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II

GENERAL ARTICLES

UK University Initiatives Supporting Forced Migrants

Acts of Resistance or the Reproduction of Structural Inequalities?

Rebecca Murray

ABSTRACT: This article reports on a decade (2008–2018) of university-led "sanctuary scholarships," which mitigate the challenges encountered by forced migrants with unsettled immigration status in accessing university: primarily financial barriers imposed by their categorization as international students and ineligibility for student funding. Secondary and primary empirical data was analyzed to i) map a decade of sanctuary scholarships delivered across the UK; ii) extend the debate from access to HE to interrogate the efficacy of sanctuary scholarships as a solution; and iii) assess the extent to which sanctuary scholarships challenge the structural exclusion of forced migrants from UK HE across three indices: growth and development, HEI investment, and student success. The findings reveal the extent to which neoliberal and administrative immigration logics are manifest in bordering practices specific to universities, and the interaction of the higher education border with university-led initiatives shaped by hospitality, in the context of anti-migrant hostility.

KEYWORDS: bordering, forced migration, higher education, hostile environment, sanctuary scholarships, structural inequalities

This article reports on an in-depth mapping of a decade (2008–2018) of initiatives led by UK universities to create pathways for forced migrants to acquire accredited higher education (HE) qualifications.[1] This research builds on scholarship exploring problems of access and participation in HE for forced migrants by directing the lens of inquiry onto university-led responses to these challenges. While the HE sector encounters restrictions from a regime that manages migration by focusing on practices that serve to repress and *immobilize* forced migrants (Murray and Gray 2021; Murray 2018), UK higher education institutions (HEIs) have a record of substantial engagement in initiatives that aim to *mobilize* these individuals, through the inception and growth of publicly available "sanctuary scholarships" (Murray 2019).

Forced migrants with unsettled immigration status are categorized as "international," resulting in their being: i) charged university tuition fees at a significantly higher rate than those categorized as home students and ii) ineligible for student funding required for tui-

tion fees and maintenance, because these students have no recourse to public funds in the context of HE (Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998; Oliver and Hughes 2018).[2] Sanctuary scholarships are primarily designed to overcome the financial barriers encountered by forced migrants in the pursuit of HE. Scholarships are typically comprised of a full tuition fee waiver and financial stipend; however, their composition is wholly discretionary and varies significantly between HEIs (Murray 2019). The inherent complexity and inconsistency in the composition of scholarships is further reflected in their delivery, which takes place within a higher education sector that places responsibility on individual universities for reproducing bordering practices that seek to exclude forced migrant students. This article explores the extent to which the provision of sanctuary scholarships constitutes a challenge to the structural exclusion of forced migrants from HE, as well as the extent of students' success in spite of HE-specific bordering practices.

The "higher education border" is a tangible example of the extension of immigration controls, orchestrated by the state (Home Office), into all areas of civil society and social life in the UK. Borders and bordering practices are increasingly recognized as embodying "everyday" forms (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018), manifest in the context of the "hostile environment" designed to prevent, deter, and minimize forced migrants' access to a wide range of basic services, as well as opportunities to embark upon a university education. The "hostile environment" is a term used to describe a series of administrative and legislative technologies designed to prevent the arrival of "undesirable" migrants in the UK, as well as to immobilize them within and remove them from the country. It is core to understanding the manifestation of managed migration and is used to collectively describe mechanisms designed to facilitate the economic, physical, social, political, and symbolic exclusion of migrants from UK society (Hall 2017; Mayblin and James 2019; Wardle and Obermuller 2019). The hostile environment is responsible for creating fear, uncertainty, and insecurity within the population (Hall 2017; Berg 2018; Wardle and Obermuller 2019), providing the foundations upon which to coerce nonstate actors, such as higher education staff, to operationalize "everyday borders" on behalf of the state. Yuval Davis et al.'s (2018, 2019) concept of "everyday" bordering has been extended by Murray (2018; Murray and Gray 2021) to develop a conceptual understanding of bordering practices specific to higher education.

This article addresses significant gaps in the literature by seeking to explore forced migrants' higher education trajectories, from the perspective of HEIs and the conflicting role that universities increasingly play in educating forced migrants. Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration is employed to explore the mechanisms, such as legislation, policy, and practice, used to construct the HE border built upon the foundations of the hostile environment. Meanwhile, Derrida's work on "hospitality" (2000) provides a theoretical lens through which to explore universities' response to the hostility aimed at forced migrants. The article is based on the following data: archival records from the Article 26 project, which led to the inception of sanctuary scholarships; publicly available information on university web pages; and primary quantitative and qualitative data collected through structured interviews with operational, academic, and decision-making staff leading sanctuary scholarship schemes across UK HEIs. The findings presented make three key contributions: i) they map a decade of hospitable initiatives led by HEIs in an increasingly hostile environment; ii) they broaden the debate from exploring issues pertaining to forced migrants' HE *access*, to investigate issues pertaining to *solutions* in the form of sanctuary scholarships; and iii) they assess the extent to which sanctuary scholarships challenge the structural exclusion of forced migrants from UK higher education, utilizing three broad indices: growth and development, HEI investment, and student retention and success.

