

GC.10.09.8d

GUILD COUNCIL

29/10/09

Author/contact:	Josie Collins – STAR Laura Beckmann –UN Society
Executive Summary:	This motion looks at changing the status of Asylum Seeker students to ensure that they have equal access to Higher Education. It calls for the Guild to promote and support STAR's beliefs on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and also support STAR's 'Equal access to higher education campaign' as well as outlining the barriers in place for Asylum Seeker Students to the University and Vice Chancellor.
GOG Recommendation:	Approval

Motion: Equal access to higher education for asylum seekers

Guild Council Notes:

1. The term refugee applies to any person who, owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted 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.
2. Asylum seekers are individuals who claim to be refugees, but are awaiting a formal decision on the acceptance of their application from the Home Office (HO).
3. Asylum seekers and some refugees are currently charged international fees at the University of Birmingham (from £9,880 - £23,350)
 - a. while denied the right to work in the UK
 - b. while not being allowed to take out student loans
 - c. while they cannot apply for grants and bursaries
4. Many refugees and asylum seekers do not have permission to reside in the UK for the duration of a university course and therefore fail the admissions tests for many universities.
5. A number of UK universities have amended their admissions policies to allow more equal access to higher education for refugees and asylum seekers. Such as Edge Hill University, Leeds University, Liverpool Hope University, London Metropolitan, Manchester Metropolitan, Middlesex and Wolverhampton.
6. In 2008 the National Union of students passed a motion that reflects all the points put forward in this motion.
7. The university of Birmingham states that '*Asylum seekers are required to pay tuition fees at the higher overseas rate ... unless you have sufficient funds to finance your studies and pay tuition fees at the overseas rate, you are best advised to*

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wait until your immigration status has been confirmed by the Home Office before commencing your course'.

Guild Council Believes:

1. The University should adopt a fair and equitable approach in providing access to higher education for all students, including refugees and asylum seekers.
2. The University should not discriminate against refugees and asylum seekers based on their political status.
3. The University's decisions on admitting students should not be influenced by the length of time asylum seekers and refugees are permitted to remain in the UK.

Guild Council Resolves:

1. To campaign to promote and support STAR's beliefs on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.
2. To support STAR's 'Equal access to higher education campaign'.
3. To lobby the University to provide financial support to asylum seekers and refugees who face financial barriers to accessing higher education, through the provision of bursaries and grants.
4. To lobby the University to reclassify asylum seekers as 'Home Students' for tuition fee purposes.

Guild Council Mandates:

1. For the Guild Officer Team to sign a letter to relevant people within the University to outline barriers that the University puts in place to accessing higher education, to explain the benefits of providing equal access to higher education at Birmingham University, and to liaise with the STAR society in the creation of this letter.
2. To liaise with the STAR society about how best to promote this campaign.

Proposed: Josie Collins – Chair of STAR

Seconded: Laura Beckmann – President UN Society