



The Further Education Colleges of Sanctuary Award:

Guidance for Completing an Application

1.0 Introduction

Further Education (FE) Colleges of Sanctuary¹ is an initiative to celebrate the good practice of FE Colleges who foster a culture of welcome and belonging for all, especially students with asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds.

FE Colleges of Sanctuary helps and encourages FE Colleges to review and refine their provision, policies and practice to enable access to and progression in education for those seeking sanctuary and ensure the college community is a place of belonging, safety and understanding. FE Colleges of Sanctuary also educate the whole college community about the experiences of people who are forcibly displaced to build understanding and empathy, and engage with and support people seeking sanctuary in their local communities. FE Colleges that are committed to City of Sanctuary's shared vision of welcome and belonging can apply for an award from the City of Sanctuary movement.

City of Sanctuary recognises that FE Colleges vary in their contexts, so there is no expectation that every college of Sanctuary will follow the exact same path to embedding the ethos of welcome to all and achieving an award. This document outlines the principles and minimum criteria required for the award, but we encourage FE Colleges to build on these in a way that best reflects their unique situation and to aim for an institution-wide approach.

This guidance is designed to be read alongside the [FE Colleges Resource Pack](#) and [sanctuary award application](#). We have also developed an [audit or self-assessment tool](#) that we strongly encourage all colleges to use in order to review how existing practice and provision meets the minimum criteria and identify areas for further development.

¹ *The Further Education Colleges of Sanctuary initiative includes all college settings that offer a post-19 education. Sixth Form Colleges should review the criteria for [Schools of Sanctuary](#).



2.0 The Application Process

To become an FE College of Sanctuary, City of Sanctuary UK expects FE Colleges to follow a series of processes to Learn, Embed and Share about asylum, refugee and migration issues and meet twelve minimum criteria. An overview of the necessary steps includes:

Step 1: First, FE Colleges must sign an [Organisation Pledge](#) which affirms their commitment to the City of Sanctuary vision of welcome for all in the UK: this is also one of the eight minimum criteria to become a FE Colleges of Sanctuary. You can find more information here: [Sign an Organisation Pledge](#).

On signing the pledge colleges should announce their intention to become a College of Sanctuary within the college community and beyond and make sure everyone understands what this means. The pledge should be displayed publicly and included on a webpage.

Step 2: Your pledge will be followed by contact from City of Sanctuary UK who will share details of upcoming events, networking meetings and application deadlines. If possible, you will also be connected with one of our local City of Sanctuary groups to forge local connections and encourage collaboration.

Step 3: It is recommended that FE Colleges then review and recognise everything they already have in place or done to date to meet the award criteria; it is not compulsory but you might find our [audit](#) tool useful for this. Identify areas for improvement using ideas from the audit tool, the website and newsletter and the [resource pack](#) for inspiration and make an action plan to develop your practice.

Step 4: We advise starting the application process early and treated as an ongoing effort as you develop and refine your practice and activities. Have a look at the [application form](#) to familiarise yourself with it and then use this document to complete the application concisely and clearly and with reference to the minimum criteria. As you work on your application form you should also compile a folder of supporting 'evidence'.

Step 5: Once ready, you can submit your completed application and supporting evidence to your FE Colleges of Sanctuary main contact. They will then review your application with an appraisal panel, share their feedback and arrange a visit (either in person or virtually depending on current circumstances) to assess your application and hear from staff and students.



3.0 Becoming a FE College of Sanctuary

3.1 The Core Processes: Learn, Embed & Share

A college can attain an award if they can provide evidence that they have integrated our three core processes:

- **Learn:** learning about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, both in general as a whole institution, and specifically with regards to staff understanding the needs of students from sanctuary seeking backgrounds and how to effectively support them.
- **Embed:** taking positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and belonging within the college including, but not limited to in college practice, provision and culture whilst identifying and overcoming, where possible, barriers to access for those seeking safety. Looking at ways to centre the voices and experiences of students with sanctuary seeking backgrounds to drive improvement. To take steps to ensure this practice and progress remains sustainable.
- **Share:** sharing your vision, achievements, what you have learned, and good practice with other FE Colleges, the local community and beyond. Working in partnership with people, organisations and institutions within the wider community to build a culture of welcome that extends beyond the college gates. Standing in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary and proudly calling and advocating for a more welcoming culture.

The FE Colleges of Sanctuary criteria have been structured to fit into the three overarching processes of Learn, Embed, and Share, which are used for all sanctuary awards. Please provide evidence of meeting each of the criteria in the relevant section of the award application.

