

Let us Learn scholarships/bursaries briefing paper for universities

Thank you for taking the time to read this paper. It was produced by the Let us Learn team, with expert input from the award-winning charity Just for Kids Law. Its aim is to explain the hidden barriers that many ambitious young migrants face to fulfilling their dreams of studying for a degree - and the steps universities and other higher education institutions can take to enable them to continue to learn.

The problem

There are many young people living in the UK, who came here as young children and have completed most of their schooling here, but who do **not** qualify for student loans, because the eligibility criteria set by government are narrowly drawn (see below). Often, as an additional financial barrier, universities charge those who are not entitled to student finance international fees.

As a result, however hard these students work and however good their grades, they hit an education brick wall when it comes to going to university. For some, this means long-cherished ambitions of professional careers, say in medicine or law, are completely closed. For universities, it means being denied the chance to recruit from a pool of diverse, aspirational and highly motivated young people, who have an enormous amount to offer and would enrich the student body.

Many of these young people are from groups that are recognised as being under-represented in further education. Many would be the first in their families to go to university. Some have overcome great personal disadvantage to succeed at school - including spending time in care; acting as carers to other family members; or even being victims of trafficking. Nearly all will have had to overcome obstacles that most students do not face, including language and cultural barriers. They all want to contribute to British society and make the best of themselves and realise their ambitions.

These young people are part of an unacknowledged group: they think of themselves as British. Britain is their home. It is where they grew up and have been educated, and where their future lies. Yet, when it comes to higher education, they are put in the same category as overseas students and do not qualify for the funding that is available to their peers. Let us Learn and Just for Kids Law is working with many able students who have had to turn down, or repeatedly defer, university places that they would love to take up, because they have no way of financing their studies.

Through no fault of their own, these young people cannot meet the criteria for a government student loan, and other funding options available to them are extremely limited. There are only a small number of charitable trusts which offer funding that they may be eligible to apply for (such as the Tiko Foundation and the Robertson Trust in Scotland), but scholarships like these are in extremely short supply (fewer than 10 a year).

How you can help

A number of universities like Kings College London and Sussex University have already recognised the problem, and are offering a small number of scholarships specifically aimed at young people who are excluded from student finance, despite having grown up in the UK.

The Let us Learn Young, Gifted and Blocked campaign is asking **all** universities to follow suit, and set up similar funding schemes, which will benefit ambitious young people who have grown up in the UK, who otherwise have no prospect of continuing their studies.

Let us Learn can help make this process as straightforward and simple as possible. Through our links to Just for Kids Law, we have access to legal, educational and other experts, who can provide guidance and support, and model scholarship agreements that can be tailored, as necessary.

The would-be graduates

Let us Learn is in contact with around 600 young people, who are currently in educational limbo. It is a nationwide problem and we know there are thousands more students out there, who are affected in the same way. However, the situation is particularly acute in London, because of the diverse population in the capital.

Below are the stories of just some of the young Londoners who are affected by this issue. All of these young people are active members of the Let us Learn team and determined not to give up on their ambitions:

- Arkam, 20, came to the UK age 10 from Pakistan. He achieved ABBB at A-level and his ambition is to work in the field of climate change. He was previously offered a place to study at Queen Mary University, which he had to turn down because he does not qualify for student finance. However, thanks to Kings College London's Sanctuary Scholarship scheme, Arkam is now studying for a geography degree and able to look forward to pursuing his career ambitions.
- Ijeoma came with her family to the UK age 2 from Nigeria. She went to primary school, secondary school and sixth form college here, and wants to study sociology at university. She was granted Limited Leave to Remain in 2015, so will not reach the 'lawful ordinary residence' requirement (see below) and qualify for a student loan until 2018. Ijeoma overcame considerable personal difficulties to achieve three good A-levels. She lives in east London with her mum and brother. Ijeoma is committed to the Let us Learn campaign and in May 2016, stood up in front of 4,000 people at the London Mayoral Hustings to tell her story. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-lUkMoJWkw>
- Kimani came to the UK age 5 from Jamaica. Now 18, he was granted British Citizenship in August 2015, but faces a wait of another three years before he meets the ordinary residence criteria (see below) and can qualify for a student loan. Kimani achieved ABB at A-level and has been offered a place at SOAS to study politics, which he has been unable to take up. He feels he is being left behind, as he sees all his school friends heading off to university.
- Emmanuel arrived in the UK from Ghana age 9. He went to Mossbourne Community Academy in Hackney and achieved AAA at A-level, which earned him a place at Imperial College to study chemistry. However, lack of access to student finance meant he had to defer taking up his place for two years, while he worked to try to save to pay for the cost of his studies. When Imperial would not allow him to defer his place for another year, he was afraid his ambition of working in the pharmaceutical industry might be in ruins. However, with the help of the charity Just for Kids Law, he was lucky enough to secure alternative funding, via a scholarship from the TIKO Foundation. TIKO generously agreed to pay the £26,000 overseas student fees charged by Imperial. Emmanuel also used crowdfunding to raise money for his living expenses, and is now in the second year of his degree.

