

# University for young asylum seekers and refugees: frequently asked questions

Edition 1 (October 2018)

This guide is written by [Refugee Support Network](#)'s higher education team in response to the questions which are frequently asked by people getting in touch with our [helpline](#). We hope you find it helpful!

**Important note:** this guide is for your information only and is correct at the date of publication. It is not legal advice.

We will update this document regularly so please check [this page of our website](#) regularly for the latest version. If you spot anything that needs updating or have anything to add, please contact us: [highereducation@refugeesupportnetwork.org](mailto:highereducation@refugeesupportnetwork.org)

## Contents

Click on the links below to find the answers to your questions:

### [Contents](#)

#### [1. Questions about immigration status](#)

[1.1 If I am an asylum seeker can I go to university?](#)

[1.2 If I am a refugee can I go to university?](#)

[1.3 If I have Discretionary Leave to Remain \(DLR\) can I go to university?](#)

[1.4 If I have Limited Leave to Remain \(LLR\) can I go to university?](#)

[1.5 If I have Humanitarian Protection \(HP\) can I go to university?](#)

[1.6 If I have Indefinite Leave to Remain \(ILR\) can I go to university?](#)

## [2. Questions about funding and scholarships](#)

[2.1 I have temporary immigration status \(asylum seeker, DLR, LLR\), how much does it cost to go to university?](#)

[2.2. I have a more settled immigration status \(refugee, HP, ILR\), how much does it cost do go to university?](#)

[2.3 I have temporary immigration status \(asylum seeker, DLR, LLR\), how can I pay for university?](#)

[1. University scholarships](#)

[2. Private scholarships](#)

[3. Care leaver support](#)

[2.4 I have a more settled immigration status \(refugee, HP, ILR\), how can I pay for university?](#)

[1. Student finance](#)

[2. Self funding](#)

[3. Scholarships](#)

[2.5 I have been offered a place by a university, but I have no funding secured - what should I do?](#)

[2.6 I have secured funding for part of my degree, but not all of it - what shall I do?](#)

## [3. Questions about applying to university](#)

[3.1 How can I choose a course?](#)

[3.2 How can I choose a university?](#)

[a\) Which universities are best for the course I want to study?](#)

[b\) What are the entry requirements?](#)

[c\) Where will I have a community that supports me?](#)

[d\) Which is the best option for me with my finances?](#)

[e\) What is the best location for me?](#)

[3.3 How do I apply? \(UCAS\)](#)

[3.4 How do I write a personal statement?](#)

[3.5 When do I have to apply to university?](#)

## [4. Potential barriers getting to university](#)

[4.1 I have educational transcripts/ certificates from my home country, how can I get them translated?](#)

[4.2 What qualifications will I need for university?](#)

[4.3 I am not sure where to find accommodation for university?](#)

[Halls of residence](#)

[Private accommodation](#)

[Family home](#)

[Living with friends or relatives](#)

- [Local authority accommodation](#)
- [4.4 I am having challenges with my immigration status, who can help?](#)
- [4.5 My university is not accepting my documentation, what can I do?](#)
- [5. Potential barriers whilst at university](#)
  - [5.1 What happens if my immigration status changes whilst at university?](#)
  - [5.2 I'm at university and I've run out of money, who can help?](#)
  - [5.3 Who can I turn to if I need support with my mental health and wellbeing?](#)
- [6. If not university, what are the other options?](#)
  - [6.1 If I want to study at a higher level but not at university, is there anything else I can study?](#)
- [7. Useful contacts](#)
  - [7.1 How can RSN help me?](#)
    - [Phone advice sessions](#)
    - [Face-to-face advice sessions](#)
    - [Thinking Ahead to Higher Education' toolkit](#)
    - [Training for practitioners](#)
    - [University scholarships](#)
  - [7.2 What other organisations can help me?](#)
  - [7.3 How can I stay up to date about opportunities?](#)
- [8. I'm interested in this issue. Where can I find out more?](#)

# 1. Questions about immigration status

## 1.1 If I am an asylum seeker can I go to university?

Yes. The important thing to remember is that as an asylum seeker you are allowed to go to university (unless you have 'no study' immigration bail conditions - please see [here](#) for more details). However, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland you will be charged tuition fees at an 'international/overseas' rate and won't be eligible for student finance (the loans from the government that other students can apply for).

