Student Action for Refugees

STAR UNIVERSITY APPLICATION GUIDANCE PACK 2026/27

Applying to university

A STAR guide for refugees and people seeking asylum, including our guide to applying for sanctuary scholarships

Updated October 2026, for courses starting in 2027

Good luck with your application to university! This pack brings together resources and websites to help you prepare. Sign up to the STAR Equal Access mailing list to receive updates and new opportunities.

Student Action for Refugees

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Part 1: Applying to university

Where to find information

There is a lot of information in the Access to University section of the STAR website, including:

- Applying to university for refugees and people seeking asylum (October 2026): YouTube video
- Top tips from university staff and FAQs (October 2026): YouTube Video
- STAR's Frequently Asked Questions page, for answers to common questions

Other useful websites

- How to apply to university on the Refugee Education UK (REUK) website
- This helpful video produced by REUK and the University of Sussex
- UCAS has a range of resources about applying to university:
  - key dates and deadlines for undergraduate degrees
  - a guide to filling in your UCAS application
  - information for refugees and people seeking asylum
  - advice on writing your personal statement
  - information about getting a reference, including if you are not in school or college
  - application fee waivers
  - sign up to the UCAS Hub
- If you haven't chosen a course yet, look at:
  - the UCAS careers quiz
  - advice from the Complete University Guide
  - university open days (also advertised on university websites)
  - STAR's pre-university courses page
- To search for postgraduate courses, use the Myriad app from UCAS.

Important: if you are seeking asylum and your immigration bail letter (BAIL 201) has a 'no study' condition, please take legal advice before applying to university. Right to Remain has information on finding legal support.

Step-by-step guide to applying to university

Step 1: Check your eligibility for student finance

In the UK, your immigration status affects whether you can get government student finance (loans for your tuition fees and living costs) and whether you pay home or international fees. The rules are different in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- **Refugee status or humanitarian protection:** you are usually eligible for home fees and student finance in all four nations. You do not need to have lived in the UK for three years first.

- **Seeking asylum:** you are usually not eligible for student finance and are usually charged international fees. In Scotland, if you or your parents claimed asylum when you were under 18, you may be able to get home fees and support.
- **Discretionary or limited leave to remain:** the rules depend on where you live.
  - **England:** you can usually only get student finance under the long residence rules. You must be under 18 and have lived in the UK for at least seven years, or be 18 or over and have lived in the UK for at least half your life or at least 20 years, before the first day of the first academic year of your course.
  - **Wales and Northern Ireland:** you may be able to get home fees without a three-year wait. Check with Student Finance Wales or Student Finance NI about loans.
  - **Scotland:** you may get home fees and support if you have discretionary leave after a refused asylum claim, or other leave to remain after living in the UK for three years.

Please note: since 2 March 2026, new grants of refugee status and humanitarian protection are usually for 30 months. Make sure your leave is valid at the start of each academic year, and apply to extend it in good time.

For a detailed explanation of eligibility, visit the UKCISA website and the Refugee Education UK website. Universities make the final decision on your fee status.

Step 2: Check which universities offer scholarships

If you aren't eligible for student finance, you may be able to get a scholarship to fund your studies. Over 80 universities in the UK offer scholarships, bursaries or fee waivers for people who have claimed asylum. You can't be sure you will be awarded a scholarship, but you can improve your chances by applying to universities that offer a scholarship that suits you. Look at STAR's scholarships list to see which universities offer the course you're interested in. The list is updated regularly, but always check the details with the university.

Step 3: Check your eligibility for the scholarship

Every university's scholarship is slightly different. Some are only open to people seeking asylum or to people who are not eligible for student finance. Check the eligibility column of the scholarships list and the university's website, and contact the university if you are unsure. Make a note of the scholarship deadline.

If you came to the UK through a resettlement scheme for Afghan nationals (ARAP or ACRS) or through a visa route for Ukrainians, you may not be eligible for some scholarships. If you are unsure, ask the university whether your application will be considered.

