



**UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM**

## **Sanctuary Scholarships**

**An update on the impact of your support**

**2024/25**

**Thank you for supporting students through the Sanctuary Scholarships programme at the University of Birmingham. We are living in a turbulent world and the need for scholarships like these continues to grow.**

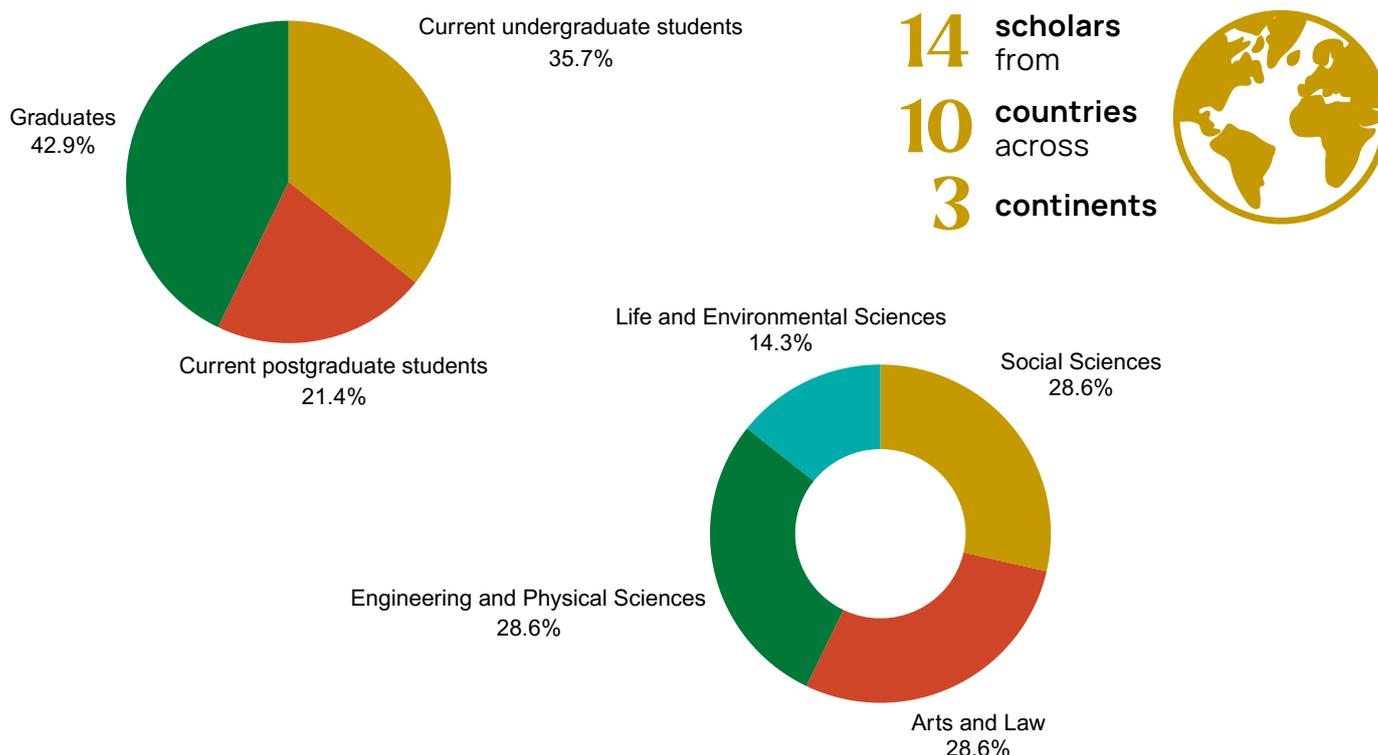
As part of our response to the global refugee crisis, the University is offering five Sanctuary Scholarships per year for students from anywhere in the world, living in the UK. The Scholarships, plus the support the students receive when they are here, gives them certainty and confidence during particularly challenging times.

Alongside the financial support, Scholars receive tailored study support, one-to-one tutoring, skills workshops, mentoring and opportunities to attend special events or apply for internships. They also receive a welcome pack upon arrival, including a laptop from the University that they can use for the duration of their course, as well as other study essentials.

