BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Birkbeck is a world-class research and teaching institution, a vibrant centre of academic excellence and London’s only specialist provider of evening higher education – which means students can balance studying with work, family and other commitments.

BIRKBECK’S SANCTUARY SCHOLARSHIPS 2020-21

This handbook is a guide for prospective students who wish to study at Birkbeck with support of the Compass Project, Sanctuary Scholarship.

‘Sanctuary Scholarship’ is a term given to scholarship places within universities, that promote and encourage applicants from students of a forced migrant background, through providing financial help towards to cost of university.

Here are some useful resources to find out more about the sanctuary movement in Universities:

- Universities of Sanctuary
- Student Action for Refugees

There are two steps involved in obtaining a Sanctuary Scholarship at Birkbeck. Please ensure that you have first applied to your course before making an application to the scholarship.

WHAT IS THE COMPASS PROJECT SANCTUARY SCHOLARSHIP?

The Compass Project provides 20 students from a forced migrant background, who are not eligible for student finance, with a sanctuary scholarship to study a university-level programme at Birkbeck.
Birkbeck is committed to supporting those who have taken a less traditional route into higher education. The Compass Project is focused on helping those who may face difficulty in accessing other educational opportunities due to lack of previous academic documentation, or for those who have been out of education for a long period of time.

The qualification gained through receipt of the Compass Project Scholarship may then be used for further study of work.

Successful applicants will receive:

- a full tuition fee waiver for relevant courses up to 120 credits (typically equivalent to one year of full-time study)
- additional financial support to cover costs such as transport, childcare and books

THE SCHOLARSHIPS

HOW MANY SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE?

Birkbeck sponsors 20 students a year under the Sanctuary Scholarship Programme. Students may apply for funding for both undergraduate and
postgraduate courses. It is a competitive scholarship and we do receive more applications than available places. It is important therefore to read the guidelines carefully and attend the Compass Project Taster Day (more information below!)

WHAT DOES THE SCHOLARSHIP INCLUDE?

TUITION FEES

Successful applicants will be given a tuition fee waiver for an appropriate course up to 120 credits. This typically covers 1-year of a full-time programme.

If you are a successful applicant to a Master’s programme, you will also have the opportunity to complete an additional 60 credits for the dissertation.

BURSARY

Successful applicants to the scholarship will receive a £3000 bursary that should be spent on the cost of travel to classes, books and other study materials.

Students will be awarded £1000 per-term if enrolled onto a full-time programme. Students who receive NASS support will be offered the bursary in vouchers.

ONE TO ONE SUPPORT

Successful applicants will also receive additional support around navigating university such as an orientation event and meetings with our wellbeing team. Every student is also paired with an academic mentor who is their dedicated point of contact within their department. Students are also invited to attend a variety of workshops throughout the year.

WHAT COURSE CAN I STUDY?

We typically offer scholarships for the following types of degree programmes:

- **Higher Education Certificate** (120 credits)
- **Foundation Year / 1st year of an Undergraduate programme** (120 credits)
- Postgraduate Diploma (60-120 credits)
- **Master’s programme** (180 credits)

*Please note that we award scholarships for 3 master’s programmes every year.*
Degree programmes will start in October. We cannot support applicants intending to start a January degree programme. Similarly, we do not support applicants to shared programmes with other institutions.

If you are unsure what programme you would like to study, we encourage you to attend an **Open Day** and look into the courses available on the Birkbeck website.

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**WHO IS ELIGIBLE?**

If you are unsure as to whether you meet the eligibility criteria or if anything requires clarification, please contact us.

**ELIGIBILITY**

The Compass Project offers opportunities to those asylum seekers or forced migrants who would not otherwise be able to access university level education elsewhere. As a result we prioritise applicants who meet the following criteria:

- Those who have **not** previously studied a degree at a UK institution.
- Those who have **not** been in formal education for more than 5 years.

**IMMIGRATION STATUS**

You must meet **one** of the following criteria

1. **Asylum Seeker**

You have made a claim for asylum in the UK and not yet had a decision (asylum seekers).

Or you are currently appealing an asylum decision and can evidence making a fresh claim.

Or you have made a claim under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights and not yet had a decision.

2. **Discretionary/limited leave to remain**

You have been granted temporary status as a result of an asylum claim or an Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights claim.
You will need to provide copies of documentation to confirm your immigration status in the UK, this could include any of the following:

- Application Registration Card (ARC), Home Office Letter Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)

If you have refugee status you will not be entitled to receive the Sacntaury Scholarship as you are eligible for Student Finance. Find out more about what you are entitled to here.

If you have Humanitarian Protection you may be entitled to financial support, please check this online via the UKISA website before applying.

**OTHER**

In addition to the above, you must also meet all of the following criteria:

- You must be resident in the UK.
- You must be ineligible to receive Student Finance (find out more about eligibility requirements for student finance here).
- You will need to demonstrate a good level of English language skills (spoken and written).
- As we are unable to offer accommodation, you will need to already be living within a commutable distance of central London.

**HOW DO I APPLY?**

If you are eligible to apply for the scholarship, please ensure that you have read the following guidelines on how to submit a full application. If you do not complete all necessary steps by the deadline, your application will not be considered.

**Please note that you MUST have applied to your course at Birkbeck BEFORE applying to the Compass Project!**
**STEP ONE: DISCOVER BIRKBECK**

Before applying for the scholarship, it is important that you have had the opportunity to get to know Birkbeck as well as exploring which course is right for you. You may decide to visit a specific department on an Open Day or attend a taster lecture. Find out when the next Open Day is [here](#).