Situating UK Universities' "Hospitality" in an Environment of "Hostility"

The state exercises a high degree of interest in, and management of, the relationship between forced migrants and UK higher education; this is unlike other marginalized populations, such as the urban poor, who have experienced a lack of interest, resulting in state withdrawal and abandonment (Povinelli 2011). The exclusion of migrants enacted through practices of "everyday bordering" is replicated in the construction of the "higher education border," evident in the Home Office's extension of immigration controls into UK universities (Murray and Gray 2021; Oliver and Hughes 2018; Yuval-Davis et al. 2018, 2019). The higher education border[3] can be conceived of as comprising multiple layers: relating to "*bordering*," explicit legislative exclusions; "*ordering*," implicit legislative exclusions; and "*othering*" through practices that deter HEIs, support agencies, and even forced migrants from pursuing HE studies (Murray 2018; Murray and Gray 2021).

The structures that shape the higher education sector and individual universities are comprised of specific mechanisms such as legislation, which underpin rules, processes, and procedures (Giddens 1984; Bakewell 2010; Dean 2010). Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHDR) (1948) enshrines in international legislation the right to access university; however, human rights are limited by the lack of structural mechanisms to enforce them (Sen 2007; Whiteside & Mah 2012). Understanding the mechanisms through which forced migrants can be excluded from university thus requires further investigation of domestic law and policy.

The *Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998* introduced university tuition fees for the first time for home students and sought to reclassify forced migrants with unsettled status as international students, rendering them ineligible for student support and funding typically afforded to home students.[4] Forced migrants are, in the main, absent from these legislative frameworks and it is through their absence that their exclusion is enacted. Despite HEIs' status as public sector organizations, funding for higher education has significantly decreased over the past 20 years, forcing an increased reliance on income generation strategies external to the state. The financial pressures faced by universities and students were exacerbated by the 2008 global financial crisis and the politics of austerity imposed by the Coalition (2010–2015) and Conservative governments (2015 onward), both of which disproportionally impacted upon migrants in terms of service cuts (Berg 2018; Vertovec 2007).

The higher education border is dominated by neoliberal and immigration-focused administrative logics, evident in the lack of financial incentives to support forced migrant students and decreases in state funding across the sector. Financial challenges are interwoven with the bureaucratic burdens placed upon universities to manage the presence of forced migrants within the wider student population (Murray 2018). The Home Office is afforded powers by the state to manage, monitor, and exclude forced migrants from HE (Oliver and Hughes 2018; Andrews 2019). The *Immigration Act 2016* came into force in January 2018 and introduced new Home Office powers to impose an explicit "no study" stipulation as part of the immigration bail conditions (these rules apply to higher education) imposed upon forced migrants with unresolved immigration status (Baron 2019). Derrida's theory of hospitality provides a useful lens through which to explore the interplay between the legislative limitations impeding forced migrants' access to higher education and sanctuary scholarships as an appropriate institutional response.

Derrida (2000) defines hospitality as the binary opposite of hostility. Sanctuary scholarships delivered in the context of the UK hostile environment could be conceived of as significant acts of hospitality toward forced migrants; however, Derrida also articulates the complex contradictions evident in the laws of hospitality:

> In appearance, a performative contradiction which bids welcome, by acknowledging that we do not know what welcome means and that perhaps no one welcomed is ever completely welcome. (ibid.: 5)

The hospitality/hostility binary is evident within the myriad of ways that higher education structures are implemented and resisted through powerful and pervasive invisible mechanisms, such as habits and behaviors, which play an equally important role in governing these students (Giddens 1984; Derrida 2000; Murray 2018; Dean 2010). The structures, multiple layers, and mechanisms of the higher education border reflect its flexibility, malleability, and capacity to be molded by universities operating in the highly diverse and stratified UK higher education sector, and to *block* or *assist* members of the increasingly heterogeneous forced migrant population. This is evident in the dual role played by HEIs in exercising:

i) responsibility for compliance with Home Office legislation designed to exclude forced migrants—*hostility*, in parallel with;
ii) institutional autonomy to facilitate access and effectively include forced migrants—*hospitality*.

HEIs' initiatives to mitigate the impact of forced displacement on access to HE are not driven by state policy, but by a series of responses designed and delivered by individual universities. Morrice (2009, 2013) recognizes the role of universities in reducing or removing institutional barriers, while Bell and Stevenson (2006) assert that universities do not simply implement government policy, but interpret, enact, and contest it in a variety of ways. Initiatives that seek to *include* forced migrants in HE are the result of institutions exercising their, albeit compromised, autonomy. It is imperative to situate these conceptual ideas within the broader context, in which there is a palpable absence of research focused on the role played by universities in both mitigating and exacerbating the exclusion of forced migrants from HE studies.

