

SCP008- Equal Access Policy

Proposer- Kelsey Clarke

Seconder- Antonia Obrvan

Policy Owner- SU President

1. This Council Notes

State the facts surrounding the policy proposal

- a) According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Everyone has the right to education... and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”
- b) According to UNHCR the term refugee applies to any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.
- c) An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application for protection on the basis of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol making the convention applicable to that seeking refugee protection post 1951 too. The UK government has ratified both the convention and the protocol.
- d) Officially, there is no policy at the University of Northampton specifically relating to asylum seekers. However, the government states that they are classified as overseas students when it comes to higher education. Additionally, asylum seekers are: not allowed to take out student loans; not allowed to apply for grants and bursaries; unable to study in another country; denied the right to work in the UK; sometimes required to wait like this for years while a decision is made as to whether they can stay in the UK.
- e) A number of UK universities have amended their admissions policies to allow people seeking refugee protection to pay ‘home’ tuition fees, or have waived fees entirely. These include: King’s College, Warwick, York, Queen Mary’s and Bristol.
- f) 153 students (as of 07/12/2017) have taken campaign action by signing the Equal Access petition at the University of Northampton supporting equal access to university for budding students seeking refugee protection as part of the Equal Access campaign.
- g) The Equal Access campaign is being led by the National Union of Students and Student Action for Refugees and is supported by a range of other organisations.
- h) The experiences and insights of students seeking refugee protection have the potential to greatly enrich the intellectual and social life of the university.
- i) The University of Northampton has a University of Sanctuary working group working towards creating a university welcoming to refugees and asylum seekers. UoN Students’ Union has a Student Action for Refugees group, actively working towards the recognition of human rights for asylum seekers and volunteering in the community.
- j) The University of Northampton are the only Changemaker campus in England, as part of the University Strategy ‘Transforming Lives, Inspiring Change’ for years 2015-2020, the University has stated how the value of ‘opportunity, diversity, a global perspective, inclusion and equality for all’ is a key aspect of this vision. This will be achieved by achieving 2 of the Changemaker Challenges:

Challenge 1 - Make Northamptonshire the best county in the UK for children and young people to flourish and learn.

Challenge 2 - Make Northamptonshire the leading county in the UK for Health and Wellbeing.

It is a direct result of both this global image and the plans for the future of our University that we note that our University will benefit in numerous ways from enabling access to people seeking refugee protection.

2. This Council Believes

State the facts surround the for amendment

- k) The University should adopt a fair and equitable approach in providing access to higher education on the basis of merit for asylum seekers, people granted discretionary leave to remain or humanitarian protection.

3. This Council Resolves

- l) To support the Equal Access campaign and work closely with STAR to create a campaign specific to our institution.
- m) To lobby the university to remove financial barriers preventing students seeking refugee protection from studying here. Specifically to:
 - i) Classify all those seeking asylum as home students.
 - ii) Offer at least 5 bursaries and scholarships to meet study and maintenance costs.
 - iii) Publicise their Equal Access policies so that potential students are encouraged to apply.
- n) For the executive team to request a meeting with the Vice Chancellor and representatives from STAR to discuss how this can be achieved.
- o) For the executive team to sign and support an Equal Access proposal outlining the benefits of providing equal access to higher education to this university, and to liaise with STAR in the creation of this proposal.
- p) To support campaigns on the national level for the equal access to higher education for students seeking refugee protection.

EQUAL ACCESS POLICY

Policy Statement

It is a direct result of both this global image and the plans for the future of our University that we note that our University will benefit in numerous ways from enabling access to people seeking refugee protection.

The world is facing the largest humanitarian crisis with record numbers of people forcibly displaced.

As a Students' Union located in Northamptonshire that has approximately 130 unaccompanied asylum seeking minors and another approximately 130 over 18 year old asylum seekers, we should be supporting Equal Access at our University of Northampton. According to the University Strategy 'Transforming Lives, Inspiring Change' for years 2015-2020, the University has stated how the value of 'opportunity, diversity, a global perspective, inclusion and equality for all' is a key aspect of this vision. This will be achieved by achieving 2 of the Changemaker Challenges:

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Therefore, as an institution valuing student voice, we should lobby the university on behalf of all those students who are in support of asylum seekers accessing higher education in Northampton.