

LEARN: Best Practice according to Sanctuary Scholars

The University of Warwick became a University of Sanctuary in 2017 and has in the time since sought to ensure that it has upheld and continues to uphold its 'learn' commitment. The working group established to drive the programme, seeking to embed it into the university, chose a course of action aimed at better understanding the University of Sanctuary Scholars' personal experiences of the programme by connecting and communicating with them directly.

An [Ambitious Futures](#) graduate trainee was given the opportunity to lead a research project seeking to map the current process all Sanctuary Scholars follow from admission, through arrival and in their studies at Warwick. The graduate trainee undertook the task via the use of questionnaire and focus groups with current Sanctuary Scholars, with a specific outline to focus on documenting any changes required to ensure a suitable arrival, welcome and induction was in place; to develop a greater understanding of Sanctuary Scholars needs; examine any gaps which should be filled by an improved and more systematic welcome and support provision; and to highlight the costs, challenges and implications of any best practice recommendations.

The result of this was some key insights including (but not limited to); the desire for more structured activities and increased interactions between Scholars; the need for a dedicated member of staff specific to Sanctuary Scholars with a focus on support in relation to arrival at the university and immigration issues; and a well-rounded, full service website providing information not only on the application process but also support available, social event details, volunteering opportunities, finance links, budgeting costs and advice, views of former and current Scholars, as well as the views of the university.

From these insights, the working group learned much and pro-actively took on board the recommendations. Included in those taken forward were the commission of a new website incorporating those elements requested and more, and the permanent embedding of the UoS programme within the Widening Participation team. Here, an individual has been identified who will be the Sanctuary Scholar's key member of staff for all issues, providing support, signposting, and intermediary assistance with regards to other areas of the university. Additionally, events information and other opportunities will in the future be made available via both the website and through the WP team, moving forward. All staff actively involved with Sanctuary Scholars have completed the Bradford University's online training course, to ensure all have a more in-depth understanding of Sanctuary Scholar's backgrounds and additional needs.

The research project findings did not just provide insight and learning, it also allowed the working group an opportunity to see the programme through the Scholars eyes, to better understand their fears, their concerns, their challenges and their successes – to better understand them as not just a cohort, but as individuals.