Scarcity of Research Exploring the Role of HEIs in Mitigating the Impact of Forced Migration

A key motivation in undertaking this research was in direct response to the need to create an evidence base in the absence of academic research, policy, or data reporting on extensive practice across UK universities to support forced migrant students. Research in the field of forced migration is described as "voluminous" (Gill 2010: 627), but there is a deficit in research connecting the fields of forced migration with higher education, exemplified in the systematic review undertaken by Mangan and Winter (2017) and the meta-scoping by Ramsay and Baker (2019).

Analysis of existing international studies highlights the homogeneity in challenges impacting upon forced migrants' access to higher education, in spite of the heterogeneity of this group. The common issues identified transcend geographical location, national legislation, and local policy frameworks. They include interruptions to, or incomplete, prior education and misrecognition of existing qualifications, compounded by a palpable lack of investment in the training and time required to understand the needs of these students and adequately support them (Stevenson and Willott 2007, 2008; Morrice 2009; Burke 2011; Naidoo 2015; Wilkinson and Lloyd-Zantiotis 2017; Lambrechts 2020). Unsurprisingly, the experiences of forced migrant students successful in accessing HE have been characterized by a lack of inclusivity and belonging (Burke 2011; Naidoo 2015).

Noticeably absent from the majority of research is the impact of immigration regimes on experiences while studying in university. Scholarship in this area has a tendency to either fail to differentiate between immigration statuses, or to omit the university aspirations of forced migrants with unsettled status or—as is the exclusive focus of this research—considerations of the role played by HEIs and staff operating within them (for exceptions, see Jungblut and Vukasovic 2018; Webb et al. 2018; Oliver and Hughes 2018; Murray and Gray 2021). Such scholarship thus reflects a further deficit in relation to research that expands its locus of inquiry beyond the immediate experiences of forced migrants. The combination of limited scholarly attention and the relative invisibility of these issues were primary drivers in the design and implementation of this research project. A multi-method approach to data collection was essential in order to develop a comprehensive picture of the provision and impact of sanctuary scholarships across the UK.

Methodology

This study recorded activity that supported forcibly displaced individuals to access and ultimately succeed in their HE studies in UK universities between 2008 and 2018, via a detailed mapping of sanctuary scholarship initiatives. In 2008, the first student supported by the Article 26 project commenced an undergraduate degree program. Events taking place during summer 2015 triggered a powerful response from the global higher education sector, leading institutions to utilize their skills and resources to provide a range of opportunities for displaced migrants. Included in this movement were multiple institutions throughout the UK.[5]

This research sought to quantify the provision and impact of sanctuary scholarships, by answering the following research questions:

- RQ1. How has provision of sanctuary scholarships in the UK changed between 2008 and 2018?
- RQ2. To what extent do sanctuary scholarship schemes constitute a challenge to the structural exclusion of forced migrant students from UK HE, manifest in the higher education border?
- RQ3. To what extent have sanctuary scholars succeeded in UK HEIs in spite of the higher education border?

Content analysis of web-based publicity materials and archival data collated by the Article 26 project led to the identification of 72 UK HEIs that had, between 2008 and 2018, delivered targeted initiatives to support forced migrants.[6] Forty-six of the 72 HEIs agreed to participate in the second stage of the research, a structured telephone survey that collected predominantly quantitative, supplemented by qualitative, data.[7] Interviews took place over a 12-month period (February 2018–2019). The lack of external state-led governance in this area was reflected in i) the lack of internal structures to locate scholarship schemes and ii) the diversity of institutional actors leading scholarship schemes. The Article 26 project coordinated a network of universities delivering sanctuary scholarships. These contacts were used to promote the research, and to identify and access participants across UK HEIs.

The survey questions were structured with a view to collecting comparable data across five key areas: i) scholarship history—determining when the scheme was established, and whether it had grown or diminished over time; ii) scholarship composition—tuition fee waiver or remittance, student support costs or accommodation, and historical changes to the composition;

iii) scholarship impact—collating student retention and graduation figures; and iv) operationalizing the scholarship scheme—in respect to funding and identifying departments responsible for delivery. The final section of the survey (v) was semi-structured. Research participants were invited to share iterative reflections on the overarching successes, challenges, and opportunities of their scholarship schemes.

The 46 participant codes were comprised of the following components: "RU" indicated a Russell Group university and "U" the remaining universities, 14 of the 46 HEIs interviewed belonged to the Russell Group.[8] A unique number between 1 and 46 distinguished between participants; an acronym was used to indicate their university department.[9] The majority of research participants (38 of 46) were operational staff located in professional service teams: widening participation (WP) (12), student services (SS) (12), student funding (SF) (8), admissions (ADM) (5), and compliance (1). The remaining eight research participants were members of the executive board (EB) (2), academics (ACAD) (4), or Students Union (SU) (2).

