

Reaching Out to Sanctuary Scholars

Introduction

The aim of 'Reaching out to Sanctuary Scholars' is to support universities in the development of effective communication and promotion strategies for their Sanctuary Scholarship scheme. We recommend that every university utilising the advice in 'Reaching Out to Sanctuary Scholars', also refer to the other resources in this series, in particular 'Guiding Principles on Sanctuary Scholars in UK Higher Education' and 'Identifying Sanctuary Scholars'. This resource is intended as guidance and the suggestions within do not represent an exhaustive list, but serve as a point of reference and the basis upon which strategic discussions can take place within the institution.

Key themes to consider include:

1. Access & Participation Plans (Office for Students)
2. Communication
3. Outreach activities
4. Media
5. Point of Contact

Communicating and promoting Sanctuary Scholarships is presented as a three tier process: i) Internal Promotion – university, ii) Local Promotion – local / regional area and iii) National Promotion. Activities that promote the scholarship scheme and the recruitment of students, in the context of the five identified themes, are not to be confined to a level but cut across all three levels. The primary aim is to explore communication and promotional activities for Sanctuary Scholarships that connect the institution to the local area and national platforms.

We have drawn on (some) examples of best practice that we have found amongst our partner universities, presented here as short case studies outlining the development and efficacy of specific activities.



Media

In the first year of the scholarship scheme led by the University of Bristol, the institution embarked on a very successful promotional campaign. Whilst instigated through a big **social media** push, the campaign resulted in the Sanctuary Scholarships receiving coverage from local **TV** and **radio** stations:

- The University central **communications** team made an announcement on the University Social Media account, which was then picked up and **retweeted** by many interested groups and organisations. This also included targeted tweeting of Local MP's and councillors.
- Members of the Sanctuary Scholarships Working Group made contact with the Migrant Rights Network, Article 26 project, STAR, Citizens UK members, South West law, Migrant Legal Project, City of Bristol College, Bristol Red Cross, Refugee Women of Bristol, The Law Centre, B-Friend and Welsh Refugee Council.
- A **local newspaper** the 'Bristol Post', promoted the scholarships in their news feed.
- The Public Relations Officer in the communication team was contacted by a local radio station, which resulted in a pre-recorded **radio interview** about the Sanctuary Scholarship Scheme.
- Communication with a **diverse** range and large number of different groups and **organisations** ensured that information about the Sanctuary Scholarships spread quickly, either via websites or social media accounts.



Outreach Activities

The University of Winchester has developed an on-campus residential for forced migrants aged between 14 and 20. The residential is targeted at those who arrived as unaccompanied minors, although those who arrived with families are not excluded. In August 2017, 27 young people from 9 different countries attended the University for 3 days and 2 nights. Promotion was undertaken through **local refugee charities**, the Southern Universities Network, Virtual Head Teachers based in local authorities and the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers. Key aims of the residential included:

- Raise participants' **awareness** and understanding of higher education and **pathways** to entry.
- Provide information about the **local** Sanctuary Scholarship Award scheme at the University of Winchester and similar scholarships within the **national** network of Article 26 universities.
- Introduce prospective students to welcoming, interactive and **creative activities** on a university campus.
- Encourage socialisation with each other, with University staff and students, thus improving **English language** skills and cultural awareness. Some of the social activities take place off-campus in the evening, for example, in 2017 the whole group went ten-pin bowling.
- The residential is now an annual event at the university.



Access & Participation Plan (Office for Students)

When Birkbeck University developed the concept of the Compass Project (scholarships for forced migrants), it was done so in the knowledge that Birkbeck needed to be **proactive** in reaching out to potential applicants within the **community**. The project was created with the input of the **widening participation** team, who suggested a series of ways in which Birkbeck could engage with forced migrants.

In **2017/18** it was agreed that in order for forced migrants to be embedded within the work delivered by the widening participation team, they would be included, as a distinct group in Birkbeck's Access Agreement. This was in part possible due to the fact that in addition to their immigration status, the scholarships were targeted at applicants who met other **criteria** outlined in the **Access Agreement**: first in family to access university, low income, BME, low level qualifications, history of interrupted education and their status as mature students.

This approach had multiple benefits, but most importantly, it meant a whole **college commitment** and approach to improving access for forced migrants. Specific activities were established that targeted this group, which ensured that the team included their needs when developing generic widening participation work.

Birkbeck was able to ensure that there was a dedicated **point of contact** focused on building relationships with the **forced migrant community**, as well as making colleagues, internal to the institution aware of the challenges faced by forced migrants in accessing higher education.

The **prioritisation** of forced migrants by the widening participation team, as a group to focus and **report (OFS)** on, has resulted in systems being put in place across different Birkbeck schools and departments, which **recognise** and act on the needs of forced migrants.



Communication

Keele University has developed close relationships with other University departments, in particular **Admissions, Compliance, Recruitment** and **Outreach** to ensure communication about the Sanctuary Scholarships are embedded in current processes through following a series of simple, yet effective steps:

The delivery of **training** and regular updates to Admissions and Compliance teams, to make sure they are aware of the latest information about the scholarship scheme and that they refer potential applicants to our dedicated **point of contact** for advice and support.

Incorporation of a **flag** on our Student Records database so that we can identify applicants whose immigration status may mean they do not have access to student finance. The dedicated **point of contact** gets in touch to determine their eligibility, and if appropriate, promote and raise awareness of the Sanctuary Scholarships.

The Outreach team include information about Sanctuary Scholarships, as a dedicated feature in every presentation they deliver and in the **Student Recruitment Outreach Newsletter**. This is disseminated to every local school, college and provider of further education opportunities.

Developed links with a **local refugee charity** supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The dedicated **point of contact** has attended sessions delivered by the charity, in order to speak to people they work with, raise awareness and answer questions about the scholarship scheme.



Point of Contact

The University of Salford established their Article 26 scholarship scheme in 2012 with an appointed person to act as dedicated point of contact for scholarship recipients. This emulated Salford's wider practice in affording all **'vulnerable'** student groups a dedicated point of contact to **recruit and retain** students – in order to ensure that vulnerable students are well supported, engage in university life and can access services. The dedicated point of contact is involved in recruitment, application and selection (i.e. interviews) processes, which results in sanctuary scholars getting to know this individual from their first contact with Salford.

Prior to starting their degree programme, Sanctuary Scholars **meet** the point of contact as well as other students supported through the scholarship scheme. This is combined with meeting the **compliance** team to check documents pertaining to their immigration status.

Registration takes place separately from the wider student population and is supported by the point of contact to ensure there are no complications and enrolment is a smooth and **stress free** process.

The point of contact acts as **referral** point to other **university departments** and services students may need, which serves two functions: i) ensure students receive the support they need as quickly as possible and ii) communicate with other university departments to ensure awareness and understanding of the Sanctuary Scholarship scheme.

Issues relating to **attendance** or **academic progression** are raised by the personal tutor, with the student and the point of contact, to ensure maximum support is received to overcome any challenges (be they practical or academic).

Timetable of dedicated 1:1 sessions during the first semester to establish a pattern of support with Sanctuary Scholars to sustain them through their degree programme.

Reaching Out to Sanctuary Scholars

Your plans

Use the space below to write in your notes and draw connections to the three tiers of promotion.



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1. Access & Participation Plans (Office for Students)



3. Outreach Activities



2. Communication



4. Media



5. Point of Contact



Our partners:



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