



Guidance for asylum seekers and refugees on applying for university entry

Is going to university in the UK your ambition? If so, there are a number of things to think about. You will need to know what subject area and also where in the UK you would like to be. Take a look at the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) website which contains masses of information about our universities. Also, all applications for universities go through UCAS.

Here are four areas you will need to think about

1. **Checking the level of English language competence that you will need** (IELTS or other qualifications)
2. **Qualifications to get into the university. What is the equivalence of your existing academic qualifications to those of the UK** (ENIC)
3. **Financing your course** (STAR Scholarships)
4. **Choosing a course and applying for a place at a university** (UCAS)

Have I got the right level of English language competence?

If you are not a native English speaker, you will need one of the following qualifications:

- the IELTS Academic test (fee £195). The minimum score required varies between 6 and 7.5, depending on the course and university. See this [website](#) for more information.
- GCSE English which is the exam taken by British students at the age of 16.
- The Duolingo exam is accepted by a few UK universities. It is computer-based, online and tests listening, speaking, reading and writing. It gives you a score, takes 60 mins and costs about \$59

Each university may have some different tests that they accept. Check the website of any university you might apply to.

IELTS preparation

- IELTS preparation lessons are generally not free but there are free self-study resources such as the British Council [free practice tests](#). There are also [online courses starting at £88](#).
- Practice tests and tips [IELTSbuddy - Free exam preparation to improve your test score](#)
- Sample test questions [Sample test questions \(ielts.org\)](#)
- [Refuaid](#) offer free on-line language programmes at all levels, including proficiency.
- [OLIVE | University of East London \(uel.ac.uk\)](#) offers a 12-week course for refugees and asylum seekers - check the website for the dates of the next course.

Are my existing academic/professional qualifications going to be accepted or will I need to add to them?

Universities have a licence to check your qualifications if you apply to them, and Further Education (FE) colleges may also check the general standard of your existing qualifications.

If you need a statement of comparability you will have to go to [ENIC](#), a government service that checks how your qualifications match with those in the UK. For details, see [Statement of Comparability \(enic.org.uk\)](#) The service costs £49.50 + VAT, translation cost is £40 +VAT. They also charge for postage.

ENIC will need clear colour photographs or scans of your final certificate(s) and transcript(s), plus:



- certified translations of your documents if your documents are not in English and you are not going to use their Translation Waiver Service.
- proof of name change, if your current name does not match the name on your qualification documents.
- If you choose to use their Translation Waiver service, they work with your qualification in their original language. This means that you do not need to upload certified translations.
- They do not provide you with translations of your documents as part of this service.
- At the moment, the Translation Waiver service is available for these languages:
- *Arabic , Bulgarian , Catalan , Chinese , French , German , Italian , Japanese , Polish , Portuguese , Romanian , Russian , Spanish , Ukrainian*
- The Translation Waiver service is only available for the Statement of Comparability service.

To apply for university courses, you normally need level 2 (e.g. GCSE) qualifications in Maths and English and Level 3 (e.g. A level) qualifications in your chosen subject area but it will vary between universities. Taking a level 3 course for a year at an FE College might help you get to the necessary level.

How will I finance my course once accepted?

All students have to pay fees and maintenance costs. Asylum seekers are considered International Students who pay higher fees than Home Students (roughly twice as much). Refugees are classed as Home Students and are entitled to take out student loans. Both can access Sanctuary Scholarships through the STAR universities. <https://star-network.org.uk/access-to-university/scholarships/list/>

Over 80 universities offer scholarships, bursaries and fee waivers for people who have claimed asylum or have refugee status in the UK. Each scholarship has different eligibility criteria, application deadlines, and levels of financial support. The amount allowed for maintenance varies. Competition for the scholarships also varies. You might have to be holding an offer for a place at the university before you can apply for a scholarship there. This varies between universities. You can hold offers at up to five universities, but only one for a scholarship.

At present, you may not get funding for a course if it is at a level equivalent to a course you have already taken (ELQ) Equivalent Lower Qualification in your home country or elsewhere.

<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/courses/funding/full-time-undergraduate-funding/equivalent-or-lower-qualification>. This may change.

Refugee Education UK <https://www.reuk.org/> handles a small number of scholarships. Small grants are available from these charities:

- [Hope for the young](#) supports young people with insecure immigration status in the UK to access and complete higher and further education. They provide small bursaries and advocacy support. Grants up to £4,500 for those who cannot access government funds or are facing extreme financial hardship. Applications from 1. January 2023.
- [The Schwab Educational Trust](#) helps students with small educational grants. They aim to promote and encourage the education of young (up to 28) asylum seekers and refugees. They give grants of up to £2,000 for education resources and materials to young people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds.
- [The Ruth Hayman Trust](#) helps students with small educational grants, maximum £1,500.
- [The Black Heart Scholarship Programme](#). The Programme represents the formal development of some of The Foundation's previous initiatives. The Scholarship Programme awards several annual bursaries to qualified candidates to advance their



educational goals and life aspirations. The process is open to all stages of education from preparatory education to post graduate schooling and the bursaries can be applied to the costs of formal (classroom/school) education or experiential education (field/community).

- [Refuaid](#) have a long list of sources of grants and scholarships

Identifying a course, university(ies) of your choice and applying

UCAS is the organisation that handles everything to do with applying for university. Go to their website and register. You will need a ULN (Unique Learner Number) and when the time comes you will need to pay to submit an application.

Choosing a course and a university <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-where-study>
<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/choosing-course/how-choose-between-undergraduate-courses-and-unis> Also go to <https://www.displacedstudent.org.uk/> where you can search for what you want as an asylum seeker or refugee. Check individual course requirements carefully and apply as early as possible. Look at the grades and or tariff points each course requires and make your selection realistically.

When you're thinking about where to apply, you need to consider whether the scholarship would be sufficient for you to actually take up your place. For example, if the scholarship only offers a fee waiver with no accommodation or living cost component and far away, would it be possible for you to attend that university? On the other hand, some scholarships are very generous and provide accommodation, living costs and fee waivers, so just consider everything carefully when you're deciding which five universities to choose

Applications for up to five universities go through UCAS and the form that you will have to complete covers personal details, qualifications, a reference and a personal statement. There is [special guidance on writing the personal statement for asylum seekers](#) . The nature of the personal statement is changing and will be based in future on five questions for you to answer. Personnel at UCAS are allowed to 'walk you through' completing your application if you phone them.

Other useful websites:

- [Unifrog](#)
- [the Russell group](#) of universities
- Refugee Education UK <https://www.reuk.org/>