Step 4: Research what course you'd like to study

Take time to find a course and university that suits you. You can:

- **Use the UCAS Hub:** search over 35,000 courses, take the careers quiz, try subject tasters and virtual work experience. Subject tasters are also good evidence for your personal statement.
- **Check the entry requirements:** the qualifications, grades and level of English the course asks for. Some universities consider your circumstances (contextual admissions), for example by making a reduced offer.
- **Consider different routes in:** Level 3 qualifications (such as A Levels, the International Baccalaureate or Scottish Highers), Access to HE, BTEC, foundation and pathway courses, or school leaving certificates from abroad. Some universities, such as the Open University, accept students without formal qualifications.

- **Find out what it's really like:** go to open days, virtual tours and UCAS Discovery events, and talk to current students.
- **Think about practical things:** where the university is, the cost of living there (the UCAS Hub has a budget calculator), and whether you want to study full-time or part-time, online or in person.
- **Check the scholarship covers your course,** and contact universities early to discuss your circumstances before you apply.

Step 5: Check what you need before applying

- **Qualifications:** you will need evidence of your qualifications. If they are from outside the UK, a Statement of Comparability from ENIC may help (there is a fee). Always check with the university what they accept.
- **English language:** if English is not your first language, you may need to take a test, such as IELTS, Duolingo, GCSE English or Level 2 Functional Skills. The British Council offers free IELTS tests, and the Duolingo test can be free if you ask the university for a voucher.

Step 6: Apply for your course

In most cases, you must apply for your course before you can apply for the scholarship.

Undergraduate courses

You apply for undergraduate courses through UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service), the UK's shared admissions service.

- **Register on the UCAS Hub.** If you are applying through a school or college, link your application using their **'buzzword'**. If you are applying independently, skip this step.
- **Choose up to five courses** (four for medicine, dentistry or veterinary courses, plus one other). Make sure you apply to universities with scholarships you are eligible for. You can't apply to both Oxford and Cambridge, and universities can't see your other choices.
- **Complete each section** and mark it as complete. The **'Where you live'** section asks for your addresses for the last three years, which helps universities work out your fee status. **'Nominated access'** lets someone you trust, such as a support worker, speak to UCAS on your behalf.
- **Sharing your circumstances:** the 'More about you' section includes an optional question about refugee status or seeking asylum. Your answer is confidential and is not used to decide your fee status. It helps universities offer you the right support.
- **Personal statement:** answer three questions: why you want to study the course, how your qualifications and studies have prepared you, and what else you've done to prepare outside of education. You have **4,000 characters in total**, with at least 350 characters for each answer. See UCAS's personal statement advice.
- **Reference:** a school or college will add your reference. If you apply independently, enter your referee's details and UCAS will email them, so ask them early. The same reference goes to all your choices. See UCAS's advice on references.
- **Supporting documents (optional):** you can upload documents such as your visa or immigration status document, passport, qualification certificates and translations, English test results, or a letter confirming time in care. Documents can't be removed once you submit.
- **Application fee:** £34.50 for 2027 entry. You may not have to pay if you are in education and have received free school meals in the past six years, or if you are a care leaver aged 25 or under (26 or under in Scotland). Care leavers must contact UCAS after completing every section but before submitting. See fee waivers.

- **Deadlines:** the main deadline is **13 January 2027 at 6pm** (15 October 2026 for Oxford, Cambridge and most medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses). See the key dates below. If you apply through a school or college, their internal deadline will be earlier.
- **After you apply:** track your application in the UCAS Hub. You will receive one of four decisions: unconditional offer, conditional offer, unsuccessful or withdrawn. Once you have all your decisions, choose a firm (first) choice and an insurance (back-up) choice. If you make a mistake or change your mind, call UCAS on 0371 468 0 468 with your Personal ID within 14 days.
- **Adding or changing choices:** if you applied to fewer than five choices or all your five choices were unsuccessful, you can add more until 30 June, as long as you haven't accepted or declined any offers. UCAS Extra (25 February to 1 July 2027) is for people who used all five choices and either had no offers or declined them. Clearing opens on 2 July 2027.
- **Need help?** UCAS has guides to applying in different languages. You can call the UCAS Customer Experience Centre on 0371 468 0 468, Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 6pm.

