Your right to work depends on your immigration status. Read on for information and resources on how to start your job hunt, plus details of the organisations which can help.

Finding positive employers for refugees and asylum seekers

The rights of refugee students and graduates are very different to the rights of asylum-seeking students and graduates so it's important to know your status.

If you have full refugee status you'll be entitled to all services and benefits that other students and graduates can access, including graduate opportunities. If you haven’t got refugee status what you can access will be limited and dependant on your exact status. If you’re an asylum seeker you should have a legal representative who can advise you on your rights in finding a job and what services you can access.

Where can you find information on employers?

Sometimes it can seem like there are a lot of negative attitudes from employers taking on people with some kind of refugee status. But if you do your homework you’ll find plenty of employers who won't view your immigration status as being a barrier, as long as you have the right to work in the UK.

If you’re a graduate and have Home Office permission to work, you can look in the same places as other students and graduates for jobs. This includes job websites, recruitment agencies and your university careers service.

Organisations who work with refugees and asylum seekers often have links with positive employers. Some will help facilitate contact between candidates and employers or arrange work placements. The Employability Forum is a good resource for refugees and produces Making a Difference: Refugee successes in the world of work, a guide which includes case studies of refugees in various sectors.

Your own research can be invaluable when looking for positive employers. Make a list of all the employers in your area that are based in the sector in which you’d like to work. Look on their websites for pages on corporate social responsibility (CSR) or equality and diversity. Sometimes the sections may include references to their policies on employing refugees and even if they don’t, having such visible pages in these areas is a sign that they may be more positive about recruiting someone with a refugee status.

Getting professional advice on finding work as a refugee or asylum seeker

The main organisations working nationally for refugee rights are:

- **Refugee Action**
- **Refugee Council**: This has an employment advice and support service. Although it’s primarily for refugees living in London, they work across England and may be able to put you in touch with similar services in your area.
- **The Welsh Refugee Council**
- **Scottish Refugee Council**
- **Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

It's important to note that most asylum seeker and refugee organisations that can help you find positive employers are based locally. Therefore, if you're not
already in contact with a local organisation, ask at one of the national services about an organisation in your area.

**Disclosing your refugee or asylum seeker status when marketing yourself to employers**

If you're a refugee or an asylum seeker with permission to work in the UK, you're not required to disclose your status on an application form. However, if the information you provide on your CV or application form leads an employer to conclude that you don't have permission to work in the UK, perhaps because the rest of your life and work experience has been overseas, it's a good idea to make it clear by explaining you are eligible to work here.

If an employer isn't familiar with the legal position regarding status, you might want to refer them to the employers section at the [UK Border Agency (UKBA)](https://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk) for advice on questions about immigration status or documentation. Alternatively a letter from your solicitor is also acceptable to most employers.

If you do disclose your status on your CV or application form, make sure that you highlight the strengths you have developed as a refugee, for example your determination, motivation, adaptability and problem solving skills.

**Tips for marketing yourself and increasing your chances of getting a job**

The graduate labour market is competitive so it's important to spend time preparing a way to promote yourself positively to potential employers.

- Poor English and IT skills are a barrier to getting a job so spend time improving these crucial skills and find out about courses that can help you with this. Try your local refugee centre if you’re not sure where to start looking for information. Most universities also provide courses for improving your English.
- Remember that a UK-style application may be different from what you're used to, so take the opportunity to attend career planning workshops if you can. King’s Careers and Employability offer help with application forms, CVs and interviews and whether you can discuss your application with an adviser.
- Consider starting a portfolio in which you collect evidence of your skills and experience. Include reflective accounts of work you've undertaken, either paid or voluntary, records and feedback from any training courses you've attended, photographs of you at work and letters of appreciation: in short anything that focuses attention on your skills in a working environment.
- When considering unpaid opportunities for work experience, draw up a list of the skills you want to develop and apply for work which fits your list. Find out what training you’ll be offered and how you'll be managed.
- When applying for paid or voluntary opportunities, make sure that you explain any aspects of your experience that may be unfamiliar to a UK employer. For example try to indicate the UK equivalents of any overseas qualifications.

