

HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISPLACED PEOPLE:

A GUIDE FOR UK
UNIVERSITIES



Universities UK
International



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FOREWORD

Access to higher education transforms peoples' lives. It enables learners to develop the skills and capabilities that are needed in the 21st century, and helps to build the capital needed to make the most of personal, social and economic opportunities.

But millions of people today are denied access to these life-changing experiences due to circumstances that are beyond their control. Tens of millions of young people are, right now, living with and through the consequences of long-term displacement. Through war and political upheaval, natural disaster and man-made catastrophes, and for a combination of deeply personal reasons and as a result of far-reaching social and economic conditions – many millions today find themselves far from home without the security, comfort and opportunity that many of us are thankfully able to take for granted.

As this report sets out, there are opportunities for universities to work with and for displaced people, both as learners and as colleagues. Universities can provide financial and social support that enables people to benefit from our world-class universities. They can work with their local communities and support people living with displacement to adapt to their new homes, and to develop the skills they need to actively participate in society. And they can work outside of the UK and use the skills, expertise and global networks to which they have ready access to provide for the needs of displaced communities wherever they are to be found.

Our universities already do all of these things – but they can do more. As this report shows, the challenges of displacement are wide-ranging and pervasive; and while this in itself is a matter of profound concern, it does mean that our university community, in its very diversity, can find unique ways to help those living with displacement.

Addressing the many challenges faced by people in displaced communities cannot be solved by universities and access to education alone. But our higher education institutions can – and do – play an important role in alleviating some of these challenges. This report does not tell institutions what they should do – more, it provides a guide to some of these myriad possibilities, and urges leaders to consider how they can engage with the issue of access to education for displaced people and communities.

In this way, we can – as a community – help to mitigate in some part the many challenges and consequences of displacement faced by millions of people every day.

Professor Sir Steve Smith

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Exeter and Chair of Universities UK International's International Policy Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are more than 65 million displaced people in the world: almost 1% of the global population, and equivalent to the population of the UK. Only 1% of displaced people are in higher education. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the number of displaced children under 18 to be more than half the total (approximately 33 million), with a further 6.5 million young people aged 19–26. This means that there are almost 40 million young people who are likely to be missing out on education, and other opportunities for personal fulfilment, and economic advancement.

There are many ways in which universities and other higher education providers might support the educational and wider needs of displaced people, and there is no single, correct approach. Institutions may offer scholarships and bursaries to displaced students (around 60 UK institutions currently do so) or provide fellowships for academic faculty, directly educating refugees and hosting refugee academics in the UK. They can work with displaced people in their local communities, and with national bodies working with displaced people. Through academic and other partners in Europe and, for example, in Syria's neighbouring countries, they can help build capacity in the region while enhancing their own capability, capacity and expertise in working with, and supporting the needs of, displaced people and refugee students. Further, universities can make significant contributions to research into displacement issues, for example, in health, migration issues, employment, and in education at all levels.

There are, therefore, many potential responses for universities wishing to engage with the plight of displaced people, as every institution will have its own set of strategic priorities, strengths and capabilities, and every potential learner from a displaced community will have subtly different ambitions, desires and expectations, as well as requiring different modes and levels of support. Institutions should therefore seek to develop their own individual response, which should both properly reflect the desires and needs of the community of learners with whom they will seek to work, and the specific opportunities that might be provided by the strengths, capabilities and context of their own institution.

In this spirit, this report does not seek to dictate how any particular institution might respond to the challenges faced by learners and academics from displaced communities. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the current situation and suggest possible responses, and sources of information, advice and guidance. In summary, this report will:

- Introduce a range of activities that your institutions might consider developing as part of a strategic response.
- Highlight issues for consideration when developing an institutional response.
- Signpost further advice and guidance that you may wish to consider, including a summary of important organisations working to support displaced people, both here in the UK and internationally.

Should an institution decide to build on their existing work in this area, or begin to consider a new approach to supporting access to higher education for displaced students and academics, principles to help guide action have been developed by specialist organisations. These can help to inform some general issues to consider in framing any potential response:

1. **Think about how you can best support refugee students in the context of your wider strategies to promote access and inclusion.** Consideration should also be given to how policies to support refugees are structured and promoted in the wider context of the sector's support for vulnerable groups particularly in relation to widening access agendas. Students who are refugees may need a personalised admissions process that is sensitive to and recognises their unique circumstances.
2. **Use the expertise of dedicated groups to inform your approach – especially where outreach and support needs are concerned.** Both national organisations like the Refugee Council (and the devolved country equivalents) and local refugee organisations and communities can provide guidance on how best universities can support both refugee students and the wider refugee community.

3. **Wherever possible, support for refugees should be comparable to the support offered for other vulnerable groups.** Refugee students share many support needs with other groups. It can assist with the integration of refugees for support to be offered within the context of a wider programme of support for students, rather than offering services specifically labelled for “refugees”.
4. **Get advice on the potential impact of providing financial support to refugee students.** When considering offering financial support through universities’ own funds, for example, it is important to consider the impact of this support on a prospective student’s existing entitlements. Asylum seekers who are in receipt of living costs and/or accommodation support from the Home Office will normally have their support reduced, or even removed in response to other income they receive.
5. **Supporting displaced scholars can form part of a holistic response to the challenges posed by the refugee crisis.** Significant numbers of refugees are members of the academic community. Organisations such as the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) do a huge amount of work to support academic faculty – consider how your institution might host displaced scholars, and how this might be incorporated in to a broader institutional strategy.
6. **Consider how your institution can help deliver access to education outside of the UK.** Distance learning, transnational education delivered directly and with and through partners, and other forms of in-country activity can play a major role in providing access to education, and developing skills, resilience and capabilities that are critical to developing long-term effective responses to the refugee crisis.

Given the diverse range of learner requirements and institutional perspectives, there is no ‘correct’ way of approaching supporting access to higher education for displaced people. However, it is possible to develop a bespoke plan of action.

SUPPORTING THE SUCCESS OF FORCED MIGRANTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION¹

Education creates life-enhancing opportunities, and helps forced migrants to shape their own futures and gain a sense of belonging in their new community. However, many forced migrants living in the UK are unable to avail themselves of such opportunities due to limitations placed upon them, such as their international student status or their ineligibility for vital student finance.

The Article 26 project (page 23) has set out a number of guiding principles that provide the foundations for any sanctuary initiative designed to support the success of forced migrants in higher education. They are a vital strategic planning tool for institutions, tailored to assist them in establishing, sustaining or growing their scholarships and wider initiatives that support forced migrants at their institutions.

There are 10 main principles. These are:

1. The right of forced migrants to access higher education.
2. Equal treatment and non-discrimination.
3. The right to privacy.
4. An outline of Sanctuary Initiatives.
5. Underlying principles for the design, administration and implementation of Sanctuary Initiatives.
6. Selection processes and removal of procedural barriers.
7. Communication.
8. Academic, pastoral and professional support.
9. Student progress and participation.
10. Staff training.

¹ Rebecca Murray, ‘Supporting the success of forced migrants in higher education’, blog for Universities UK International, January 2018. Available at <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/Pages/supporting-the-success-of-forced-migrants-in-higher-education.aspx>. For the complete guidance, see Article 26 (2018) *Guiding Principles on Sanctuary Scholars in UK Higher Education*. A document outlining guiding principles, which lay the foundations for Sanctuary Scholarship schemes, available at http://article26.hkf.org.uk/_uploads/Article_26_-_Guiding_Principles.pdf

AN OUTLINE PROCESS FOR BUILDING AN INSTITUTION-WIDE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ENGAGING WITH DISPLACED PEOPLE

The principles and general issues framed above are a useful starting point for developing a strategic response. As a guide, four main stages might be considered in developing a new strategic approach within your institution:

- **Step 1: Audit, review and engagement**
- **Step 2: Planning for action**
- **Step 3: Setting objectives and targets**
- **Step 4: Implementation, monitoring and impact**

Step 1: Audit, review and engagement

- **Conduct an audit of current activities and engagement:** What activities are currently underway at your institution, and who is leading these? Is there a strategic, coordinated approach, or is activity bottom-up and community-led? Are there any activities that could deliver significantly greater impact with a little extra support, and are any activities scalable? And which communities, organisations and other stakeholders are your institution engaged with?
- **Consult with a wide variety of stakeholders to identify needs and opportunities:** Prioritising engagement with a wide range of stakeholders can be beneficial – the academic community, students and student-led groups, and community organisations can all provide invaluable insights in to the most effective ways of engaging with and supporting the ambitions of people in displaced communities. Consider how you will ensure the voice of displaced people is prominent in the development of your approach.

- **Consider your strategic positioning in light of the review and engagement:** Is the focus of your work institutional, local/regional, or are you planning to work in other host-countries – or to take a holistic and multifaceted approach? The activities and responses available will vary considerably depending on the focus of your institution. In light of your engagement and audit activities, would a more coordinated and strategic approach leverage significant synergies and benefits – or is a more flexible, less directive form of institutional support for bottom-up activities more appropriate?

Step 2: Planning for action

- **Create ownership for any new approach:** If the decision is made to develop a new strategic approach, there has to be clear ownership and responsibility. This does not need to be overly burdensome and bureaucratic – but individuals or teams need to be empowered to engage with different parts of the institution, and have a route for engaging with senior leaders to ensure buy-in for any new activities.
- **Understand your priorities for action:** The needs and desires of displaced learners and faculty are not uniform – where can your institution make the most difference, given your strengths, resources, networks and contacts? Is your priority to work with or in a specific community, or is it an approach such as scholarships, fellowships of transnational education? Or is your priority to work in specific a region or with displaced people sharing similar experiences? Or are you looking to create a flexible and adaptable approach?