Postgraduate courses

To apply for a postgraduate course, apply directly through the university's website, not through UCAS. Deadlines for postgraduate applications vary, so apply early to make sure there is time to apply for a scholarship. Talk to potential supervisors, and for a PhD you will need a research proposal: contact the department you want to research in.

Step 7: Apply for a scholarship

Each university produces its own guidance on how to apply for its scholarship, so follow their advice. Give yourself enough time to complete your application so you don't need to rush. See Part 3 of this pack for our step-by-step guide.

Key UCAS dates for 2027 entry

Date	What happens
1 September 2026	First day UCAS can receive a completed application
15 October 2026, 6pm	Deadline for Oxford, Cambridge and most medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses
13 January 2027, 6pm	Equal consideration deadline for most other courses
25 February 2027	UCAS Extra opens
31 March 2027	Universities aim to have sent decisions on applications received by 13 January
30 June 2027, 6pm	Last date to send a main scheme application (later applications go into Clearing)
1 July 2027	Last day to add an Extra choice
2 July 2027	Clearing opens
10 and 12 August 2027	Results days: Scotland (SQA) on 10 August, A levels on 12 August
23 September 2027, 6pm	Final date for 2027 entry applications

Source: UCAS, SQA and JCQ. Always check the UCAS website for the latest dates.

More resources and support

Stay connected

- Sign up to the STAR Equal Access mailing list for updates and new opportunities.
- Equal Access Network: an online peer support network coordinated by STAR's Equal Access Advocates. Join to connect with other applicants and students from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds.

Advice and guidance

- Refugee Education UK (REUK): information and advice on getting to and paying for college and university, plus mentoring. Email advice@reuk.org. If you're not yet ready for university, see their help for college.
- UCAS: displaced students: UCAS's advice on fee status, student finance and scholarships for refugees, people seeking asylum and people with limited leave. Supporters can use UCAS's supporter toolkits.
- UKCISA student advice line: advice on fee status and student finance based on your immigration status.
- We Belong: a charity led by young migrants, supporting young people with insecure immigration status into university, including advice on the long residence rules.
- Coram Children's Legal Centre: legal advice for children and young people, including on education entitlements.
- Aspiring Dreams: mentoring and support with education and employment, based in North Tyneside.
- RETAS: if you are in Leeds, RETAS can help with college or university applications.

Finding a university and a scholarship

- Universities of Sanctuary: the list of universities recognised for welcoming people seeking sanctuary. Every University of Sanctuary offers sanctuary scholarships, but each scholarship differs in its provision - to ensure that you know exactly what it covers, check with each university you are interested in applying to by contacting them directly.
- STAR scholarships list and Displaced Student Opportunities UK (DSOP): scholarships, open days, courses and other opportunities.

Preparing for university

- Pre-university courses: if you need to improve your English or want to do a preparatory course. You can also find courses on DSOP and RefugEAP.
- Free online learning: OpenLearn (free courses from the Open University) and Kiron. These are good evidence of independent study for your personal statement.
- ENIC: if you need to compare an overseas qualification with UK qualifications, ENIC provides a Statement of Comparability (for a fee). University admissions teams may also be able to help.

Help with costs

- Other scholarships and grants on the STAR website.
- Ruth Hayman Trust: small education grants for adults whose first language is not English, mainly refugees and people seeking asylum.

- Westheimer Scholarship (Schwab and Westheimer Trust): covers home tuition fees and living costs for an undergraduate degree in social work, medicine, nursing or a related health or social care subject. For people aged 30 or under who are seeking asylum or have limited leave. Up to three a year.
- RefuAid: interest-free loans that can cover education, training and exams.
- Turn2us grants search: find charitable grants you may be eligible for.
- **Care-experienced students:** Propel has information about university support for care leavers. The Unite Foundation offers free student accommodation to some care leavers and estranged students who are eligible for home fees.

Before you accept a scholarship

- If you receive Asylum Support or legal aid, get advice on how a scholarship could affect it, from your solicitor, Migrant Help or the Asylum Support Appeals Project.

