

POLICY PROPOSAL

Policy number 2016/17-4
Passed on 8th December 2016 at policy round

Title: **Opening up access to Higher Education for refugees in the UK**

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SECONDED BY: PHILIPPA SODERBERG

The policy proposal needs to be put forward by two people who have to be registered students at Bath

INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing simultaneously the worst refugee crisis since World War 2 and a rise in the far-right politics of bigotry and hate on a scale not seen in Europe since that same conflict. Welcoming refugees to our community is not only an essential humanitarian response to an ongoing crisis but also a clear and unequivocal statement that xenophobia and hate have no place on our campus.

As an international student body, we have a collective responsibility to challenge racism and bigotry wherever they appear and to ensure that people seeking refuge in the UK have the same access to Higher Education as we do. Dozens of universities around the country have created scholarships for refugees. Our University has the ability to do the same, but senior managers have so far decided not to do so. Students and staff at our university are starting a crowdfunding to help open up access to Higher Education for refugees. We are calling on our Students' Union for support.

REASON FOR CHANGE

Considering (*facts*)

1. The Student's Union has been relatively muted in its response to the refugee crisis until now.
2. The university is large and influential - it can positively influence public discourse around refugees and dramatically improve the lives of those seeking safety in the UK by creating opportunities for them to access higher education.
3. The university's Vice Chancellor blocked calls for refugee scholarships last year, despite several demonstrations and a petition signed by 1000+ students and members of staff, proving that there is already existing support for enabling refugees to study at university.
4. Representatives of the three staff trade unions, UCU, UNISON and Unite, have pledged their support for the creation of scholarships for refugees at Bath.
5. Access to higher education promotes integration for refugees in the UK, and diminishes the threat of poverty and homelessness.
6. To date 44 other universities in the UK have already implemented schemes aimed at helping refugees access Higher Education.
7. Recently, University of Bristol created 10 scholarship places for which there were 130 applicants, affirming there is considerable demand.

Bath Students' Union recognises that ... (*opinions*)

1. Inaction is a conscious choice. Collective responses to social and political problems are always more powerful than the actions of isolated individuals.
 2. Students and our Union welcome refugees and reject the divisive rhetoric that has been on the rise in recent months.
 3. The current refugee crisis is the worst in living memory, and the university, and the Students' Union, should choose to be on the right side of history.
 4. Students and staff are planning to launch a crowdfund with the aim of opening up access to Higher Education for refugees.
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THE PROPOSAL

Bath Students' Union will ... (actions)

1. Vocally and actively support students and societies across campus that fundraise and campaign for access to Higher Education for refugees in the UK.
2. Provide cross-campus marketing for fundraising events related to aforementioned fundraising.
3. Contact the Alumni Relations Office to see if they can look into contacting alumni who may be interested in donating or supporting the fundraising in other ways, furthermore ask the Alumni Relations Office to contact former SU officers to ask for donations
4. Publish a public statement saying the Student Union welcome refugees to the University and supports opening up access to Higher Education for refugees in the UK.
5. Have SU Officers on University Senate submit a proposal and request a vote that "refugees are welcomed to the university through provision of scholarships"
6. Support students in their fundraising campaign through social media, including SU Officers temporarily changing their social media profile pictures to the image created by Amnesty society for the crowdfund.