In addition to our committed five Sanctuary Scholarships, we have been working to support students in regions of conflict, most recently students from Ukraine and Palestine. There are a further four students from Ukraine and Palestine being supported here at Birmingham. This is part of the University's commitment as a University of Sanctuary – a national network of university staff, lecturers, academics and students working to make higher education institutions places of safety, solidarity and empowerment for people seeking sanctuary. We are deeply committed to this and, in the year since we were granted Sanctuary status, we continue to adapt to changes in the world, such as introducing scholarships for students from Palestine.

## The Sanctuary Scholars you are supporting

Scholars receive support for each year of their course, meaning there are usually more than five Scholars studying here each year, depending on the length of their programme. Since September 2022, there have been a total of 14 Sanctuary Scholars, who come from ten countries across three continents. Eight of these Scholars are still studying with us this academic year, including four who started here in September 2024.



Cohort	Course	Nationality	Status
2022/23	Advanced Engineering Management	Yemen	Graduated in 2023
2022/23	Applied Linguistics with TESOL	Russia	Graduated in 2023
2022/23	Law	Namibia	Final year student
2022/23	Law with Criminology	Eswatini	Final year student
2022/23	Politics and International Relations (transferred from Engineering with Foundation Year)	Yemen	First year student
2023/24	International Development	Sierra Leone	Graduated in 2024
2023/24	Advanced Engineering Management	Zimbabwe	Graduated in 2024
2023/24	Molecular Biotechnology	Nigeria	Graduated in 2024
2023/24	Law	Zimbabwe	Second year student
2023/24	Public and Environmental Health	Namibia	Graduated in 2024
2024/25	Mechanical Engineering	Egypt	First year student
2024/25	Global Energy Technology	Sudan	Master's student
2024/25	International Relations	Yemen	Master's student
2024/25	Development Policy and Politics	Afghanistan	Master's student

## Application numbers

There were 79 applicants in total during the 2024/25 application process, of which 28 met Home Office and Scholarship eligibility requirements. Although we received less applications than last year (there were 97 for 2023/24), we received more eligible applications from talented students in need this year. For 2022/23, there were 59 applicants, and so demand is only increasing.

Engineering remains the most popular subject each year for applicants, followed by Politics and Social Policy, Business and Computer Science. Nonetheless, we received applications for subjects in all of the Colleges this year.

The Scholarship application is open for 2025/26 entry. So far there have been 36 applicants who have completed the full scholarship application. It is open until March and we expect more to come in as prospective students hear if they have received an offer from the University.

# How you are helping current students

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**Rafiq is a postgraduate student studying for a Master's in Development Policy and Politics. He shares his experiences of University life, his hopes for life after graduation and how the scholarship has made such a difference.**

'I was in a situation where I couldn't fund my studies and had no one to help me, so applying for a university, like the University of Birmingham, that has many scholarship schemes was very important for me. On top of that, the high ranking, good reputation, big and beautiful campus and being home to a wide variety of international students were other factors that made the University of Birmingham stand out for me.

'I am looking forward to engaging in extracurricular activities, achieving a distinction degree and enhancing my professional profile. I am a people person. Although English is not my first language, and I sometimes struggle to fit in with people of different cultures, the good thing is that they all understand and people are not judgmental. I am enjoying studying at the University a lot.



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**The Sanctuary Scholarship is like a boat helping me cross the most turbulent phase in the river of my life. I would have not been able to pay for anything if I had not had Sanctuary Scholarship. I am now focusing with peace of mind on my studies and goals.**

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'The Funding, Graduation and Awards team is extremely helpful and supportive and kind. I communicate every problem I have and they have always been supportive. As a Sanctuary Scholar, I don't only get financial support; as a member of a big community, informed of different opportunities, I feel emotionally and academically supported as well.



'The University of Birmingham is a city in its own right. The diversity of students, the campus and the surrounding green and lovely area. I am enjoying every day of my life. My favourite thing is participating in professional activities and taking pictures and making professional and personal memories and also meeting other students along the way.

'After I finish my degree, I am really interested and looking forward to pursuing my PhD here, but that would be contingent on my financial ability or being able to secure funding. If I couldn't do that, then I am really interested in the United Nations and will most probably work my way there.'



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I'm looking forward to improving myself as much as possible, gaining new skills, building relationships and exploring the various opportunities the University offers. I'm excited to try different services, internships and further develop my research skills. I aim to make the most of my time living here and growing academically and personally. The Sanctuary Scholarship has already provided me with a comfortable environment to focus on my studies and personal development. It has given me the chance to concentrate on my growth.

