DISCRETIONARY STUDENT SUPPORT ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN (BURSARY) FUND POLICY 2026–2027

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Discretionary Student Support (Bursary) Fund is provided by the Department for Education (DfE) to help students overcome specific barriers to participation, to enable them to remain in education.

The College is committed to maintaining the integrity of its Student Financial Support (Bursary) awards and the validity of its assessment of qualifying criteria and has effective procedures for resolving appeals.

This policy sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, bursary funding for 19+ year old students enrolled at all campuses of Tameside College and Clarendon Sixth Form College who are eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan (being replaced by the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) starting 1 January 2027).

The Advanced Learner Loan (Bursary) funds are managed by the College and are allocated on a first come first served basis via an online application and assessment process (https://tameside.paymystudent.com/portal). Applicants will be notified of their application outcome within 10 - 15 working days of a completed application.

The rules within this policy are set at the time of writing but the College reserves the right to adjust the criteria in year according to the funds available and in accordance with any changes that the DfE may make.

1) There are two types of Discretionary Student Support bursary, Advanced Learner Loan Bursary and 20+ childcare:
   a) **Advanced Learner Loan Bursary** awarded to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, free college meals, course fees, to buy essential books, uniform, specialist clothing (e.g., protective clothing) and equipment including ICT devices and connectivity. Additional support with domestic emergencies and/or in exceptional circumstances may be available*. Any awards will be reviewed on a regular basis and the college reserves the right to stop awards where it is felt it's no longer required.
   ***Separate application detailing students' domestic emergencies and/or in exceptional circumstances is required*

   To be eligible the student must:

   i) Be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026.
   ii) Meet the residency criteria in the Adult Skills Fund: Funding and Performance Management Rules in the 2026-2027 academic year.
   iii) Be learning for a minimum number of days between the learning start date and the learning planned end date before they qualify:

Length of the learning aim	Qualifying period
168 days	42 days
14 to 167 days	14 days
Fewer than 14 days	1 day

   iv) To qualify for the Advanced Learner Loan bursary support, the student's gross annual earned household income must be below £40,000.00 evidenced by Benefits/Tax Credits/P60/Payslips and the student must have an Advanced Learner Loan approved to pay for their course fees.
   v) Students with a gross annual earned household income of more than £40,000.00 can apply for the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary support providing the student can demonstrate they are facing financial hardship. In this instance the College will take into account any extenuating circumstances and a decision will be made.
   vi) An award for Advanced Learner Loan Bursary support may be paid to eligible students where one or more of the following applies:
      - Specific course related kit/books/uniform are needed for the student to attend the course.
      - The student lives 1 mile or more from college and/or work placement and the cost of travel is a barrier to attending College and/or learning. PayMyStudent (PMS) automatically measures distance using postcode.
      - An educational visit must be undertaken in order to gain a qualification or develop employability skills.–Bursary Funding can only be used to support the costs of an educational visit/field trip that is an essential part of a course. The college policy restricts financial support to UK based activity only.

- The student needs financial support for UCAS application costs and/or financial assistance towards a university open day or interview.
- The student is facing unexpected financial hardship that is creating a barrier to attending College and or learning.
- The student needs financial support for a meal when in college and attends for 3 hours or more on any given day.
- The student requires financial support to maintain their health and wellbeing.

b) **20+ Childcare**: awarded to help meet costs for Ofsted registered childcare for the children of 20+ year old students whilst they are studying. Students aged 19 and under should apply to "Care to Learn" scheme. The student must have an Advanced Learner Loan approved to pay for their course fees.
   i) To qualify for 20+ Childcare bursary support the student's gross annual earned household income must be below £40,000.00.
   ii) Informal childcare provided by a relative cannot be funded.
   iii) No more than 3 children will be funded by the scheme.
   iv) Funding is only to be used for timetabled days in college and remote blended learning sessions plus 30 minutes travelling time before and after college hours. We will only pay for eligible childcare provided on production of an invoice supplied by an OFSTED registered childcare provider. The College will pay the invoiced amount direct to the childcare provider.
   v) If the child is eligible for government funded early years places or Childcare Tax Credits, these must be used to cover the required sessions.
   vi) We will not assist in the payment of registration fees or retainer fees.

2) **NOT Eligible**
   a) Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed, rather than in education.
   b) Students who are aged 19 and over on 31 August 2026 and eligible for the Advanced Learner Loan but have not applied or who have been declined for an Advanced Learner Loan.

3) **Bursary Online Learning Equipment Loan (Laptop, Dongle etc.) Procedure:**

   a) Allocation will be decided in line with strategic objectives, in the following order:
      i) Students socio-economic need
      ii) Students who have no access to online learning equipment due to household financial situation
      iii) Students who may have additional learning needs
      iv) Students who have shared access to online learning equipment
      v) Students who are able to access online learning equipment from alternative sources
      vi) If the demand outweighs supply the college reserves the right to recall loaned equipment as required
      vii) Students must sign the online learning equipment agreement (below):

IT Learning Equipment Loan Agreement

- By using the above IT Learning Equipment, you are accepting the Tameside College IT ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY.
- Please note that this Tameside College IT Learning Equipment is loaned for the use of, and is THE responsibility of, the person named in the IT Learning Equipment Loan Agreement.
- If the IT Learning Equipment is broken or not returned you will be liable for the full cost of the IT Learning Equipment.
- You agree to take reasonable care of the IT Learning Equipment as you will be financially responsible for any loss or damage due to personal negligence.
- Please return IT Learning Equipment to the Bursary Team on request.
- Any Online Learning Equipment that has not been returned within 2 weeks of a request to do so will be unable to access the college network.
- DO NOT GIVE THIS IT LEARNING EQUIPMENT TO SOMEBODY ELSE TO USE.
- If IT Learning Equipment is recalled the student must return said equipment within 5 working days.