In the absence of data collected by universities or the bodies governing higher education in relation to this student group, it was not possible to corroborate or triangulate the information using alternative sources. It is also critical to note that this research provides only a partial representation of universities' activities to support people who have been forcibly displaced. The survey did not record the diverse and growing body of activities[10] that are unrelated to sanctuary scholarships, but which serve to enhance institutional responses to issues pertaining to forced migration.

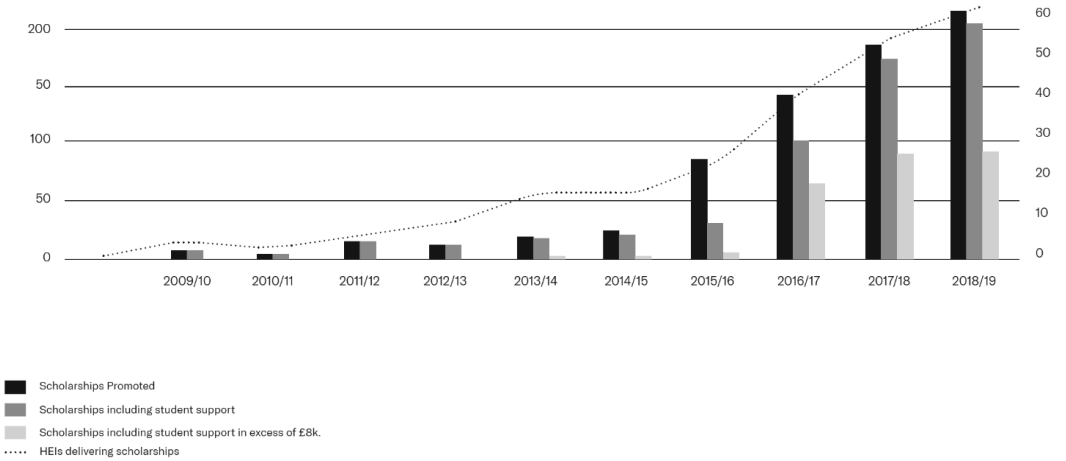
The research findings are presented in the context of the three broad indices utilized to explore and assess the efficacy of sanctuary scholarships in creating sustainable opportunities for forced migrants pursuing HE studies. The first indicator was growth of scholarships, in respect to both the quality and quantity of opportunities; the second focused on the investment of resources by HEIs, indicative of the extent of their hospitality; and the findings conclude with a report on impact in terms of student graduation and retention.

Changing Growth and Composition of Sanctuary Scholarships

Between 2008 and 2018, the mapping of opportunities for forced migrants in UK higher education resulted in the identification of 72 university-led[11] initiatives promoting a total of 754 scholarships across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Figure 1 depicts the continuous growth of opportunities for forced migrants in UK higher education, determined by two distinct periods: 2008/2009–2014/2015 and 2015/2016–2018/2019. The significant growth in scholarships from 2015/2016 onward reflects UK universities' response to the increase in people displaced from the MENA region (Murra y 2019).

During the period of early growth (2008/2009–2014/2015), the delivery of sanctuary scholarships was led by the Article 26 project in collaboration with participating universities. The project aimed to create space, to increase the visibility of forced migrants and the institutional knowledge of UK universities, and to recognize and respond to the needs of these students. Article 26 was established in response to a successful advocacy campaign led by forced migrants who aspired to pursue HE studies regardless of the inequity between them and the wider student population (Murray 2018). The successful inclusion of these students began to break the cycle of exclusion and provide new foundations upon which to build a coalition of interconnected support within and across HEIs, the long-term aim of which was to achieve transformative change across the sector. The activities described preceded the exponential period of growth responsible for shaping the second period, 2015/2016–2018/2019.

Figure 1. Mapping changes in the provision and composition of sanctuary scholarships, 2008–2018.



The common features shared by sanctuary scholarship schemes firstly include the need to overcome deficits in forced migrants' economic capital in order to facilitate their access to HE. The second shared feature, cited by one university as their overarching success, was "the creation of opportunities in a hostile political climate" (U43EB). In spite of these shared features, significant disparities exist in the design of opportunities, most noticeably in the provision or absence of student support (living costs) presented in Figure 1. Of the 754 scholarships promoted, 633 included student support. For 286 scholarships, the stipend exceeded £8,000, which was broadly considered to cover the cost of living.

2013/2014 was a pivotal year due to the fact that scholarships were promoted (for the first time) that comprised only a tuition fee waiver. All previous scholarships had included additional student support, albeit significantly lower than £8,000.[12] Between 2008 and 2018, 16 percent of scholarships offered no additional financial support, and only 40 percent included financial support in excess of £8,000 p.a. U1SF described the institutional support they offered as "filling a vacuum," a position echoed by a further 22 participants, highlighting the economic vulnerability of students in receipt of a sanctuary scholarships, due to a palpable lack of alternative opportunity underpinned by an explicit lack of rights and entitlements (Murray 2018; Oliver and Hughes 2018).