Work and re-qualifying

- Breaking Barriers: one-to-one employment support for refugees aged 18 and over with the right to work, in London, Glasgow, Greater Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands. It also runs language and re-accreditation programmes for people with professional qualifications from another country. Check whether these are open, as they aren't always taking new clients.
- The Launchpad Collective: supports refugees into employment.
- **Refugee doctors and health professionals:**
  - REACHE (Salford): free language and clinical training for refugee and asylum-seeking doctors.
  - GMC help for refugee doctors.
  - BMA refugee doctor support.
  - RMBF financial help.

Support in Scotland and Northern Ireland

- **Scotland:**
  - Universities Scotland: Refugees Welcome: what Scottish universities offer.
  - SAAS guidance for people seeking asylum.
- **Northern Ireland:**
  - Law Centre NI: free immigration advice.
  - The web page managed by nidirect provides useful contacts for asylum seekers and refugees.

Volunteering

Find your local Volunteer Centre or look at:

- general advice and useful links about volunteering from NCVO
- Do IT for opportunities across the UK
- Volunteering Wales if you are in Wales
- Volunteer Scotland if you are in Scotland
- Volunteer Now if you are in Northern Ireland
- Reach Volunteering for volunteers with specific skills, such as accountancy, marketing, law, management, mentoring or IT
- NHS Volunteering in England

For legal advice, employment support, LGBTQ+ support and more, see the other organisations listed on the STAR website.

More questions?

If you have questions about a specific course or scholarship, contact the university you're applying to. If you can't find an answer, contact Refugee Education UK, or use the contact form on Displaced Student Opportunities UK.

Part 2: Paying for university study

Before taking up a place at university, you need to know how you will pay for your studies. First, check whether you will pay **home fees** (what UK students pay) or **international fees** (usually much higher). In England, home fees are up to £9,790 a year in 2026/27, rising to £10,050 in 2027/28. Fees are set differently in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and some universities treat all displaced students as home students.

Next, check whether you are eligible for a government student loan (student finance). This is how most people in the UK pay for university. There are different loans for **undergraduate** (your first degree) and **postgraduate** (advanced degree) study. You pay the money back, but only when your income is above a certain amount.

If you can't get a student loan, or you decide not to take a loan for religious or personal reasons, you may be able to cover the cost of your studies with a university **sanctuary scholarship** (see section d) or another source of funding (see section f). To find out more about student finance, read this useful article from the Complete University Guide.

a. Undergraduate student finance

Student finance includes a **Tuition Fee Loan** to cover your fees and a **Maintenance Loan** to cover living costs. In some parts of the UK, some costs may be covered by a **grant**, which you do not have to pay back. Check early whether you are eligible, and apply as soon as you can so your money is ready when your course starts.

> **New for 2027 in England:** if you live in England and your course starts on or after 1 January 2027 (for example, in September 2027), you apply through the new Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) service. Applications open at the end of October 2026. You will need a new account, even if you already have a Student Finance England account. If you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, use the student finance service for where you live.

Things that may affect your eligibility:

- Your immigration status
- Where in the UK you live
- How long you have lived there
- Any previous study
- The course you're applying for
- Whether you plan to study full-time or part-time

How the rules usually work across the UK

Status	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
Refugee	Home fees and student finance	Home fees and student finance	Home fees and student finance	Home fees and student finance
Humanitarian protection	Home fees and student finance	Home fees and student finance	Home fees and student finance	Home fees and student finance

Status	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
Discretionary or limited leave	International, unless you meet the long residence rules	Home fees; student finance usually after 3 years' UK residence	Home fees and student finance (check with Student Finance NI)	Home fees and support; other leave after 3 years' UK residence
Waiting for an asylum decision	International, no student finance	International, no student finance	International, no student finance	International, but home fees and support if you or your parent claimed asylum when you were under 18

Rules for 2026/27. Universities make the final decision on fee status. Check UKCISA and your student finance body for your situation.

Where to find information

- For general guidance about who qualifies for undergraduate student finance, see the GOV.UK website. The finance available depends on where in the UK you live:
  - student finance in **England**
  - student finance in **Scotland** (SAAS)
  - student finance in **Wales**
  - student finance in **Northern Ireland**
- If you are in **Scotland**, the rules for some asylum seekers changed in 2023: young people seeking asylum on their own, and children of asylum seekers, may be eligible if they were under 18 when the asylum claim was made.
- Applying for a student loan: information for refugees (2022): YouTube videos
- The UKCISA website explains eligibility based on immigration status. UKCISA also has an advice line you can contact.