   b) Within 5 days of their course end date, the student is expected to return, in good working order, all loaned IT Learning Equipment. Where IT Learning Equipment is not returned within the specified timeframe, the college will contact students

to recover the equipment loaned. If the equipment is not returned when requested, then the student's details will be passed to the Finance/Debt Collection Department for the recovery of any costs incurred from the unreturned equipment.

c) Laptops will be regularly monitored for hardware condition and performance. In line with college operational processes, devices will be systematically replaced on a three-year cycle.

d)

4) **Bursary awards, award suspension and repayments of bursary awards**

b) Wherever possible, the college will provide items directly (in kind) rather than giving students cash. Where this is not possible, payment will be made direct into the student's bank account via the BACS system. Only in exceptional circumstances where a student is unable to administer their own account will a payment be made into another person's account.

i) **Meals**

- May be awarded at a rate of £6.00 per day, subject to the condition that the student is physically present in college for a duration exceeding 3 hours per day. Approved funds will be loaded directly onto the student's ID card for use on campus.

ii) **Travel**

- Where the award is for travel passes i.e. for students seeking asylum, bus passes will be issued in line with days attending college/approved college activities.
- Collection of bus passes will be available Monday to Thursdays 09:00hrs to 16:00hrs, Fridays 09:00hrs to 14:00hrs.
- Payments will be made to credit student accounts on Mondays. In the case of bank holiday payments will be made to credit student accounts on Tuesdays.
- Payments will be made during term time only.
- You must provide your travel receipts within 3 weeks of your bursary approval date, as evidence of costs incurred by students. If you fail to produce these receipts, your travel payments may be stopped.

iii) **Kit, Uniforms and Books**

- These should be purchased via our approved suppliers and bursary approved students will be issued a code to facilitate placing orders and college will reimburse the suppliers on production of an invoice.
- In exceptional circumstances where purchase is not possible through the approved suppliers and students/parents have purchased items independently, payments will be made directly to the student (on production of a valid receipt of expenditure.
- deemed by college as 'consumed/worn', will be purchased and supplied directly to the relevant students if the student has met the attendance requirements for the previous term. No additional payments will be made directly to students.
- Bursary Funding can only be used to support the costs of an educational visit/field trip that is an essential part of a course. The college policy restricts financial support to UK based activity only.
- These payments will be made either directly to the student or to the department on an ad hoc basis throughout the year – usually within 6 weeks of being notified of a trip from the curriculum area. The bursary scheme will contribute up to 75% of the overall cost of the trip per bursary student if the trip is of educational value and is an essential part of achieving the student's qualification.

b) **Repayment of the Bursary**

i) The student will be required to repay all or part of the bursary if it is terminated in the following circumstances:

- If the student has used the bursary payment for anything other than the stated purpose.
- If the student has knowingly or recklessly provided false or inaccurate information about their financial position.
- If the student has been found to have committed a serious breach, or series of persistent minor breaches, of discipline for which the sanction would normally be expulsion or required removal.
- If equipment purchased with bursary funds is damaged through misuse or neglect, then the student will be liable for the cost of replacement items.

ii) If a student is withdrawn within the first six weeks of their course, we may attempt to reclaim all monies paid and/or ask for kit and uniform that has been paid in kind to be returned to us.

5) **Attendance Criteria at College Site and Including Blended Learning**

a) Attendance criteria is set at 85% following October half term.

i) 85% weekly attendance - automatic award of travel payment if student is eligible.
ii) Less than 85% weekly attendance payment will be cancelled for that week for students in receipt of discretionary bursary.

6) **Student responsibility**

a) Funding Applications and Deadlines:
i) For all applications funding is limited meaning evidence of eligibility does not guarantee an award.
ii) Students wishing to apply for financial support are advised to do so as soon as possible from the start of their course.

b) State Benefits:
i) For students/households in receipt of any state benefits, it is their responsibility to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that they are in receipt of support via Bursary scheme.

7) **Appeals Process**

a) First appeal must be made in writing to studentfinancialsupport@tameside.ac.uk
b) Second appeal can be made in writing to the Head of Central Support & Enrichment within 14 days of notification of a decision. All Appeals will receive a response within 10 days of receipt. All decisions on appeal are final.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

This policy applies to all eligible 19+ year old students enrolled at Tameside College, Tameside One and Clarendon Sixth Form College and sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, Student Financial Support (Bursary) funding.

3. POLICY REVIEW

Bursary policies will be reviewed on an annual basis taking in to account statutory guidance from DfE. The college reserves the right to review and make in year amendments to this policy to ensure fair distribution of funds to those most in need of financial support to enable them to remain in education. Amendments made in year will be applicable from 1 day after the date of the in-year review only.

4. LOCATION AND ACCESS TO THE POLICY

The Discretionary Student Support Advanced Learner Loan (Bursary) Fund Policy 2026 - 2027 and supporting policies and other documents are available via SharePoint on the College network.

5. POLICY STATUS

Responsibility: Gail Clifford – Head of Central Support & Enrichment
Approved by: Senior Leadership Team
Issue Date: September 2026
Annual Review Date: July 2027 (on release of updated guidance)
Annual review / in-year amendments:

Review July 2025 GC/LH	Annual review in line with guidance	Approved by SLT
Review Dec 2025	In year review in line with guidance	Approved by SLT
Review Feb 2026	In year review in line with guidance	Approved by SLT