The majority of institutions demonstrated an enduring commitment to the delivery of scholarships: 16 of the 72 HEIs consistently provided scholarships for five years or longer, while a further 17 consistently provided scholarships for between three and five years, up to and including 2018, demonstrating the potential for the long-term reshaping of HE structures by changes in practice (Bakewell 2010). In direct contrast, four universities promoted a large number of scholarships (10–50) during one academic year, to subsequently reduce provision to two, one, or zero scholarships the following year (Murray 2019). There is no evidence that the copious places were filled during the single year that they were available. This may simply represent mismanagement and shortsightedness, but ultimately facilitated positive media attention for creating, but not successfully implementing or sustaining, scholarship opportunities.

The extensive changes to scholarship provision during the period 2015/2016–2018/2019 reflect the diverse support and increased awareness from NGOs, individuals, and a wide range of institutions on the role of HEIs in mitigating the impact of forced migration.

This was evident in the significant growth of scholarships in terms of their geographical spread, level of financial investment, and the diverse range of HE programs that sanctuary schol-

ars were permitted to access. The spectrum of eligibility criteria was also extended (by some HEIs) from an exclusive focus on students with precarious (unsettled) status to include those holding refugee (settled) immigration status. In 2015–2018, a combined total of 112 scholarships were promoted that exclusively targeted people with refugee status and Syrian nationals. An exclusive focus on refugees is a problematic feature of scholarship eligibility criteria, serving to reinforce hierarchies based on immigration status and (in some cases) nationality, but it is a risk-averse strategy in terms of recipients requiring minimal financial investment due to students' eligibility for mainstream funding. The recruitment of "ideal" refugees, coupled with inconsistent support, risks producing a range of exclusions that reinforce, as opposed to resist, the higher education border (Murray and Gray 2021).

Sanctuary Scholarships: Resource Dilemmas

An analysis of resource-based challenges provides insight into the practical reality of initiatives that aim to support forced migrants and how the provision of hospitality to this group is in conflict with the wider hostile environment. If we conceive of forced migrants as the institutional "guest" and universities as the "host," there is an underlying and persistent pressure on the host to maintain their authority and ensure that welcoming these particular guests does not compromise their ability to meet their own needs (Derrida 2000; Gibson 2010). The delivery of sanctuary scholarships threatened universities' ability to generate income and their relationship with the Home Office. The key challenges identified by participants emanated from a significant deficit in terms of their institutions' investment of economic capital and reluctance to acquire essential knowledge capital.

Twenty-nine university participants cited a lack of resources as a pivotal issue governing the development of their scholarship scheme, while 23 reported that financial challenges posed the biggest threat to delivery and continuation. Forty-two participants reported on the funding arrangements for their scholarship scheme—37 of whom reported that the cost of, or loss of, tuition fee income was absorbed internally through the institution's central funds (28/37) or at the departmental level (9/37). The remaining five institutions fundraised to mitigate this financial loss of tuition fees. Thirty of the 40 participants who identified the source of funding for student support stated that their institution utilized central (24/30) or departmental funds (6/30) to meet arguably the more tangible financial cost. A total of 10 universities reported their reliance on fundraising initiatives to meet the cost of student support, double the number of HEIs reliant on this method to fund tuition fees.

The cost of international tuition fees and student support costs for sanctuary scholars studying at two Russell Group universities were met in full by donors. External funding sources were used to ensure minimal financial investment on the part of the institution and to guarantee that scholarships generated a profit as opposed to a financial loss for the institution. An interviewee from the Widening Participation department of one of these Russell Group universities reported that: "the university's perception of a fee waiver is a loss of income, which is recouped from funds raised." These universities prioritized their own financial needs, in their capacity as the "host," and when funds were secured from external donors, they were used to mitigate the loss of tuition fee income, as opposed to spending the full donation on meeting the student support needs of sanctuary scholars (Gibson 2010).

Forced migrant students encounter a myriad of financial barriers imposed by the HE border, which center on a lack of eligibility (for the majority) to student finance, which invariably extends to alternative external sources of HE funding, such as charitable trusts. Deficits in

economic capital are further exacerbated by bordering restrictions threaded throughout civil society, evident in restriction on opportunities to generate income through employment (Stevenson and Willott 2007; Murray 2018; Mayblin and James 2019). In this context, roles are reversed—the neoliberal academy, driven by a privileging of profit and growth, evident in the introduction and steep rise in university tuition fees (Waters 2006;), is relied on by the sanctuary scholar for funding. HEIs are further challenged by the limited financial *incentives* to include forced migrants, evident in the small number of HEIs relying on external donors. In the event that an HEI is judged to have mismanaged their role as border guard, punitive technologies of governance such as suspending a university's license to educate international students can be administered (Murray 2018; Andrews 2019). It could be argued that these potential penalties issued by the Home Office act as a disincentive.

