

"ReConnect makes a huge difference to people's lives. It enables refugees with often unrecognised talent and competence to find a way forward in higher education and teaching. Everyone benefits: the individuals, society and the education system itself." Professor Tom Schuller, former Dean, Birkbeck, University of London

UPDATE

Preparation for Higher Education Programme at UCL

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, our partner University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IOE) has continued to deliver ReConnect's Preparation Higher Education programme online (remote),

A total of 19 refugees and Asylum Seekers from 13 countries, 7 females and 12 males, were supported during autumn 2020 and Spring 2021 terms. A total of 23 Refugees and Asylum Seekers from 13 countries, 16 females and 7 males, are currently attending the summer 2021 term.

9 Refugees and Asylum Seekers are currently attending the Reconnect English Springboard course at the Working Men's College in Camden. This course is designed to benefit refugees / asylum seekers who are not ready to access our Preparation for Higher Education Programme at UCL Institute of Education.



Our thanks to the *Barrow Cadbury Trust/ The National Lottery Community Fund COVID Support Fund*, for providing the much-needed funding for the programme

Our thanks also to *CitizensUK* for donating 10 laptops to the programme.

Pathways into Teaching, PGCE Post-Compulsory Education

The three students (two female, one male), we are currently supporting at UCL Institute of Education, are due to complete their two-year (part-time) studies in July 2021.

Theodoros Abraham
Director of ReConnect
theodoros@reconnectonline.org.uk

JOIN US AT OUR REFUGEE WEEK EVENT

SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Organised by UCL Institute of Education in partnership with ReConnect

Friday 18 June 2pm -5pm
Online Event



Images by Eiad Zinah G. Michael Rakhim Gerikanov

- Guest Speakers include:
[Professor Alison Phipps - UNESCO Chair Refugee Integration through Language and The Arts](#), and guests:
- [Tawana Sitholé](#) – Poet in Residence UNESCO Chair RILA
 - [Tesfalem H Yemane](#) and [Hyab Yohanne](#)- Doctoral Researchers
 - [Professor Elena Fiddian Qasmiyeh](#) – Professor in Migration and Refugee Studies, Co-Director of the UCL [Migration Research Unit](#), Coordinator of [Refuge in a Moving World](#) (@RefugeMvingWrld).
 - [Yousif Qasmiyeh](#) Writer in Residence – Refugee Hosts, Poetry Collection: Writing the Camp (Broken Sleep Books 2021).
 - Students & alumni from the programme, teachers with refugee background
 -

Register and find zoom link at:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/reconnect-supporting-refugees-into-higher-education-tickets-156084618295>

Reflection on the buddy initiative, Aine McAllister, Course Leader, Preparation for Higher Education Programme

We continue to develop our fledgling buddy initiative. Participants from the Spring Term 2021 have been 'buddied' with academics from across UCL including Ophthalmology, Electrical and Civil Engineering and UCL Social Research Institute. The Buddies comment on how mutually rewarding the experience is but also how the experience has highlighted for them the challenges faced by refugees with existing qualifications as they seek access to Higher Education. We hope to continue to develop the initiative and its impact.

A SUCCESS STORY

ReConnect creates opportunities for refugees to realise their potential

Teaching Russian for 11 years and still enjoying it

'You must say that the governments' investment in my education has been a success' said Tatiana, as we ended our conversation. She had been part of the first group at Institute of Education, in 2008, a group coordinated by ReConnect and funded by the UK government, through the London Hub for Refugee Teachers. Sadly, the London Hub does not exist now, but Tatiana is a shining example of what it achieved. She had been a teacher in Russia before she sought asylum in UK and needed a UK qualification to teach here. Somehow, she heard about ReConnect and the opportunity to study for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Post Compulsory. The course was an excellent experience, and particularly being part of a group of mature students who had been through different experiences.

Tatiana's teaching placements were in a school, and then in a college, and she grasped all opportunities. She has been teaching for most of the time since she graduated in 2010 and is valued by her comprehensive school.

Covid has presented many challenges. Students are in small bubbles; playing language games across year groups has been lost. Some students have lost motivation and dropped out.

Tatiana enjoys her job and being part of the UK community of Russian teachers, contributing to discussions in the Facebook group. She smiles as she recalls her luck in finding ReConnect, and the IoE course.