- **Identify the resources that are needed – and be clear about what is available:** Who is going to deliver on any new activities and strategy – and what resources might be needed? As this report shows, there are numerous ways to engage with and help address the challenges of displacement and higher education, and each has its own set of resource needs – time, people, skills, financial support. What level of investment across all of these areas might be needed to make a difference – and what resources can your institution make available? Also think about how you can draw on best practice to inform your planning – what are others doing in this space?

Step 3: Setting objectives and targets

- **Clearly articulate what success looks like:** Setting your priorities within a broader strategic framework is a helpful guide to action – but it does not need to restrict the excellent bottom-up activity that already occurs within institutions. However, it can help to bring together activities that are not currently linked to provide a more coherent approach. Establishing a strategy with a clear understanding of what success looks like will ensure that future activities and opportunities can be maximised.
- **Establish short, medium and long-term goals:** The challenges posed by displacement are profound. It is important to establish goals along different time horizons as part of the strategy – what can be done with little resource immediately, and what may require longer-term investment and development?
- **Identify targets and milestones as a spur to action:** Building on your strategic goals, identifying specific projects, deliverables and outputs and outcomes with clear timelines ensures a focus on impact. However, it is important to reflect on the nature of your targets – a blend of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ measures that consider both the scale of support offered and also the impact it has on individuals, communities and the broader social, economic and policy environment is necessary for an effective, holistic approach.

Step 4: Implementation, monitoring and impact

- **Ongoing communication and engagement is critical:** Communicating your strategy and priorities at all levels – internally to staff and students, and externally to displaced people, community and support groups and other networks – should be part of an on-going process; it should not be a one-off activity.
- **Properly support and resource your strategic plan:** Once established, it is important that there is clarity about the levels of support and resourcing that are available. Investing the time and energy to develop a plan but failing to provide the necessary resources to ensure it has the desired impact risks undermining the support of interested stakeholders and failing the very communities you intend to work with. Who is responsible for decisions on overall resourcing?
- **Monitoring the impact of a new strategy is vital:** Finally, ensuring that progress is monitored in a light-touch manner, in line with the priorities, goals and targets that have been established, is important to ensure successful delivery. This monitoring can – alongside engagement with staff, students and displaced communities and support groups – can be used to periodically review the strategic direction of your institution. Are your priority areas valid? Do the activities and mechanisms of support being provided meet the requirements of displaced learners and faculty? It is not always a question of ‘what more can be done’ – but of what could be done differently, or more effectively.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide a resource for UK higher education institutions that wish to engage with, or expand their engagement with, the plight of displaced people. While the focus of the concern at this time is around the Syria/Middle East situation, the principles are applicable to any situation where there are large numbers of displaced people.

The report presents a summary of the context of displaced people and higher education, and provides guidance on the issues that institutions wishing to play a more active role in supporting the needs of displaced learners may need to consider when formulating their response, both here in the UK and in (or near) countries with significant populations of displaced people. It also introduces a framework to guide action at the institutional level, suggesting a process and approach that can be used to both structure and orientate a bespoke response.

There are many ways in which universities and other higher education providers might support the educational and wider needs of displaced people, and there is no single, correct approach. Institutions may offer scholarships and fellowships to displaced students and academics, directly educating refugees and hosting refugee academics in the UK. They can work with displaced people in their local communities, and with national bodies working with displaced people. Through academic and other partners in Europe and, for example, in Syria's neighbouring countries, they can help build capacity in the region while enhancing their own capability, capacity and expertise in working with, and supporting the needs of, displaced people and refugee students. Further, universities can make significant contributions to research into displacement issues, for example, in health, migration issues, employment, and in education at all levels.

This list is, of course, not exhaustive. The specific circumstances of each institution, and of the displaced people and communities they may seek to work with, necessitate an individual response, suited to the resources, capabilities and needs of all parties. However, there is a wealth of information available to support and guide those institutions that plan to engage with and support learners from displaced communities, and this report brings together examples and case studies of institutional experience, alongside an overview of the organisations, frameworks and existing resources that one can draw on to inform an institutional response.

Each university will have its own idea of how and where it can engage with this pressing, extremely challenging issue. The report does not provide answers to all the challenges facing the UK higher education sector in relation to displaced people, but it does seek to make a significant contribution to the debate by supporting institutions as they consider and develop their own responses.

DISPLACED PEOPLE AND HIGHER EDUCATION: THE GLOBAL SITUATION

The scale of the problem

There are more than 65 million displaced people in the world: almost 1% of the global population, and equivalent to the population of the UK. Only 1% of displaced people are in higher education.

Of this population of 65 million, approximately 21 million are refugees, seeking refuge outside their country; 3 million are awaiting asylum decisions in industrialised countries; and 41 million are internally displaced within their own country. The countries hosting the most refugees are Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia and Jordan. The countries with the largest number of internally displaced people are Syria, Iraq, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Central African Republic and Colombia.²

Within this population, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the number of displaced children under 18 to be more than half the total (approximately 33 million), with a further 6.5 million young people aged 19–26.³ As such, there are almost 40 million young people who are likely to be missing out on education, and other opportunities for personal fulfilment, and economic advancement. These young people face displacement from home, from security, from livelihoods, and from access to healthcare and education provision. This loss of individual opportunity and human potential is immense, while their presence can sometimes result in social unrest in the host community.

For these populations, access to all levels of education is a major problem. Their needs are complex, as access to education for displaced people is much more likely to be interrupted, or to end early, and therefore the cumulative benefit of integrated education progression is severely curtailed. Again, UNHCR figures (2015) provide a concise demonstration of the scale of the problem: it is estimated that only 50% of displaced children receive some form of primary education; only 20% receive any secondary education; and only 1% have access to higher education. Importantly, even these figures have provisos: while 50% of displaced children receive *some* primary education, a large proportion of these will probably not complete the full cycle. For those who are successful in completing primary school, opportunities for progression into secondary schools are limited, and for those who are able to access it there are the same issues around interruption and dropout. It is, therefore, understandable that only 1% of displaced young people attend higher education.

Recent research in Lebanon⁴ shows that, over the period 2011–2016, there has been a significant decline in young Syrian refugees in Lebanon that are seeking scholarships for higher education as they no longer have the prerequisite secondary education. The figures for the decline in school enrolment for Syrian refugees in Lebanon between 2011 and 2016 (see Table 1, following page) are sobering, while the figures for secondary school – an obvious requirement for entry to university are a particular cause for concern.

THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

65M
displaced
people in
the world

61%
of these
are under
26 years old

40M
young people
missing out
on education

² UNHCR (2016) *Global Trends Forced Displacement 2015*. Full report available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>

³ UNHCR (2016) *Global Trends Forced Displacement 2015*. Full report available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>

⁴ As reported by Jazar, Mustapha (2017) 'Education in Emergencies: Problems and Road Map' October 2017 (unpublished seminar presentation)

TABLE 1: ENROLMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON IN EDUCATION, 2011 AND 2016

Level of education enrolment	2011	2016
Primary education (G1–6)	98%	63%
Intermediate (G7–9)	96%	37%
Secondary (G10–12)	62%	1.4%
University (ages 18–24)	26%	3.6%

Source: Jazar, 2017

If this research is indicative of a more general trend among Syrian refugees throughout the region, this indeed bodes ill for the future of Syria. In 2010, about 72% of the population finished some form of secondary education (academic or vocational) and about 24% of the relevant age groups attended higher education. There is clearly a need for further action on education for displaced people at the global level, and there is a move towards creating a [rapid response mechanism for higher education in emergencies](#).⁵ However, appropriate funding is not yet being provided.

With reference to the example of Syria, a regional UNESCO/UNHCR Ministerial Conference on Higher Education in Crisis Situations (focussing on the Middle East and North Africa, or MENA, region) was held in March 2017. The report⁶ of this meeting included details of the issues of access to higher education for refugees and displaced people, and the challenges faced, which make for sobering reading. As well as general recommendations, the report includes country by country analysis, with recommendations at the academic, policy and social levels. It also highlighted the very different situations in which displaced people live, emphasising the need for responses that are sensitive to the different challenges posed to individuals by their different contexts. For example, while most refugees in Jordan live in refugee camps, very few do in Lebanon, while the situation in Turkey is more mixed (with significant numbers living in camps, but not the majority).

The conference report highlights that while there is very limited humanitarian funding for higher education, there are a number of scholarship schemes, such as the UNHCR's [DAFI scheme](#)⁷ and EU Madad Fund's [HOPES project](#).⁸

The report also notes the lack of good data about numbers and location of displaced students in higher education, and the lack of co-ordination between countries as major issues, and while the locus of concerns regarding access to higher education varies between countries, common considerations include:

- Lack of recognition of previous qualifications and learning.
- Finances (where there are insufficient scholarships available).
- Language skills, particularly English (as many courses in Jordan and Lebanon are delivered in English, and a level of English competence is needed for entry to higher education).

To help mitigate some of these issues, the conference report recommended a number of policy interventions that might help to enhance access to higher education, including:

- Greater coordination on policy and legal frameworks for displaced people.
- Better data and data management systems.
- Improved regional co-operation and institutional capacity building.

⁵ 'Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) For Higher Education in Emergencies' (June 2017), video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZ84tyeb6Fg>

⁶ UNESCO/UNHCR (2017) The Regional Conference on Higher education in Crisis Situations Synergizing Policies and Promising Practices to enhance Access, Equity and Quality in the Arab Region, Conference Report, available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/HIGHEREDUCATION.pdf>

⁷ The DAFI programme enables young refugees to unlock their potential by addressing key barriers to higher education. Undergraduate refugee students are provided with scholarships that cover a wide range of costs, from tuition fees and study materials, to food, transport, accommodation and other allowances. For more information on the DAFI Programme, see <http://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html>

⁸ The HOPES project (Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians) is a €12 million project, funded by the European Union's Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis, 'the Madad Fund' and implemented by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) together with the British Council, Campus France and Nuffic. See <http://www.hopes-madad.org/about-us/>

However, even assuming that learners are able to overcome these challenges and both access and complete a higher education course, there are often very restricted job opportunities, and there is often little relation between university courses and labour market demand. Refugees often have very limited access to graduate level jobs. In Lebanon and Jordan for example refugees can only legally work in the agricultural, environmental and construction sectors. The challenge does not end at access to education.