The majority of scholarship recipients were still in the process of resolving their immigration status upon commencing, during, and in some cases for the duration of their HE studies. The retention of sanctuary scholars and the concept of a student with an uncertain future in the UK embarking on a degree program were presented as key concerns, which fed into broader institutional anxieties about immigration and the Home Office. The most widely reported resource-based challenge, after financial issues, was knowledge. Seventeen research participants cited concerns over the complex process involved in "navigating immigration status, compliance, and defining eligibility [for sanctuary scholarship initiatives]" (U42SS). Underpinned by the perpetual sense of fear around delivering a scholarship scheme while remaining compliant with the Home Office, "compliance issues are intimidating" (U46SS) and "[there are] compliance concerns if we widen the [scholarship] eligibility criteria to include more immigration statuses" (U6WP).

The research participants' responses' clearly conveyed the dual pressures dominating resource-related pressures: neoliberal logics and management of the HE border. Scholarship initiatives reliant on internal funding could be viewed as more secure due to their gradual interweaving into the fabric of the institution. Relying on external philanthropic funding to finance scholarship schemes creates additional difficulties. If the underlying purpose of an initiative is to generate income, then this creates a "business case" for its discontinuation and raises questions as to what happens when this funding ends or support for issues of access to HE diminishes. However, even for the institution attempting to structurally include forced migrant students, state-imposed hostility mediated through the Home Office continually compromises acts of hospitality (Derrida 2000; Gibson 2010).

Sanctuary Scholarships: Structural Dilemmas

The impact of these investment deficits in economic and knowledge capital was compounded by a failure to accommodate the sanctuary scholarships into existing institutional structures. Twenty-six research participants highlighted the embedding of scholarship processes and practices as an area for improvement: "in the absence of a structure, we are forced to try and create one" (RU15WP; RU36SF). One participant surmised that "as a vulnerable group, we need to think about how to mainstream [sanctuary scholarship recipients] into the wider university, in relation to the structures, processes, and procedures to accommodate these students" (RU36SF).

In the absence of the information or monitoring and evaluation infrastructure required to obtain an accurate picture of the size of the forced migrant student population (beyond scholarship recipients), or data collated in relation to enquiries and applications that denotes demand, universities can continue to justify neither embedding their schemes nor developing training

to support staff to deliver them. Thirty-one participants reported that their institutions did not record and did not have processes in place to count the number of forced migrants (beyond those on their scholarship schemes) who were studying within their universities. An interviewee based in Student Services (U18SS) saw identifying students who are forced migrants as a key challenge for their university. This may be a broader issue, but it is difficult to appraise since only 26 universities recorded enquiries made by forced migrants about their scholarship schemes. It was also reported that when HEIs offered only a small number of sanctuary scholarships, this rendered it impossible to justify training HEI staff in relation to the needs of this student group. As the same interviewee reflected: "numbers [of sanctuary scholars] are too small to justify widespread training" (U18SS). To a large extent, the absence of structures reinforces the invisibility of this student group, thus impacting upon capacity to both identify and meet the needs of these students (, Murray 2018; Murray and Gray 2021).

The creation of scholarships that fail to create financial equity between forced migrant students and the wider population is reproduced in the investment in resources required to deliver these schemes, extended to resource-related challenges in respect to the allocation of staff time. Two participants explicitly stated that it was "no one's job" (U37ACAD; U29WP) to manage scholarships, and U8WP highlighted that investing in staff to deliver scholarships was as important as increasing funding for scholarship recipients. Several research participants reported feeling "isolated" within their institutions when undertaking scholarship activities (RU32SF; U5WP; U17SS), reflecting an overarching "institutional culture in which scholarships are not a priority" (U10SU).

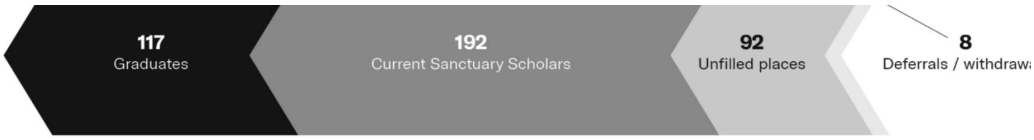
An exploration of structural change in the context of this research highlighted two specific areas in which universities could be doing substantially more. The first was integrating the scholarship schemes across the institutions in which they were located, and the second related to the creation of new (or the adaptation of existing) policy and practice to ensure effective implementation and delivery. Process and practice are fundamental to developing the structures within which a scholarship scheme exists and, most importantly, can be reproduced on an ongoing basis—disjointed and inadequate provision brings into question the utility and purpose of scholarship schemes.

High Returns on a Low Investment? Beneficiaries of Sanctuary Scholars' Success

In the context of a neoliberal HE sector, situated in a wider hostile environment that seeks to exclude forced migrants not just from civil society, but ultimately from the UK (Yuval Davies et al, 2018; 2019Mayblin and James 2019), how did sanctuary scholars fare given the adverse conditions in which they undertook their HE studies? The quantitative data portraying the changing composition of sanctuary scholarships paints a portrait of success that extends to the impact of the initiatives, as depicted in Figure 2.