3.2 The FE Colleges of Sanctuary Minimum Criteria

Learn Criteria



Within the learn process, we will be looking for examples of work which signals the commitment of your college to build staff expertise to understand the challenges of students seeking safety and how to meet their needs. We also want to see how all members of the college community have opportunities to learn about what it means to be seeking sanctuary and how we can foster a culture of belonging and solidarity. It is important that the diverse stories, experiences and voices of people seeking sanctuary are centered in learning activities.

To receive a School of Sanctuary award, a college must meet these two 'Learn' minimum criteria:

Criterion 1: Training and awareness-raising opportunities are provided for college staff and senior management on refugee, asylum, trafficking and migration issues.

Within this criterion we want to see how a) all staff and governors have been offered opportunities to develop their own understanding of migration, seeking sanctuary and the FE Colleges of Sanctuary process, and b) relevant training opportunities have been offered to develop staff expertise in best meeting the needs of students from sanctuary seeking backgrounds. This might include training specifically around access requirements for students with refugee or asylum backgrounds, teaching English language learners, trauma-informed practice and wellbeing, anti-racism, unconscious bias, cultural sensitivity and more.

Criterion 2: Commit to raising awareness of migration and forced displacement issues amongst students. This might be through the curriculum, where relevant, or as additional sessions such as during the student induction.

Within this criterion we typically advise colleges to review a) where learning related to migration or forced displacement occurs or can occur within subject learning and b) where specific focuses on building empathy and compassion towards people who are forced to flee take place in non-subject learning such as personal development time, workshops, events and more.



Embed Criteria

Embedding means that institutions are taking positive action to implement welcome, safety and belonging throughout the college and across its entire community. City of Sanctuary wants FE Colleges to detail how they will ensure a continuation of support for sanctuary beyond the current student and faculty population.

To receive a FE College of Sanctuary award, a college must meet the following three 'Embed' minimum criteria:

Criterion 3: A dedicated member of staff/team of staff as a contact point for sanctuary students. This provision should be communicated to the students, be easily accessible and the staff member(s) must be appropriately trained.

This criterion identifies someone as a named contact for all refugee or asylum seeking students, assigns them responsibility for overseeing the practice and provision for newly arrived sanctuary students and explains what resources and training they have received to support their efforts. In some cases, this responsibility might be divided between more than one person, for example one person is in charge of the pastoral care for sanctuary seeking students whilst another person is responsible for enabling academic access and progress. In the context of students with asylum seeking backgrounds, it is important to have someone that keeps up to date with issues related to their access and eligibility to courses that other members of staff can turn to when there is a query.

Criterion 4: Ensure that your college takes a holistic approach to ensuring that students from sanctuary seeking backgrounds can access and thrive in education.

This criterion demonstrates how your college takes an informed and flexible approach to admissions and eligibility, understanding that the biggest challenge for students with sanctuary seeking background is simply access to education commensurate with their knowledge, qualifications and interest. This criterion demonstrates that there is a plan in place for a holistic assessment of their needs and an enhanced induction. This should include a language assessment and an assessment of previous education and gaps in education as well as interests and aspirations. Try to find ways in which the young person can be supported to



develop their interests even if this is via an extra-curricular programme. NB: You may need to use an interpreter for this. Also ensure that any responsible adults in the young person's life are involved in this process so that they can continue to support and complement the work of the college.

Criterion 5: Commitment to supporting active student voice on sanctuary and welcoming activities in the college. For example, this might mean supporting the establishment of a student-led awareness group or ensuring that your student council, governors or other student-led groups are actively involved in the process of working towards recognition.

This section is about how students have been given opportunities to advise and lead on sanctuary efforts and also how students have been given opportunities to develop their skills as future leaders and positive changemakers. This could include students leading diversity walks, organising fundraising efforts, delivering workshops to colleges, speaking about sanctuary issues at public events and writing to their MP.

Criterion 6: Recognition of and participation in the annual Refugee Week or other annual/regular celebratory events which highlight the contribution of people seeking sanctuary and migrants to the UK.

More information about the annual event can be found here: <http://refugeeweek.org.uk>. We see Refugee Week as an opportunity for FE Colleges to dive into themes relating to forced displacement in depth, stand in solidarity with those seeking sanctuary and connect with the wider refugee sector and local sanctuary seeking communities.

NB. We recognise that not all FE Colleges will be able to participate in the annual national Refugee Week which usually takes place during the third week of June, but would encourage all FE Colleges to find ways to regularly mark and celebrate the experiences and contributions of sanctuary seekers living in the UK.

Criterion 7: Active engagement with the wider community including people seeking sanctuary. Where relevant, this may also include the local



City of Sanctuary network or refugee support organisations or local authority.