- Chrisann achieved A*AB at A-level and now studies law at the London School of Economics, after being granted a scholarship by LSE, which recognised her situation and did not want her potential to go to waste. Chrisann arrived in the UK at age 8 and excelled through school. She was head girl at Clapton Girls School and president of her debating society, yet found herself stuck when she discovered she could not access student finance. She is the founder of the Let Us Learn campaign, and although Chrisann is now in her third year at LSE, she continues to fight for other young people who are in the same situation she was.

See our campaign film, *Young, Gifted and Blocked*, which features the stories of Arkam, Kimani and Chrisann, along with other young people who are unable to access student finance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BumdwKTbyZQ>

The technical bit

Immigration law is complex, and constantly changing.

The problem that the Let us Learn campaigners and others like them face stems from the fact that the eligibility criteria for government student finance are narrowly drawn, and exclude large numbers of young people who have grown up in the UK, and even some who have become British citizens.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2016/584/pdfs/ukxi_20160584_en.pdf

To qualify for a government loan, students from migrant backgrounds have to meet a number of additional criteria, regardless of how long they have lived in the UK, or the fact that their families and their futures are here. At best, they may face lengthy delays in qualifying for loans (a minimum of three years); at worst, they may miss out on the chance of a university education entirely.

Under the criteria, most students must be able to prove that they have lived in the UK for at least half their life; **and** that they have had 'lawful ordinary residence' for a minimum of three years. Even those who have been in the UK since primary school can fall foul of the 'ordinary residence' rule.

The only way to become 'lawfully ordinarily resident' is by being granted what's known as Limited Leave to Remain' (LLR) (formerly called Discretionary Leave to Remain), or 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' (ILR) by the Home Office, or becoming a British Citizen (people with ILR or citizenship are exempt from meeting the half-of-life rule). After that, they face a three-year wait before being eligible for a student loan, and before automatically qualifying for home student fees.

The application process for LLR is complex, slow and expensive. It can take 18 months or more for LLR requests to be processed (applying for British Citizenship is even more complicated and lengthy). A delay of 18 months means the three-year lawful ordinary residence rule can take up to five years to achieve. For many young people and their families, the cost of applying (£936 for under 18s; £1,236 for over 18s) is prohibitive. It can take years for families on low or modest incomes to save up enough to fund an application, particularly if they have several children, leaving many young people in prolonged educational limbo, as a result. ILR applications have to be renewed every 30 months, again adding to the expense. If an application has to go to tribunal, this will add considerably to the time and expense involved before a young person is able to resolve their situation.

As a result of these barriers, many able, aspirational, and hard-working young people find themselves blocked from continuing their education, and universities are denied the chance to draw from the widest, most diverse pool of candidates available.



About the Let Us Learn campaign

Let Us Learn was set up by the youth justice charity Just for Kids Law in 2014. It was founded by Chrisann Jarrett (see above), after she discovered she did not qualify for student finance, and so could not take up her place to study law at LSE. Let us Learn now has over 600 members, including a core group of 20, which meets regularly. The aim of the group is to help ambitious young people overcome the barriers they face to further education.

Thank you

Let Us Learn
www.letuslearn.study

October 2016