

University of Sanctuary Award - Guidance for completing your application

This document outlines the **minimum criteria** for the award, but we encourage universities to build on these in a way that best reflects their unique situation. This document will also provide some guidance notes, to be read alongside the form and [resource pack](#), on how to answer the questions in the application.

Every institution will vary in terms of its strengths and context so the approaches taken will not be identical. All applicants should start with [joining the Sanctuary Movement](#) and by doing so, your institution becomes part of a growing community of people and organisations working together to build a culture of welcome across the UK.

Any organisation or institution that shares our vision can join our movement and access support, guidance, networking, and opportunities to help create a more welcoming UK for all. The Sanctuary Award offers members a rigorous but supportive process to reflect on and strengthen their practice. As a critical friend, we provide support, challenge, and recognition, celebrating organisations' achievements and ongoing commitment to turn our shared vision into reality.

City of Sanctuary UK is committed to becoming an anti-racist organisation and to promoting justice and solidarity-led practice across our movement. We encourage organisations applying for the Sanctuary Award to [explore anti-racist practice](#) as part of their Sanctuary journey, reflecting on how they can create more inclusive and equitable environments for all.

A university can attain an award if they are able to provide evidence that, *at all levels of the university structure*, they have integrated our three core principles:

Learn: learning about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, both in general (for the community in which the university is situated), and specifically (in the context of HE and the campus environment).

Embed: taking positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion within the institution including, but not limited to, the student body, students' union, departments, faculties, senior management, administrative and campus management staff. To take steps to ensure this progress outlasts the current student population.

Share: sharing your vision, achievements, what you have learned, and good practice with other universities, the local community and beyond.

Minimum Criteria for a University of Sanctuary Award

The following minimum criteria (10) must all be evident in your Sanctuary Award application:

1. A public commitment to the City of Sanctuary vision through endorsement of the charter, and signing of the local group pledge where relevant.
2. Offer Sanctuary Scholarships which should be underpinned by the [Article 26 Guiding Principles](#).
3. A commitment to taking steps to minimise the impact that changes in government legislation has for forced migrants on the experience of applying for and attending university.
4. A web page dedicated to the sanctuary initiatives and commitment of the university to a culture of welcome.
5. Support the establishment of a student-led awareness group on campus (such as a [STAR group](#))
6. A dedicated member of staff/team of staff as a contact point for sanctuary students. This provision should be communicated to the students, be easily accessible and the staff member(s) must be appropriately trained.
7. Create a three-year plan or embed into existing plans how the institution can continue to develop a culture of welcome.
8. Evidence of effective communications that ensure sanctuary scholarships and other opportunities are taken up by people seeking sanctuary. See the Article 26 resource '[Reaching Out to Sanctuary Scholars](#)'.
9. Active engagement with the wider community including people seeking sanctuary and their local City of Sanctuary network or refugee support network if there is one.
10. Active engagement with the national University of Sanctuary stream. This could be through financial/in kind contributions, contributions to the work of the University of Sanctuary national steering group, or email group (see resource section below for a link to join the email group). It's also vital to provide case studies to share good practice with others and help with the development of resources and furthering the movement.

Application Top Tips

- Be concise and specific in describing your sanctuary activities in your application. The panel that reviews the application does not need many paragraphs of narrative description of your effort but instead needs to see concrete, clear information about the exact steps taken for the University to have met the criteria. When detailing information about events, trainings or activities, include dates/years, durations, content and outcomes in as pithy a manner as possible. Provide the who/what/where/why of your activities and include links to any webpages or documents that substantiate and/or expand on your activities to help the panel confirm and understand your efforts without adding significantly to the page count of the application.

- If you provide information about training that has taken place at your university, please clarify how and when future/on-going training will take place to ensure that there is continuous learning about sanctuary and how new staff will be inducted to know the University is committed to sanctuary and welcome.
- Please describe the staff infrastructure set up to support sanctuary initiatives at the University and how this is linked into any wider Equity, Diversity or Inclusion groups and/or the Senior Leadership team at the University so the panel can understand how embedded these efforts are across the university. We welcome seeing organizational charts to see where those working on the sanctuary fit into the wider university structures. Please include any Terms of Reference for sanctuary working or steering groups, and membership lists as appendices.

Guidance on the application questions

Q: Please provide a summary of how your organisation engages with sanctuary seekers.

In this section, there are 3 sub-questions/areas, in these we are looking for the ways you have engaged with people seeking sanctuary. How has your university sought to build relationships with

local people seeking sanctuary? Has it formed partnerships with any local support organisations?

What about the student body - have those within it who have a background of forced migration been consulted on your initiatives? Is there a mechanism for feedback from them?

Q: Using the 3 principles of the sanctuary award, please reflect on how you have achieved these principles attaching evidence to support your answer.

Here we are looking for evidence of your initiatives, projects, policies and progress. Even if something is ongoing, include it as it helps to build a picture of how the university is developing.

