

UNIVERSITIES OF SANCTUARY CONFERENCE - WEDNESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER

This is the first annual Universities of Sanctuary conference, which is being generously hosted and supported by **York St John University**. The conference will bring together academics, professional staff, students, sanctuary scholars, charities and others to explore how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can work together and maximise their potential to develop a practice and a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in the UK.

There are currently 13 recognised Universities of Sanctuary in the UK, with many more working towards recognition. At the conference, we will hear from leading practitioners to explore ways to work more closely as a sector to improve our own practices and campaign for a more hospitable environment in the UK.

The conference will be organised into three themes, 'Learn', 'Embed' and 'Share', in line with the three principles which underpin the commitment needed to become a University of Sanctuary. The following is a description of the three themes as well as a programme.

LEARN

Universities are places of learning. However, their reach extends far beyond the student body and includes the wider community, administration and support staff, partners in the UK and overseas and many others. This theme will look at the role of HEIs in creating a culture of welcome and how to promote learning throughout the whole reach of the institution.

The keynote speaker will be **Rebecca Murray** who has been instrumental in the development of Sanctuary Scholarships through the Article 26 project that she established in 2010.

EMBED

To be recognised as a University of Sanctuary, it is vital that HEIs embed the culture of welcome across their institution to ensure that initiative outlast the current student, and staff, population.

To support this theme there will be choices of workshops to attend over two different sessions exploring key themes including improving access to HE, Sanctuary Scholarships, At-Risk Academics and University-Community partnerships. There will also be an opportunity to sign up for support with the application process for becoming a University of Sanctuary. Full details of each workshop can be found at the end of this programme.

SHARE

In the final theme of the day we look at how a network of Universities of Sanctuary could work together to celebrate sanctuary and to promote wider changes that will create a culture of welcome in the UK.

There will be some inspiration shared from the current network and input from **Professor Nick Gill**, the founder of the University of Sanctuary initiative, sharing his vision for the future. There will be an opportunity to discuss ideas in roundtables and this input will be used by the University of Sanctuary steering group to help inform future plans.

We will conclude the day by celebrating those HEIs currently recognised as Universities of Sanctuary.

TIME/ROOM	ACTIVITY	WHO
09:30 - 10:00 De Grey Foyer	Registration, tea and coffee	
10:00 - 10:15 DG017	Welcome	Professor Karen Stanton: Vice Chancellor, York St John University
LEARN		
10:15 - 10:20 DG017	Welcome to the conference	Daniel Mutanda And Arooba Hameed: University of Sanctuary Steering Group
10:20 - 10:30 DG017	Speaking from experience	Dr Ahmed Khaleel: University of York
10:30 – 10:50 DG017	Keynote speaker: <i>The role of universities in building a culture of welcome in the UK</i>	Dr Rebecca Murray: University of Sheffield
10:50 – 11:05 DG017	Embedding practice: <i>Engaging sanctuary seekers in the life of the Faculty of Health Studies</i>	Dr Mel Cooper & Diana Flores, University of Bradford Faculty of Health Studies
11:05 - 11:30	Break	
EMBED		
11:30 - 12:30	Workshops 1	
DG014	At-Risk Academics: <i>The role of HEIs in supporting at-risk academics in the UK and overseas</i>	Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA)
DG016	Breaking Barriers: <i>Creating pathways into, through and beyond Higher Education for sanctuary students</i>	Leicester University; RefuAid
DG017	Sanctuary Scholarships 1: <i>Learning from experts by experience</i>	Sanctuary scholars
DG103	Advice clinic <i>on the process of becoming recognised as a University of Sanctuary</i>	Professor Nick Gill (by sign-up only)
12:30 – 13.20	Lunch	
13:20 - 14:20	Workshops 2	
DG014	University-community partnerships: <i>The role of universities in creating a culture of welcome in the wider community</i>	Isabelle Schafer; Agata Lambrechts
DG016	Hostile Environment: <i>Understanding compliance and related issues within the hostile environment</i>	CORAM Children’s Legal Centre
DG017	Sanctuary scholarships 2: <i>Sharing best practice</i>	Article 26; STAR; Let Us Learn; Refugee Support Network
SHARE		
14:30 – 14:35 DG017	Repairing Broken Lives: <i>A music project coordinated by the University of Hull with Paul Field</i>	University of Hull
14:35 – 14:55 DG017	Universities of Sanctuary: <i>Inspiration from the network</i>	University of Hull University of Winchester
14:55 - 15:05 DG017	A network for positive change: <i>A vision of a network of Universities of Sanctuary in the UK</i>	Nick Gill – University of Exeter
15:05 - 16:15	Round Tables: <i>Discussion groups on the development of the network and how HEIs can fulfil their potential for building a culture of welcome internally and externally</i>	Tea and coffee available
16:15 - 16:30 DG017	Closing words and celebration of Universities of Sanctuary	University of Sanctuary Steering Group

WORKSHOP DETAILS

At-Risk Academics: The role of universities in supporting at-risk academics in the UK and overseas

Workshop leaders: Council for At-Risk Academics

The Workshop will explore the particular challenges facing exiled academics escaping from very real dangers to travel to the UK to start their courses, and how Cara works with them, from first contact up to their arrival and, just as importantly, after that. They face many challenges - negotiating the visa process; arrival in an unfamiliar country and academic system; settling their families in, who may have only very limited English language skills; anxiety about those they had to leave behind, including their own children if they are over 18; and the worry about what happens next, when their course or research period ends. How can their host communities help?

