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Administration

Frequently Asked Questions - Trainees at the EMA

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1. Applying for a traineeship at the Agency

1.1. How do I apply for a traineeship?

In order to apply for the EMA traineeship programme applicants are required to submit an application form available on our website. The application form is located under Careers > Trainee programme and it needs to be submitted directly from the website through the "submit by email" feature located in the upper right-hand corner of the form.

1.2. I have not finished my degree by the deadline for applications, can I apply?

Applicants are required to have completed the first cycle of a university education course and obtained a full degree or its equivalent by the receipt of the contract (i.e. end of July for 1 October intake and end of February for 1 April intake). A list with the minimum national qualifications by country can be found in Annex 1 of the traineeship rules. These rules are available on the EMA website under Careers > Trainee programme.

1.3. Do I get paid?

Yes, trainees are awarded a monthly maintenance grant. The amount of the grant is decided by the Agency and it is revised on a regular basis. The amount of the grant is published on the EMA website under Careers > Trainee programme.



If a trainee terminates his/her contract early, he/she will be required to reimburse that part of the grant, which he/she may have received, relating to the period after the termination date.

Upon representation of proper justification, disabled trainees may receive a supplement to their grant equal to a maximum of 50% of the amount of the grant. HR may consult the EMA medical service if necessary.

1.4. What professional background do I need to have to apply for a traineeship?

Successful applicants will typically have a background relating to the activities of the EMA, i.e. pharmacy, medicine, chemistry, life sciences and health care. Qualified candidates with an interest in any support function (for example information technologies, legal affairs, internal audit, internal and external communication, human resources, facility management, budget, accounts, infrastructure services, document management, library, project management and meeting management) are welcome to apply too.

1.5. How are trainees selected?

The EMA makes its selection of trainees on the basis of the applications received. The different divisions review the profiles and shortlist in line with the requirements of the Agency. Shortlisted candidates are interviewed over the phone before a final selection decision is made. Successful candidates are informed by letter, in duplicate, of the dates of the traineeship period. Due to the high number of applications, candidates who are not shortlisted are not informed by letter/email. If you have not been contacted by end-August/mid-September for a start on 1 October, you have not been shortlisted.

1.6. I work in a pharmaceutical company. Can I take unpaid leave from my current employment to take up a traineeship at the Agency?

Shortlisted candidates currently in employment within the pharmaceutical industry or other commercially motivated healthcare sectors including consultancy and/or legal services will be required to produce documentary evidence that they have resigned and ended all contractual associations with their employer before being allowed to take up duties at EMA.

2. Practical information about London

2.1. I have heard London is expensive and it is difficult to live on the grant, is this true?

London is an expensive city for some things but it will be possible for you to live on your traineeship grant. There are many people living and working in London who have a monthly income at the same level as the trainee grant. You will need to budget and be careful how much you spend on accommodation and transport as these are the two greatest outlays.

2.2. Does EMA provide accommodation?

No. But we do provide accommodation advice. Candidates who receive a traineeship contract will receive a guidance document about accommodation in London.

2.3. An estate agent requires a letter from EMA confirming my traineeship. Do you provide this type of letter?

Yes. We could provide you with a standard certificate outlining your status and the period of your traineeship contract.

2.4. What is transport like in London?

The public transport system is extensive and you will not need a car. The system is safe and reliable. You can find more information about the tube, trains and buses routes and fares on the website of Transport for London (TFL) www.tfl.gov.uk.

3. Your first day at the Agency

3.1. My traineeship starts on the first day of the month. This is a Saturday/Sunday. Do I need to report on Saturday/Sunday?

There are 2 possible traineeship intakes, 1st October and 1 April each year. Should this day be a weekend or EMA holiday, you do not need to report to EMA for work. Please report to EMA reception by 8:45 a.m. on the first normal working day (i.e. Monday to Friday).

3.2. When do I come/start on my first day?

Please report to reception by 08.45 a.m. on your first normal working day. The reception opens at 8 a.m. so if you arrive earlier than expected you are welcome to enter the building.

3.3. Who do I ask for on my first day?

You will be informed before the traineeship who your contact person will be. Alternatively, you can ask for Birgit Breen who works in (Recruitment and Staffing Office).

3.4. Is there a dress code?

There is no strict dress code at EMA. Staff are expected to dress in a tidy manner and appropriately for their work. It is normal for staff to dress more formally for meetings where there are external participants.

3.5. What will happen on my first day?

There will be a welcome briefing where the main elements of your traineeship will be explained to you. You will have a chance to meet all the other trainees who are starting on the same day. You will also meet your welcome partner to introduce you to your colleagues in the division.

