



Universities of Sanctuary Ireland (UoSI)

Introduction

Welcome to the *Universities of Sanctuary Ireland* stream of Places of Sanctuary Ireland.

Academic and administrative staff and students in institutes of higher education in Ireland have been advocating for their campuses to become safe and welcoming places for refugees, international protection applicants and other migrants, with the first institute being awarded the designation University of Sanctuary in 2016.

Universities of Sanctuary Ireland (UoSI) is an initiative to encourage and celebrate the good practice of universities, colleges and institutes welcoming displaced persons into their university communities and fostering a culture of welcome and inclusion for all those seeking sanctuary. We want to spread this culture of welcome across the institutions of higher education all over the island.

Access to higher education & scholarship schemes

Access to higher education is a challenge for those seeking asylum in Ireland, mainly due to financial costs. One of the key actions of a university of sanctuary is enabling pathways to higher education through designated scholarship schemes.

As it stands, international protection applicants do not have the same entitlements as Irish citizens in relation to accessing SUSI grants or EU/EEA/Swiss citizens eligible for the EU fees rate.

In addition, refugees who do not officially satisfy the 3 out of 5 year residency requirement before entering their course do not have access to the above entitlements; they are thus charged the non-EU Fees rate.

While there is a state funded 'Student Support Scheme for people in the International Protection System (asylum seekers)' offered by the *Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science* for those in the protection system, those who do not meet the 3 year residency requirement are not eligible to apply.

How to become a University/College of Sanctuary in Ireland

A University/College/Institute of Sanctuary should follow three main principles across the board and at all levels:

1. **Learn:** Learning about what it means to seek sanctuary, in general and in relation to higher education institutions, in particular. It encompasses any activities that involve training staff, teaching students, or holding events to raise awareness on what it means to seek sanctuary.

Examples:

- Inviting refugees and people seeking asylum to come and talk about their experiences and raise awareness
- Training staff and students about the issues that refugees, people seeking asylum, and other migrants face, especially those who may need this information for their work
- Attending refugee forums/meetings/conventions and bringing back learning to the academic community
- Including lecture content on refugee issues or the wider refugee crisis on taught programmes
- Annual events, e.g. Refugee Week

2. **Embed:** embedding concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion within the institution and the wider community. A sustainable culture of welcome should be established within the institution. These actions should be far reaching, tangible and long lasting. They should include offers of places to study, subject to eligibility, through scholarships and similar supportive schemes. The actions need to be coordinated through the creation of a sanctuary steering group that is representative of stakeholders across the board. Stakeholders include: senior management, representation from all faculties, academic and support staff, the Students' Union and student volunteers, international protection applicants and refugees, and NGO representatives. Actions include:

- Create financial incentives such as bursaries, scholarships and fee waivers for sanctuary seeking students
- Support asylum seeking academia to get back to their research
- Support voluntary work by staff and students
- Whenever appropriate, make sure curriculum covers relevant aspects of migrant issues including the refugee crisis and the Irish asylum system
- Open up facilities on campus, such as sports centres, computer labs and libraries to people seeking sanctuary
- Build a relationship with the local City of Sanctuary (CoS) group (or help to start one) and other refugee charities, and consult them on how best to support their work
- Support local community efforts in helping people seeking sanctuary
- Find ways to help refugees to re-establish themselves and integrate, through language support, work placement, volunteering opportunities, accrediting prior learning, re-skilling and up-skilling career workshops.

3. **Share:** Sharing your vision, achievements, what you have learned and your good practice with other education institutions, the local community and as far as you can reach. What are you offering? What has worked? What have you learnt? Share your experience and understanding with others through media, on your (and our) website, and through your own events.

The “learn”, “take positive action”, and “share” principles can be approached in lots of different ways.

If you believe your university/ college is following these three main principles, and would like to apply for a University of Sanctuary Award, you are invited to submit an application to us at uosireland@gmail.com. This application will be appraised in accordance with the vision of the City of Sanctuary movement and the three principles mentioned above.

A faculty or other organisation within a third level institution already following the principles may consider applying for its own Sanctuary Award as a first step that can then be spread to other parts of the campus.

If your organisation agrees to support the principles of the CoS movement, but you do not feel you are ready, after reaching agreement within your organisation you can sign our pledge card, and enter the path. Members of our national/local groups will be happy to assist you.

The UoSI Sanctuary Network: Academia around Ireland use the UoSI network, which meets regularly on-line, to link up with each other and share sanctuary-related knowledge, initiatives and experiences. You are welcome to join by emailing your request to: uosireland@gmail.com.

Cross-institution sanctuary working group checklist

Membership		Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Senior management ● Key faculties ● Student’s Union ● Students/ staff directly involved in supporting vulnerable migrants in Ireland ● Representatives from the asylum seeker and refugee community ● Representative NGO ● Target beneficiaries of the actions taken 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strategic plan (3 year minimum), accounting for commitment and sustainability ● Scholarships (detailing fees waiver and ancillary supports, e.g. transport, materials and equipment and subsistence costs) ● Website and communication strategy ● Annual report ● Representation on University of Sanctuary Ireland Committee ● Active engagement with the wider community, including local schools and City of Sanctuary 	

Next step: Download the application form from the UoSI website and, when completed, email it to uosireland@gmail.com