*Interview conducted by Sarah Buxton
Chair of Trustees of ReConnect*



SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION/ TEACHING

RECONNECT

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Established in 2003 **RECONNECT** is a Charity that works with unemployed and underemployed **refugees** to reconnect them to their professions, especially teaching. We provide guidance and support; liaise with education providers to deliver relevant training including work experience; support transfer of skills to developing countries; and draw attention to forced displacement and education needs.
<https://reconnectonline.org.uk/>

APPEAL BY SARAH BUXTON Chair of Trustees of ReConnect

If, like mine, your life has been enriched by higher education, I hope you see the value of what ReConnect does and make a donation to support our work. We urgently need individuals to contribute. As Professor Schuler says, 'everyone benefits: the individuals, society, and the education system itself.'

ReConnect was founded in 2003 by our Director, Theodoros Abraham, who was and is determined to create opportunities for refugees to be successful in their efforts to rebuild their careers. He wanted to overcome some of the barriers, e.g., unrecognised qualifications, disrupted higher education, lack of information and finance, and lack of interest in harnessing the valuable skills of refugees in exile here. He saw the waste of potential among refugees who had been part of the workforce in their home countries or in higher education but were excluded in UK. ReConnect addresses the fact that refugees with a qualification and experience from another country will need to re-qualify here, needing support and financial help. Those granted refugee or humanitarian status in UK may face a long wait before they are eligible for government funding, and ReConnect can fill this gap, and minimise delay.

Since 2006 ReConnect has created opportunities for 56 people with a refugee background to take the PGCE in Post - Compulsory Education, and (since 2018), for 111 to follow the 10-week Preparation for Higher Education Programme. Most of these students studied at our valued partner, UCL Institute of Education. The course leaders at IoE have deep understanding of the complex needs of people with overseas academic background seeking to study in the UK higher education sector. Participants greatly appreciate the course and the commitment of staff. Outcomes in 2020 revealed many different onward pathways (see 2020 newsletters, on website under 'About Us'). An Impact study has been commenced in 2021.

ReConnect receives some funds from grant-giving trusts, but it's very competitive so support from individuals is essential. If you feel inspired by what ReConnect is doing, please make a donation today. We, and future participants, will be very grateful.

With Gratitude
Sarah Buxton
sarahbuxton@reconnectonline.org.uk

MAKE A DIFFERENCE/ DONATE

- It costs £ 1,100 to enable A Refugee/ Asylum Seeker to undertake Reconnect - Preparation for Higher Education Programme. This includes guidance, course fees and cost of travel.
- It costs £ 10,700 to enable a refugee to undertake a teacher training course (PGCE Post Compulsory Education Programme), at UCL Institute of Education. This includes guidance, tuition fees, Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), and Occupational Health Checks fees, and cost of travel.

HOW TO SUPPORT US

Choose one of the following:

1. **Donate via Just Giving**
through the following link:

<https://reconnectonline.org.uk/donate>

2. **Write to us**
Send us a cheque or CAF voucher (payable to Reconnect)
Charity No. 1105016

to: *Reconnect
Resource for London
356 Holloway Road, London
N7 6PA, United Kingdom*

3. **Donate using Gift Aid**
Gift Aid is a simple way to increase the value of your gift to ReConnect – at no extra cost to you. If you pay tax in the UK, ReConnect can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you donate. For example, if you donate £50, it is worth £62.50 to us.

To donate using Gift Aid we must receive the completed form, which you can find via the following link:

<https://reconnectonline.org.uk/gift-aid> or by emailing
theodoros@reconnectonline.org.uk
Tel. 0207 697 4065

OUR THANKS

To all those who have supported us with grants and donations during the year. These include: The Equator Fund, the Barrow Cadbury Trust/ The National Lottery Community Fund COVID Support Fund, Network for Social Change Charitable Trust, J H Levy Charitable Trust, The Cotton Tree Trust, and our many individual donors. With this financial support the Charity has been able to implement its programme.

The Charity is also grateful for the dedicated teaching and pastoral support provided by staff at UCL Institute of Education, including for the 'buddying' (mentoring) initiative.

Our thanks also to our volunteers and members of our Advisory Group for their immense contribution to support our work.

LINKS TO OUR WORK

A Guardian article on refugee teachers

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2017/jul/14/the-refugees-rebuilding-their-lives-as-teachers-in-british-schools>

UCL video on preparation for Higher Education Programme
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDi7-kdluic>

UCL publicity video
<https://youtu.be/6DNZWzOXUU>

Awards Ceremony/ Refugee Week 2019
<http://youtu.be/TkriSEGiVzU>