3.6. I do not have a UK bank account, will the EMA help me to open one?

As soon as you arrive in London, you should take care of setting up your bank account. You can ask the contact person from HR to provide you with a relevant bank letter, which facilitate the whole process. If you do not manage to do that before the Traineeship starts then a Canary Wharf-based bank will visit EMA on your first day to offer trainees the possibility of opening a bank account. You do not have to choose to use this service as you are free to find your own bank account. The service

offered by the local bank will make the process less stressful and less time consuming. The bank account offered to trainees will be a basic account. Please note we can only pay the traineeship grant into UK bank accounts. If you do not manage to open an account within the first few days of your Traineeship you may have to wait longer to receive your first grant.

3.7. What is a welcome partner/mentor? Is this person my line manager?

Your welcome partner is there to assist you during your first weeks. This person will show you around the Agency and introduce you to your colleagues. They will also answer any practical questions about getting set up in London. The welcome partner is not necessarily your line manager. Your line manager is the person who will supervise you and assist you with work related aspects of your traineeship. Strictly speaking the line manager is the Service Head or the Head of Department. In practice the Service Head/Head of Department normally delegates this work to a senior member of his/her staff.

3.8. I would like to know what is expected from me. Is there any guide or task checklist to know what I am going to do during my traineeship from the first day?

You will be given a work plan on your first day or at the latest within a few days of your start date by your manager. The work plan will set out your tasks for the period of your traineeship. It would be normal for the plan to change/develop as you progress with your traineeship.

4. Being a trainee at the Agency

4.1. How long is the traineeship?

The traineeship is for an initial period of 6 months with the possibility for a further extension of 6 months. The maximum total contract length is 12 months.

4.2. Can you offer me a reduced/extended traineeship?

Yes. The EMA traineeship is intended to last for 6 months initially. There is a possibility to have one extension of 6 months. In the event that a current trainee needs to cancel the traineeship due to special circumstances, article 12.2 states that the trainee must complete a minimum of three months to be entitled to receive travel reimbursement.

If you cannot commit to a minimum of a 6 months' traineeship now, please re-submit a new application for the next in-take or period that you could accept a 6 months' traineeship.

4.3. What are the working hours and what days I am supposed to work?

Your working hours are between 9:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday (1 hour lunch break to be taken after 12:00 and return from your break no later than 14:30). The normal working week is 40 hours, a full working day counts for 8 hours and a half day 4 hours.

Core hours (i.e. employees must be present) are 9.30 to 12.00 and 14.30 to 16.00. On Friday afternoon core time ends at 15.00. The lunch period is between 12:00 and 14.30. The minimum period for lunch is 30 minutes.

4.4. Where can I eat during lunchtime? How long is the lunch break?

There is a restaurant and coffee bar at the EMA premises. EMA operates on a cashless payment system. This system speeds up till transactions and is very easy to use, requiring no pin numbers or codes just tapping your access card on the till reader whenever you wish to purchase something at the Restaurant or Deli. There are two ways to load money on your card: using the cash loaders located in the restaurant and in the Reception area or by using the online load service Upay.

The Canary Wharf estate also provides many coffee bars, bistros, restaurants and sandwich shops. Eating at your desk is discouraged.

4.5. What is the maximum and minimum lunch break?

You should take a minimum of 30 minutes for your lunch break. You are encouraged to take one hour (normal break). Maximum lunch break is 2.5 hours. Your lunch break must be between 12:00 and 14:30.

4.6. What is flexitime?

Flexitime is a system to allow staff a better work/life balance. However, the Agency does not encourage a culture of longer working hours for trainees. If you do happen to work extra hours in one week you are asked to try to work less hours the following week. If you happen to carry forward a surplus of hours from one month to the next you are also advised that you make attempts to reduce the total number of hours you work in that month. The core hours are Monday to Friday 09.30-12.00 and 14.30-16.00. On Fridays core time ends at 15.00. You can use the hours outside of core time to reduce any surplus, e.g. starting a little later in the morning or leaving earlier etc. It means that your working hours are 8 hours per day, and 1 hour for lunch break. Trainees are not permitted to take flexi leave.

4.7. What happens if for some reason I need to stop my traineeship due to personal problems, such as serious sickness of a family member back in my country?

You are advised to make an immediate appointment with Human Resources.

4.8. What is SAP HR?

SAP HR is a system where staff record the time spent on work activities. Trainees must also record their activities in the system. The system is used for budgetary purposes. E-learning about how to use SAP HR will be given.

4.9. What is my annual leave entitlement?

A total of 12 days - 2 days leave per month of trainees. You apply for annual leave online via the SAP HR system.

Please note that EMA holidays are extra holidays to your standard annual leave entitlement. Therefore, you will have 12 days annual leave plus any EMA holidays during your traineeship period.

4.10. Can I take my whole annual leave entitlement the last 2 weeks of my traineeship?

Yes, but you must discuss this with your line manager. Your leave entitlement may be used at any time during your traineeship. You should provide two weeks' notice of any leave by submitting your leave request electronically via SAP HR to your line manager. There is no provision to pay trainees for any unused leave at the end of their traineeship contract.

