

## **R. 18-1 *Motion for Equal Access***

Owner: Tashi Tahir

In Effect From: Immediately

Review Date: 06 November, 2018

### **This Council Notes:**

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".
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 on the basis of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.
4. 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 and provided with just £36 per week to cover all their living expenses. It is not unusual for asylum seekers to be required to wait like this for years while a decision is made as to whether they can stay in the UK.
5. Officially, current university policy on asylum seekers living in the UK at University of St Andrews is to classify them as international students and there is currently no funding and scholarships in place to cover their tuition and living costs.
6. A number of UK universities have amended their admissions policies to allow asylum seekers to pay 'home' tuition fees, or have waived fees entirely. These include: King's College London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, LSE, and around 72 other universities around the UK.
7. 229 students, in one day, have signed a petition at St Andrews supporting equal access to university for students seeking refugee protection as part of the Equal Access campaign.
8. The Equal Access campaign is supported by the National Union of Students (NUS) and also has the backing of our local MP for North East Fife, Stephen Gethins.
9. The experiences and insights of students seeking refugee protection have the potential to greatly enrich the intellectual and social life of the university.

### **This Council Believes:**

9. The University should adopt a fair and equitable approach in providing access to higher education on the basis of merit for asylum seekers, people granted discretionary leave to remain or humanitarian protection.

**This Council Resolves:**

10. To support the Equal Access campaign and work closely with RASA to create a campaign specific to our institution.

11. To lobby the university to remove financial barriers preventing students seeking refugee protection from studying here. Specifically to:

a) Classify all those seeking asylum as home students

b) Offer at least 5 bursaries and scholarships to meet study and maintenance costs

c) Publicise their Equal Access policies so that potential students are encouraged to apply

12. For the executive team to request a meeting between the Vice Chancellor and representatives from RASA to discuss how this can be achieved.

13. For the executive team to sign a letter to the Vice Chancellor to outline the benefits of providing equal access to higher education to this university, and to liaise with RASA in the creation of this letter.

**Proposed by Petition**