This criterion demonstrates a college's commitment to working beyond the college campus to communicate and collaborate with other organisations and institutions to build a culture of welcome and increase the support available to people seeking safety.

Criterion 8: The college should demonstrate how it will continue to develop and sustain a culture of welcome beyond the award and ideally, this should be linked to or made clear in policy documents and induction for new staff. This strategy should also consider how the college will widen participation to courses and projects to those seeking sanctuary.

This criterion evidences how a college prioritises and sustains efforts to identify barriers to students' positive educational experiences and overcome them. To ensure sustainability, relevant duties must be included within staff job descriptions, references should be included in policy documents, sanctuary issues should be a regular (at least twice annual) agenda item on SLT meetings and the college's commitment to this should be evident on key documents, including brochures, the website and staff induction documents.

Criterion 9: Wherever possible, ensure that people seeking sanctuary are involved in the development of your plans and action and on relevant committees.

For students with sanctuary-seeking backgrounds, it is often helpful to give them a dedicated safe space to lead on welcoming activities. For example some FE Colleges have established 'welcoming committees' made up of students who have arrived in college mid-year and who can help advise on what the college can do better and who participate in annual or termly focus groups to feedback to college administration. Students with lived experience might also benefit from participating in a 'buddy' scheme whereby they support new arrivals through the admissions process and first days, and/or give them a tour of the campus and local area.



Share Criteria

The third and final process in the City of Sanctuary model is Share. City of Sanctuary will be seeking evidence that the college is seeking to share its commitment with the wider community; reaching refugee charities, local organisations and institutions and not only spreading the word about the college's efforts but looking to involve and engage others in them. FE Colleges can also tap into national (or even international) college networks to spread the ethos within the sector.

To receive a School of Sanctuary award, a college must meet the following three 'Share' minimum criteria:

Criterion 10: A public commitment to the City of Sanctuary vision of welcome, including the endorsement of [City of Sanctuary charter](#) which can be done via signing the City of Sanctuary [organisation pledge](#). This pledge should be included on the college's website and in a public space in the college.

Under criterion 6, we expect the college to have signed the supporting organisation pledge, developed a webpage about being an FE College of Sanctuary and have a public display of sanctuary in college. The college should also have sought to share their intention and journey with the wider college community. Everyone should be able to explain what a College of Sanctuary is and why it is important. NB: Some local City of Sanctuary groups have their own pledge and therefore FE Colleges would be encouraged to also sign these pledges if appropriate.

Criterion 11: Celebrate and promote the welcome and contribution of people seeking sanctuary. The college publicly highlights its activities in support of welcome and inclusion.

Within criterion 11, we want to see how the college seeks to extend a culture of welcome beyond the college gates and into the local community. This should include collaboration with local partners like refugee support organisations and City of Sanctuary groups where FE Colleges can learn from and support them in their efforts but could also relate to working with other organisations/institutions (like libraries, theaters, museums, churches, etc..) to help raise awareness amongst different communities. It might also be engaging with local decision makers and



politicians. In the simplest form, this can include social media/website posts, college newsletter updates or attending regional activities or meetings to share the college's efforts with other FE Colleges. NB. Once a college has achieved a sanctuary award, we expect FE Colleges to include the FE Colleges of Sanctuary logo and a link to the FE Colleges of Sanctuary webpage on their website.

Criterion 12: Commitment to on-going engagement with the FE Colleges of Sanctuary stream.

This criterion is all about supporting and helping to sustain the primarily grassroots FE Colleges of Sanctuary Stream and wider Sanctuary networks. This may include sharing resources, ideas and achievements via the college's website and social media or the national City of Sanctuary website, and/or with other local/regional FE Colleges. It might also be engaging with suggested activities and opportunities shared via the FE Colleges of Sanctuary newsletter and network meetings. To offer more meaningful support, we would want to see FE Colleges working in collaboration with other local FE Colleges to share practice and resources and/or mentor one another through the process. We might also ask awarded FE Colleges to participate in future appraisals.

4.0 Filling in the Application

When approaching the application form, we encourage FE Colleges to start early and treat it as an ongoing, collaborative process. Many FE Colleges find that saving the application form in a shared online drive where multiple staff can access and edit it helps to share responsibility.

Evidence might include lesson plans, schemes of work, powerpoints, meeting agendas, photos, students' work, etc) all of which could be uploaded to the shared folder), or hyperlinks to training provider webpages talking about the course taken, or to a college blog, or webpage etc. that are directly linked in the application.