There are displaced people in large numbers in the Middle East and Central Asia; significant numbers in north-east Africa; and similar, newer displaced populations in West Africa. Within each region, each country's issues, while similar in principle, are subject to their own national and cultural perspectives. Within each country, different geographical location (cities, provinces) and differences in ethnicity and religion between displaced people and host communities can cause further complications. And at the centre of these challenges is the individual: often traumatised, and often far from home and family, from livelihood, and indeed from education. To help mitigate, in some small part, the immense challenges presented by the plight of displaced people interventions of different types and scale are needed at each of the levels. The UK higher education sector can play a role in addressing many of them.

Humanitarian and development responses – and the need for transitional support

At present, responses to the plight of displaced people and communities fall broadly into two distinct categories: 'humanitarian' responses, and 'development' responses. Whereas humanitarian responses seek to meet the most serious and urgent needs of displaced people, namely safety, protection, and food, and to address immediate health issues, development is a longer-term and systemic approach to dealing with the underlying challenges of poverty and economic disadvantage that impact on the lives of displaced people. However, there is a definite gap between the two which is insufficiently addressed.

Humanitarian crises now last for many years, with UNHCR suggesting that the average displacement time is now almost two decades.⁹ And yet there is no clear transition mechanism between the humanitarian response to a disaster, and the longer-term development provision that is essential to rebuilding and renewing society and the economy. There is a need for transitional support for those who are displaced, a stage beyond immediate humanitarian support and before long-term development and reconstruction can take place. These needs are generally to be found in maintaining social cohesion, educational readiness, and education at all levels; and building skills and social capital necessary for livelihoods.

This form of transitional support is sometimes referred to as *building resilience*. Building resilience in displaced populations can help to mitigate some of the immediate challenges and help to create the social capital required to benefit from opportunities that emerge as a longer-term solution becomes available. Resilience-building activities may include practical skills development; teaching languages such as English, and/or the host country language; and developing critical thinking and communication skills that can help to develop personal and social confidence.

BUILDING RESILIENCE: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING TO SUPPORT INTEGRATION AND ACCESS TO FURTHER STUDY

At the **University of Sussex**, 50 Syrian refugees are being offered scholarships to study English language for a minimum of one term. Students are in mixed classes, and the aim of the programme is to support the learners' integration in to their new environment. Improving their English helps their students better integrate into their new environment. Appropriate students are placed on the pre-session English course, which prepares them for academic study in the UK, and can be used as proof of English level achieved, instead of having to pay to study for and sit an English exam like IELTS. Almost all Syrian students who have studied on the programme under the scheme have progressed into higher level study. Three have now begun undergraduate degrees: two at Sussex and one at the University of Westminster. The scheme was launched in January 2017.

⁹ UNHCR (2016) *Global Trends Forced Displacement 2015*. Full report available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>



Photo: Syrian refugees in class in a PADILEIA study hub, Beqaa Valley, Lebanon (photograph by Moia Rowsome and Hannah Bond, King's College London)

Where is education happening – and what is being done?

With demand at all levels of education far exceeding supply for displaced people, innovative approaches are needed, and indeed are being used. While technology can play a very useful role in this, providing access to education (while essential) is by itself insufficient. There is an ongoing need for more holistic forms of ‘wraparound’ support for learning, such as appropriate financial support, psychosocial support, and support for developing social and cultural awareness of the norms of what education means in the host nation (for example, moving from a traditional teacher-led classroom to greater self-direction, particularly at the higher education level). Again, the UK higher education sector can play an important role in addressing these and other similar issues.

Using the example of Syria, education is still available within the country. However, it may be physically and psychologically dangerous to stay there and neighbouring countries can often provide educational access in a safer environment, albeit still in the context of severe challenges. Yet as the statistics in Table 1 (see page 10) suggest, access to higher levels of education is increasingly difficult to obtain.

The consequences of these challenges are striking. Again, using the example of Syria, in 2010 the university age group (pages 19–24) made up approximately 10% of the population and the higher education participation rate in this group was 24%, meaning that ~ 2.5% of the overall population was at university at any time. In 2017, there were about 3.4 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, and official estimates by the Turkish Higher Education Authority (in September 2017) suggest that the 19–24 age group of Syrians in Turkey numbered 400,000.¹⁰ The expected number in higher education would therefore be in the region of 100,000. However, the actual number is 15,000 – or, to put it another way, higher education participation among Syrian refugees in Turkey is barely one-eighth of what one might expect, relative to participation in the home country.

¹⁰ As reported by Mandal, Hasan (2017) ‘Conference on HE and refugees in the Mediterranean Region: report and papers’ September 2017, available at https://ec.europa.eu/education/events/20170926-conference-higher-education-refugees_en

Despite these serious challenges, access to education is in fact better in Turkey than in some of Syria's other neighbours, and the percentage of refugees at universities is therefore much lower in other areas hosting displaced communities. In many of the countries hosting Syrian refugees (again, except for Turkey) it is also extremely difficult for displaced people to undertake paid work in the economy, placing a further significant barrier in the way of educational participation. Indeed, the desire to travel from the region to Europe is largely because of a perceived greater safety, and greater opportunity for personal and economic improvement. Given this situation, how can access to higher education be supported?

Scholarships provide one answer. However, there are constraints and difficulties in recruiting, selecting, and retaining scholarship students in the region, or getting them to move to Europe or the US to pursue education, because of other demands. These include: roles as family breadwinner; other financial difficulties; difficulties in accessing transport; difficulties in accessing IT; and maintaining motivation to study in the midst of all of this.

Similarly, **online learning** has a role in addressing some of these problems, but it also has some significant limitations, such as: lack of recognition of e-learning by governments in the region; a cultural unfamiliarity (by students and their parents) with learning outside a classroom and without a 'professor'; connectivity problems; and a foreign language as medium of instruction. Evidence shows that online learning works best in the region when blended with active psychosocial support nearby, and face-to-face tutoring.

And perhaps the biggest problem of all, as shown in the Lebanon figures (Table 1, page 10), is the drying up of the pipeline of young people who have the **educational background and experiences** necessary to benefit from higher education. Unless there is a clear progression of children through the school education system, there will be fewer and fewer university students. This lack of opportunities for personal advancement and development risks wasting the potential of entire generations. This is not only morally wrong; as the refugee crisis which has developed in Europe demonstrates, it can have profound social, economic and political consequences in host countries and beyond.

Although there are comparatively few refugees seeking places in UK higher education, it is nevertheless important that, as a community, the sector is able to reflect on the scale and scope of the current challenges facing displaced people and their communities and consider what might be done to engage with and help to address these where possible. The challenges faced by displaced people are wide-ranging and pervasive; however, the very diversity of these challenges and experiences means that opportunities exist for UK universities to support the needs and ambitions of displaced people in a wide variety of ways, both here in the UK and beyond.

Some reflections on how institutions might support access to education for displaced learners are provided in the chapters that follow. However, before considering practical steps that might be taken, it is important to understand the legal context and regulations concerning the rights and entitlements of potential displaced learners in the UK.

DISPLACED PEOPLE AND HIGHER EDUCATION: RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS¹¹

The [1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees](#)¹² defines who is a refugee and the rights that refugees should enjoy. Rights relating to higher education are set out in Article 22 (2):

The Contracting States shall accord to refugees' treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.

Further, the latest [Home Office guidance](#) to staff (January 2018)¹³ states on page 13:

There is nothing in the Immigration Rules to prevent asylum seekers studying but if they:

- have exhausted their appeal rights
- have committed immigration offences
- are otherwise not entitled to study

you must not give them permission to study using immigration bail conditions.

However, under section 71 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, decision makers can apply a study condition to individuals who claim asylum when they have valid leave to enter or remain in another category. These individuals may be restricted to studying at a particular institution. For further information see [Asylum claims from persons with leave](#).

The condition can also be used in national security cases where a restriction on studying may be imposed as part of a package to manage those with whom an individual is able to associate.

Key considerations for institutions and students, alongside academic suitability for a course, are fee status and access to financial support. This is a complex area, which varies within the four nations of the UK, and where information changes often. Institutions are encouraged to refer to the information provided by UKCISA, which is regularly updated with the latest information.¹⁴ It is important that institutions apply the fees regulations fairly and consistently and that students have clear information about financial support to which they may be entitled.

¹¹ This section is based on the Universities Scotland (2016) *Refugees Welcome: Guidance for Universities on Providing Asylum Seekers and Refugees with Access to Higher Education*, available at: <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Guidance-on-Providing-Asylum-Seekers-and-Refugees-with-Access-to-Higher-Education-Nov-2016.pdf>. Material is used with permission.

¹² The 1951 Refugee Convention is the key legal document that forms the basis of our work. Ratified by 145 State parties, it defines the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them. See <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/1951-refugee-convention.html>

¹³ The latest Home Office guidance is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673954/immigration-bail-v1_o.pdf

¹⁴ UKCISA (www.ukcisa.org.uk) works to support international students and the institutions, students' unions and organisations who work closely with them. They provide services to students and members, and also work to raise areas of concern with government departments, and raise awareness of the benefits that international students bring to the UK in the wider media. For up-to-date guidance on fee status, see <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Fees-and-Money/Home-or-Overseas-fees-the-basics>

THE RIGHT TO REMAIN TOOLKIT¹⁵

The [Right to Remain Toolkit](#) provides a comprehensive guide to the UK's asylum and refugee processes. Although addressed to asylum seekers themselves, it is also a useful guide for institutions. The guide provides an overview of the legal system and procedures, with detailed information on rights and options at key stages, and actions you can take in support of your claim, or to help someone else. The Toolkit was made, and is kept updated, by Right to Remain: a national migrant rights organisation which provides resources and support to assist people in the immigration and asylum system. Since 2013, the Toolkit has been developed with migrant community support groups to provide a primary source of information and guidance relating to the UK immigration and asylum systems.

