



Tertiary pathways for students from refugee backgrounds

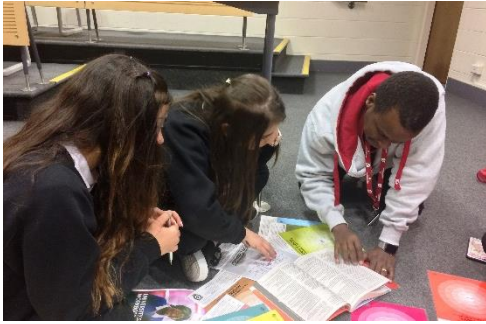
Students from refugee backgrounds and their parents/carers often need personalised support to understand and navigate senior school and post school options.

The impact of traumatic experiences is significant for students and families from refugee backgrounds. They may have experienced trauma, torture, loss of family members, and may have emotional, mental or physical health problems.

In addition, many refugee and humanitarian entrant students have experienced significant disruption to their education or have had little or no schooling prior to enrolment in an Australian school. They may have low literacy skills in their first language and generally have greater educational and support needs than other newly arrived students.

Students from a refugee background may have a limited understanding of the range of options and pathways available in Australia as well as the breadth of career/work options. They may face financial barriers that limit their post school options. Depending on their time of arrival to Australia and language levels, some students may also face additional challenges accessing Stage 6 courses and may need English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) support post-school.

Despite these challenges, many students from a refugee background have enormous resilience and motivation to succeed and will benefit greatly if provided with the support they need to learn EAL/D.



What schools can do to support senior secondary students

- Use the Department's Enrolment and Registration Number (ERN) database to help **identify students with a refugee background**, including asylum seeker students. Additionally, EAL/D teachers in schools may be able to assist with identifying students and provide more background information as needed.
- Support students with their **subject selection** for year 11 and 12. Students will need to ensure they choose subjects that don't limit their options and provide them with the opportunity to gain an ATAR if they want to pursue a pathway directly into university. Students will also need to choose subjects that support an achievable outcome for their completion of Stage 6. Students and teachers may use the HSC Minimum Standards tests results as a guide to understanding and assessing the literacy skills required for subjects.
- Inform students and their parents/carers about **different pathways available** if they are not interested or not ready to pursue tertiary education directly after school. Many students are not aware of the transition opportunities and credit arrangements possible between high school, TAFE and University. Some subjects allow for the completion of VET certificates in Stage 6, setting students up for employment and further study.
- Provide **bilingual and interpreting support** at subject selection and information sessions for students and their parents/carers. Personalised student interviews with parents/carers in attendance offer opportunities to help them understand the schooling system, subject choices and various tertiary pathways.
- Ensure identified students **meet the Careers Advisor or Transition Advisor** and arrange a meeting to discuss their individual post school pathway options. This process can be enhanced by including the EAL/D or New Arrivals Program (NAP) teacher in the meeting.
- Plan **language and literacy support** for career and transition activities collaboratively, For example include an EAL/D teacher in the Transition team.
- Provide **supported work experience/s** for students to help develop the skills they need to seek employment and develop understanding about expectations in Australian workplaces. Some students may benefit from having opportunities to observe or role play someone modelling these skills such as making a phone call, meeting potential employers and completing application forms.

- Encourage students to **tour a TAFE or university campus** and participate in taster days.
- Connect with **university mentoring programs** such as [Fast Forward](#) or [LEAP UP Macquarie Mentoring](#) which can assist students in navigating their post-school pathways and develop their personal confidence. Local and regional based universities, TAFE and local settlement support agencies may also provide a service to support students.
- Link students with **tutoring support** to help with completing homework and assessment tasks as some may not have access to the internet or a home situation that is conducive to study.



Financial support

Students from refugee backgrounds often face financial barriers that can prohibit their direct pathways into tertiary education. The cost for citizens, permanent residents, temporary residents and asylum seekers varies greatly and many refugee-background students will need financial support to access further study.

Refugee students seeking asylum and on temporary visas

Currently, students who are seeking asylum and refugees on temporary visas are not eligible to receive support through some federal government programs designed to assist students with financing tertiary study. In addition, the Universities Admission Centre (UAC) and tertiary institutions are not able to distinguish this group of students with a humanitarian background from other temporary visa holders.

Without financial assistance, students who are seeking asylum and refugees on temporary visas are forced to pay international student rates for tertiary education. A number of universities are now offering full fee waiver scholarships for these students.

For students who are not ready or do not wish to attend university, Vocational Education and Training courses from Certificate I to Advanced Diploma level are available. Students who meet certain criteria can access fee-free training for qualifications up to Certificate IV level on the [NSW Smart and Skilled list](#).

Scholarships

Many universities offer scholarships for students to support them whilst engaged in tertiary study. Some scholarships are available through the UAC website whilst some universities require direct application through their websites. It is advisable for students to explore both ways of accessing university pathways.

Students will require support to complete scholarship applications and supporting statements with references as the process can be difficult and overwhelming. Time will be needed to gather the evidence and documents required to support each application.

[2024-2025 Tertiary scholarships](#) provides an overview of post-school and tertiary scholarships for students from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds. It includes a wide range of programs offered by universities and other institutions.

[UAC Equity Scholarships](#) help financially disadvantaged students with general costs associated with tertiary study.

[The Good Universities Guide](#) provides tips and advice for students applying for scholarships and help with finding the right course.

Other places that can help

[Study Assist](#) - information about government assistance for financing tertiary study

[Career learning and VET](#) - links to career and further study information

[TAFE counsellors](#) - free and confidential service for prospective and current students

[Settlement Services International](#) and the [Australian Red Cross](#) - information and links to community organisations around the state that support the employment and transition of students from refugee backgrounds

[Asylum Seekers Centre](#) - practical and personalised support for people seeking asylum

For more information

Rachel Hennessy
Refugee Student Education Advisor
NSW Department of Education
Phone: 0436 522 021
rachel.hennessy1@det.nsw.edu.au