Reaching Out to Sanctuary Scholars

Introduction
The aim of ‘Reaching out to Sanctuary Scholars’ is to support universities in the development of effective communication and promotion strategies for their Sanctuary Scholarship schemes. We recommend that every university utilising the advice in ‘Reaching out to Sanctuary Scholars’, also refer to the other resources in this series, in particular: ‘Guiding Principles on Sanctuary Scholars in UK Higher Education’ and ‘Identifying Sanctuary Scholars’. This resource is intended as guidance and the suggestions within do not represent an exhaustive list, but serve as a point of reference and the basis upon which strategic discussions can take place within the institution.

Key themes to consider include:
1. Access & Participation Plans (Office for Students)
2. Communication
3. Outreach activities
4. Media
5. Point of Contact

Communicating and promoting Sanctuary Scholarships is presented as a three tier process: (i) Internal Promotion – university, (ii) Local Promotion – local / regional area and (iii) National Promotion. Activities that promote the scholarship scheme and the recruitment of students, in the context of the five identified themes, are not to be confined to a level but cut across all three levels. The primary aim is to explore communication and promotional activities for Sanctuary Scholarships that connect the institution to the local area and national platforms.

We have drawn on (some) examples of best practice that we have found amongst our partner universities, presented here as short case studies outlining the development and efficacy of specific activities.

Access & Participation Plan (Office for Students)
When Birkbeck University developed the concept of the Compass Project (Scholarships for forced migrants), it was done so in the knowledge that there is a need for universities within the community. The project was created with the idea of the widening participation of students, who applied from all areas of the country. In 2017/18 it was agreed that in order for forced migrants to be embedded within the university delivery by the widening participation team, they would be included, as a distinct group in Birkbeck’s Access Agreement. This was to put in place due to the fact that in addition to their immigration status, the scholarships were targeted at applicants who met other criteria outlined in the Access Agreement: first in family to access university, low income, BME, low level qualifications, history of interrupted education and their status as mature students.

This approach had multiple benefits, but most importantly, it meant a whole college commitment and approaches to improving access for forced migrants. Specific activities were established that targeted this group, which ensured that the team included their needs when developing generic widening participation work.

Birkbeck was able to ensure that there was a dedicated point of contact focused on building relationships with the forced migrant community, as well as making colleagues, internal to the institution aware of the challenges faced by forced migrants in accessing higher education.

The prioritisation of forced migrants by the widening participation team, as a group to focus and export (OFSP) on, has resulted in systems being put in place across different Birkbeck schools and departments, which recognise and act on the needs of forced migrants.

Keele University

Communication
Keele University has developed close relationships with other University departments, in particular Admissions, Compliance, Recruitment and Outreach to ensure communication about the Sanctuary Scholarships are embedded in current processes through following a series of simple, yet effective steps:

• The delivery of training and regular updates to Admissions and Compliance teams, to make sure they are aware of the ideal candidate and can pass on any pertinent information to potential applicants to our dedicated point of contact for advice and support.

• Incorporation of a link on our Student Records database so that we can identify applicants whose immigration status may mean they do not have access to student finance. The dedicated point of contact gets in touch to determine their eligibility, and if appropriate, provide them with awareness of the Sanctuary Scholarships.

• The Outreach team include information about Sanctuary Scholarships, as a dedicated feature in every presentation they deliver and in the Student Recruitment Outreach Newsletter. This is disseminated to every local school, college and provider of further education opportunities.

• Developed links with a local refugee charity supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The dedicated point of contact has attended sessions delivered by the charity, in order to speak to people they work with, raise awareness and answer questions about the scholarship scheme.

Point of Contact
The University of Salford established their Article 26 scholarship scheme in 2012 with an appointed person to act as dedicated point of contact for scholarship requests. This enabled Salford’s wider practice in offering of ‘vulnerable’ student groups a dedicated point of contact to recruit and retain students – in order to ensure that vulnerable students are well supported, engage in university life and access services. The dedicated point of contact is involved in recruitment, application and webinars (i.e. interview) processes, which results in sanctuary scholars getting to know the individual from their first contact with Salford.

Prior to starting their degree programmes, Sanctuary Scholars meet the point of contact as well as other students supported through the scholarship scheme. This is to ensure that vulnerable students are well supported, engage in university life and access services. The dedicated point of contact is involved in recruitment, application and webinar processes, which results in sanctuary scholars getting to know the individual from their first contact with Salford.

Registration takes place separately from the wider student population and is supported by the point of contact to ensure there are no complications and enrolment is a smooth and stress free process.

The point of contact acts as external point to other university departments and academic areas which oversee the delivery of the scholarship, ensuring students receive the support they need as quickly as possible. They are the key contact to communicate with other key departments to ensure awareness and understanding of the Sanctuary Scholarship scheme.

Issues relating to attendance or academic progression are raised by the personal tutor, with the student and the point of contact, to ensure maximum support is received to overcome any challenges (the practical or academic).

Timetable of dedicated 1:1 sessions during the first semester to establish a pattern of support with Sanctuary Scholars to sustain them through their degree programme.
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Your plans
Use the space below to write in your notes and draw connections to the three tiers of promotion.

1. Access & Participation Plans (Office for Students)

2. Communication

3. Outreach Activities

4. Media

5. Point of Contact

Internal Promotion

Local Promotion

National Promotion