page of the bulletin to help those who happen upon the bulletin while actually seeking claims advice
- added more value by making more prominent number of pupils and expanding the explanation around those numbers
- added more value by introducing chart of successful applications by gender
- added more value by introducing a description and link to the Well-being of Wales report
- added more value by introducing alt-text and expanded alt-text detail to all charts and tables
- added more value by moving the webpage to the updated gov.wales stats and research pages

## Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/education-maintenance-allowances-ema-awarded-wales>

Comparable monthly data and further detailed information on EMA applications can be found on the [StatsWales website](#).

Further information about the EMA scheme can be found on the [Student Finance Wales website](#).

## Related articles

The [Scottish Government](#) publish statistics on recipients of EMA.  
[Student support in Wales](#).

## List of tables and data items provided on StatsWales

- i. [Cumulative totals of applications for EMA by academic year and work stage](#)  
(Chart 1 and Chart 2)
- ii. [Approved applications by LEA and type of award](#)
- iii. [Approved applications by learning centre type, gender and type of award](#)

(Chart 4. Similar (slightly higher) than Tables 3 and 4 since this bulletin restricts to most recent learning agreement. Type of award is £30 for recent years.)

## Next update

September 2021

The next update to the StatsWales table on cumulative applications, covering November 2020 EMA data, will be on 16th December 2020.

## We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [HigherEducationAndStudentFinance.Stats@gov.wales](mailto:HigherEducationAndStudentFinance.Stats@gov.wales) Open Government Licence

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