If you are eligible for student finance but **cannot take a loan for religious reasons**, the UK government's Alternative Student Finance is designed to be compatible with Islamic principles. Check whether it is available for your course.

If you are not eligible for student finance, some universities offer **sanctuary scholarships** for displaced students (see section d). Check what universities offer before you apply for your course. There are also **other sources of financial support** you may be able to apply for (see section f).

b. Undergraduate bursaries

Depending on your course, there may be **bursaries** that help with your costs. Bursaries are not loans, and you do not have to pay them back. They differ across the UK, so find the information for where you live and check you are eligible before you apply. These are some examples, not a complete list:

- **NHS Bursary:** for medical and dental students in England in the later years of their course (for example, years 5 and 6 of an undergraduate course).
- **Nursing and health bursaries:** for nursing, midwifery and allied health profession students in Wales; nursing, midwifery and paramedic students in Scotland; and nursing, midwifery, allied health and dental hygiene students in Northern Ireland.
- **Social work:** bursaries for full-time social work students in England and Wales, and a Student Incentive Scheme in Northern Ireland.

c. Funding for postgraduate study

You may be able to fund postgraduate study through loans, studentships, bursaries and grants. You may be able to get a Postgraduate Master's Loan or a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan for full-time or part-time study. These have their own eligibility rules, so check before you apply.

There may be **bursaries** (which you don't pay back) for some postgraduate courses, such as teacher training in certain subjects, social work, medicine or health care. **Studentships** are funded postgraduate research places that cover fees and sometimes living costs. Read more about postgraduate funding options.

d. Scholarships

There are **two main types of scholarship** that can help you pay for university. You can apply for both, and many students combine support from more than one source.

- **University scholarships** (often called **sanctuary scholarships**): offered by an individual university, for students who want to study at that university.
- **External scholarships and grants**: offered by charities, trusts and foundations, and usually used at any university.

1. University scholarships (sanctuary scholarships)

Sanctuary scholarships are packages of financial support that a university offers to students who would find it hard to get into higher education because of their **immigration status or forced displacement**. Many are for people who cannot get government student finance, such as people seeking asylum or people with limited leave. Some are also open to those granted refugee status in the UK.

Other names. Universities give these scholarships different names, for example **Article 26**, **Equal Access**, Displaced Student or Refugee Scholarships. They all work in a similar way.

Which universities offer them. Sanctuary scholarships are usually offered by universities which are awarded Universities of Sanctuary status and by universities working towards this award. All Universities of Sanctuary offer sanctuary scholarships, but not every university in the UK does. If a university you like is not on the list, check its website or contact it to ask what support it offers.

How they differ. Each university sets its own scheme, so check the details carefully:

- **Who can apply:** some are only for people seeking asylum; others include people with limited leave, refugees or other statuses. Some have age or residence rules.
- **Courses covered:** undergraduate, postgraduate or both. Some exclude certain courses, such as medicine.
- **What they cover:** a full or partial tuition fee waiver. Some also give money for living costs, accommodation, travel or books.
- **Number of places:** often only a few scholarships each year, so competition is high.
- **How to apply:** usually a separate application with its own deadline, often early in the year. Many ask you to apply for the course through UCAS first or to hold an offer.

Where to find them. Search STAR's scholarships list and Displaced Student Opportunities UK (DSOP). Both are updated with new scholarships and deadlines as universities advertise them, so keep checking. You can also find information on the UCAS page for displaced students and on each university's website.

STAR does not manage any of the scholarships. For questions about a specific scholarship, **please contact the university directly**. Sign up to the STAR Equal Access mailing list to hear about new scholarships, and read our full guide to applying for sanctuary scholarships in Part 3.

2. External scholarships and grants

Charities, trusts and foundations also offer scholarships and grants. These are not linked to one university, so you can usually use them at any UK university where you have a place. What they cover varies a lot:

- **Full or part tuition fees**, sometimes for a particular subject such as medicine, dentistry, social work or architecture
- **Living costs**, paid as a regular amount during your course
- **Accommodation**, for example free student housing
- **Small one-off grants** for books, a laptop, travel or other study costs

Each funder has its own rules on immigration status, age, subject, level of study and where you live. Deadlines are often months before the course starts, and many funders only support a small number of students each year, so read the eligibility rules carefully before you apply.