In Scotland, this is slightly different - check out the guidelines on fee regulations at [UKCISA](#) for more information.

See below for more information about how to pay for university.

For more detailed information about access to higher education for young refugees and migrants, see [the Migrant Children's Project's page about this topic](#).

## 1.2 If I am a refugee can I go to university?

Yes. As someone with refugee status, you can access university as a 'home' student and will ordinarily be eligible for student finance (the loans from the government that other students can apply for).

Please visit [UKCISA](#) and [student finance](#) for more details about the qualifying rules for student finance funding.

See below for more information about how to pay for university.

For more detailed information about access to higher education for young refugees and migrants, see [the Migrant Children's Project's page about this topic](#).

## 1.3 If I have Discretionary Leave to Remain (DLR) can I go to university?

Yes. The important thing to remember is that as someone with DLR you are allowed to go to university. You will likely be charged tuition fees at an 'international/overseas' rate and won't be eligible for student finance (the loans from the government that other students can apply for). However, if you have resided in the UK for a long period of time, you may qualify for 'home' fee status (and funding) due to long residency.

To be eligible for student finance funding under the new long residence category you must be a resident in England on the first day of the first academic year of your course, hold discretionary leave and have been resident in the UK and Islands throughout the three-year period immediately before the first day of the first academic year of your course. You must also be either:

- under 18 years old having lived in the UK for at least 7 years before the first day of the first academic year of your course; or
- aged 18 years and above having either spent at least half your life in the UK or at least 20 years in the UK prior to the first day of the first academic year of your course.

[Let Us Learn](#) provides useful information about the new long residence category.

You can also check out the guidelines on fee regulations at [UKCISA](#).

See below for more information about how to pay for university.

For more detailed information about access to higher education for young refugees and migrants, see [the Migrant Children's Project's page about this topic](#).

## 1.4 If I have Limited Leave to Remain (LLR) can I go to university?

Yes. The important thing to remember is that as someone with LLR you are allowed to go to university. However, you will be charged tuition fees at an 'international/overseas' rate and won't be eligible for student finance (the loans from the government that other students can apply for).

[Let Us Learn](#) provides useful information about the new long residence category. Check out the guidelines on fee regulations at [UKCISA](#) for more information.

See below for more information about how to pay for university.

For more detailed information about access to higher education for young refugees and migrants, see [the Migrant Children's Project's page about this topic](#).

## 1.5 If I have Humanitarian Protection (HP) can I go to university?

Yes. As someone with HP, you can access university as a 'home' student. In order to be eligible for student finance you need to have been "ordinarily resident" in the UK

for 3 years before the first day of the first year of the course. Unless you are applying in Scotland where you do not need to have been 'ordinarily resident' for 3 years, but you must be ordinarily resident in Scotland on the first day of the first academic year of the course.

Please visit [UKCISA](#) and [student finance](#) for more information about this.

See below for more information about how to pay for university.

For more detailed information about access to higher education for young refugees and migrants, see [the Migrant Children's Project's page about this topic](#).

## 1.6 If I have Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) can I go to university?

Yes. As someone with ILR, you can go to university as a 'home' student (and access student finance) if you have been been "ordinarily resident" in the UK for 3 years before the first day of the first year of the course.

Please visit [UKCISA](#) and [student finance](#) for more information about this.

See below for more information about how to pay for university.

For more detailed information about access to higher education for young refugees and migrants, see [the Migrant Children's Project's page about this topic](#).

