

A guide to studying in the UK for asylum seekers and refugees

I need to learn how to speak, read and write in English.

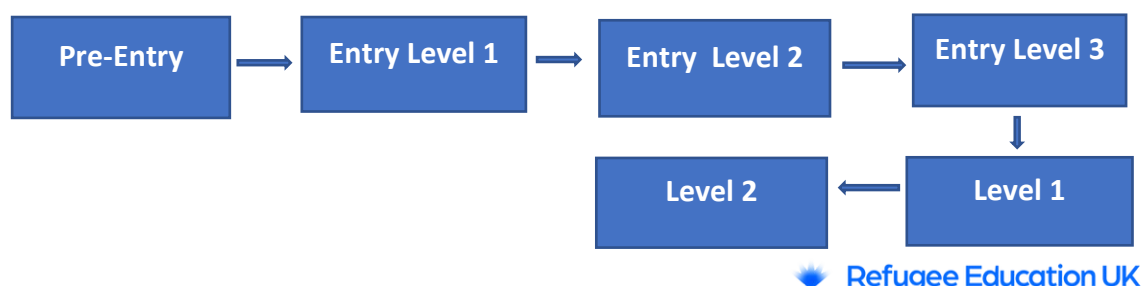
What do I do?

There are different ways to learn English, but the best way is to attend an ESOL course. English classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL) will support you to develop your knowledge and skills.

What are ESOL Courses and who are they for?

ESOL stands for English for Speakers of Other Languages. It means English courses for those who want to improve their English and don't have English as their first language.

Courses are available to suit everyone, and their current level of English starts from beginners to more advanced. This graph shows you how you progress from one level to another.



At the end of each level, you will have an exam which includes speaking and listening, reading, and writing. If you pass, you can progress to the next level.

ESOL courses not only help you to improve your English language knowledge. They enable you to understand British culture and citizenship. Some courses will focus on employability and the job market in the UK, and this is especially useful for those who are looking to get into work.

How does ESOL work?

There are two groups of ESOL courses:



1. For those who are 16-18 years old:

These courses are usually offered by a college, and they run for a whole year from September to June. You will study for 18 hours a week. If you are between 16 and 18 years old, and an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person (UASC) who have just arrived in the UK, this is the course for you.

For more information about this course contact Weston College – EMTadmin@weston.ac.uk.

2. For those 19 years and older:

These courses can be offered by a college or run in the community. Generally, the courses offered by a college are accredited which means you get a certificate at the end of each level. These courses are called formal ESOL. Informal courses are those that do not offer any formal accreditation certificate or qualification. In North Somerset they are usually offered in the community, or by a community group or by North Somerset Community Learning.

ESOL classes at a college

If you live in North Somerset, the two nearest colleges that offer ESOL courses are Weston College and City of Bristol College.

If you decide to study at Weston College in Weston-super-Mare, you need to book an interview through this website: [English and Maths Courses Starting this September | Weston College](#)

If you decide to study at City of Bristol College you can find more information through their website: <https://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/adult-courses/international-english-and-esol-english-for-speakers-of-other-languages/>

ESOL classes in the community

If you decide to attend other ESOL classes that are offered in the community, there are a few classes available from the following providers in North Somerset:

North Somerset Community Learning: They offer informal and small classes especially for those who do not have any English language skills. Courses are from pre-entry to Entry 1, and they are offered in Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon. For more information and to register for a course contact: Iona Gibbons **email:** iona.gibbons@n-somerset.gov.uk
phone/text 07767 671633

Lowering the Bar: They offer informal courses that are non-accredited, but they assess the learners against the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) scale every 3 to 4 months, in order to provide personalised feedback to students. All classes are offered in Weston-super-Mare. For more information and to register for a course contact: **email:** info@lowering-the-bar.org.uk **phone:** 07827 061464

St. Paul's Church Drop In Class: They offer English conversation classes every Tuesday morning during term time in the church hall. There are three different levels to suit the students' needs. St. Paul's Church is in Weston-super-Mare. For more information contact Debbie du Mont **Email:** debbiedu58@gmail.com

The Other Place: They offer drop-in classes every Wednesday at The Other place on Meadow Street. Classes are run during term time. For more information contact: **Email:** hello@rens.org.uk



As a refugee, can I apply to go to college or sixth form?