My favourite part of living and studying in Birmingham is the environment and the sense of community. I feel very much at home here, surrounded by supportive friends and a diverse group of people. The city's diversity and the vibrant campus life have also been incredibly fascinating and enriching for me.

After completing my degree, I hope to secure a rewarding job, particularly with an international organisation like the United Nations, which I have always been passionate about working for.

**Salah, International Relations Master's student**



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The University of Birmingham's reputation as a global academic leader, particularly in international relations and global studies, attracted me to apply, and its commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse community aligns with my personal and academic values. I chose the Masters in Global Conflict and Cooperation because of my deep interest in understanding and addressing the dynamics of international conflict, diplomacy and peacebuilding. The programme offers a comprehensive curriculum that directly supports my aspirations of contributing to global conflict resolution.

Being located in the diverse city of Birmingham assured me I'd meet people from different cultures and communities. Birmingham's vibrant multicultural environment is one of my favourite aspects of living here. The city offers a rich blend of cultures and histories, which resonates with my personal background and interests.

The Sanctuary Scholarship is invaluable in alleviating the financial burden associated with higher education. It allows me to fully focus on my studies and academic growth while also providing access to resources and support that enhance my overall university experience.

I am most looking forward to engaging with the university's diverse academic community and participating in insightful debates and discussions. The opportunity to learn from leading academics and work alongside students from various backgrounds enriches my understanding of global perspectives. Upon completing my degree, I aspire to work in an international organisation or academic institution focusing on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, particularly in the Middle East.

**Atta, Global Conflict and Cooperation Master's student**

# Life after Birmingham

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Six Sanctuary Scholars have now graduated, plus two Article 26 Scholars (the forerunner to Sanctuary Scholarships). The two Article 26 Scholar graduates are a testament to how important this core level of support is: Karim is now studying for a PhD at Imperial College London and Ahmed secured graduate employment at Rothschilds & Co.

Eiad graduated in 2023 with a Master's degree in Advanced Engineering Management. He shares his experiences, how the support helped him and what he has gone on to do since graduating in 2023.



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I applied to the University of Birmingham because it offers full scholarships for asylum seekers, which was vital for me to access higher education. I chose the Advanced Engineering Management course because it aligned with my long-term goal of becoming a Construction Manager.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the University. One of the highlights was volunteering and engaging with various campus activities. For example, I had the chance to collaborate on events like Go Green Week through the Guild and Islamic Week with ISoc. These experiences enriched my time on campus and allowed me to connect with a diverse group of students.

The scholarship provided incredible support throughout my studies. One of the most valuable aspects was the tolerance and flexibility shown by the team. For example, they assisted me with meeting the English language requirements and helped me secure accommodation. This made a significant difference to my academic journey.

I am currently working as a Graduate Site Manager at John Sisk & Son. My degree played a pivotal role in helping me secure this role, as it provided the technical knowledge and credibility required to enter the field. Moving forward, I hope to continue building my expertise and advancing within the construction industry.

**Eiad (MSc Advanced Engineering Management: Construction Management, 2023)**



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The University of Birmingham is one of the few universities that offers an accredited environmental degree programme by the Chartered Institute of Environmental health. I did an undergraduate degree in environmental health and upon arriving in UK, I wanted to continue studying in the same field. The overall aim was to become a registered environmental health practitioner.

My experience at the University was really incredible. The Sanctuary Scholarship helped me overcome the financial barriers I faced when it came to continuing my studies. The quality of education offered by the lecturers was really good, and friendly, helpful staff made my journey great.

**Himeezembi (MSc Public and Environmental Health, 2024)**

Nicole, below, is one of the four Scholars who graduated in 2024. She shares how the University has helped prepare her for her next steps.



I chose to apply to the University of Birmingham because of its strong reputation for excellence in research and its commitment to supporting students from diverse backgrounds. The Molecular Biotechnology programme specifically appealed to me because of its interdisciplinary nature, combining advanced biological sciences with practical applications in industry and healthcare. As someone passionate about addressing global challenges like infectious diseases and sustainability, I was drawn to the course content, which aligned perfectly with my career aspirations.