## **2. Questions about funding and scholarships**

### **2.1 I have temporary immigration status (asylum seeker, DLR, LLR), how much does it cost to go to university?**

The main costs of university include tuition fees and living costs (such as accommodation, transport, food, etc.). If you have temporary status you will pay tuition fees at an 'international/overseas' rate, with an average cost of £12,000 per academic year. This cost may vary depending on university and course chosen, and some fees are significantly higher. Living costs vary similarly each year, depending on where you study, whether you need to pay for accommodation, and other factors. On average you may need to budget for £1,000 per month (minimum) to cover your living costs.

### **2.2. I have a more settled immigration status (refugee, HP, ILR), how much does it cost do go to university?**

The main costs of university include tuition fees and living costs (such as accommodation, transport, food, etc.). If you have a more settled immigration status you will likely pay tuition fees at an 'home' rate, with a cost of up to £9,250 per academic year. This cost may vary depending on the university and course chosen as some fees are slightly lower. Living costs may vary, depending on where you study, whether you need to pay for accommodation, and other factors. On average you may need to budget for £1,000 per month (minimum) to cover your living costs.

## 2.3 I have temporary immigration status (asylum seeker, DLR, LLR), how can I pay for university?

If you have temporary status you can't access student finance, so you have to arrange another way to pay for university.

### 1. University scholarships

Many universities offer scholarships for those who can't access student finance on account of their immigration status. All of these have different names but these are sometimes called Sanctuary Scholarships and Equal Access. The Article 26 project works in partnership with universities to offer scholarships, which include a full tuition fee bursary and funding meeting some of the additional costs associated with studying.

For up to date lists of which universities offer scholarships, please visit [Student Action for Refugees \(STAR\)'s website](#) and on the [Article 26 website](#).

### 2. Private scholarships

There are a small number of private scholarships available for those who cannot get other funding for their studies. These include the Westheimer scholarship, the Brittan Scholarship and the scholarship supported by the Marks Family Charitable Foundation. RSN helps administer these scholarships: [click here for more details](#).

*"I am the first girl in my family who has this chance to explore this tremendous experience of going to university. I had planned and dreamed about every step of my education and this scholarship has brought that dream to me."*



### 3. Care leaver support

If you are/ have been a care leaver you may be eligible to receive a grant of up to £2,000 from your local authority towards your university studies. Please visit [here](#) for more information.

## 2.4 I have a more settled immigration status (refugee, HP, ILR), how can I pay for university?

### 1. Student finance

If you have settled status you can ordinarily access student finance. If you can access student finance, there are two main loans you can apply for:

- a) Tuition fee loan - This is a non-means tested loan and is paid directly to the university to cover your fee cost
- b) Maintenance loan - This is a means tested loan and is to help cover your living costs, e.g. rent, food, transport etc. The amount you receive varies depending on where you live and whether you live with family.

Remember this is a loan and has to be repaid once you start earning a salary of £25,000 per year.

Please visit this [student finance](#) resource for more information.

### 2. Self funding

Often those with more settled status have the right to work and can self fund their university studies.

### 3. Scholarships

Some universities offer scholarships to those from refugee backgrounds with more settled statuses. Please visit [Student Action for Refugees \(STAR\)'s website](#) for a more comprehensive list. Universities often offer scholarships too - visit the websites of different universities to find out more.

## 4. Care leaver support

If you are/ have been a care leaver you may be eligible to receive a grant of up to £2,000 from your local authority towards your university studies. Please visit [here](#) for more information.

## 2.5 I have been offered a place by a university, but I have no funding secured - what should I do?

If you have been offered a place but don't have funding there are a few options for you to consider:

1. Contact the university and advocate for a fee waiver. Refer to Article 26's [Education for All guide](#) for more information to support your case
2. Look in to deferring your course at university, and try and apply to grants and bursaries for the costs of university for the following year
3. Apply the following year to a university which offers scholarships for students of asylum seeking background. See STAR's website for a [comprehensive list](#).