Try to be concise but don't assume that the recognition team will have knowledge of your university (so please explain all acronyms and give context where necessary). See the Resource Pack for more detail on what is required for each of the key areas - [Learn](#), [Embed](#), [Share](#).

Q: Please identify how people seeking sanctuary have been involved in helping you achieve these principles

All applications for a Sanctuary Award are expected to involve people seeking sanctuary, refugees and migrants, in the planning, delivery and/or evaluation of activities for each of the principles, where appropriate.

Building on the examples you have given, identify the ways in which people seeking sanctuary have contributed to these successes. For instance, have you learnt from them directly as 'experts by experience'? Does the university take note of feedback from sanctuary scholars and adapt accordingly? How and how often does this feedback get gathered?

And, importantly, has the university ensured that there are mechanisms for critical feedback, particularly from people seeking sanctuary; which enable them to be honest, anonymous and

confident that there will be no implications for their own funding.

Q: How does your organisation intend to build on your achievements over the next 3 years in order that your award is renewed?

We want to acknowledge and celebrate institutions which show a commitment to the principles in the long-term and which have a forward-looking approach; receipt of the sanctuary award is just the beginning! Every institution will need to re-apply after 3 years to retain its award and ensure a lasting commitment. So, use this section of the application form as an opportunity to share information about your strategic planning.

Please note this section is separate to the detailed 3-year plan expected as part of the application (minimum criterion). In this section, provide a summary of your plans / main realistic and targeted priorities over the next 3 years. Examples of questions to reflect on: Has your university demonstrated a sustainable commitment to improving access to education in the foreseeable future? How will it reevaluate and adapt to improve the experience for people seeking sanctuary? What happens when the current cohort of students has moved on, how will the university ensure the engagement continues? What evidence is there that this commitment will continue after the award is granted? For example, is it embedded in the university's mission statement, strategic plan, policies and procedures?

Additional points to include where relevant: Evidence of self-evaluation

Do students, staff and others involved feel that the university has met the principles? How do you know? What tools does the University use to get feedback from across the institution? Please detail any specific activities such as annual surveys or evaluations, focus groups meetings, or any other monitoring/voice efforts that exist at the University? Have local community/refugee support organisations been aware of your activities, and involved in conversations/meetings about your University of Sanctuary work?

Feedback from others involved

Has feedback from the local community, prospective students or the refugee & migrant support sector been taken into account into developing the University's sanctuary efforts and activities? Have there been any changes or actions arising from partnership activities?

Feedback from refugee/migrant involvement

It is always useful to include quotes or comments from an asylum seeker, refugee or other migrant who has engaged with any aspect of the university's endeavours and is happy to share their perspective.

Details about the minimum criteria:

1. A public commitment to the City of Sanctuary vision of welcome through endorsement of the charter, and signing of the local group pledge where relevant.

The University should have some form of public commitment to the charter. Public endorsement of the charter may include a webpage dedicated to this, publicity of charter/ signatory status through social media platforms or webpages. There should be a positive connection or partnership with the local City of Sanctuary group or a plan to connect and invite them to university meetings.

Potential questions to ask are: have you been able to use the charter to garner support or bring a cohesion to the movement within the university? Do you feel that the Charter is accepted at all levels of management? Are there contested areas? How did you overcome any obstacles to accepting the Charter?

2. Offer Sanctuary Scholarships which should be underpinned by the Article 26 Guiding Principles.

- Universities should show an acknowledgment of and engagement with the [Article 26 Guiding Principles](#) in the application.
- Applications should specify the exact number and types of scholarships and accompanying levels of support available to those from backgrounds of forced migration. This includes specifying how many and which types of degree scholarships are available (undergraduate and/or postgraduate). Please detail what additional support is provided as part of the scholarship such as accommodation, living costs, tech support etc. If your University has scholarships open/available to a range of prospective students which includes those from backgrounds of forced displacement amongst other criteria (such as being a care leaver etc), please clarify how many students with lived experience of have taken up these scholarships in recent academic years.
- Scholarship places must be taken up in order to "count".
- Scholarships can be offered at any level of study but should amount to, at least, a full-fee waiver for one student AND a stipend payment to help with study costs and additional expenses whilst at university. Anything additional to this can be taken into account as a sign of greater commitment to this criterion (e.g. scholarships for access courses or IELTS, CARA fellowships, childcare support).
- For a scholarship to count as a "sanctuary scholarship" it must be viable for target students. Simply giving a tuition fee waiver with no consideration of wider support needs is unlikely to be sufficient to constitute a "sanctuary scholarship".
- A University must provide at least one undergraduate pathway for sanctuary seeking students. Providing only a postgraduate bursary/fee waiver, is insufficient to facilitate access to HE.
- Universities must: a) recognise the immense financial challenges that the vast majority of asylum seekers and refugees face beyond simply paying tuition fees, and b) think creatively and do what they can to alleviate these challenges.