My time at the University has been both challenging and rewarding. The academic environment pushed me to grow intellectually, while the support from staff and fellow students created a sense of community that made the experience truly memorable.

Without the scholarship, completing my education would have been nearly impossible. It gave me hope and stability during a time when I was in a state of limbo and unsure about how to proceed with my education. The financial support allowed me to focus entirely on my studies without constant worry. It provided not just financial relief, but also a sense of belonging and encouragement that motivated me to excel in my studies.

Since graduating, I have been focussed on applying for PhDs to further my research in areas such as antibiotic resistance and sustainable biotechnology. My time at the University prepared me well for this next step, as it gave me both the technical skills and the confidence to pursue advanced research.

I wholeheartedly advocate for this scholarship programme, as it is vital in empowering students like me to reach their full potential. I am truly honoured and thankful to have been a recipient.

**Nicole (MSc Molecular Biotechnology, 2024)**



# Supporting students in regions of conflict

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The University of Birmingham is committed to supporting students from around the world in Higher Education. As a University of Sanctuary, we are proud to offer support to students from regions where conflict, or other global events, have negatively impacted the opportunities for study and educational advancement. This includes students from Ukraine and Palestine affected by the ongoing conflicts in those regions – we are currently supporting four from each.

## Ukrainian students

The four students from Ukraine are all undergraduate students. Due to government rules, once a Ukrainian citizen has a Visa, they can be treated like a home student and so are eligible for a student loan and UK level fees. They have come to the University because their route to higher education is blocked by the war in Ukraine.

## Palestinian students

There are currently four postgraduate students from Palestine receiving support who have joined the University during the conflict. Due to there being a level of financial support asylum seekers can receive before it impacts their government support, the offer is slightly different for these students compared to our standard Sanctuary Scholars.



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The Scholarship has been instrumental in alleviating the financial burden of pursuing my education. It has allowed me to focus fully on my studies and personal growth without the stress of financial constraints.

I chose my course because of my deep passion for Shakespearean literature and its creative applications. The unique combination of studying Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon while exploring creativity and innovation made this course the perfect fit for me. After completing my degree, I hope to return to the academic field, either as a lecturer or researcher, to share my passion for literature and inspire others. I am also interested in exploring creative projects that combine education, literature, and community engagement.

**Sara, Shakespeare and Creativity Master’s student**



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The Sanctuary Scholarship programme represents a supportive community that values inclusion and encourages me to pursue my academic goals while contributing to the wider university environment. This support is crucial for me as an international student navigating life in a new country.

**Haya, Digital Media and Creative Industries Master’s student**



The Sanctuary Scholarship has done a lot for me as a student, in terms of the financial support, providing a suitable environment for studying and also the opportunity to get to know the British culture and people.

I like everything so far, even the challenges and the hard time I faced when I first arrived in the UK, including the cold weather! The beautiful green Campus, the welcoming friendly people and the students' life at the university accommodation. I'm excited to embrace every challenge I will go through as I believe I'm going to learn a lot through this year. Thank you so much for this amazing opportunity!

**Taymaa, Applied Linguistics Master's student**

## What's next?

The University's Student Services team recently met with the President of the Student Action for Refugee (STAR) at the Guild of Students to discuss collaborating with them to provide more regular and informal support sessions. The team hope to start this later this year, with STAR hosting coffee mornings and relaxed gatherings through the support they receive from the Guild.

STAR is a charity led and run by students which directly supports by organising and delivering their own activities funded by their fundraising. They deliver an impressive range of activities across the Birmingham region namely around helping asylum seekers and refugees to develop their conversational English skills. This includes four projects based on football, sport for life, a women's group and film.

Our long-term aspiration is to support 15-20 refugee student scholars per year, and we can only achieve this with the amazing philanthropic support of alumni and friends like you, so thank you.



# Thank you

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Each year the lives of five people are transformed with the award of a Sanctuary Scholarship at our university. These scholarships do not simply give those seeking refuge a chance to pursue their studies; they are the first step in a whole new beginning of friends, progress and opportunities. People who have been forced to leave their homes, their families and their education to seek refuge, are welcomed into a new community.

We are privileged to be able to contribute to rebuilding lives that have been brutally disrupted and to be able to offer the chance to belong again. Thank you to the generous donors who make this possible with their support of the Sanctuary Scholarships.



**Alison Tinker, co-chair of the Sanctuary committee**

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