It is **very important** to know how you will fund the whole duration of your degree. **Getting into debt with the university can have serious consequences.**

## 2.6 I have secured funding for part of my degree, but not all of it - what shall I do?

**It's important to consider whether or not you can afford to pay for your whole course before starting university.** Getting into debt at university can have very serious consequences. It is a really good idea to think from the outset about how you will fund not only your first year, but also your second and third year as well.

Here are a few potential options:

1. Wait for your status to be sorted out and until you will be eligible for more support ie defer your current offer of a place until you have status.
2. Re-apply for entry next year to universities which have special scholarships in place for asylum seekers and others who can't get student finance.
3. If you have been in the UK for a longer period of time, you may qualify for funding due to long residency. Find out whether you qualify on the [Let us Learn website](#).
4. If you are supported by social services, it would be worth finding out if your local authority has any duty to support you financially towards university. [Read this factsheet](#) or contact the [Migrant Children's Project free helpline](#) for more information.

## 3. Questions about applying to university

### 3.1 How can I choose a course?

Spend some time looking at courses in university prospectuses (these are the booklets produced by universities with lists of the courses they offer and many are online). There are also many options on the UCAS website in the '[Course Search](#)' section. Try thinking about a course which brings together the things you enjoy, the things you are good at and the careers you are interested in.

### 3.2 How can I choose a university?

There are some important questions to consider when you think about which universities to select. These include:

#### a) Which universities are best for the course I want to study?

You can compare statistics on student satisfaction and employment for different universities and courses on the [Unistats](#) website. Some students also find it helpful to look at league tables on [The Complete University Guide](#) website or [What Uni?](#)

## b) What are the entry requirements?

Each university has different requirements that their students need to meet before they can start a course. Some universities ask for a certain number of UCAS Tariff Points (which are points gained by completing qualifications). Careers advisors usually suggest that you should have at least one 'safe' choice: a university course with entry requirements that you will definitely meet. You can check entry requirements on the 'Entry Profile' for each course on the UCAS 'Course Search' ([www.ucas.com/students/coursesearch](http://www.ucas.com/students/coursesearch).)

## c) Where will I have a community that supports me?

Each year many young people leave their hometown/city to go to university in a new place. As university is a great context for meeting new people, most people quickly make friends and find a new community to support them. Try and find if your university has a [STAR](#) group and if so, befriend them! STAR is a national charity of 27,000 students welcoming refugees to the UK. STAR is made up of 46 groups at universities and colleges across the UK and a national team which coordinates and supports the groups.

## d) Which is the best option for me with my finances?

If you are not eligible for student finance, it will be particularly important for you to think about this when you make your UCAS application. You may need to apply to some universities close to home so you won't have to pay as much for your accommodation, or to apply to at least one university that can offer additional support with paying your tuition fees through scholarships or bursaries.

## e) What is the best location for me?

The location of your university will have a big impact on your university experience. Some universities are in the middle of big cities, some are in the countryside and others are on 'campuses'. If you like the buzz of an urban environment, with access to great transport links and social activities then why not look for a city university? If however you prefer a quieter, more rural environment with a smaller number of students, you could look into attending a university in the countryside. Finally many

universities are on campus which are like mini towns in themselves. A university campus usually refers to the land owned by the university which contains all its buildings and services. If you like having everything in one place and feeling part of a 'community', why not consider a campus University? You will also need to think about where in the country you want to study. Some students like to be really close to home, others like to be as far away as possible! So check out exactly how long it takes to get to the universities you are considering (and how much this journey costs). Do you want to be able to come back to your current home at the weekend? Do you want to be able to travel back for a Saturday job? Do you need to be near friends and support networks? Or do you want to be in a new place? It is important that you think about these questions.

### 3.3 How do I apply? (UCAS)

To apply for a full-time undergraduate degree you normally apply through [UCAS](#). The UCAS online application is quite easy to use and you can save your progress as you go along. This means that if you need to check a detail with your tutor or support worker you can save what you have done so far and then come back to it. UCAS produce some guides to applying for international students in [different languages](#) that may be helpful. You can apply for up to 5 universities through UCAS. Check university websites for how to apply for other courses, such as part-time or language courses, as these may require a direct application to the university.