In addition to this, you **must** attend a Compass Taster Day to be eligible for the scholarship. This is to make sure that you have all the necessary information ahead of applying to Birkbeck. Applicants who have not attended will not be considered.

Taster Days are scheduled for the following dates and can be booked online [here](#).

- Tuesday 17th March
- Thursday 23rd April

If you have any questions about the taster days please contact us on [thecompassproject@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:thecompassproject@bbk.ac.uk).

**SET TWO: APPLY FOR YOUR COURSE**

When you are ready to apply to your course, you may make an application online. Most of our student’s study part time, if you wish to study part time or at postgraduate level please take the following steps:

1. Apply via the ‘apply here’ button on the course page
2. Complete the application form including the personal statement

See further details about how to apply to a course [here](#).
If you are applying to a course that has modular enrolment, you must still open a ‘my Birkbeck account’ and send a confirmation to the Compass Coordinator by emailing thecompassproject@bbk.ac.uk.

If you wish to study a full-time undergraduate programme, please contact the Compass Coordinator by emailing thecompassproject@bbk.ac.uk.

Consider using Birbeck’s ‘Personal Statement Checker’ or attending one of Access and Engagement’s ‘Get Started’ events for further advice on applying to university.

**STEP THREE:**

Once you have completed the previous steps, you must apply for the Compass Project Scholarship. You will need to:

1. Select a Referee
2. Complete an online application form for the Compass Project
3. Send proof of your immigration status

**1. SELECTING A REFEREE**

You will need to provide a reference from someone who knows you and who is able to comment on your suitability for study. Examples of possible referees are educators (e.g. school teachers, ESOL instructors, college instructors), lawyers, social workers, NGO workers, or local authority officers.

Please make sure that you have asked the permission of your referee before submitting their details on your application form. We require:

- Full Name
- Name of the organisation they work for and the address
- Role in the organisation
- Telephone number
- Email Address

We will contact your referee after applications have closed on 31st May. They will have 5 working days to submit their reference.
2. COMPLETE THE ONLINE APPLICATION FORM FOR THE COMPASS PROJECT

The online application form for the Compass Project is divided into a number of sections including:

- Personal Information
- Educational History
- Intended course details
- Immigration status + funding eligibility
- Referee details
- Supporting information (series of 5 questions that focus on your reasons for study and applying to the scholarship)

You can download a PDF version of the application here to look at in advance of submitting your application. We encourage you to do this, as applications cannot be saved mid-way. **Please only start your application once you are ready and have all the information that you need.**

We also encourage you to have prepared the answers to questions on page 9 of the application on a word document, then copy them into the application when you are ready to submit. To download the questions on a word document see here.

Once started the application should take around 20 minutes to complete.

3. SEND PROOF OF YOUR IMMIGRATION STATUS

We need to see evidence of your immigration status upon application. Please ensure that you have sent through these details by 31st May.

You must email a scanned copy of the relevant documents from the list below to thecompassproject@bbk.ac.uk

- Application Registration Card (ARC)
- Biometric Residency Permit (BRP)
- Home Office Letter

We will confirm receipt of these documents via email.
Please be aware that we may ask you for further information or evidence to clarify your status after you have submitted your application.

WHEN CAN I APPLY?

- Applications will open on 1st April 2020.
- The deadline for applying is Sunday 31st May 2020

You must have applied to both the course AND the scholarship by this date. We will not accept applications submitted after this date.

Please follow this link to complete the application form for the Compass Project: https://bbk.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/compass-project-application
FAQ’S

I have a first degree from a UK/EU institution, am I eligible to apply?
Although you are welcome to apply, preference will be given to those who have not previously had an opportunity to pursue a degree in the UK.

I have refugee status, can I apply for the scholarship?
Scholarships are reserved for students who are not eligible for Student Finance and as a refugee, you would be able to apply for a student loan to pay for your studies. If you are interested in studying at Birkbeck there is still lots of support available. We would encourage you to attend one of our workshops [here](#) or get in touch directly at thecompassproject@bbk.ac.uk.

How many applications do you receive?
The Scholarship is competitive and attracts many applications every year. In 2019, 90 people applied for the scholarship.

I live outside of London, can I still apply?
Preference will be given to students living inside, or within an hour of London. This is to ensure that students are able to travel safely and confidently from home to lectures.

What is a referee?
A referee is someone who knows you well and who can testify to your character. A reference is often required when applying to work or study.

I did not get onto my chosen course, what should I do?
Please contact the Compass Coordinator on thecompassproject@bbk.ac.uk to discuss further.

I have an ongoing asylum case, will applying for this scholarship affect it?
Although we do check your right to study with the home office, there is no reason to believe that studying at university will affect any ongoing case with the Home Office.

What if my status changes whilst I am on the course?
Once enrolled, if you are granted refugee or a similar status, you can continue your programme as usual and will not have to pay back any fees. We ask that all scholarship receivers notify us if their status changes whilst studying with Birkbeck.

Can I receive the scholarship if I study part time?
Yes, but how you receive the funding will be slightly different. This will be explained to you if you receive the scholarship.

Is childcare support available?
Yes, please see [here](#).

Am I entitled to any other bursaries whilst on this scholarship?
You will not be entitled to any further bursaries available at Birkbeck. You may however still apply for charitable bursaries or scholarships.

What happens after the scholarship?
Students will be supported to apply for university degree programmes via UCAS or continue with their studies at Birkbeck following completion on 120 credits. One-to-one help will be offered around this in your first term.