Asylum seekers and Tier 4 visa compliance

An asylum seeker is someone who is in the UK who has applied to the UK Government to be recognised as a refugee and is awaiting a decision on their application or appeal. They may be newly arrived in the UK or have been in the country for some time. If asylum seekers meet the academic admission requirements and the Home Office requirements set out above (that is, they have not exhausted their appeal rights, have not committed immigration offences, and are not 'otherwise not permitted to study' – see previous page) then they can be offered places to study in higher education. **Importantly, however, they are required to support themselves, and must be able to cover both tuition fees and living expenses.**

Asylum seekers need access to specialist legal advice about their asylum claim and some refugees and people with Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave may need advice about making further applications to the Home Office for refugee family reunion, for travel documents and for extension to the immigration leave. Most university advice services are not resourced to provide the highly specialised advice that these students need. The University may be in a position, however, to help a student access appropriate legal representation. Many student support services already have links with specialist solicitors and organisations which may be helpful, and these can provide an invaluable route to appropriate advice and guidance.

Prospective students who are awaiting the outcome of their asylum application or subsequent appeal should be advised to discuss their proposed studies with their legal representative. They should clarify any effect their proposed studies may have on their asylum claim and whether there are any other legal considerations that might affect the decision to take up the offer of a place for study. It may also be prudent to have contingency plans in place for responding to a student who receives an adverse Home Office decision during their studies. Such an outcome may result in the student requiring extensive legal support – or even withdrawal from study – depending on the stage of the asylum process the student has reached. Having a clear understanding the potential needs and support required in such cases would be important in enabling an institution to structure their response.



Photo: PADILEIA students (photograph by Brooke Atherton El-Amine, American University of Beirut)

¹⁵ Available at <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/index.html>

HOW CAN MY INSTITUTION SUPPORT ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE?

The overwhelming majority of displaced people are not in the UK, or even in Europe. They are in the countries and regions where the situation is such that it causes displacement, and though the situation is fluid one thing remains clear – that the cause of displacement and displaced people, whether from natural disasters or man-made disasters, will continue to be a critical humanitarian and development priority for many years to come. And while access to higher education is but one part of the landscape, it is the area in which UK universities might play an important role in helping to address some of the major, systemic challenges affecting displaced individuals and to provide opportunities for personal, social and economic advancement that can have a transformative impact of their lives, and indeed on the welfare of the families and wider communities of displaced people as a whole.

There are, of course, myriad demands on time and resources within all institutions, and many different ways in which a university might engage with the plight of displaced people. This may sometimes make it difficult to identify an appropriate way of engaging with the agenda. But the very scope and diversity of the challenges they face does mean that a wide variety of opportunities exist to positively support access to education for displaced people, both here in the UK and elsewhere, through direct access to study and through broader-based support across a whole spectrum of activities.

Should your institution choose to develop a new or enhanced approach to supporting access to higher education for displaced people, the following sections of this report will:

- Introduce a range of activities that your institutions might consider developing as part of a strategic response.
- Highlight issues for consideration when developing an institutional response.
- Signpost further advice and guidance that you may wish to consider, including a summary of important organisations working to support displaced people, both here in the UK and internationally.

The ambitions and desires of displaced people with whom universities might engage are as varied as their individual social, cultural and economic backgrounds, and as diverse as the causes and origins for their displacement. There is a need and space for a diverse and varied menu of responses on the part of higher education institutions. Across the UK, many universities have developed a range of activities and approaches to supporting access to higher education for displaced people.

While it is clear that there is no single approach, some of the main responses that have been developed by universities, and which can be considered as part of an institutional response, include:

- Offering scholarships to learners, and providing other forms of financial support, such as bursaries and assistance with living, maintenance and study costs.
- Providing fellowships and other opportunities for displaced academic faculty to work at or in partnership with your institution.
- Support for displaced people in your local community beyond the academy, for example through providing community and support services, language training or legal advice.
- Joining pan-European and other international networks with a focus on supporting displaced people, drawing on and adding to the expertise that can be mobilised to help address some of the challenges relating to displaced people and access to education.
- Working in-region to support better access to education through collaborations and transnational education, directly through in-country presence or indirectly with and through partners.
- Supporting the work of globally-recognised international organisations and NGOs in all aspects of their work, from research, consultancy and policy development to volunteers and on-the-ground expertise.
- Undertaking research into issues surrounding displaced people to help identify, develop and evaluate interventions both with and for the needs of displaced people and communities.
- Offering support and development in disciplines essential for post-conflict development, particularly professional development for critical professions such as medical and healthcare workers.

These suggestions are, of course, not exhaustive, and nor are they exclusive. However, they do provide an indication of the kind of activities and approaches that can be employed to help enhance the ability of displaced people to engage with and benefit from access to education.

SUPPORTING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE IN THE UK AND BEYOND¹⁶

One of the principal ways in which institutions can support access to higher education for displaced people is, of course, to provide opportunities within their own institutions – for both students and academic faculty. However, opportunities also exist to help students in-region. This section will provide an overview of some of the possible options for universities, and introduce some of the organisations that are available to provide support, advice and guidance alongside case studies of activities undertaken by UK universities.

In seeking to work with, and supporting access to higher education for displaced people, institutions should consider a holistic response and strategy that encompasses:

- Supporting displaced academic faculty.
- Outreach activities and wider community engagement.
- Recruitment and admissions policies, process and practices.
- Funding and other forms of financial support.
- Creating a supportive and welcoming environment.
- Engaging with the wider community.
- Supporting refugees and displaced learners outside of the UK.

Supporting displaced academic faculty

Supporting displaced scholars can form part of a holistic response to the challenges posed by the refugee crisis. Significant numbers of refugees are members of the academic community. Organisations such as the [Council for At Risk Academics \(Cara\)](#)¹⁷ and the Scholar Rescue Fund¹⁸ do a huge amount of work to support academic faculty. They look to provide scholarships and fellowships to enable displaced academics to continue their study/research/teaching while they are unable to work in their home institution.

THE COUNCIL FOR AT-RISK ACADEMICS

[Cara](#) was launched in 1933, by academics and scientists in the UK to rescue their academic colleagues in Germany from Nazi persecution. The founders' mission had two parts – *'the relief of suffering'* and *'the defence of learning and science'* – saving the people, but also, for the common good, saving the knowledge in their heads. Over eighty years on, Cara continues to help persecuted and at-risk academics. Most now come from the Middle East, although altogether Cara currently has some 27 'source' countries.

Cara's *Fellowship Programme*, developed in close partnership with a network of 117 UK universities, helps at-risk academics to find places at universities and research institutions where they can develop their skills and build the networks that they will need when they can go back. As of January 2018, some 290 Fellows are being supported, with over 350 family members. Cara also runs regionally-based programmes to help those trying to work on in their countries, and those forced into exile in the surrounding region.

Consider how your institution might host displaced scholars, and how this might be incorporated in to a broader institutional strategy.

¹⁶ This section is based on the Universities Scotland (2016) *Refugees Welcome: Guidance for Universities on Providing Asylum Seekers and Refugees with Access to Higher Education*, available at: <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Guidance-on-Providing-Asylum-Seekers-and-Refugees-with-Access-to-Higher-Education-Nov-2016.pdf>. Material is used with permission

¹⁷ For more information on Cara, see their website at <http://www.cara.ngo/>

¹⁸ For more information on the Scholars Rescue Fund, see <http://www.scholarrescuefund.org/about-ii-scholar-rescue-fund>

Outreach activities

Universities across the UK have diverse strategies for identifying and recruiting learners from disadvantaged and non-traditional backgrounds, and support for refugees may form a part of these strategies. Indeed, the Office for Fair Access notes that refugees are considered to be one of the ‘under represented and disadvantaged groups’ that institutions can choose to target in their access agreements¹⁹ (access agreements are requirement for all institutions wishing to charge tuition fees over a set limit). As the good practice recommendations produced by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) notes:²⁰

Even where a constituent part of the UK does not specifically identify refugees and asylum seekers under widening access arrangements, the types of financial, discrimination and participation disadvantages faced by them make it likely they would still count under many HE providers’ outreach activities for under-represented groups.

This guidance note goes on to advise universities how refugees and asylum seekers may be actively included within existing activities, alongside considering what additional activities might be developed to specifically cater for their needs.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO ENGAGE WITH DISPLACED COMMUNITIES

Goldsmiths, University of London provides information, advice and guidance, via local charities and day centres, to help forced migrants understand how to apply for university. This includes campus visits giving an insight into university life for groups of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. International Response Scholarship student ambassadors support the university’s community outreach activity for forced migrants.

While there is no single approach to outreach activities for any specific community of learners, institutions should consider drawing on the expertise and experience of dedicated groups to inform your approach. Refugee Council²¹ (and the devolved country equivalents), and the Student Action for Refugee (STAR) network, across the UK, alongside local refugee organisations and communities, that can provide guidance on how best universities can support both refugee students and the wider refugee community.

A list of resources and organisations that may be of interest are provided at Annexe A and Annexe B.

STUDENT ACTION FOR REFUGEES: THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF STUDENT GROUPS WORKING TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF REFUGEES IN THE UK²²

Student Action for Refugees (STAR) is a national charity founded by students at Nottingham University in 1994 with support from UNHCR and the British Refugee Council. There are currently 43 STAR groups engaging over 27,000 students.