To apply for a postgraduate degree you can either apply directly through the university's website or through UCAS depending on the type of course. Whilst there isn't always a deadline for postgraduate applications, it is better to apply early in the academic year to ensure there is time to apply for supporting scholarships if needed.

Here are some top tips for making the UCAS process as smooth as possible:

1. Note down your 'username' and 'personal ID' and keep them in a safe place, so you can always log-in to your online application.
2. Take a moment to check your 'residential category' (asked for in the 'personal details' section).
3. If you are a care leaver, it is good to say this on your application (asked in the 'additional information' section). This will not prejudice your application in any way, but the university will be able to give you extra support if and when you want it.
4. Ask your tutor or teacher who you want to write your reference about this early. Your application cannot be sent to universities until they have written your reference, so it is important that they submit it before the UCAS deadline in October or January (check deadlines).

5. Allow yourself enough time to do your personal statement. This is your opportunity to tell the university about yourself: why you want to do the course, your experience, your interests, and your passion for the subject. Don't copy someone else's or lie. Use the UCAS [worksheets](#) or [mind maps](#) to get you thinking.

## 3.4 How do I write a personal statement?

UCAS has some helpful documents that talk you through how to write your personal statement and how to get an academic reference. Have a look on [their website](#), use their instructional videos and take their advice. They know what they are talking about!

You might feel like you don't know what to include and so find the idea of starting scary but you should know that you will probably write several drafts before you are happy with it so you don't have to get it right first try. Here are a few tips for getting started:

- Write out in bullet point form why you are applying to the course you have chosen and why you think you are a good applicant. There are two ways to do this:
  - list characteristics you think make you a good applicant and then find examples of things you have done to help demonstrate those characteristics eg. 'I am independent and know how to take initiative because I had to self-direct my study for a school project'
  - list things you have done, for example any work experience you have had, extra-curricular activities you have done and then think about what skills and characteristics these experiences have taught you eg 'I worked on a special project at school on my own because of this I have learnt to be independent and take initiative'

The examples are important. Don't just list your good characteristics but back them up as well.

- Your reasons for applying and qualities that make you a good applicant are just a few things to include in your personal statement. UCAS has a [document](#) asking you a series of question such as questions about your achievements or future work plans. Answer all these questions. It can still be in bullet points, just get your answers down on paper.

- Now you will have written out everything you want to include but you only have 4000 characters so you might not be able to fit it all in. Only include the things that are most relevant to the course you want to study. Making your answers specific to the course you are applying to shows that you know what the course includes and that you are passionate about the subject. However your personal statement goes to all five of the universities you apply to so don't make it only relevant to one of those, focus more on what you'll be studying than the university.
- Now you have the content of your personal statement, fill it out into proper sentences, arrange it in an order that flows well and make sure your spelling and grammar are correct. Your spelling and grammar are important when making a good first impression.
- If you need to, cut down your word count a little more. Only 4000 characters remember.
- Once you have done this you will have a first draft. Ask someone you trust to read it over for you, maybe a teacher or your mentor. Listen to their advice and make some changes. If you can get more than one person's opinion.
- Once you are happy with it upload your personal statement. Make sure you know the deadline for uploading it and it could take you a while until you are happy with it so start as early as you can.

## 3.5 When do I have to apply to university?

Make a note of these key deadlines so you don't miss out:

- **Mid-September** - You can start your application on UCAS.com, but you can register before then.
- **15th October** - All applications for Oxford and Cambridge, or any course in medicine, veterinary medicine/science or dentistry must be completed - including your reference.
- **15th January** - The majority of applications must be completed - including your reference.