- This could be by giving in-kind support (e.g. printer credits, meal vouchers, book vouchers, bike rental/ transport costs, and similar), by seeking financial contributions from their alumni or business/industry partners, or by providing financial support from other pots of money that the university has available generally for disadvantaged students. For guidance about the financial support people seeking asylum can receive, refer to the [Guidance for universities on setting up scholarships](#).

3. A commitment to taking steps to minimise the impact that changes in government legislation has for forced migrants on the experience of applying for and attending university.

The university should be aware of current issues facing sanctuary students which might prevent them from accessing HE. The university may already be able to evidence efforts to advocate / campaign / add their voice to national conversations. Potential questions to ask: Does the university part-take in any forums, research groups, or networks which might be relevant? Are there key academics from certain departments whose work might feed into this, who are vocal about sanctuary issues, and/or take part in national campaigns or coalitions? Is the university outspoken about its support of sanctuary scholars in such current debates?

4. A web page dedicated to the sanctuary initiatives and commitment of the university to a culture of welcome.

The university should have a webpage up and running. This should be easily accessible from the main site. It should detail the university's commitment to a culture of welcome and outline some of the initiatives. It might also link to scholarship opportunities or external groups or organisations, such as opportunities for academics and students to get involved or volunteer with local community projects/partnerships.

5. Support the establishment of a student-led awareness group on campus (such as a STAR group)

This means there should be a sanctuary-related student society (such as a STAR group or refugees welcome group) currently, or that one is in the process of being formed. Someone at the university should be in contact with the STAR head office team. This should be student led (i.e. a student society with a student chair). This group might be concerned with campaigning (such as contributing to the Equal Access campaign) or with service delivery. The support element might be in terms of direction and involvement in the UoS application process, facilitation of meetings (e.g. spaces to meet), assistance with recruitment through the communication of student volunteering opportunities, financial support etc. The aim of the group is also to create a welcoming and understanding environment for those studying at a university with a sanctuary seeking background. For guidance about setting up a STAR group, please [contact the STAR team](#).

6. A dedicated member of staff/team of staff as a contact point for sanctuary students. This provision should be communicated to the students, be easily accessible and the staff member(s) must be appropriately trained.

The university must have (at least one) member of staff whose remit includes the support of the sanctuary scholars. This member of/team of staff should be known to all scholars. They must be able to evidence sufficient and appropriate training or experience for this role. They must be accessible by email and offer face to face appointments when required. This member of staff should have some involvement in the induction process of sanctuary scholars.

Please describe the staff infrastructure set up to support sanctuary initiatives at the University and how this is linked into any wider Equity, Diversity or Inclusion groups and/or the Senior Leadership team at the University so the panel can understand how embedded these efforts are across the university. We welcome seeing organizational charts to see where those working on sanctuary fit into the wider university structures. Please include any Terms of Reference for sanctuary working or steering groups, and memberships lists as appendices.

7. Create a three-year plan or embed into existing plans how the institution can continue to develop a culture of welcome.

The university must be able to evidence a three year strategic plan which includes/centres on developing the sanctuary initiatives. The plan should include time-frames for each objective, and a responsible team/department(s) should be identified. It might include: increase in numbers of scholarships available; Plans for closer partnership working with the local group; Plans for peer-to-peer learning or mentoring with other accredited universities or universities seeking accreditation; Plans to create training about sanctuary as part of staff induction.

8. Evidence of effective communications that ensure sanctuary scholarships and other opportunities are taken up by people seeking sanctuary. See the Article 26 resource [‘Reaching Out to Sanctuary Scholars’](#).

This means evidencing the mode of publicising scholarships (such as websites, mailing lists, open days etc). This might mean working with colleges or refugee-supporting NGOs to do outreach. This should also include the university uploading all their opportunities (scholarships, pre-sessional English courses, mentoring programmes, access pathways) for refugees on the [Displaced Student Opportunities](#) portal.

9. Active engagement with the wider community including people seeking sanctuary and their local City of Sanctuary network or refugee support network if there is one.

The university should be in contact with the local CoS group if there is one. They should be aware of local refugee-support organisations and evidence some mutual-support or partnership working. They should be aware of the context within which they work (i.e. is there a large refugee population locally? What are the key organisations/needs/challenges?

10. Active engagement with the national University of Sanctuary stream. This could be through financial/in kind contributions, contributions to the work of the University of Sanctuary national steering group, or email group (see resource section below for a link to join the email group). It's also vital to provide case studies to share good practice with others and help with the development of resources and furthering the movement.

The list here is not exhaustive, nor must universities evidence all things listed. The university should at minimum be willing to pay the accreditation fee, and evidence a willingness to engage with other universities who are/are working towards becoming universities of sanctuary (this could be through attendance of the conference, collaborating on events, or sharing of resources/good practice case studies for example.