

# Universities of Sanctuary



Around the world, more people than ever in history are being forced to flee conflict and persecution to find safety and sanctuary elsewhere.

Higher Education Institutions in the UK

- have a proud and radical tradition of providing sanctuary for academics and young people and many are actively looking for ways to build on this tradition in today's political and social context.
- develop well-informed, intelligent understanding of issues relating to forced migration through their research, teaching and knowledge exchange
- promote active citizenship amongst students, staff and their wider community.
- can, and must, be leaders in providing active support to marginalised groups and in challenging negative stereotypes and hate speech.
- have the reach and potential to counteract narratives in the media and society which stigmatise and attack people seeking sanctuary and to instead call for human rights to be respected and for people fleeing persecution to be given a welcome and equal access to opportunities in the UK.

In addition, the growth of sanctuary scholarships gives opportunities to highly motivated students who would otherwise be unable to access HE and realise their full potential for the benefit of wider society.

City of Sanctuary has partnered with Article 26, Student Action for Refugees and others to develop a network to inspire and support universities to promote a culture and a practice of welcome within their own institutions, in their wider communities, and across the Higher Education sector in the UK. Over 200 university practitioners are involved in a JISCM@il discussion group which is open to anybody seeking to find out more about Universities of Sanctuary, equal access issues and to share best practice including around the delivery of sanctuary scholarships.

<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?SUBED1=SANCTUARY&A=1>





## Equal Access

Equal access to Higher Education is enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, yet many people who are forced to flee to the UK find significant financial, cultural and institutional barriers in their way.

People seeking asylum in the UK are currently treated as international students and are therefore charged tuition fees at the international rate. This makes university prohibitively expensive and inaccessible to nearly everyone. Most asylum seekers live on £5.39 per day (January 2019), so even the cost of books and accommodation put university out of reach.

A growing number of universities now offer scholarships as part of their commitment to equal access. A full list of scholarships is available on the STAR website whilst a set of resources developed by the Article 26 project is now available on the University of Sanctuary website to assist universities in developing scholarship programmes.

### Case Study: University of Winchester

The University of Winchester has been offering Sanctuary Scholarships including fee waivers and bursaries since 2009 with, so far, 24 students from 16 countries receiving awards.

More recently, as part of its work towards University of Sanctuary recognition, the university has also focused on its outreach initiatives with the local community. They now work closely with the Rural Refugee Network to support Syrian refugees settle into rural communities. This has included 'family days' to bring Syrian families together to socialize and meet university staff and students as well as 3-day residential held on campus for up to 30 children and young people. The residential involve staff, students and alumni from across the University, including from the Faculty of Arts, who run creative workshops. Importantly, these activities are now embedded in the University's Access and Participation Plan.

The Education Department has developed a Schools of Sanctuary programme in the local area. An option module is available to students in Teacher Development to develop critical understanding of approaches to teaching and learning that support schools to teach children about inclusion of children who are refugees and asylum seekers.

<https://www.winchester.ac.uk/news-and-events/press-centre/media-articles/winchester-recognised-as-a-university-of-sanctuary.php>





As a sanctuary scholar at the University of Winchester, equal access to education means recognising that my innate value does not change across borders and by welcoming people like myself, institutions say we are worth the highest forms of education. As I pursue my degree, I also have the opportunity to be a student ambassador to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to overcome any barriers they face in accessing higher education.

Daniel - Sanctuary Scholar



## What is a University of Sanctuary?

A University of Sanctuary demonstrates commitment at all levels of the organisation to create a culture, and a practice, of welcome, and to do everything possible to secure equal access to higher education for people seeking sanctuary. It actively reaches out to people seeking sanctuary and others in their local communities to seek ways to work together to enable access to their services and facilities.

A University of Sanctuary will have embedded into its policies, procedures and its strategic planning, sustainable activities that promote continuing awareness amongst their staff and student body to underpin an inclusive and welcoming environment. Opportunities to understand the experience of forced migration would be embedded into curriculum modules across all faculties as appropriate within their context.

## Case Study: University of East Anglia

Discussions at UEA about becoming a University of Sanctuary began amongst some staff and students, and eventually the work developed into a whole institution commitment towards the vision of a University of Sanctuary. A small group of staff formed a steering group and gradually identified champions in different departments at the university including several academics as well as people in the finance and widening participation teams. The UEA University of Sanctuary steering group is now made up of around 30 people, including senior staff, who meet regularly to discuss existing and future plans. They have employed a part-time Sanctuary Liaison Officer who is available to support students on sanctuary scholarships and to develop the sanctuary programme at the university. UEA are also offering specialist Open Days for sanctuary seekers, and members of the INTO team are using their volunteer time to offer dedicated English for Academic Purposes to sanctuary seekers based in and around Norwich.

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/-/uea-awarded-for-ongoing-commitment-to-sanctuary-seekers>





## Case Study: University of Bradford

The University of Bradford has refugee scholars undertaking programmes across the University, including providing sanctuary scholarships to asylum seekers. People seeking sanctuary are regularly invited to share their stories within curricula and often participate in recruitment, teaching assessment and research. There is an e-learning module for all staff and students to develop their awareness and understanding, plus curriculum modules often focus on refugees and asylum seekers. The University engages with the local community and widens participation to asylum seekers and refugees into university life, including access to pre-university learning opportunities and facilities such as sports and the arts. Students have opportunities to undertake placement and work-based learning opportunities in asylum refugee organisations and the student union organises volunteering opportunities for students across the University.

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/university-of-sanctuary/>



## University of Sanctuary Award

UNIVERSITY OF  
**SANCTUARY AWARD**  
WELCOMING ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

Universities are able to apply to be recognised as a University of Sanctuary. To apply for the award, universities are required to submit evidence of their commitment using the following principles:

- **Learn:** learning what it means to be seeking sanctuary, in general and at university in particular, and to be actively involved in awareness raising
- **Embed:** Taking positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion within all faculties of the institution and the wider community, including offering scholarships to sanctuary seekers
- **Share:** Sharing your vision and achievements widely and being active participants in relevant local networks and the national University of Sanctuary network.

Our resources, case studies and website provide a wide range of examples of the activities that can be undertaken through the Learn, Embed and Share process.

For further information and to request a University of Sanctuary resource pack, please contact [universities@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:universities@cityofsanctuary.org) or visit our website at <https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org>



**City of Sanctuary**