Of the 46 HEIs surveyed, 43 reported on the impact of their scholarship schemes, measured using graduation, annual progression, and retention rates of sanctuary scholars (2008–2018). Sixteen of the 43 institutions providing impact data were members of the Russell Group. The 43 HEIs collectively promoted 409 scholarship opportunities over the course of the decade. This resulted in 117 students graduating with respectively foundation (six), undergraduate (71), or postgraduate degrees (40—including three doctorates). A further 192 students were progressing without deferring or needing to resit the academic year. In addition to the 409 opportunities

Figure 2. Mapping the Graduation and Retention rates of Sanctury Scholars, 2008–2018.



that created the possibility to secure a degree qualification, an estimated 228 students completed, and 139 students were currently engaged in, pre-sessional or nonaccredited courses. As well as the impact data collected during the course of this research, a report produced by Universities Scotland and the Scottish Refugee Council (2016) estimated a further 250–350 forced migrants studying in HE in Scotland.[13]

High rates of student "year on year" progression, retention, and graduation effectively dispute university participants "concerns about the caliber of applicants" (U19ADM) and more specifically their ability to "meet the requirements of the Russell Group" (RU45SS). Student retention figures compare favorably with those recorded for the wider student population: HESA (2018) statistics reflect a withdrawal rate of 6.4 percent across UK universities, while a 2 percent withdrawal rate was recorded in respect to sanctuary scholars (across Foundation/UG, PGT, and PGR). It is important to note that half of these withdrawals resulted from Home Office interventions, and bore no relation to the students' academic or personal progress.

Student success was often accomplished in highly adverse circumstances and offers insights into the benefits of initiatives to HEIs. One university acknowledged that "a low cash award makes it very challenging to succeed within the provision" (U29WP). However, the reality is that sanctuary scholars do succeed, owing to the absence of alternative opportunities; this was widely cited as one of the main reasons for the schemes' success (U4WP). This perspective was presented in multiple examples of students' contributions to university life, which included participating in student committees, acting as mentors and ambassadors, and exceeding the academic requirements placed upon them: one participant stated that "his [a sanctuary scholar's] contribution to the university is tenfold in comparison with what we provide" (U46SS).

Universities experience multiple benefits from facilitating access for sanctuary scholars, who in turn are often grateful to take up places in spite of the minimal financial support in place (Murray and Gray 2021). In reality, scholarships have been utilized by some institutions as an expedient way to demonstrate their liberal or democratic credentials and leverage income generation through attracting home students concerned with the ethics of the institution they enter and external investment through the deployment of neoliberal accounting logics. Encouragingly, 28 HEIs reported that the success of individual sanctuary scholars was the most important outcome of their schemes. Given the success of initiatives despite the financial and administrative disincentives to deliver them, it is perhaps optimistic to hope that this would encourage universities to strive harder to overcome the multiple issues encountered by forced migrants navigating their access and participation in higher education. Scholarship in this area is dominated by challenges related to the misrecognition of prior qualifications and the lack of investment in staff training and access to advice and guidance for forced migrant students (Hannah 1999; Stevenson and Willott 2007, 2008; Morrice 2009; Burke 2011; Naidoo 2015; Murray 2018; Lambrechts 2020).

It is highly unlikely that these challenges, which also serve to exacerbate the financial barriers and further compound the lack of inclusivity and belonging, will become institutional priorities for change.

Conclusion

The analysis of the activities of 72 UK universities highlighted substantial yet inconsistent growth in the number and composition of sanctuary scholarships between 2008 and 2018. A central concern is the fact that very few universities during this period created initiatives to support forced migrants that were commensurate with the support offered to the wider student population. Universities in some instances launched initiatives that were ill equipped to meet the needs of this student group, reflected in their eligibility criteria and ultimately reduction in or discontinuation of scholarships. Other initiatives facilitated access to the institution, but scholarships were vulnerable owing to insecure or insubstantial funding arrangements, and lacked the support of institutional structures and staff to ensure the full participation of forced migrant students.

The findings presented herein connect to the external inhospitable and exclusionary context in the UK, which ranges from restrictions on asylum support, work, and welfare to time spent in limbo awaiting an immigration decision (Squire and Darling 2013; Mayblin 2014; Rotter 2015). Structural inequalities constructed and enacted within the hostile environment, interwoven with and reinforced by financial drivers, are perpetuated by and within UK universities. Sanctuary scholarships' reproduction of structural inequalities results in the marginalization of forced migrant students, which characterizes their HE trajectory from the peripheral edges (*access*) to the conclusion of their studies (*success*), reinforcing the fact that they do not "belong" in the academy (Yuval-Davis et al, 2018; Murray and Gray 2021). This context poses a direct threat to the continuation of opportunities, their sustainability, and their visibility within and beyond the higher education sector.