Breaking Barriers: Creating pathways into, through and beyond Higher Education for people seeking sanctuary

Workshop leaders: Leicester University: RefuAid

This workshop will give participants the opportunity to explore practical barriers which sanctuary students face when accessing HE, not only in terms of gaining access to a degree programme, but also on their journey through and beyond HE (areas which are often neglected). These three stages of their journey will then be examined from the perspective of different barriers, including those related to: English language provision; finance/funding; recognition of previous qualifications; mental health issues (including trauma); and practical daily stressors such as those related to housing and the progress of immigration cases. Participants will have an opportunity to consider the barriers that exist in their own institutional contexts, and then move towards suggesting potential solutions.

Sanctuary Scholarships 1: Learning from experts by experience

Workshop leaders: Sanctuary Scholars from York St John University

In this workshop Sanctuary Scholars will share their direct experience of Sanctuary Scholarships. Scholars will share insights into their scholarly background and how they came to be Sanctuary Scholars, their current experience of Higher Education at different levels, both undergraduate and postgraduate, at various institutions, and where they hope their scholarship may lead them. Through their reflections, scholars will offer insight into what is working well within the scholarship programme, and where improvements might be made. These reflections will offer the Sanctuary network a rich insight into how to implement the extension of the scholarship programme, and build upon and improve the scholarship experience.

University-community partnerships: The role of universities in creating a culture of welcome in the wider community

Workshop leaders: Agata Lambrechts and Isabelle Schäfer

An intrinsic part of being a University of Sanctuary is contributing to not only make its campus, but also its town a welcoming environment for forced migrants. This means engaging with the local community and support network available and finding out where universities can make the biggest

difference in their locality. However, this engagement might look different for each university, as every community will have distinct needs and every university will have specific strengths. In this workshop, we propose to have an open discussion about what such an engagement can look like, how it can be started and sustained, and what the potential challenges and opportunities might be. To start the conversation, Agata Lambrechts, PhD researcher at the University of York, and Isabelle Schäfer, PhD researcher at the University of Bath, will both present preliminary findings and thoughts from their respective current research. This will be followed by an open discussion with the participants.

Hostile Environment: Understanding compliance and related Issues within the hostile environment

Workshop leader: Stewart MacLachlan, Coram Children’s Legal Centre

This workshop will give an insight into Coram’s work on the legality of access to education for young people seeking sanctuary. The session will first aim to provide some clarity on the complex matter of immigration status, and talk through what different statuses mean in terms of meeting eligibility criteria to access education, and also eligibility criteria to access support such as student finance. The session will also cover compliance issues and give an overview of expectations placed on Universities in relation to Immigration Law, such as meeting Tier 4 sponsorship requirements, while also thinking about the inadequacy of Tier 4 for undocumented young people, or those with uncertain status. Finally, the session will cover regularising status. Overall, the session will aim to break down the complexity of the legal barriers to higher education that people seeking sanctuary face, and give an overview of current legal work on making access to Higher Education fairer.

Sanctuary scholarships 2: Sharing best practice

Workshop leaders: Student Action for Refugees; Let Us Learn; Refugee Support Network

This workshop will be made up of brief insights from each organisation: Article 26, STAR, Let Us Learn, and Refugee Support Network. Each organisation will share information about the work that they do related to Sanctuary Scholarships, including events and campaigns they run, research they have undertaken, and resources they have to support the establishment and development of scholarship opportunities. Their insights will evidence the network of groups and organisations that that University of Sanctuary is part of, which are working to welcome people seeking sanctuary in the UK into higher education. Following a brief overview of the work that each organisation is doing, facilitators will open the floor to questions, and the audience will have the opportunity to ‘ask an expert’ about the process of setting up scholarships, and improving existing scholarship opportunities.

The process of becoming recognised as a University of Sanctuary

Advice clinic with Professor Nick Gill, University of Exeter

Parallel to the workshops, Nick Gill will be facilitating an advice clinic on the process of becoming a University of Sanctuary. The clinic will give attendees the opportunity to take questions to an experienced member of the University of Sanctuary network, and receive advice and guidance about the process. It is completely open to all, whether you or your organisation has a general interest in becoming a University of Sanctuary, or a specific question about the accreditation process. A sign-up will be available at registration on the day of the conference.