**Your rights as a refugee or asylum seeker**

Your rights to work and study in the UK are complicated and depend on your immigration status. You should seek advice on your individual status from your legal adviser or a reliable organisation such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.
What are your rights for studying in the UK?
The main issue for most potential students is the cost of study and for asylum seekers this can be a major barrier. Eligibility for student finance differs in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland depending on your immigration status. Check your documents from the Home Office and consult with your legal advisor before making a decision.

- **If you're a refugee** (or the spouse or child of a refugee), you should be charged home fees which vary between universities (up to £9000 per year), not overseas fees which can be much more. Check university websites for more information. You'll also be eligible for funding via student finance from the day you gain your refugee status.

- **If you have humanitarian protection** you'll be charged home fees and will be eligible for student finance if you've been resident in the UK for three years before starting your course.

- **If you've been granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR)** you'll only be eligible for home fees and for student finance if you've been living in the UK for three years before starting university.

- **If you're an asylum seeker** in England, Wales or Northern Ireland you'll be charged overseas fees, although some universities will make exceptions in some instances. You also won't be able to get funding through student finance. However, if your immigration status changes to full refugee status while you're studying, your fee status changes from overseas to home from the date the next instalment of fees is due. In Scotland you'll be eligible for home fees if you applied for asylum before 1st December 2006 and were under 18 years old, and if you're currently under 25 and have lived in Scotland for three years before the start of the course.

- **If you've been granted discretionary leave to remain (DLR)** it depends on the part of the UK in which you live. In England you'll have to pay overseas fees, although some universities will make exceptions. You won't be eligible for funding. In Wales and Northern Ireland you'll be eligible for home fees if you've been a resident in the UK (including England) since being granted DLR and will still be a resident on the first day of the course; for Scotland, you will need to have been resident in Scotland.

If you can't access student finance, it's worth looking into Article 26, a project run by the Helena Kennedy Foundation. It provides a tuition fee waiver and a small bursary to cover travel, books and equipment. However, it's only awarded to a small number of students and is very competitive.

Remember, funding is difficult for all postgraduate students so you're not alone. Support, advice and guidance relating to continuing education can be found through the Refugee Support Network.

If you were a lecturer or researcher in your home country, you may be able to apply for help with requalification through the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA).

Can you work in the UK as a refugee of asylum seeker?

- **If you have refugee, humanitarian protection, indefinite leave to remain (ILR) or discretionary leave to remain (DLR) status** you're
allowed to work part-time while at university, carry out voluntary work and apply for jobs, including graduate training schemes.

- **If you're an asylum seeker** you usually can't work while your asylum application is being considered. But if you've been waiting for a decision for your asylum claim for more than a year, you can apply for the right to work. In most cases you can do voluntary work or internships but you should speak to your case owner before starting anything.

- If you're qualified in a profession that's listed by the Home Office on the **UK shortage occupations list**, you may be able to get a job if the employer can get a work permit that gives Home Office approval for the appointment. If you haven’t got the right to work, think creatively. Do something you enjoy such as sport, music, dance or art and develop a project around it to evidence key skills for when you are able to gain employment. For example, organise a performance or event to demonstrate your ability to meet deadlines, work in a team and balance a budget.

The asylum seeking process is tough, stressful and can take up a lot of time so it's important to look after yourself. Make sure you have adequate support from friends, family and organisations that are there to help you, such as the **Red Cross**.

**Further information**

**UKCISA: Fees, Funding and Student Support**

**Citizens Advice Bureau**
http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

**Gov.UK: Student Finance**
https://www.gov.uk/student-finance

**Making a Difference: Refugee successes in the world of work**
http://www.employabilityforum.co.uk/documents/Making%20a%20Difference.pdf

**Refugee Action**
http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/

**Refugee Council**
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/

**Helena Kennedy Foundation**

**Refugee Support Network**
http://www.refugeesupportnetwork.org/

**Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA)**
http://www.academic-refugees.org/