

**Equal Access to HE Policy Proposal**

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| **Contact details** | |
| Your name (Proposer of the policy) | Hadiza Adah |
| The name of a person who supports the policy (Seconder of the policy) | Al.Noor Abdullah |

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| **Student Impact** | |
| Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how. | Yes. Although the university does not collect information on these groups of people, I have consulted a few students who identify as refugees or asylum seekers and spoken to a few other students about this motion and how it would impact our present and future students who identify under this group. I have spoken to different students through local organisations who have access to these groups of students or are preparing them to access HE |
| How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students? | It will provide a fairer treatment to refugees or asylum seekers studying within our HE. It would give some students the opportunity to get access to higher education. |

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| **Policy Proposal** |
| **The Union Notes** (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible. |
| 1. 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".[[1]](#footnote-1)  2. 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 fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.  3. An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application for protection based on the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.  4. The University of Plymouth currently has no policies on asylum seekers and access to HE. This means, they are treated as international students. Meanwhile 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.  The university of Plymouth also does not collect any data on how many or what students belong to this group. Hence it is difficult to provide support to them.  5. 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 more  6. 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.  7. The experiences and insights of students seeking refugee protection have the potential to greatly enrich the intellectual and social life of the university.  8. These groups of students could potentially improve the diversity and knowledge of opinions in classrooms, and research departments, and would be a positive addition to supporting university life. |
| **The Union Believes** (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in ‘The Union Notes’ |
| 1. In 2016, the UK received applications for asylum for 39,000 individuals (including dependents) – far less than Germany (692,000), Italy (117,000) and France (83,000). In the same year, 34 per cent of initial applications (not including appeals) were accepted.[[2]](#footnote-2) 2. People who have sought refuge in the UK do not have equal access to university; most are classed as international students, which mean they are charged higher fees. On top of this, most cannot get a student loan and do not have the right to work to earn money to pay their fees and living costs. 3. The University should adopt a fair and equitable approach in providing access to higher education based on merit for asylum seekers, people granted discretionary leave to remain or humanitarian protection. 4. Asylum seekers are not International students and hence should not pay international fees. 5. Everyone including refugees and asylum seekers should be able to access and succeed in education |
| **The Union Resolves** (Actions) Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific. |
| 1. To seek guidance from NUS as regards how to go about providing equal access to refugees or asylum seekers on our campus.  2. To lobby the University of Plymouth into offering a good scholarship package for victims of these crisis who choose to study at University of Plymouth so they can begin rebuilding their lives.  3. To lobby the university to remove financial barriers preventing students seeking refugee protection from studying here. This could be to:  a) Classify all those seeking asylum as home students with regards to tuition.  b) Offer access to short courses for asylum seekers  c) To offer access to extra-curricular short courses (e.g. academic writing) for asylum seekers or refugees.  d) To provide maintenance grants for refugees and asylum seekers seeking higher education. This could cover accommodation, resources, food, or travel  e) To offer at least a tuition and accommodation bursary for refugees or asylum seekers  f) To offer at least one fixed postgraduate scholarship for refugees or asylum seekers.  g) Publicise their Equal Access policies so that potential students are encouraged to apply  h) To recognise the degrees some refugees or asylum seekers may have gotten from their home countries.  4. For the relevant sabbatical officer to work closely with the Law clinic to discuss how this can be achieved.  5. To work with the university to investigate further ways the institution could help future University of Plymouth refugees and migrants of circumstance, for example, by offering them places in surplus accommodation, setting up English language classes.  6. To support any students who may want to create a student network group for this purpose. |
| **Appendices/supporting information** Please include any supporting information relevant to your motion, this could include; consideration of how you would achieve any points in ‘The Union Resolves’, links to news articles or online publications |
| Generally, there are only a few students within our cohort who identify as refugees or asylum seekers.  This proposal seeks to provide extra support for these groups of students.  Already, over 5o universities across the country provide some sort of support to these groups of students.  I have been working with Rosie Brenan from the law clinic to produce a report with recommendations that would go to the university. This proposal would strengthen the report, and continue the work with Rosie Brenan towards lobbying the university to provide some extra form of support to these groups of students.  This topic has been brought up with the university. Although they have not committed to doing anything yet, this would be a stepping-stone towards establishing something for students on our campus.  <http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf>  <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-support-refugees/find-out-about-refugees>  <http://www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/campaigns/equal_access>  <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0002/5956/A_lot_to_learn-Jan_13.pdf>  <http://www.star-network.org.uk/images/uploads/documents/Equal_Access_Toolkit_-_WEB.pdf> |

1. <http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-support-refugees/find-out-about-refugees> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)