Their work focusses on welcoming refugees to the UK by empowering students, refugees and supporters to take positive action for refugees by:

- Volunteering to support refugees in the community
- Campaigning to change policies which adversely affect the lives of refugees
- Educating people about asylum in the UK.

¹⁹ See <https://www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/guidance/target-groups/>

²⁰ Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (2015) Good practice considerations in admissions for refugees and asylum seekers. Available at <https://www.spa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Good-practice-refugees-asylum-seekers.pdf>

²¹ The Refugee Council is one of the leading charities in the UK working directly with refugees, and supporting them to rebuild their lives. They also speak up for refugees and ensure refugees have a stronger and more influential voice in decisions that will affect them. The Council works with a range of partners and in collaboration with others to best support their clients. See <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

²² For more information, see <http://www.star-network.org.uk/>

Recruitment and admissions policies, process and practices

While the number of displaced people who are applying to study in the UK is low, it is important that institutions are able to deal with this situation when it arises. In 2016 Universities Scotland convened a meeting of heads of admissions to discuss access issues for asylum seekers and refugees.²³ A particular focus for those discussions were issues around admissions processes when applicants are unable to provide all of the necessary documentation. The good practice recommendations produced by SPA²⁴ were an outcome from those discussions, and apply equally to the other home nations. They set out clear advice for institutions and provide an excellent starting point.

TAILORED SUPPORT THROUGH THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS – AND BEYOND

At **Edinburgh Napier University**, all applications from refugees are flagged up to an Admissions team leader to be considered on an individual case by case basis, who then passes on the applicant's details to a named contact in the Widening Access team. The named contact will work with the applicant throughout their time at the University, from application through to graduation, and signpost support available to them, provide advice and guidance, and ensure the student is fully aware of all the opportunities available to them at the University. In addition, students with refugee status will be invited to join the University's pre-entry peer e-mentoring programme, *Ask An Experienced Student*.

In terms of policy and processes on admissions, flexibility and understanding of the specific circumstances of a displaced person seeking access to higher education are important.

- **Applications should be considered based on people's entitlements.** When there are issues about documentation, institutions should have clear guidelines to refer to in order to assess what further evidence applicants might provide or what can replace the information required.
- **It is important for admissions staff to understand the context for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.** It is likely that UK higher education frameworks and bureaucracies will be unfamiliar to them. Many may have had bad experiences dealing with bureaucratic institutions and some will have left their countries because they have been persecuted by their own government. It is important that staff take time to build trust and reassurance.
- **Individualised approaches may be needed for potential students from displaced communities.** Flexibility may be required if your institutions wish to engage with and support displaced people who do not have access to funding for HE, and for whom special arrangements may be made by institutions to improve access to education.
- **Institutions may need to develop policies that allow staff to treat each application from refugees individually.** This will enable staff to work with applicants who are unable to provide verifiable documentation because they have had to flee their homes quickly or because the government or institutions from their home country will not provide them.

If an applicant cannot provide formal documentation to evidence their qualifications and prior learning, then there are several options institutions can use to assess their knowledge. As a refugee may not be familiar with the different types of higher education assessment, or what may be expected of them, institutions could use alternative approaches that should be accompanied by clear, supportive information and advice to help applicants prepare.

²³ This section is based on the Universities Scotland (2016) *Refugees Welcome: Guidance for Universities on Providing Asylum Seekers and Refugees with Access to Higher Education*, available at: <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Guidance-on-Providing-Asylum-Seekers-and-Refugees-with-Access-to-Higher-Education-Nov-2016.pdf>. Material is used with permission

²⁴ Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (2015) Good practice considerations in admissions for refugees and asylum seekers. Available at <https://www.spa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Good-practice-refugees-asylum-seekers.pdf>

All higher education institutions have Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies in place. These policies allow institutions to make an assessment of whether an individual's work experience, informal learning, and formal education has given them the necessary skills and knowledge they will need to undertake the course they are applying to. The methods used to make these assessments can also be used to understand the position of an applicant who cannot supply the normal documentation.

It is good practice for admissions staff to explain to the applicant how Recognition of Prior Learning can be applied to their situation. It is reassuring for the applicant to know that institutions are used to making these kinds of assessments. Institutions may also want to consider whether the 'European Qualifications Passport for Refugees' might form part of their strategic approach to admissions for students from displaced communities.

EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS PASSPORT FOR REFUGEES²⁵

The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is a document providing an assessment of the higher education qualifications based on available documentation and a structured interview. It also presents information on the applicant's work experience and language proficiency. The document provides reliable information for integration and progression towards employment and admission to further studies. It is a specially developed assessment scheme for refugees, even for those who cannot fully document their qualifications.

Importantly, the admissions processes should be clearly explained to the applicant. This is not just in relation to standard applications but also in relation to other applicants in similar situations. For example, the way an institution might make an assessment of someone's knowledge of biological science might be very different to the way they would assess someone's knowledge of graphic design. Admissions staff should be confident that they have multiple options for working with students in this situation.

Funding and other forms of financial support

Questions of funding are among the most pertinent and pressing for both individuals and institutions. Depending on the status of the potential learners, the situation regarding fees and funding can be complex (see pages 14–15).

In terms of funding a period of study and being able to provide for maintenance, the guidance document on *Good practice considerations in admissions for refugees and asylum seekers* developed by SPA²⁶ states that:

Refugees and asylum seekers are highly likely to be critically concerned with financial arrangements, not only in terms of covering tuition, but also for living and any other costs associated with study.

As such, a range of potential interventions might be considered to support learners. Many institutions already offer a range of scholarships and bursaries to facilitate access and participation to higher education by and for students from displaced backgrounds. Between 50–60 universities currently offer some form of scholarship provision for refugee students, and some examples of schemes that have been put in place are set out on the following pages.

²⁵ For more information on the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, see <https://rm.coe.int/168070016d>

²⁶ Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (2015) Good practice considerations in admissions for refugees and asylum seekers. Available at <https://www.spa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Good-practice-refugees-asylum-seekers.pdf>

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

The **University of Bath** offers two postgraduate-taught scholarships for applicants who are asylum seekers and have discretionary/limited leave to remain or humanitarian protection as the result of an asylum claim. The scholarships include a fee waiver and £10,000 towards living costs. The University also provides support for undergraduate applicants with refugee status or humanitarian protection with three years of ordinary status, which includes guaranteed accommodation for the duration of their programme, a bursary of £1,000 per academic year plus £1,000 towards start-up costs and a further £1,000 on graduation, as well as access to means-tested University bursaries and scholarships.

CASS Business School, City University offers three bursaries available to individuals who, in addition to meeting the normal entrance criteria, can demonstrate they will use this opportunity to strengthen their organisation's capacity to respond to the refugee crisis or contribute to the wider charitable sector's response. The students can be refugees themselves or UK/EU citizens working in the refugee sector. The bursaries will cover the fees on the School's Charities Masters courses, delivered by Cass Centre for Charity Effectiveness. Three awards were made in 2016.

The **University of Edinburgh** offered three postgraduate scholarships for students from Syria studying a one-year Master's degree programme in

any subject offered by the University for the 2017–2018 academic session, through the Edinburgh Syrian Postgraduate Scholarships programme. In addition to these activities, the University has made special scholarship provision available for five students with asylum seeker status – four undergraduates and one postgraduate.

Goldsmiths, University of London offers three undergraduate and three postgraduate scholarships for refugees and asylum seekers. These scholarships offer a full fee waiver and free accommodation, and a maintenance grant of up to £10,000 per year. One undergraduate and one postgraduate scholarship is offered in each of the universities three academic schools.

Kings College, London has awarded five Sanctuary Scholarships over the past two academic years to talented refugees to study for an undergraduate degree, with the aim to increase this to eight next year.

London School of Economics has offered up to three undergraduate scholarships, and up to 10 postgraduate scholarships since 2015, means-tested up to full awards, including maintenance. There were two undergraduate awards taken up in 2015, and one in 2017. There were three postgraduate awards taken up in 2016. Indicators for 2018 look better.

As the SPA guide also notes, while refugees will normally be entitled to access UK student loans, asylum seekers will not and institutions may require them to pay the full overseas fee rate up-front. This guidance advises providers to promote any financial arrangements that might be available to support refugee students, (for example for accommodation costs, study materials, food and subsistence) – whether direct or indirect – through their students' union or locally.²⁷

²⁷ Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (2015) Good practice considerations in admissions for refugees and asylum seekers. Available at <https://www.spa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Good-practice-refugees-asylum-seekers.pdf>



Photo: PADILEIA Syrian students' first day of classes in Lebanon (photograph by Brooke Atherton El-Amine, American University of Beirut)

INFORMATION ON SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

Article 26 is an organisation that exists to promote access to higher education for people who have fled persecution and sought asylum in the UK. A number of providers work in partnership with the [Article 26](#) project to offer a [range of bursaries](#) to asylum seekers, including full fee waivers and often support for additional study costs.²⁸

The **Student Action for Refugees (STAR)** network collates information and advice on bursaries and scholarships available from UK institutions. A full list of opportunities is available online via their [website](#).²⁹

Like many other students, prospective refugee students who are currently in receipt of welfare benefits may need advice about the financial support available to them during study and benefit entitlements while studying part-time or full-time. When considering offering financial support through universities' own funds, for example, it is important to consider the impact of this support on a prospective student's existing entitlements. Asylum seekers who are in receipt of living costs and/or accommodation support from the Home Office will normally have their support reduced, or even removed in response to other income they receive.

