



## **Get Ahead Project**

### **Information about higher education for refugees and asylum seekers**

#### **Entry to higher education**

If you wish to study a higher education course in the UK, you will need to meet the academic entry requirements. If you hold overseas qualifications, you will need to check if they are recognised in the UK. You can contact the universities or colleges you want to apply to, the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#), or the [National Recognition Information Centre](#), which gives refugees free advice about their qualifications by telephone on 0870 990 4088.

If you need to gain qualifications, you may wish to contact your local further education college to find out what courses are available to prepare you for higher education, and any costs involved.

#### **Funding higher education**

UK universities and colleges charge fees for their courses, and you will also need money for your living costs.

Under certain conditions you may be entitled to financial support in higher education. You could be eligible for support for your fees and maintenance if you (or your parent, guardian or spouse):

- have been recognised as a refugee by the UK Government;
- have "Indefinite Leave to Enter" or "Indefinite Leave to Remain" or a "Certificate of the Right of Abode in the UK", you have been living in the UK for the three years before you start your course, but you were not here mainly for education;
- have been granted Exceptional, Discretionary or Indefinite Leave to remain in the UK.
- are a migrant worker from a country in the European Economic Area (EEA) or from Switzerland, and you have been resident in the EEA and/or Switzerland for the three years before your course starts.

The rules on this are very complicated, and you will need to seek specialist advice. [Education Action](#) and the [Council for International Education](#) are good places to start.

Universities and colleges can charge students around £3,000 a year for their courses.

If you qualify for support, you can get financial help from the government in the form of [loans and grants](#). The amount of support a student receives depends mainly on family income.

Support for full-time students includes:

- Help with full-time tuition fees. (The fees may vary between different universities and colleges.)
- A [Student Loan](#) for living costs (such as accommodation, food, books and, hopefully, relaxing).
- A non-repayable [Maintenance Grant](#) worth up to £2,700 a year for students from low income families. The loan for living costs is reduced by the amount of Maintenance Grant received up to a maximum of £1,200.
- Universities or colleges that are charging fees over £2,700 must give a bursary of £300 to students who are receiving the full Maintenance Grant, and many offer additional [bursaries or scholarships](#) for particular groups of students.
- All students who have extra course costs as a result of a disability can apply for the [Disabled Students' Allowance](#).
- Supplementary grants for students with [children](#) or [adult](#) dependants.
- Universities and colleges have [Access to Learning Funds](#) which can provide emergency payments for unexpected financial crises and help students who may be considering giving up their course because of financial problems. Payments are usually given as grants, but can also be given as short-term loans.
- Students studying approved Social Work courses can apply for a bursary from the [General Social Care Council](#).
- Some courses are funded by the NHS (National Health Service) and can attract a bursary. You can find out about these courses from the [NHS Student Grants Unit](#) website.

There is also some financial support for [part-time students](#) if they are studying for at least 50% of the full-time course.

[Repayment](#) of the loans for fees and maintenance only starts when graduates earn over £15,000 a year. Interest is added at the rate of inflation.

If you do not qualify for support you will be treated as an “overseas” student, and have to meet all your own costs, including maintenance and course fees which can be £7,000 or more per year. Universities have discretion in what they charge, so if you are interested in a particular course speak to the university to see what might be arranged.

## **Ethnicity and Religion**

Universities and colleges vary in their ethnic and religious diversity, largely depending on their location. Universities in large cities (especially those in London) tend to be more diverse than those in more rural areas.

Universities are generally secular institutions (some, like York St John University or Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln, were Church foundations and still have a more Christian ethic, but are far from exclusively Christian). All have a duty to encourage equity, diversity and tolerance, and to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against people of different faiths or of none.

Before applying you would be advised to check that the universities you are interested in will be able to adapt timetabling to fit with your religious observances and festivals, and that there are facilities available for these when required. It is also worth checking that they can (and will) be able to meet your dietary requirements, and that you will be comfortable following any dress codes in that environment.

You may want to contact the [Students' Union](#) to see if there are specific groups and activities available for you, or others promoting integration and understanding. Traditionally most Student Union social life is centred on the bar, so you may want to check what alternatives are available.

## Further information on UK education

The Refugee Assessment & Guidance Unit at London Metropolitan University has produced a [Guide for Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#) on education, training and employment which has been translated into a number of languages.

The Council for Assisting Refugee Academics has produced 'Higher Education Pathways', a comprehensive guide to the opportunities available to refugees and asylum seekers wishing to study for a degree in the UK, including a directory of specialist higher education, refugee and funding organisations. Refugees and asylum seekers may obtain a free copy by emailing [info.cara@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:info.cara@lsbu.ac.uk) or telephoning 0207 021 0880.

Refugees and asylum seekers can get free advice and guidance on education and careers from *learndirect* on the internet at: [www.learndirect-advice.co.uk](http://www.learndirect-advice.co.uk), or by telephone on 0800 100 900. There are some [bilingual advisers](#) available (for example in Farsi, Polish, Somali and Urdu).

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