It is not possible to negate the fact that scholarship beneficiaries excel in spite of the inequalities they encounter during their HE studies. The positive outcomes of sanctuary scholarships also extend beyond the students' success in acquiring accredited qualifications. The data reveals evidence of slow yet incremental changes that constitute the gradual restructuring of existing structures within some HEIs. The first sanctuary scholarship was established in 2008, while by the academic year 2014/2015, 26 scholarships were offered across 17 HEIs: this growth preceded the cataclysmic events of summer 2015 by seven years. This would appear to indicate that some sanctuary scholarships were established with the intention of, and that their continuation is predicated upon, meeting the HE needs of forced migrants, rather than responding to external events.

Economic barriers pose the most significant block to forced migrant students in the UK (Murray 2018; Murray and Gray 2021); however, the amount of financial support included in a scholarship is not the only indicator of a successful scheme. The length of time during which scholarships have been consistently provided; the investment of the university's core funds (as opposed to external donors); evidence of scholarships in communications; policy and procedures in place to support students; established points of contact among HEI staff—all these demonstrate the development of new mechanisms designed to include forced migrants in HEIs.

There are imperfections within this provision and, more often than not, a lack of equity between sanctuary scholars and the wider student population. Sanctuary scholarship schemes hint at the potential for the long-term restructuring of higher education as a sector that includes, as opposed to excludes, forced migrants, but they are only part of the solution. The overarching aim underpinning future initiatives should focus on translating discretionary practices into tangible rights. This involves progressing from providing hospitality to forced migrants to asserting and enacting their access to higher education, without conditions pertaining to their immigration status, as articulated by Zeus (2011: 271):

> When long term refugees are only viewed as temporarily displaced, their rights are often denied . . . the normative recognition of HE as an inalienable right still needs to be translated into unconditional practice.

A long-term strategy is required that is not dependent on sympathy and the discretionary distribution of funds, but on eligibility to access mainstream funding and support, coupled with the universal right to study.

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NOTES

1. "Forced migrant" is a nonlegal term used as a broad definition in this article to describe the diverse categories of legal status afforded to people who have migrated to the UK. It is not used to exclusively describe people who have sought asylum. For further details on some of the legal statuses included in this definition see Murray (2019).
2. Unsettled status is used to collectively describe the different immigration statuses held by forced migrants that impose limitations on their access to HE.
3. The concept of the higher education border was developed in Murray's 2018 doctoral thesis, and further analysis of its construction and enactment is reported on in Murray and Gray (2021).
4. The most restrictive legislation pertaining to forced migrants' access to higher education is in operation in England. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland provide access to student funding for a broader range of immigration statuses. Further information and guidance can be accessed on the UCAS website—see UCAS (n.d.). In 2007, the Scottish Executive introduced a time limited policy (now expired) whereby asylum-seeking children residing in Scotland were guaranteed to access HE as home students, therefore eligible for student funding.
5. This date indicates events triggering what is widely referred to as the "refugee crisis"; however, this term is contested and will not be used in the remainder of the article.
6. The Article 26 project was, until September 2018, a project of the Helena Kennedy Foundation, working with UK universities to support the access, participation, and success of forced migrant students. Further information and details of the multiple resources produced by the project can be found on the Universities of Sanctuary website: https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/resources/article26.

7. The activities of 72 UK HEIs were analyzed: 57 in England (40 in the survey interview/17 in the content and archival analysis); 2 in Northern Ireland (1 in the survey interview/1 in the content and archival analysis); 10 in Scotland (5 in the survey interview/5 in the content and archival analysis); and 3 in Wales (3 in the survey interview).
8. The Russell Group constitutes an association of 24 research-leading universities in the UK: see https://russellgroup.ac.uk/ (accessed 7 February 2022).
9. This is an example of how to break down the information contained in a research participant code: RU7WP indicates that the participant worked for a Russell Group university, was number 7 of 46 participants, and worked in the department responsible for Widening Participation.
10. Activities include, but are not limited to, the following: university places funded by charitable trusts; opportunities created in partnership with the Council for At Risk Academics or Scholars at Risk; lobbying and support activities led by student groups such as Student Action for Refugees, Amnesty International, and student unions; Universities of Sanctuary-led initiatives aimed at creating a culture of welcome for refugees across university campuses; or networks that coordinate academic research with the work of practitioners and policy-makers.
11. Murray (2019) presents a table mapping the individual activities of the 72 HEIs between 2008 and 2018. The development of sanctuary scholarships across the four countries of the UK has been uneven, due to complex interconnected factors relating to population size, dispersal and resettlement quotas, and different approaches to policy development and implementation adopted by the devolved nations—all of which impact upon both need and demand.
12. This finding was juxtaposed with the significant rise in the number of scholarships offering a student support component that (arguably) met the cost of living (in excess of £8,000 p.a.). In 2018/2019, 5 percent of scholarships comprised a tuition fee waiver only, and 44 percent provided support commensurate with a maintenance loan.
13. For the academic year 2015/2016, Universities Scotland and the Scottish Refugee Council (2016) collated information from nine Scottish HEIs and reported that 50 refugees and 200–300 individuals with some form of temporary immigration status were current students.

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