Creating a welcoming and supportive environment

Refugee students can be a particularly vulnerable group. It is important that the institution not only guide potential refugee students through the admissions process, but are also able to provide the appropriate form and level of support throughout their course of study – as, of course, should be the case for all learners, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. The support systems provided for international students and by widening access teams can provide the necessary infrastructure for this provision, but additional support may also be required. For example, having a designated person for students who are refugees to refer to within the department and/or within the student services office may be a valuable and beneficial approach, providing an easily identifiable and accessible contact should any issues or concerns arise.

²⁸ For the most up-to-date list, see <http://article26.hkf.org.uk/student-bursaries>

²⁹ For the most up-to-date list, see http://www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/resources/access_to_university

TAILORING STUDENT SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE

The **University of Bath** provides all students that have a status as refugee, asylum seeker, humanitarian protection with three years of ordinary status and/or discretionary/limited leave to remain with a named contact in the Student Services Money Advice and Retention team. This member of staff is able to provide personal support to students throughout their entire programme and works directly with students to ensure they are aware of the comprehensive pastoral, academic and employability support offered across the institution, drawing effectively on existing University provision. This model of support is based on that already provided to care leavers and estranged students.

However, at the same time it is important that students are not defined by their refugee status and care needs to be taken not to differentiate such students unnecessarily. The ambitions and desires of students who are displaced for their period of study are likely to be no different from those of their peers: they are looking to achieve academic progress and qualifications and to have a positive social experience at university. Refugee students may in fact prefer not to be identified as such at all, and so it is important that university policies and processes are able to balance the need to provide appropriate bespoke support alongside the need to be sensitive to issues around identity and identification.

STUDENT UNION-LED SUPPORT FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE

At **Kings College, London**, the [KCL STAR \(Student Action for Refugees\)](#)³⁰ scheme now has over 80 volunteers who are doing work to support refugees and are one of the most active societies at KCLSU. They have hosted panel discussions, held collections and organised an outreach programme at a London school to help recently-arrived young refugees complete their GCSE and A-Level qualifications, and organise weekly clubs for refugee and asylum-seeking children in Battersea, South London, helping young refugees with homework and personal development as well as organising day trips for them. Also at King's, the [KCL MyLifeMySay Refugee Outreach](#) project for young people aged 16–18 draws on volunteers to help teach younger refugees life skills such as CV workshops and mock interviews. Members of the [KCL Students4Syria](#) society have raised funds with partner charities for humanitarian aid and medical supplies, as well as hosting informative sessions to educate students about the Syrian crisis.³¹

[Universities of Sanctuary](#) make their institutions accessible and welcoming to asylum seekers and refugees, looking at bursaries, fee waivers, access to facilities and clubs, language tandem projects, accommodation and other initiatives.³²

Student unions can also play an important role in welcoming, and integrating refugee students into the broader student community. [Student Action for Refugees](#) (STAR) has a membership of 27,000 students, groups within more than 40 university student unions across the UK.³³ Among other things, STAR campaigns for equal access to universities for refugees and asylum seekers. STAR maintains a list of universities offering scholarships or bursaries to refugees and asylum seekers, which, at the time of writing included 58 universities.³⁴

³⁰ For more information and KCL STAR, see www.kclsu.org/volunteeringgroups/star/

³¹ For more information on the KCL Students for Syria Society, see www.kclsu.org/organisation/10676/

³² <https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/>

³³ For more information, see <http://www.star-network.org.uk/>. See also page 19

³⁴ For the most up-to-date list, see http://www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/resources/access_to_university

Engaging with the wider community

In addition to welcoming refugee students and academics to the university community, the university can reach out to local government and refugee community organisations³⁵ and the refugees welcome campaign in the wider community. As well as linking refugee students and academics with others in the wider community, the university can mobilise staff and students to provide voluntary services to refugees, and other disadvantaged people, in the community. This could include teaching English, providing support in navigating bureaucracy, and organising social events.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At **De Montford University** hundreds of students and staff have been involved in the development and delivery of a programme of outreach activities that shares the skills, expertise and research of the University with and for the benefit of refugees and migrant communities across the UK. Some of this work has also been delivered overseas to support refugee communities in central Europe and the US. Projects in the De Montford University refugee support programme include free English lessons, teaching IT skills, providing mentoring for young people and offering free legal advice.

Since January 2017 the **University of Edinburgh** has run a weekly tutoring scheme for new Syrian arrivals to the city. The programme was launched by two University of Edinburgh post-doctoral researchers, Amer Masri and Nadine Aktaa. Their scheme specifically targeted teenagers who were not provided for in existing support structures. Student volunteers were initially drawn from the University's Islamic Society and Islamic and Middle

Eastern Studies Department as they would also have the benefit of being able to speak Arabic. It is thought that this programme now includes every Syrian teenager in the city of Edinburgh.

The **University of East London** launched the [Refugee Mental Health and Wellbeing Portal](#) in June 2016, aimed at providing refugees, asylum seekers, social care professionals and others with easy access to practical tools and resources.³⁶ The launch was supported by Maurice Wren, CEO of the Refugee Council and Jamie Hacker Hughes, Vice President of the British Psychological Society.

The **University of the West of Scotland** is part of the HEI Refugee Forum and has provided significant resources to support refugee families to obtain appropriate accommodation. The University has also engaged in fundraising and charitable exercises to provide funds and materials in support of those in need.

Such activities can help to play a role in building the resilience referred to above, enhancing the prospects that displaced people are able to benefit from potential opportunities to access education, and to engage with the host community more generally.

³⁵ For an up-to-date list of community organisations involved with supporting refugees, see https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/what_we_do/supporting_refugee_community_organisations

³⁶ Refugee Mental Health and Wellbeing Portal, see <https://www.uel.ac.uk/schools/psychology/research/refugee-mental-health-and-wellbeing-portal>



Photo: Beqaa Valley in Lebanon (photograph by Hannah Bond, King's College London)

Supporting refugees and displaced learners outside of the UK

Unsurprisingly, most displaced young people seeking higher education opportunities are in the affected country or in countries nearby. For example, in the neighbouring countries of Syria, the number of displaced people aged 18–24 is estimated to be around 500,000, or 10% of the total displaced population. Given that there are also a further 5 million displaced people within Syria, a very significant number of young people in Syria and its neighbours are missing out on higher education. Turkey, in 2017, has 15,000 Syrians in higher education, although it estimates that almost 100,000 of the Syrian refugees should be in university; in Jordan, Lebanon and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), there are no firm figures for Syrian refugees in higher education, though it is undoubtedly less than in Turkey.

Clearly, the number of scholarships available internationally, in the US, in Europe, and in the UK cannot address the scale of the issue: the greatest need for higher education opportunities for young people is where displaced people live; in the example of Syria, this means in Syria itself and within the neighbouring countries that are host to the vast majority of people who have been displaced by the crisis. Approaches and initiatives that can work in these communities therefore stand to have a transformative impact on the lives and opportunities of a greater number of people than scholarships and fellowships might reasonably be expected to have.

So what can the UK higher education sector do to productively engage with organisations and institutions within the region to begin to address this education emergency?

Broadly speaking, three categories of intervention dominate. These are:

- The provision of UK education in-region, either directly or by working with local partner institutions through a variety of modes for delivering transnational education.
- Providing staff and student volunteer support to institutions and organisations that support access to higher education, or education pathways in to higher education. This could include English language development (for displaced staff and students) as well as other forms of professional development.
- Other formalised in-region partnerships with higher education institutions in the region, including both teaching-focussed and research-focussed collaborations which can help to enhance both capability and capacity to support the needs of displaced learners.

Examples of transnational education approaches

In the UK, the Department for International Development (DfID)-funded [SPHEIR](#)³⁷ programme has a specific project for refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, called Partnership for Digital Learning and Increased Access ([PADILEIA](#)),³⁸ led by Kings College, London, and involving the American University of Beirut (Lebanon), Al al-Bayt University (Jordan) with Kiron Open Higher Education gGmbH (Germany) and FutureLearn (UK). PADILEIA will produce and deliver blended higher education programmes to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, along with members of their host communities. Students will be offered curricula that provide micro-credentials in relevant fields, augmented by student support services and affordable pathways into locally-delivered formal academic qualifications.

The project design includes three learning formats: massive open online courses (MOOCs); bespoke, tailored courses delivered online to a defined cohort (SPOCs); and traditional classroom-based learning, with a complementary online subcomponent.

In partnership with the Open University, the British Council provides English and academic skills training, delivered by British Council teachers, to 3100 Syrians and disadvantaged Jordanians in locations throughout Jordan and Lebanon, and a route back into higher education through online accredited courses through the Open University in the UK and Amity University in India.

Examples of student and staff volunteering

There is obviously a need for expertise in a wide range of skills, particularly around education, in refugee camps, and other centres, catering for refugees and displaced people. University staff can offer their expertise on their speciality in the service of displaced people. Kings College, London provided opportunities for [Dental students](#) to contribute to dental care in a refugee camp in Jordan in the summer of 2017.³⁹

However, it is very important that such opportunities are carefully organised, involving local organisations and institutions, to ensure that volunteers do not cause an additional burden on already stretched resources, or divert attention from those in most need. While the volunteering opportunities undoubtedly provide vivid and life-enhancing opportunities to the volunteers themselves, it is important to remember that the purpose of volunteering is to help others, not to help yourself. All these activities should be carefully planned with local organisations, to address a particular need. The [AlSadi Changing Lives programme](#) is one such organisation, that works with University of London SOAS, and Coventry and Westminster Universities.⁴⁰

³⁷ SPHEIR (Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform) aims to transform higher education systems in focus countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Middle East to better meet the needs of graduates and employers. It supports diverse, large-scale partnerships working across different sectors and countries to improve the quality, relevance, accessibility and affordability of higher education. It focuses on creating new and innovative solutions to key higher education challenges to deliver systemic and sustainable change at scale. For more information on the SPHEIR programme, see <https://www.spheir.org.uk/>

³⁸ An overview of the PADILEIA project is available at <https://www.spheir.org.uk/partnership-profiles/partnership-digital-learning-and-increased-access>

³⁹ See <https://spotlight.kcl.ac.uk/2017/06/26/student-volunteers-syrian-refugee-camp/>

⁴⁰ See <http://changinglivesprogram.me/>



Photo: A foundation course for PADILEIA students in Lebanon (photograph by Brooke Atherton El-Amine, American University of Beirut)

Examples of teaching and research partnerships that support capacity building

Through its multifaceted, partnership approach, the British Council has reached over 154,000 displaced Syrians and they are conducting research into how the UK and international research and innovation sector can meaningfully support displaced individuals and institutions further.