Examples include the Snowdon Trust scholarships (such as Westheimer), the Phoenix Fellowship for medicine, dentistry, veterinary and science students, the Unite Foundation (free accommodation), the Leathersellers' Company, Hope for the Young and the Ruth Hayman Trust.

Where to find them. See other scholarships and grants on the STAR website for a list of funders, with who they support and what they cover. Displaced Student Opportunities UK also lists external scholarships, along with open events, summer courses, postgraduate research and PhDs, English courses and mentor support. You can also search for grants using the Turn2us Grants Search.

To learn more about both types of scholarship, watch the STAR Applying to University and Scholarship YouTube videos.

e. Study-related benefits

Depending on your circumstances and immigration status, you may be eligible for extra government support with living costs as well as student finance. For example, in England:

- Disabled Students' Allowance: if you have a disability or long-term health condition
- Childcare Grant: help with childcare costs for full-time students
- Parents' Learning Allowance: for full-time students with children
- Adult Dependants' Grant: for full-time students with an adult who depends on them

Similar support is available in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Check with your student finance body.

f. Other sources of financial support

Charities and other organisations offer scholarships, grants and other funding. For more information, visit other scholarships and grants on the STAR website.

The Displaced Student Opportunities UK website lists many opportunities, including open events, summer courses, postgraduate research, **PhDs**, English courses and mentor support.

Part 3: STAR guide to applying for sanctuary scholarships

This guidance was developed by Student Action for Refugees (STAR) with STAR's Equal Access Advocates and university staff involved in scholarship programmes. It is general guidance for sanctuary scholarship applicants, but universities have different requirements, so always check the application guidelines for each university you apply to. Demand for scholarships is high. This guidance is designed to support your application, but it does not guarantee you will be successful.

Before you apply, check whether you are eligible for UK student finance and home fees. See Parts 1 and 2 of this pack.

What are sanctuary scholarships?

Sanctuary scholarships are packages of financial support from universities to help people who face barriers to higher education because of their immigration status. They may have other names, such as Article 26 or Equal Access Scholarships. There is a full list on the STAR website and on Displaced Student Opportunities UK. Each university runs its own scholarships, and they vary in:

1. **Who is eligible to apply.** Some scholarships are only open to people seeking asylum or to people who are not eligible for student finance. Check the 'Eligibility' column of the STAR scholarships list, then read the full criteria on the university's website.
2. **What courses are covered.** Some scholarships are only for undergraduate courses, or only for postgraduate (Master's or PhD) courses. Others exclude certain courses, such as medicine. Check that your course is covered.
3. **The level of financial support offered.** Some scholarships only include a fee waiver (so you don't pay fees). Others also include a cash bursary for living costs, accommodation, or other 'in-kind' support such as gym membership, a bus pass or study materials.
4. **The application process.** Each university runs its own application process, so check the deadlines and requirements for each one.

Before you apply: checklist

- ☐ Check your eligibility for student finance
- ☐ Check which universities offer scholarships or fee waivers
- ☐ Check your eligibility for the scholarship
- ☐ Apply for your university course
- ☐ Apply for the scholarship!

Step-by-step guide for scholarship applications

Step 1: Research and preparation

Research the university and the scholarship to make sure it is right for you. Things to consider:

- Do you meet the eligibility criteria for the scholarship?
- Does the scholarship cover the course you are applying for?
- Will the support on offer be enough for you to complete your studies?

- If you need help with accommodation, will the scholarship cover this?
- Will you have enough money to cover your living costs?
- If you receive Asylum Support (Section 95 or Section 4) or legal aid, will the scholarship affect it? Get advice before you accept.
- What happens if your immigration status changes during your studies?
- Is the university a good fit for you? Does the style of study (full-time or part-time, online or in person) suit your life? Are the university's values and wider activities what you are looking for?
- If you have a conditional offer, are you likely to meet the conditions?

