

Asylum Seekers and Refugees - Student Support

This leaflet gives a very brief overview of the rules surrounding financial support that may be available for asylum seekers and refugees while studying. The rules are complicated and subject to change. Always seek advice if you are in any doubt about your circumstances.

As an Asylum Seeker, what rate of tuition fee do I pay?

Middlesex University has a concession that allows all asylum seekers to be charged the 'home rate' of fee while their application is pending with the Home Office. You will however, have to submit proof that you have made an application for asylum in the UK. This will normally be your Application Registration Card (ARC) issued to you by the Home Office.

Can I get any financial assistance from Student Finance England (SFE) for help towards my full-time studies?

Most asylum seekers do not fulfil the 'settled status' criteria required by the SFE in order to qualify for Student Support. Therefore, you will need to ensure that you have secured enough money to pay your own tuition fees. Tuition fees for 2018/19 are £9,250, so you need to budget properly and have guaranteed funding in place for the duration of your course. Non-payment of fees will result in a debt to the University and will result in penalties and restrictions to University facilities.

Some students, who can prove 'long residence' will be eligible to apply for funding from SFE. In order to come under this exception you would need to satisfy the following on the first day of the first academic year of your course:

- a. Be either:
 - Under the age of 18 and have lived in the UK throughout the seven-year period preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course; or
 - Aged 18 years or above and, preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course, have lived in the UK throughout either half of their life or a period of 20 years
- b. Ordinarily resident in England
- c. Been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands throughout the three-year period preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course; and

- d. None of the residence in the UK and Islands during the period above was wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education

Can I claim benefits while I am studying full time?

The rules surrounding asylum seekers and benefits are too complicated to go into here (seek advice from the Student Welfare Advice Team).

If you have full Refugee Status, then the benefit rules are largely the same as home students. These rules state that only very limited categories of full-time students are eligible to claim means-tested benefits.

For more information refer to Welfare Advice Guide: 2018/19 'Benefits and Students'.

Is there any other help available to me?

Unfortunately, there is very little help available for asylum seekers studying full-time. You may be able to get some support from trusts or charities geared towards working with asylum seekers. For more information refer to Welfare Advice Guide: 2018/19 'Sources of Funding for International Students'.

What about part-time study?

Again, Student Support is not usually available because of the settled status rule, so fees and living expenses will have to be paid privately. However, a very limited number of asylum seekers are able to claim Welfare Benefits while on a part time course, so this might help with living costs. To see if you are eligible, seek advice from Student Welfare Advice Team.

What happens if I, my spouse, civil partner or parent gets full Refugee Status (ILR) part way through my course?

If you receive Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) based on your Asylum Application part way through your course then you may be eligible for:

- Living cost support: payable in the following academic quarters.

- Fee assistance: in the year of your change in status if the change is made within three months of the first day of the academic year, and any subsequent years. The first day is usually the 1st September or 1st January if you started in the second semester.

You should submit an application to Student Finance England as soon as you receive notification from the Home Office.

NB. To qualify as the child of a refugee you must have been under 18 on the date on which the refugee made the application for asylum. To qualify as the spouse you must have been married at the time the refugee made the application for asylum.

What happens if I, my spouse, civil partner or parent gets Humanitarian Protection (HP)?

If you are granted HP you do not have the same immediate entitlement to student support as full refugees.

You must also meet:

- The three year residence requirement before the first day of the first academic year of the course. The first day is usually the 1st September or 1st January if you started in the second semester.
- The level of Student Support will depend on the date you are granted HP. If you are awarded HP before the start of your course you will be eligible for full Student Support for the whole of that course. You must have your status confirmed in writing by the Home Office.

If you are awarded HP status after the course starts you will be eligible for:

- Living cost support, payable in the following academic quarters.
- Fee assistance in the year of your change of status, if the change is made within the first three months of the academic year. If granted at a later date, you will have to pay privately for that year, but should get fee assistance in any subsequent years of the course.

Remember, you must meet the three year residency period preceding the 'first day of the academic year of the course' mentioned above.

Note: People who arrived under the Gateway Protection Programme, the Mandate Refugee Scheme, the Ten or More Plan and the Case Resolution (legacy) cases will have been granted indefinite leave to enter/remain (ILE/R) mentioned above, but not refugee status.

What happens when my permission to stay in the UK is due to expire?

You remain eligible for Student Support if you can show that you applied to extend or change your immigration status before your permission expired, even if you are still waiting for a decision on that application. Additionally, if you are in the process of appealing against a Home Office decision to refuse you further permission to remain in the UK. Seek advice immediately if you fall into this category.

Further information:

Student Finance England - For advice on student funding. Tel: 0300 100 0607 (Mon-Fri, 8am to 8pm and Sat & Sun, 9am to 5.30pm) or visit www.gov.uk/student-finance

Refugee Council - Works with asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. Tel: General enquiries 020 7346 6700 or visit www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Refugee Women's Association - For advice and guidance on education, employment, health and social care specifically for Refugee women. Tel: 020 7923 2412 or visit www.refugeewomen.org.uk

Any questions?

Contact the Middlesex University Student Welfare Advice Team on 020 8411 3008 or email: welfare@mdx.ac.uk

You can access some of our other Welfare Advice Guide information leaflets at: unihub.mdx.ac.uk/welfare-guides

Middlesex University Student Welfare Advice Team have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this leaflet is accurate. Middlesex University however, cannot be held responsible for any omissions or errors. This publication can only be a guide and is not intended to replace the complex and diverse legislation covered. Statutes and regulations may change during the year without notice. If in doubt seek independent advice.

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