## 4. Potential barriers getting to university

### 4.1 I have educational transcripts/certificates from my home country, how can I get them translated?

UK NARIC is the National Agency responsible for recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills. They provide statements of comparability for people who have international qualifications and want to study in the UK. You can apply for this through their [website](#), but please note there is a cost for this. You may be able to fund the cost of this through a small grant (see 5.2 below).

### 4.2 What qualifications will I need for university?

To be accepted onto an undergraduate course you will usually need a Level 3 qualification:

- A Levels
- BTEC awards, certificates and diplomas at level 3
- BTEC nationals
- International Baccalaureate
- NVQs at level 3
- Access courses

You will also need to think carefully about your level of spoken and written English. Universities may ask you to have a pass in GCSE English, or to sit the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and achieve a minimum score. Even if you can achieve the minimum score, you may decide to wait a year and take further classes to improve your English. You are much more likely to enjoy university when you feel confident with your English.



If you have qualifications from a different country, you may need to get these recognised in the UK (see section above regarding UK NARIC).

## 4.3 I am not sure where to find accommodation for university?

There are different kinds of accommodation. Some will be better than others, depending on your particular circumstances. See below a detailed list of different options:

### 1. Halls of residence

Halls of residence, often shortened to 'halls', are buildings owned by the university and rented out solely to students who go to that university. Information about 'halls' can be found through the universities website.

### 2. Private accommodation

Private accommodation is housing that you rent from an individual, instead of from the university. University websites often advertise private accommodation offered by individuals, but you usually need to go through a letting agency to arrange to rent the flats and houses.

### 3. Family home

If there is a possibility of living at home with your parents or other relatives, this may be a helpful option. Some parents ask their children to contribute a small amount to renting the family home, or expect them to help out with household chores when they become a student to help encourage independence.

### 4. Living with friends or relatives

Living with friends or relatives can be similar to living in your family home. Friends and relatives will probably want you to contribute towards the rent, but it may be possible to negotiate a lower rate of rent than if you rented through a letting agency.

### 5. Local authority accommodation

Local authorities provide accommodation for people who have been in their care. After the age of sixteen, young people who have been in care may be offered 'shared accommodation' (with other young people their age), or low-cost accommodation in a council flat. After a Care Leaver turns eighteen, the local authority does not have

the same duty to provide accommodation and maintenance, but still the duty to provide general assistance and the power to provide more at their discretion.

## 4.4 I am having challenges with my immigration status, who can help?

It's important to always receive immigration advice from qualified legal professionals. The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) regulates immigration advisers and makes sure that they meet certain standards. You can find a qualified immigration adviser through [this government website](#).

Coram Children's Legal Centre also provide free legal information, advice and representation to children, their families and carers. They have free helplines that you can call for help with your particular situation:

<http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com>

## 4.5 My university is not accepting my documentation, what can I do?

If you have certificates and documents from overseas, your university may wish to see an English translation or comparison to UK qualifications. These services are provided by [UK NARIC](#) (see section above regarding UK NARIC on page 10). You can also receive advice from organisations such as the [CORAM Legal Centre](#).

# 5. Potential barriers whilst at university

## 5.1 What happens if my immigration status changes whilst at university?

There are a few important steps to take when you find out your immigration status has changed:

1. Speak with an educational advisor at university so they can guide you on steps to take and people to contact. This can include student services and the widening participation team at your university, as they are a good point of first contact. You may also want to speak to a group like [UKCISA](#) who can provide advice about education entitlements.
2. Seek legal advice from your solicitor or an advisory group such as [CORAM Legal Centre](#) about the implications to the changes of your status.
3. Inform the university of the change because this can affect your fee status and entitlements.
4. Inform student finance or any organisation that is funding your studies e.g. charitable trusts, grants and scholarship networks.

If you receive refugee status after starting your course, you should be eligible to receive student finance for the following academic year. For example a student who is granted refugee status whilst studying in Year 1 of their course will be eligible to receive student finance at the beginning of Year 2.