Then:

- Go to any information sessions the university offers, or read their online resources.
- Before filling in the application, read the guidance and make sure you understand all the steps.
- Give yourself plenty of time before the deadline, in case you need to ask questions or gather information.
- If you have questions, contact the university. Many universities have contact details on their scholarship webpage, and this is also a chance to build a relationship with them.

Step 2: Writing your supporting statement

- Most universities ask for a 'supporting statement' or 'personal statement' as part of your application. Some ask you to answer a series of questions. Each university has its own guidelines, so read them carefully.
- Your supporting statement is your chance to tell the university about your personal, academic and financial situation and why the scholarship will be valuable to you. It is separate from your UCAS personal statement. Don't copy and paste from your personal statement, because the person assessing your scholarship application can already see it.
- Read the questions and guidance carefully, and make sure everything you include is relevant. Use specific examples to show your strengths.

What to cover

Topic	Things to think about
The course and university	Why you chose the course, and why you chose this university
Your circumstances	Your immigration status, your personal and family circumstances, and the barriers you have overcome to continue your education
Your finances	How you funded your previous education, and how you will meet your costs during the course
Additional support	Any extra support you would like while at university
Why they should choose you	Your resilience, your achievements (such as volunteering or self-directed study) and your future goals

Some tips for your statement

1. Show how the scholarship will help you achieve your future goals. Explain why the scholarship will make a difference to you, both at university and afterwards. Try to show why this scholarship at this university is the best fit for you.

2. Talk about the barriers you have faced in continuing your education. Include challenges you have overcome, especially barriers to education. Don't share anything you don't feel comfortable sharing. Universities do not expect details of why you claimed asylum or your journey to the UK.

3. Celebrate your achievements. Share achievements and experiences that have helped you prepare for university, such as volunteering, online or self-directed learning (courses you have taken or books you have read), and university open days or online events you have attended.

4. Show that you are prepared for university. Show you are aware of challenges you may face at university and how you will manage them, for example costs the scholarship doesn't cover, or caring responsibilities.

5. Use your own words. Universities recommend that you don't use AI tools like ChatGPT to write your statement. AI-written text can be detected, and it won't sound like you. Universities want to hear what you have to say.

Step 3: Finding a referee

- If the university asks for a reference, they will have guidelines about who can be your referee.
- Your referee should know you well and be able to comment on your readiness for university study. Ideally it should be a different referee from your UCAS or academic application, but that may not be possible. Choose someone who knows your background and how determined you are to succeed.
- Some universities specify how long your referee must have known you, or which roles are acceptable, such as a support worker, teacher or lawyer.
- If you are struggling to find a referee, contact the university for advice. Some universities accept referees from abroad.

Step 4: Submitting your application

- Know the scholarship deadline and prepare your application well in advance. We add deadlines to the STAR scholarships list when they are announced, and post deadline alerts on Instagram (@STARnational).
- If possible, ask a friend, teacher or support worker to proofread your application before you submit it.
- Check the next steps with the university. Some universities may invite you to an interview.

What if my application is not successful?

Scholarships are competitive, with more applicants than scholarships available. If you are not successful, try not to be disheartened. You can:

- Ask the university for feedback on your application.
- Apply for scholarships again the following year. You may be able to defer your place at university until then.
- Consider a different course or university.
- Look at other sources of funding: see other scholarships and grants on the STAR website, and Displaced Student Opportunities UK for a range of financial and other support.
- Sign up to the STAR Equal Access mailing list for updates and new opportunities.

Further resources

- Sign up to the STAR Equal Access mailing list for updates and new opportunities.
- STAR scholarships list, including links to university websites
- Displaced Student Opportunities UK (DSOP), including links to scholarships, bursaries, open days and other opportunities
- STAR Information Sessions (video)
- Birkbeck Compass sanctuary scholarship videos (YouTube)
- STAR webinars: STAR Applying to University and Scholarship YouTube videos.
- UCAS: writing your personal statement, getting a reference and uploading documents
- Breaking Barriers: support with English language qualifications and IELTS
- Pre-university courses: if you need to improve your English or want to do a preparatory course before university. You can also find courses on DSOP and RefugEAP.
- UCAS Customer Experience Centre: 0371 468 0 468, Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 6pm