The British Council, in partnership with Al Fanar Media and [SPARK](#) have held three regional meetings with providers, donors and stakeholders with an interest in providing opportunities for tertiary education to displaced Syrians and disadvantaged host communities.⁴¹ The report of the most recent meeting, in October 2016, is [online](#).⁴²

The Mediterranean Universities Union ([UNIMED](#))⁴³ was formed in 1991, based in Rome, and is an association of universities focused around the Mediterranean. It has 103 member institutions from 23 countries, primarily around the Mediterranean, but including Finland, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Syria and UAE. Member institutions pay an annual membership fee. It currently has no UK member institutions, but membership can provide access to more than 50 MENA member universities, and to the Association of Arab Universities. It provides a wide range of services to its member institutions, and successfully bids for European Union projects, and is currently participating in 27 EU programmes. These include the [RESCUE](#) programme, for building capacity in MENA institutions around catering for refugee and displaced students.⁴⁴

What is clear is that there is no singular approach for universities that want to better support the needs of displaced people – both here in the UK and further afield. Institutions need to identify their own strengths and focus on the areas where they can deliver the most benefit.

⁴¹ See <http://www.spark-online.org/results/>

⁴² See <http://media.al-fanarmedia.org.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/28200717/Amman-Workshop-Report-FINAL.pdf>

⁴³ See <http://www.uni-med.net/en/>

⁴⁴ See <https://www.rescuerefugees.eu/>

CONCLUSION: PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE AN INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The issue of displacement is going to be a continuing one for the foreseeable future. Across the globe, millions of displaced people face myriad, profound and complex challenges that impact on their quality of life and future opportunities. Access to education at all levels is just one of these challenges.

However, access to education – and higher education in particular – can be a route to personal, social and economic wellbeing, and it is an area in which our universities are well placed to provide support. It is only right that the global academy has a practical response to the issue, one that can be formulated and delivered at a variety of levels. Responses and interventions can be crafted at the level of the institution; at local, national, and indeed international levels; and either within host countries or at the place of displacement. These responses can also be developed and delivered independently, or as part of networks and collaborations. As this report has repeatedly stated, the very diversity of situations in which displaced people and communities live does offer the opportunity for a wide range of responses.

And while there is no single ‘right’ approach, there are a number of principles that can help to structure a response. As set out in the framework for developing a strategic plan (pages 4–5), the ten ‘Guiding Principles’ articulated by the Article 26 project provide a useful guide to action.⁴⁵

These can be summarised as:

1. The right of forced migrants to access higher education.
2. Equal treatment and non-discrimination.
3. The right to privacy.
4. An outline of Sanctuary Initiatives.
5. Underlying principles for the design, administration and implementation of Sanctuary Initiatives.
6. Selection processes and removal of procedural barriers.
7. Communication.
8. Academic, pastoral and professional support.
9. Student progress and participation.
10. Staff training.

This report aims to support the development of new institutional actions where there currently is none, and greater focus and commitment where there already is action. Reflecting on these principles, and drawing on the experiences and case studies set out in this report, institutions can further develop their own, unique response to the crisis – and help, in some small part, to mitigate the devastating impact of displacement on the lives of millions of young people worldwide.

⁴⁵ Article 26 (2018) *Guiding Principles on Sanctuary Scholars in UK Higher Education*. A document outlining guiding principles, which lay the foundations for Sanctuary Scholarship schemes. Available at http://article26.hkf.org.uk/uploads/Article_26_-_Guiding_Principles.pdf

ANNEXE A: ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND EXPERTISE: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

Al Fanar Media: Meeting report October 2016

<http://media.al-fanarmedia.org.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/28200717/Amman-Workshop-Report-FINAL.pdf>

British Academy: Refugee Integration report (2017): ‘if you could do one thing’

<https://www.britac.ac.uk/publications/if-you-could-do-one-thing-local-actions-promote-social-integration>

HEEAP (HE English access programme)

<http://www.hopes-madad.org/heeap>

HOPES Mansoura University

<http://www.mans.edu.eg/en/mans-news-archive-en-2016/2656-a-seminar-about-the-hopes-heep-project-organized-by-the-british-council-mansoura-university>

EU/British Council LASER Language, academic skills and e-learning resources

<https://www.britishcouncil.org.lb/en/programmes/education/laser>

Brookings Institute

Event recording: with David Ignatius, John McCain, David Miliband, Leon Wieseltier. June 2016: <https://www.brookings.edu/events/refugee-and-responsibility-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-in-2016/>
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/addressing-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-recommendations-for-the-next-administration/> December 2016
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2016/06/17/the-crisis-of-higher-education-for-syrian-refugees/> June 2016
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2016/02/03/thinking-big-on-syrian-refugee-education/> Feb 2016

CARA: Guide for Universities (2009)

<http://www.cara.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Supporting-Persecuted-Academics-2009-Cara-booklet.pdf>

English Language links

BBC Learning English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/>
British Council: Learn English: <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/>
British Council: Teach English: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/teach-english>
Duolingo English test: <https://englishtest.duolingo.com/>
EU online language learning: <https://erasmusplusols.eu/ols4refugees/>
Refugee Phrasebook, multilingual phrasebook with vocabulary specific to the needs of refugees (orientation, health and legal): http://www.refugeephasebook.de/refugee_phrasebook

‘European Area of Recognition’ Manual

http://www.eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR_manual_v_1.0.pdf

European Qualifications Passport for Refugees

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>

EAIE resources

A multi-stakeholder approach: <https://www.eaie.org/blog/refugees-focus-multi-stakeholder-approach/>
Integrating Refugees on your campus: <https://www.eaie.org/training/webinars/webinar-detail/effective-integration-refugees.html>

Qualifications Recognition: <https://www.eaie.org/training/webinars/webinar-detail/qualifications-recognition-refugees.html>

Refugees in Focus: <https://www.eaie.org/blog/refugees-focus-next/>

And many more via: <https://www.eaie.org/search.html?queryStr=Refugees>

European Universities Association: Refugee Welcome Map

<http://www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/refugees-welcome-map>

Presentation: Sweden

<http://www.eua.be/Libraries/default-document-library/hot-topic-session-lindholm.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

EU schemes

https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/migration/higher-education-refugees_en

Conference on HE and refugees in the Mediterranean Region: report and papers Sept 2017: https://ec.europa.eu/education/events/20170926-conference-higher-education-refugees_en

HOPES EU Madad fund: <http://hopes-madad.org>

MERIC-NET: <http://www.meric-net.eu/en/index.aspx> aimed at sharing information of education, and recognition between Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon (all Francophone) and with Europe.

RESCUE: www.rescuerefugees.eu aimed at supporting universities in Lebanon, Jordan and KRI in dealing with refugee students.

Global Business Coalition for Education: Ed tech for Syrian Refugees 2016

http://gbc-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Tech_Report_ONLINE.pdf

Higher Education in Emergencies: University of Geneva Summer Schools

<https://www.genevasummerschools.ch/programme/courses-2017/higher-education-in-emergencies>

Home Office

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules>

Refugee Resettlement Team: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-resettlement-programmes-funding-instruction-2017-to-2018>

Immigration Bail Guidelines: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673954/immigration-bail-v1_o.pdf

Institute for International Education (IIE): PEER

<http://www.iiepeer.org>

Scholar Rescue Fund

<http://www.scholarrescuefund.org/>

International Initiatives for Migrant and Refugee Education

http://www.2imre.org/page-resources_en.html

International Labour Organisation Refugees

http://www.ilo.org/Search5/search.do?sitelang=en&locale=en_EN&consumercode=ILOHQ_STELLENT_PUBLIC&searchWhat=refugees&searchLanguage=en

Issan Fares Institute for public policy and international affairs, refugee research and policy in the Arab world. American University of Beirut

<https://website.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Pages/index.aspx>

Access to Tertiary Education to Syrian Refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey: March 2017

http://website.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/infographics/20170328_tertiary_education.jpg

JigsawConsult

HE for refugees in low resource environments: research report: <https://jigsawconsult.com/sites/default/files/files/Jigsaw%2oresearch%2ostudy.pdf>

Landscape review: <https://jigsawconsult.com/sites/default/files/files/Jigsaw%2olandscapereview.pdf>

Barbara Moser-Mercer, et al. Higher education and protracted displacement

http://cooperation.epfl.ch/files/content/sites/cooperation/files/Tech4Dev%202016/1216-Moser-Mercer-SE03-HUM_Full%20Paper.pdf

New York Statement on Refugees and Migration September 2016

<http://www.unhcr.org/new-york-declaration-for-refugees-and-migrants.html>

Norwegian Refugee Council: A future in the Balance April 2016

Syria: <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/a-future-in-the-balance---syria.pdf>

Lebanon: <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/a-future-in-the-balance-lebanon.pdf>

Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies

http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Rapid%20Response%20Mechanism%20for%20higher%20education%20in%20Emergencies%20-%20january%202017_o.pdf

Right to Remain Toolkit

<https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/index.html>

Spark

https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/eac-hopes-yannick-dupont_en.pdf