For example, under criterion 1 you might include something like:



- All staff and governing board attended after an college training with the local City of Sanctuary group about the global and local migration context and challenges people seeking sanctuary experience in the UK today in November [see PPT: Training to Staff and Governors]
- 15 members of staff including the Chief Executive, Academic Progression Lead, Student Participation Lead, Head of Equity and Diversity, along with several admissions staff attended Refugee Education UK's '[Welcoming Refugees at further Education Colleges](#)' over the autumn term. More will attend during the next cohort of training.
- Head of ESOL department delivered training to all teaching staff on working with English language learners [see PPT: Working with ESOL learners.
- All personal tutors have received trauma-informed training with the Anna Freud Centre [see DOC: email registration confirmation].
- The FE Colleges of Sanctuary Lead set-up a staff sanctuary library in the staff room where staff can borrow books on refugee themes, including 'A Lightless Sky' by Gulwali Passarlay. [see photo: Sanctuary Library].
- News about forced displacement and impact on students has been regularly included in staff internal bulletins to raise awareness on potential impact on students [see email: staff update May 23 re Illegal Migration Bill].

4.1 Section Guidance

As you complete the application, here are some suggestions to support you in replying to each of the sections.

Q: Please provide a summary of how your college engages with sanctuary seekers.

In this section, briefly summarise your college demographics including whether you have students from sanctuary seeking or migratory backgrounds and, if so, from where. This might include noting student nationalities, or numbers of students with ESOL.



Application for Sanctuary Award

Name and type of organisation:		
Town / City you are based in:		
Name / position of lead applicant:		
Job Title of lead applicant:		
Contact (phone no. and email):		
Date of application:		
Name of local City of Sanctuary group if relevant		
Please put an 'X' this box if you are happy for your application to be shared with other organisations applying for sanctuary awards	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Please provide a summary of how your organisation engages with people seeking sanctuary: Click or tap here to enter text.		
Link to Website page with information about your commitment to the sanctuary vision		

If you don't have students from sanctuary seeking backgrounds in your college community, you can also discuss how your college has sought to build relationships with local people seeking sanctuary and/or formed partnerships with any local support organisations or CoS groups.

Q: Using the 3 processes of the sanctuary award, please reflect on how you have achieved these principles attaching evidence to support your answer.

Here we are looking for evidence of your initiatives, projects, policies and progress. Even if something is ongoing, include it as it helps to build a picture of how the college is developing.

We encourage FE Colleges to simply briefly bullet-point relevant activities/efforts under each criterion, keeping each point concise and clear. Please don't also assume that the appraisal team will have knowledge of your college or the UK education sector, as the appraisal team will include someone with lived experience of seeking sanctuary who might not speak English as a first language might include someone without background in the education sector (so please explain all acronyms and give context where necessary). See section 4.0 for an example of how this can be clearly formatted.



Q: Any other additional supporting evidence

As we typically advise all supporting evidence should be compiled separately, in this section you can simply add supporting quotes and evidence from partners, parents and students. For example:

1) Feedback from others involved

Has feedback from the local community, prospective pupils or the refugee & migrant support sector has been considered? Have there been any changes or actions arising from the activities?

2) Feedback from refugee/migrant involvement

It is always useful to include short quotes or comments from an asylum seeker, refugee or other migrant who has engaged with any aspect of the college's endeavors.

Q: Please identify how sanctuary seekers have been involved in helping you achieve these principles.

All applications for a Sanctuary Award are expected to involve people seeking sanctuary, refugees and migrants, in the planning, delivery and/or evaluation of activities for each of the principles, where appropriate and possible.

If you have students from sanctuary seeking or migratory backgrounds in the student body how have they, and their parents, been consulted on your initiatives, if appropriate? Is there a mechanism or space in which they feel empowered to give feedback and advice to the college on what you can improve?

If you don't have students from sanctuary seeking or migratory backgrounds, what engagement have you had with local refugee support organisations to see how you can best support them and the communities they serve? Briefly describe.



Q: How does your organisation intend to build on your achievements over the next three years in order that your award is renewed?

We want to acknowledge and celebrate institutions which show a commitment to the principles in the long-term and which have a forward-looking approach; receipt of the sanctuary award is just the beginning!

Each award is valid for three years and then a college must go through a re-accreditation process. Use this section of the application form as an opportunity to share information about your strategic planning and identify 3-5 specific areas for ongoing development. Ideally, we would like to see sanctuary and inclusion built into a college plan.

Questions to ask yourself as you complete this section include: Has your college demonstrated a sustainable commitment to sanctuary in the long-term? Has this effort been embedded in the college plan? How will your college reevaluate and adapt to continue to demonstrate sanctuary, welcome and inclusion? Can you provide evidence that this commitment will continue after the award is granted?

Final note: We encourage all FE Colleges to keep their applications to no more than 12 pages maximum. We see this as plenty of space to be able to demonstrate how you meet the minimum criteria.