If you are still awaiting the results of your asylum claim and there is a development whilst you are studying at university, it is best to discuss this with legal advisors such as your solicitor and [CORAM Legal Centre](#).

## 5.2 I'm at university and I've run out of money, who can help?

Here are some suggestions for extra funding for smaller additional costs, not for tuition fees. Please note that not all the suggestions here will be appropriate for everyone. Make sure you look at the criteria and restrictions for the different charitable trusts and grants (ie some may only fund people of particular ages, studying particular subjects, with particular immigration statuses etc).

- [Hope for the Young - Education fund](#)
- [Ruth Hayman Trust - Educational grants](#)
- [Lawrence Atwell's Charity](#)
- [Family Action - Educational grants programme](#)
- [National Zakat Foundation](#)
- [Fund for Human Need](#)
- [Leathersellers](#)
- [Schwab and Westheimer Trust](#)
- [Talisman Charitable Trust](#)

- [Al-Mizan Charitable Trust](#)
- [Alderman Newton's Educational Foundation](#)
- [CARA Funding Directory](#)
- [Thomas Wall Trust](#)
- [Helena Kennedy Foundation](#)
- [Unite Foundation](#)
- [Prince's Trust](#)
- [Always look on the Bright Side of Life Charitable Trust](#)
- [George Heim Memorial Trust](#)
- [Scarr-Hall Memorial Trust](#)
- [S and R Charitable Trust](#)
- [Truro Fund](#)
- [Chizel Educational Trust](#)
- [Elizabeth Allen Trust](#)
- [RefuAid](#) - Equal Access loan
- You could also try searching for funding in the [Turn to Us grants database](#)

## 5.3 Who can I turn to if I need support with my mental health and wellbeing?

It's really important to seek support and speak to someone for your mental health and wellbeing. For many students university is a time for transition and you may be away from familiar environments and social networks. This is a big change and can sometimes feel overwhelming for many students.

Here are some suggested ways of finding support:

1. Your university is likely to have counselling services available for students. Contact your Student Services department or Student Union for more details.
2. See your GP - they will be able to refer you for local NHS mental health services, such as [CAMHS](#) (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).
3. Peer support groups may be available at your university - speak with your Student Union for more information about what is available. [Student Action for Refugees \(STAR\)](#) may also have a student group at your university.
4. The NHS have a list of [helplines](#) available for anyone seeking support for their mental health.
5. [Samaritans](#) provide a free 24-hour helpline for anyone in emotional distress on 116 123.

## 6. If not university, what are the other options?

### 6.1 If I want to study at a higher level but not at university, is there anything else I can study?

It's very important to remember that there is more to life than university. It is not the only way to achieve your goals. In fact, many successful and fulfilled people have never been to university, and there will often be opportunities to go to university when you are a bit older.

You may have decided that university is not an option for you at the moment. Maybe this is because you would like more time to improve your English, get good qualifications, and save up some money. But perhaps it is because you are not entitled to student finance or 'home' fees and you realise that university would be too expensive for you right now.

It can be very sad and frustrating if your plans for university are blocked by the financial barriers resulting from your immigration status. However, there are things you can do to make sure that you don't waste the time and opportunities that you do have. Remember that whatever you do now - whether it is more study, work, volunteering or something different - will all help towards a future university application.

If you are unable to go to university now, think of other ways of progressing in your education.

For example:

- IF free university: <http://www.ifproject.co.uk/>
- Free university level online courses: <http://www.mooc-list.com/>

- Check out this [new 3-week online course, 'Aim Higher'](#), which is designed to help refugees and asylum seekers get the information and the support they need to apply for and enter university in the UK. You could also look into the University of East London's [OLive project](#), a 10-week introduction to HE course for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, and the free workshops, events and courses offered by Birkbeck University through their new [Compass Project](#).
- Look for local courses (such as free English classes offered by charities or by colleges which train English language teachers and which need students to be taught by trainee teachers)
- If you have been in the UK for a longer period of time, you may qualify for funding due to long residency. Find out whether you qualify on the [Let us Learn website](#).
- Look into access courses or other qualifications which are counted as further (not higher) education (See [www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk))
- You can always invest in your English: try to improve your English through conversation with native speakers, by reading English, or working through an IELTS test book. High level English is vital to progress to university and will be useful in your work and friendships.
- When you apply to university, you have to demonstrate your interest in the subject you want to study. Read books about your subject, follow it in the news, and listen to relevant talks on the internet.

