

"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 both online (remote) and face-to-face since Autumn term 2021.

A total of 41 refugees and Asylum Seekers from 18 countries, 22 females and 19 males, were supported during Spring and Summer 2021 terms. A total of 28 Refugees and Asylum Seekers from 13 countries, 18 females and 10 males, are currently attending the Autumn 2021 term.



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

Pathways into Teaching, PGCE Post-Compulsory Education

The three students (two female, one male), we supported at UCL Institute of Education, have successfully completed their two-year (part-time) studies in July 2021. One is currently teaching at a college in London. Another one is teaching with some education agencies and looking forward to finding a full-time job. The other is currently working as an Hourly Paid Lecturer (HPL) at a further education college in London where she had a placement during her training.

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SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Reflection on the Preparation for Higher Education Programme, Aine McAllister, Course Leader, UCL IOE

We have seen a welcome return to face to face teaching on the programme complimented by our virtual learning environment.

The critical collaborative approach to applying our participants' wealth of knowledge to their preparation for and endeavours to access Higher Education continues to be developmental for all of us. Sessions focused on academic writing uncovered profound dialogue around name and identity once again. This is true also of the poetic auto ethnographic research unit on the participants experience of seeking access to HE.

Independent group projects on the British Museum resulted in illuminating presentations in which participants posed thought provoking questions. Guest speakers from STAR and the PGCE FE at UCL IOE provided information to help participants navigate their journey into HE which is beset with barriers.

We remain steadfastly committed to developing the necessary navigational capital to mitigate for these barriers and to centering the critical voices of the participants.

I am looking forward to working with ReConnect as part of a UCL Public Policy funded Policy Engagement and Impact fellowship to develop engagement pathways with policy makers to reduce barriers to access to Higher Education. This work will be informed by recent research carried out with former Reconnect participants, funded by UCL IOE, CCM:
<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10134522/>

It is of great importance to the programme team and to UCL IOE that we continue to support Reconnect in their excellent work.

A SUCCESS STORY

ReConnect creates opportunities for refugees to realise their potential

Samia (not her real name) is in her 40s, BA in English Language teaching, was Head of an international school for 19 years in her home country, 5 years in UK.

ReConnect offered Samia the opportunity to undertake the Preparation for Higher Education Programme, followed by a place on the PGCE at University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IOE), which she successfully completed in July 2021. She is currently working as a lecturer in an FE college in London. Her reflection on her experience:

"I had 20 years' teaching and managing experience when I came to the UK. However, it meant almost nothing here. My qualifications and references were not recognised. It took me some time to process that I had to start over if I wanted to be a qualified teacher. After knocking on many doors, talking to many people, I started work as a teacher assistant however, I was happy to work in a school environment, however I knew I could do more, but I didn't know how to. Then, I heard about the Preparation for Higher Education course from a friend. I was so excited, and I applied immediately. I should say that the course encouraged me to pursue my dream and gave me hope!

The PGCE course helped me to get back on track. I met other people who experienced similar challenges who inspired me. On the other hand, Academic writing was challenging but with the support and constructive feedback I improved. This course encouraged me to keep my own identity while integrating which showed me that it was possible to contribute to the society I lived in (my new home) without assimilating. The course definitely made me feel stronger. Moreover, I made wonderful friends.

The PGCE course was very well designed. It covered both theory and practice. The classmates were great. The tutors were very experienced and supportive. During teaching practice I learned very practical tips. It was a great opportunity to implement what we had been learning in theory. Moreover, I got familiar with college environment.

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SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION/ TEACHING



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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

It is heartening to hear how 'Samia' returned to teaching through a ReConnect 'Pathways to Teaching' programme. Several other recent participants of the 30 hour Preparation for Higher Education (PHE) course have recently secured full or part time work. They are now a college lecturer teaching Business Studies, and a school maths teacher. The evidence is strong that this course really does provide a bridge across the gap between higher education and professional work at home, and a return to professional work in the UK, validating and building on past experience and qualifications.

All charities face an uphill struggle to raise funds to carry out their mission. I'm sure you will agree that ReConnects' work is valuable for our society as a whole, as well as the individuals. ReConnect needs to raise £1,200 for each participant on the PHE course; and £11,000 for those doing the 2 year Post-Compulsory PGCE course. We are very grateful to individual donors, and small and large Trusts and Foundations, for supporting us. Our focus is now to raise funds for the PGCE course from September 2022. We also hope a Trust will provide a half-time salary. We will be so grateful for any contribution you are able to make. See the options on this page.
sarahbuxton@reconnectonline.org.uk

A SUCCESS STORY

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I was a teacher and I wanted to continue my career here as well, but I was thinking school settings weren't convenient for me. When I heard about Post Compulsory sector, I knew this was what I was looking for. It was a great opportunity to help others who wanted to make some changes in their life.

Now, I am a lecturer at a very good college, and I have my students. I cannot explain my feelings. I definitely feel more independent and confident. This was my dream.

It really helped me to find my way and become independent again. I believe it will help others to write their stories, too. So, yes, I would strongly recommend this course to anyone in my situation." Especially if they want to change something in their life then they could have the power to change others."

MAKE A DIFFERENCE/ DONATE

- It costs £ 1,200 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 £ 11,000 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 theodros@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 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://youtu.be/6DNZWezOXUU>

UCL publicity video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDi7-kdIuic>

Awards Ceremony/ Refugee Week 2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKriSEGiVzU>