

Supporting students and scholars at risk: efforts and good practices of UNICA and CIVIS universities

UNICA and Sapienza University of Rome webinar

Practical Steps in Supporting Students and Scholars at Risk

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Overview

- UCD Case Study
 - Sanctuary Programme
 - Students at risk (refugees, asylum seekers)
 - Scholars at risk
- Advice for starting a sanctuary programme in your university
 - Scholar at Risk
 - Student at Risk



UCD University for ALL Initiative

UCD's Sanctuary Programme is part of our University for **All** initiative.

The University for All initiative is a whole-institution, evidence-based approach to mainstreaming inclusion in UCD.

The goal is to ensure that **all students feel welcome, belong and are valued.**



- **Sanctuary Programme Governance**
 - VP for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) responsible for EDI matters in UCD
 - University of Sanctuary Committee
 - Focus on strategy and **scholars at risk**
 - Widening Participation Committee
 - Focus on **students a risk**
 - UCD awarded “University of Sanctuary” status in 2018



Student Support is provided via **existing** UCD Access and Lifelong Learning (ALL) Centre

- UCD welcomes students who are international protection applicants, refugees or those with permission to remain in the state
- Treated in identical manner to Irish students who require support
- 69 Students have been supported to 2020



UCD Student Sanctuary Programme Provides

- Full tuition fee waivers
 - An annual maintenance stipend
 - An invite to the ALL Student Welcome Programme
 - Access to post-entry supports
 - A dedicated support worker within UCD ALL
 - Available for students applying to **all UCD programmes:** Undergraduate, Graduate, Open Learning and University Access
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- Up to 18 places in total available for 2021-22
 - Details at www.ucd.ie/all



UCD Scholars at Risk Sanctuary Programme

- New scheme introduced in 2021
- Managed by University of Sanctuary Sub-group
- University has agreed to fund/co-fund 1 or 2-year fellowships for 3 scholars
- Fellowship provides a tax-free stipend of **€35,000** approx
- Work with CARA, SAR and other agencies who identify the scholar
- UCD does **not** invite direct applications



UCD Scholars at Risk Sanctuary Programme

- University of Sanctuary Sub-group works with the department (school) hosting the scholar to:
 - Create a voluntary **support network** for the scholar
 - Sourcing accommodation
 - School(s) for children
 - Other integration needs



UCD Scholars at Risk Sanctuary Programme

Case Study

- Pilot before 2021 scheme
- Scholar at risk came to UCD **via CARA UK**
- Partner and 2 children
- UCD School provided appropriate work
- Support group:
 - Accommodation in town 60km from Dublin but with excellent transport links
 - Arranged school places for the children
 - Helped source job for partner close to home
 - Introduced family to local contacts for social supports
- Family very happy in Ireland



Advice for starting a sanctuary programme in your university – Scholar at Risk

Bottom up approach

- Can you persuade **ONE** department to take on a scholar at risk? They need to have some “spare” budget
- Work with CARA, SAR or other agency to identify suitable scholar
- Identify 2 or 3+ people to act as informal support group – remember the scholar will **be responsible for their own well being**. The support group helps **if they can** – they are **not** responsible for the scholar.
- If the above works approach other departments or university management to implement a formal scheme



Top down approach

- Ask university management to implement a formal sanctuary scheme
- Give them an example of another university doing this
- Point out the underlying goodwill for such a programme
- Extend the remit of an existing committee or establish a new committee to oversee the programme
- Work with CARA, SAR or other agency to identify suitable scholars



Advice for starting a sanctuary programme in your university – Students at Risk

- It is highly likely that there are existing schemes to help disadvantaged students
- Ask university management to extend existing schemes to include students at risk
- Give them an example of another university doing this
- Point out the underlying goodwill for such a programme
- Extend the remit of an existing committee or establish a new committee to oversee the programme



Conclusions

- Financial costs to host a scholar are **low in terms of a university's overall budget** e.g. €35K per year for 2 years
- **Do NOT underestimate the value of hosting just ONE scholar** – this is a life changing opportunity for the individual and can be a morale boosting opportunity for the receiving department
- Similarly, **granting fee waivers** to students at risk, typically represents a very small incremental cost especially if it does not involve displacement of fee paying students.
- Student stipends in the range, €5-10K, for a small number of students at risk, are low in terms of a university's overall budget



Conclusion

- We live in a time when **we in universities have a unique opportunity** to support the vulnerable in our society
- Students and scholars at risk are among the most vulnerable members of global society
- Our university support can help them contribute in our countries or bring their learning back to their countries
- What will we tell our grandchildren when they ask what did you do to support the vulnerable who came to our country?
- Thank You !



Questions