## 7. Useful contacts

### 7.1 How can RSN help me?

*"I came to this country when I was 13, but there were complications with my case, and I had to wait seven years to get a decision from the Home Office. Getting to university was a big challenge for me because they wanted to charge me international student fees. How would you feel if*

*you had to sit at home and wait while your friends go to uni and get jobs? It's really important to have people who can help you with this."*

RSN offers a range of service through our [higher education programme](#). These include:

## Phone advice sessions

Our national advice line is a great starting point for your questions about getting into higher education as a young refugee, asylum seeker or survivor of human trafficking. If you are a young person (aged 16-24), a parent, teacher, advisor, university staff member, social worker, or are dealing with this issue in any other way, please get in touch with us for personalised advice and signposting.

Call our advice line (07597583228) or send an email to [highereducation@refugeesupportnetwork.org](mailto:highereducation@refugeesupportnetwork.org). Our helpline is not currently operating set hours so please leave a clear message with your name and number. The helpline messages are regularly checked and one of our team will call you back.

## Face-to-face advice sessions

If you live in particular parts of London, you can meet up with our specialist higher education support worker. [Find out more here](#).

## Thinking Ahead to Higher Education' toolkit

RSN's 'Thinking ahead about higher education' toolkit brings together all the expertise and experience we have built up through this programme. Full of useful information and practical guidance, we hope it will enable young asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants to plan their progression into higher education and that it will be a useful reference tool for their teachers, careers advisors and support workers. [Find out more here](#).

## Training for practitioners

RSN's access to higher education training is ideal for university staff, student ambassadors, social workers, teachers and career advisors. [Find out more here](#).

## University scholarships

We work in partnership with the Schwab Westheimer Trust which provides university scholarships for young asylum seekers. [Find out more here](#).

## 7.2 What other organisations can help me?

These are other organisations which may offer you some help and support:

1. For more general information about your eligibility for education and other support, and to find out more about what is available near you, contact the [Refugee Council](#)
2. [UKCISA](#)
3. [STAR](#)
4. [Article 26 Network](#)
5. For preparing for the IELTS Test with Experts you can go on [this online course](#) from Future Learn
6. Student Shadowing Team at University College London (UCL) - UCL is offering an exciting opportunity for year 12 students to come into UCL and experience what life is really like as an undergraduate. Students will accompany a current undergraduate to a lecture, go on a tour of the UCL campus, and speak to staff about disability, wellbeing and/or financial support available. Please visit their [website](#) for further information.

## 7.3 How can I stay up to date about opportunities?

Stay in touch with policy developments by signing up to the [Migrant Children's Project newsletter](#).

Stay up to date with new university scholarship opportunities by signing up to [STAR's equal access mailing list](#).

Stay up to date with new scholarship opportunities from the Schwab Westheimer Trust and other relevant HE opportunities by [signing up to RSN's HE mailing list](#).



## 8. I'm interested in this issue. Where can I find out more?

- [RSN and Jigsaw Consult's research](#) into higher education for refugees in low resources environments
- A story from [Birkbeck University](#) about their new project for asylum seekers
- [Universities UK's new guide for universities](#) about how to increase access for displaced people
- World University Service of Canada (WUSC)'s paper which sets out issues in the provision of blended higher education for refugees and provide some insights into trends and what practitioners in this space should tackle next
- [Reaching the parts of society universities have missed: A manifesto for the new Director of Fair Access and Participation](#), a new report to which RSN contributed, calling on greater support for young asylum seekers wanting to access university