

Job Seekers

studying at college
whilst claiming JSA



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

West
Thames
College
Hounslow

Job Seekers

Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) allows claimants to study courses of further education for less than 16 hours per week, but with certain conditions. This leaflet explains what to do if you want to study whilst claiming JSA, and how the college can help.

The Learning and Skills Council provides funding for students who are receiving income based benefits. If you are in receipt of JSA on the first day of your course you may be eligible for fee remission, which means you won't have to pay tuition fees. You may also be able to get help with exam and studio fees from the college's Learner Support Fund. However, under DWP regulations you may only enrol for less than 16 guided learning hours per week averaged over the course, and you must remain available for and actively seeking work. Therefore if you want to enrol on a course and protect your benefits, you should take the following steps:

- Start by reading the college prospectus and factsheets to decide which courses you are interested in. If you need help making a decision, contact our advice and guidance team on 020 8326 2020.
- When you apply for your course, make a note that you are claiming JSA, and when you have your interview repeat this point. It is important that you and your interviewer agree on a programme which you can complete in less than 16 hours per week.

NOTE that the college does not classify courses as "full time" or "part time". So many courses now offer flexible programmes of modules and options that students frequently follow the same qualification aim with different amounts of study time and different modes of attendance. It is only important that your programme is less than 16 hours per week.

- When you enrol, your tutor or a member of the advice and guidance team will sign your enrolment card (which is part of your learning agreement) to verify that your learning programme averages fewer than 16 guided learning hours per week.

NOTE that the definition of "guided learning hours" only includes time when you are directly supervised by your teacher on work specifically related to your course. Your timetable may include periods of private study, research, assignments, etc, which are not supervised and not included in your guided learning hours.

- You should notify Jobcentre Plus of your course within 2 weeks of starting your course. The college can give you a copy of your learning agreement as evidence that your enrolment is within the regulations.

- Jobcentre Plus may require you to fill in a questionnaire about your course. This is quite long and you may need to refer to your course timetable to answer some of the questions. You can take the form away to complete it; the college's Student Support Officer can help you with this.
- You must be available to attend job interviews whilst you are studying and be prepared to start work immediately if a job opportunity arises.
- You must remain actively seeking work whilst you are studying. Many courses bring students into contact with employers, and the college offers educational and careers guidance services. The library keeps copies of national and local newspapers where you can look for jobs, and there is a vacancies noticeboard where offers from employers are posted.
- If you accept a job offer, this will not necessarily mean that you will have to abandon your course. It may be possible to re-schedule your course over a longer period of time, alter your hours of attendance, or complete your programme by open learning.

What documents you need to show us

When you enrol on your course, please bring along evidence of your Jobseekers Allowance (ie a letter from Jobcentre Plus). If the letter is not dated close to the start of your course, please also bring a recent bank statement showing the JSA payment going into your account.

For more information

If you have any queries, please contact Jobcentre Plus for advice. Your tutor or the college's advice and guidance team will help you to explore your course options.

March 2009. All information correct at time of printing.

Please call **020 8326 2303** to request any of these leaflets, or view them on our website:

- Data protection
- Exam and certification fees
- Fee remission
- Fees and costs
- Funding for childcare
- International students
- Learner support fund
- Payment by instalments
- Student guide to financial support
- Term dates