4.11. When am I paid?

You will be paid on the 15th of each month into your UK bank account. If the 15th of the month falls on a weekend or public holiday you will be paid on the last preceding working day.

If you do not have a UK bank account and it takes you longer than 15 days to open one, you will be paid on the last day of the month. Please ensure you provide your UK bank details to Personnel in order to proceed with the payment of your grant.

4.12. When do we receive our travel payment?

The travel payment will be paid in the month following the end of your traineeship. We are unable to pay the travel payment beforehand as any final payments to trainees cannot be verified until we have audited your telephone usage records.

In order to receive a travel payment, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

1. Minimum of 3 months of training period completed;
2. The place of recruitment is more than 150 km away from the place of employment.

4.13. Can I have/keep a job for the weekends (or obtaining permission from my current employer to take up for 6 months the EMA traineeship)?

No. You must resign from your current job if you are offered the traineeship at the EMA. As it is stated in Articles 7.3 and 8.7 of the Rules governing the traineeship programme at the EMA:

Trainees must not have any professional connections with third parties, who might be incompatible with their traineeship (i.e. must not work for lobbyists, legal attachés, etc.), and they are not permitted to exercise any other gainful or non-gainful employment during the period of the traineeship, which may adversely affect the work assigned during the traineeship. If a conflict of interest should arise during their assignment, trainees should immediately report this to their adviser, to their Head of Division or Head of Department and to Personnel in writing.

4.14. Am I exempt from Council tax and any other UK taxes?

You are subject to the current UK tax system when you come to and live in the UK. Usually the landlord/landlady/estate agency includes a quote of the council tax in the rent already because the charge is usually for 6 months or 1 year.

There is no taxation applied on your maintenance grant. However your attention is drawn to Article 14 of the traineeship rules: "Maintenance grants are not subject to the special tax regulations applying to officials and other servants of the European Union. Trainees are solely responsible for the payment of any taxes due on the maintenance grant they receive from the EMA by virtue of the laws in force in the State concerned." Strictly speaking your traineeship grant may be subject to the normal national

taxation on income. In practice the UK tax authorities, HM Revenue & Customs, have not sought to tax former trainees. We cannot guarantee that this will always be the case.

4.15. Can I join the EMA Sport & Leisure Club? What do they offer?

Yes. Trainees have a free membership due to the short term contract and low allowance. The Sport & Leisure Club (SLC) organises regular outings to cultural events, exhibitions, etc in and around London. The SLC organises as well other events such as Christmas parties, quiz nights, salsa dance night, chess competitions, theatre programme and more diverse activities.

4.16. I am sick, who do I phone to?

Please phone your Head of Department secretary who is responsible for leave in your Department before 9:30 a.m. on the first day of your sickness. You should state your current address and when you will return to work.

This person will inform Personnel that you are out of the office. You must complete a sick leave form when you return to the office. If you are sick for more than 3 days you will need to provide a doctor's certificate. Failure to do so will result in sick leave in excess of 3 days being charged against your annual leave.

4.17. Will I get training?

You will be invited to attend Introduction training on the activities of the Agency, DREAM training and a Health and Safety briefing. The traineeship is considered as being your on-the-job training.

4.18. Can I receive training besides the core training?

Apart from the core training mentioned above, spare places at the in-house language training and the IT desktop training can be offered to Trainees. Trainees also have access to the library for the loan of material which they can use for self-study. As the whole traineeship is considered as training, any further attendance to courses organised by the Learning and Development Service or identified by the Trainee or his/her Department are an exception. A Trainee may only attend these courses if they are absolutely necessary for him/her to do the job at the Agency (for example specific database training, training on a specific agency procedure). These requests for additional training have to be duly justified by the Trainee's Service Head/Head of Department (in line with the delegation rules) and have to be approved by the Learning and Development Service.

4.19. My line manager does not give me enough work, or too much work, who should I complain to?

You should approach your line manager to make him/her aware of the situation. If you are unhappy with the outcome you should consult with your Service Head, Head of Department or Head of Division, where applicable.

5. At the end of the traineeship

5.1. Is it possible to have a certificate that shows that we are currently working as trainees at the EMA?

Yes. We will provide you with a standard certificate outlining your status and the period of your contract.

5.2. What is the traineeship report?

The traineeship report is the record of the work undertaken during the traineeship period. It is prepared by the trainee, approved by the Head of Department and submitted to Human Resources at the end of the traineeship.

5.3. Can I get a job at the Agency afterwards?

There are no possibilities for a contract of employment outside of what is already defined in the traineeship rules (see Article 3).

5.4. Can I keep my EMA pass/ID as a souvenir once my traineeship is finished?

At the end of your traineeship you should return your pass to Security when leaving the building your last day and a charge may be raised against you if you fail to comply. If you want to come to see your ex-colleagues, a current staff member must request a visitor pass for you and you should be accompanied at all times by a current staff member.

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