SPHEIR project, PADILEIA

<https://www.spheir.org.uk/partnership-profiles/partnership-digital-learning-and-increased-access>

Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

<https://www.spa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Good-practice-refugees-asylum-seekers.pdf>

Universities Scotland: Refugees Welcome document

<http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Guidance-on-Providing-Asylum-Seekers-and-Refugees-with-Access-to-Higher-Education-Nov-2016.pdf>

UNESCO: Displaced people

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/displaced-person-displacement/>

UNESCO/UNHCR Ministerial Conference in March 2017 Report

<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/HIGHEREDUCATION.pdf>

UNESCO Institute of Statistics

<http://uis.unesco.org/>

UNHCR: Statistics

<http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

UNHCR: 'Missing out: refugee education in crisis' Sept 2016

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/education/57d9d01d0/missing-refugee-education-crisis.htm?query=missing%20out%20refugee%20education%20in%20crisis>

UNHCR ; 'Higher Education Considerations for refugees in countries affected by the Syria and Iraq crises.' 2015

<http://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/568bc5279/higher-education-considerations-refugees-countries-affected-syria-iraq.html>

DAFI Scholarships

<http://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html>

ANNEXE B: ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND EXPERTISE: ORGANISATIONS TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

UK-based organisations working with refugees and displaced people

[Asylum Support Appeals Project](#)
[Corum Children’s Legal Centre](#)
[Al Fanar Media](#)
[Article 26](#)
[British Academy](#)
[British Council](#)
[Council for At-Risk Academics \(CARA\)](#)
[Immigration Law Practitioners Association](#)

[International Organisation for Migration \(UK\)](#)
[Jamiya](#)
[Refuaid](#)
[Refugee Council](#)
[Refugee Studies Centre](#)
[Refugee Support Network](#)
[Scottish Refugee Council](#)
[Student Action for Refugees \(STAR\)](#)

[Techfugees](#)
[UK International Students Association \(UKISA\)](#)
[Universities of Sanctuary](#)
[Welsh Refugee Council](#)

International organisations working with refugees and displaced people

[Academisk Dugnat](#)
[Brookings Institute](#)
[Connected Learning Consortium](#)
[DAAD Germany](#)
[Education Cannot Wait fund](#)
[EP-NUFFIC](#)
[European Association for International Education \(EAIE\)](#)
[European Association for International Education refugee pages](#)
[European Universities Association](#)
[Global Business Coalition for Education](#)
[Global Platform for Syrian Students](#)

[Higher Education in Emergencies: University of Geneva Summer Schools](#)
[Infomigrants](#)
[inHERE \(Higher Education supporting Refugees in Europe\)](#)
[Institute for International Education \(IIE\)](#)
[Institute for International Education PEER](#)
[International Initiatives for Migrant and Refugee Education](#)
[International Organisation for Migration](#)
[International Labour Organisation](#)
[Jesuit Refugee Service](#)
[Jamiya](#)

[Kiron](#)
[Refuaid](#)
[Scholars at Risk](#)
[Scholar Rescue Fund](#)
[Science for Refugees](#)
[Startup Refugees](#)
[Techfugees](#)
[UNESCO](#)
[UNHCR](#)
[UNIMED \(Mediterranean Universities Network\)](#)
[Volunteer-Planning](#)

ANNEXE C: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

UN Initiatives

[The United Nations High Commissioner for refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) is the primary organisation for the protection of displaced people and refugees:

We strive to ensure that everyone has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to eventually return home, integrate or resettle.

Their immediate primary role is protection for displaced people, which includes physical security, food security, medical support, and, working with UNICEF, education at the basic level. They also provide the most accurate and up to date statistics about numbers and locations of displaced people. The focus of their work is in countries and regions where the displaced people are, though there is representation in the UK and in other parts of the developed world, primarily for fundraising.

In education, UNHCR works very closely with the [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) around children's education (up to age 18) and with [The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation \(UNESCO\)](#) on higher education. UNESCO has the strapline "*building peace in the minds of men and women*", which they believe is best done through education, and scientific and cultural co-operation. UNESCO [Statistics](#) provide global and country information about educational attainment and access. UNHCR also initiated the [Connected Learning Consortium](#), a group of public and private organisations and institutions which looks at a variety of approaches to e-learning, for refugees and displaced people, in difficult living circumstances.

The UN General Assembly's [New York Statement on Refugees and Migration](#) Sept 2016 is the first comprehensive statement on the rights and expectations of UN members in relation to refugees, displaced persons, and migrants. It is notable as the first UN document that recognised the importance of higher education in refugee situations. Article 82 of the New York Statement reads:

We will support early childhood education for refugee children. We will also promote tertiary education, skills training and vocational education. In conflict and crisis situations, higher education serves as a powerful driver for change, shelters and protects a critical group of young men and women by maintaining their hopes for the future, fosters inclusion and non-discrimination and acts as a catalyst for the recovery and rebuilding of post-conflict countries.

Other international organisations like the International [Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#) and [International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\)](#) are also active in working with displaced people. For example, the ILO is involved in vocational training activities in countries neighbouring Syria: Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. [Education Cannot Wait](#) is a new international fund, under UN auspices, focused on providing education in humanitarian crises and was established during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016. It is currently working in Chad, Yemen, Syria, and Ethiopia.

European Initiatives

[The European Association for International Education \(EAIE\)](#) has a number of initiatives primarily focused on integrating refugee students within European universities. The [Norwegian qualifications authority \(NOKUT\)](#) has piloted a [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#), assessing experience and qualifications through exams, interviews, and practical work. This is now widely accepted throughout Europe

[The European Universities Association \(EUA\)](#) has developed a [refugee welcome map](#), which identifies universities, primarily European, but also in the US and elsewhere, which welcome refugees and which provide scholarships. [The Global Platform for Syrian Students \(GPFSS\)](#) is an initiative from ex-president Sampiao of Portugal to provide scholarships for Syrian refugees, primarily in Portugal but in other European countries as well. The Global Platform is also behind a proposal for a [Rapid Response mechanism](#) for higher education in emergencies, and is currently prioritising and promoting medical training for Syrians.

[InZone, University of Geneva](#) pioneers innovative approaches to multilingual communication and higher education in communities affected by conflict and crisis. They design, develop and validate learner-centered and technology-supported pedagogical models. They have projects in the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, as well as globally.

[Mediterranean Universities Network \(UNIMED\)](#) is a European/MENA network of 103 universities in 23 countries, stretching far beyond the Mediterranean, from Portugal in the West, to Finland in the north, and Iraq and the Gulf in the east. It provides a wide range of services to its member institutions, and successfully bids for European Union projects, and is currently participating in 27 EU programmes. These include the [inHERE](#) (Higher Education Supporting Refugees in Europe) project and the [RESCUE](#) (Refugees support in MENA countries) project. The EU has a number of programmes in Europe, as part of the Erasmus+ programme, including [Science4refugees](#), a matching programme for research internships for refugees under the [EURAXESS](#) programme.

[Academisk Dugnat](#) is an initiative of the University of Oslo, which began as a local outreach initiative, but which has developed into a broader European HE initiative in providing support to refugees.

[Kiron](#) is a German-based higher education system for refugees and displaced people. It has relations with a significant number of German universities and increasingly others. The principle is to use MOOCs, which Kiron structure into a progressive programme, and, provided the programme is completed successfully, the package of MOOC modules is recognised by the associated universities as sufficient for entry to their courses. Many also provide matching scholarships. Kiron now has in excess of 2700 refugee students enrolled on their courses and a number of them have graduated to German universities.

[Jamiya](#) is a UK registered charity, which follows a similar pattern to Kiron but is distinctive by drawing on the knowledge and skills of the affected community to find 'bottom-up' solutions to the refugee education crisis. Currently, Jamiya Project is testing and prototyping two programme areas: education that supports preparation for and access to university for refugee students; and content, that is co-created by students, to support adaptation to university.

Germany is the European country that has welcomed the largest number of refugees over the last few years. It has a wide range of initiatives for welcoming refugees and for assisting them in integrating into German society, as well as accessing education and work.

US Initiatives

[The Institute for International Education \(IIE\)](#) is the key US organisation for international education, and, by extension, for work with refugees. The first of two key programmes it runs in relation to refugees is [IIE PEER](#). PEER is a multi-dimensional online database. It is supported by a three-person dedicated team and the aim of the database is to capture all tertiary education opportunities for displaced students. IIE wants to expand consortium and would welcome approaches from UK institutions. Universities update their own opportunities. The second is the [IIE Scholar Rescue Fund](#), an academic sanctuary programme analogous to the work of [Cara](#) in the UK. There is a further US-based international that focuses on academic freedom and sanctuary, which is [Scholars at Risk](#). All of these welcome UK universities engagement.

The **Brookings Institute** is not directly involved in education for refugees, but writes papers, and hosts events around the issue, some examples are included in the Organisations/references part of this section. Similarly, the [Global Business Coalition for Education](#) produced a [report in 2016](#) on using education technology in support of refugees.

The [University of the People](#) is an online US university. It aims to provide higher education to students worldwide, despite various constraints, by offering accessible and affordable online degree programmes. So far, it has accepted more than 1000 refugees to its programmes, among them 500 Syrians, and asylum seekers from more than 40 countries, including many studying in war zones. Founded in 2009, it currently has more than 10,000 students from more than 200 countries.

UNIVERSITIES UK INTERNATIONAL

UUKi is the international arm of Universities UK, representing UK universities and acting in their collective interests globally. We actively promote universities abroad, provide trusted information for and about them, and create new opportunities for the sector.



**Universities UK
International**

Cover photo: Syrian refugees participating in blended foundation programmes designed by the American University of Beirut and King's College London, as part of the PADILEIA project. (Photograph by Brooke Atherton El-Amine, American University of Beirut)

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