Yes, if you have been granted refugee status, you are allowed to study at a Further Education college or sixth form.

With refugee status, you are treated the same as a British citizen in terms of funding for courses.

Do I have to pay for college or sixth form?



It depends on the course you are going to study. Most courses at Entry Level, Level 1 or Level 2 are free regardless of your age.

If you have refugee status, you will be eligible to receive funding and are exempt from the 3-year residency

requirement rule.

However, you may have to pay for some courses. You need to check with the college and if you need to pay for a course, there may be some different options to pay for it.

Studying at College

I'm thinking about applying to college. What should I do?

You should start by visiting the college website. If you know what you want to study, check first when the course starts and finishes, the qualifications you will need to get on the course and if the course is suitable in terms of your age.

The courses at the colleges usually start in September or in January. If you are thinking of studying at a college, send your application as soon as possible because some courses can fill up quickly. Don't forget to check if the course you are interested in is free or whether you need to find the funding yourself. A good way to get more information about the course you are interested in is attending an Open Day at your chosen college.

What is an Open Day?

An Open Day is an opportunity to get information about a college and ask questions about courses that interest you. It can help you to decide where and what course to apply for. Open Days are free for anyone who wants to study.

Top tip: Use the college website to research before you attend, this will help you to think about what questions you should ask during your visit.

What is enrolment day?

Enrolment day is when you come to the college to register for your chosen course. At enrolment you will complete all necessary paperwork and the college staff will assess your circumstances and check if you meet the minimum course requirements.



What documents should I take on enrolment day?

It is very important to take the right documents with you to prove that you have the right to study in the UK.

1. Proof of residency:

For asylum seekers and refugees, this is usually your Asylum Application Registration Card (ARC Card) or Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)

1.1 I do not have my ARC or BRP, what should I do?

If you do not have an ARC card, but have another form of photographic identification - i.e. a provisional or full driving licence - this can be accepted alongside your Home Office documents that prove that your prospective student asylum application is being processed - dated 6 months ago.

Your visa will also be considered If you have an entry clearance visa in your passport based on, for example, family reunification or resettlement visas.

2. Proof of support

2.1. If you are seeking asylum and or receiving asylum support (NASS Section 95 or Section 4) and/or subsistence support, you should take your:

- Asylum support agreement letter - ideally outlining the remit of your support.

- Tenancy agreement - confirming student address.
- ASPEN Card / Subsistence support letter - ideally with ASPEN card (a debit payment card, issued by the UK Home Office to asylum seekers).

2.2. If you are under the care of the local authority (regardless of your immigration status) you should take:

A letter from your social worker or personal advisor confirming support from social services - whether in care of local authority or a care leaver and the type of support provided (e.g. accommodation and subsistence etc.) is helpful.

2.3. If you receive public funds including section 95 and section 4 (NASS), a letter dated within the last 3 months confirming the relevant support is needed - especially universal credit (UC), job seekers' allowance, housing benefit, and child tax credit.

As an asylum seeker can I study at a college?

Yes, as someone claiming asylum you are allowed to study unless you have a "no study" bail condition on your Bail 201 letter.

You can also study if it is over 6 months since you submitted your asylum claim to the Home Office and no decision has been made.

NOTE: If you are a child (18 and under) or an asylum seeker in care, you can enrol in education at any point and do not need to wait six months.

Previous qualifications

I have certificates from my home country, how can I get them translated?



The UK national agency for international qualifications and skills (UK ENIC) is the National Information Centre that recognises and evaluates international qualifications and skills.

UK ENIC offers **Statement of Comparability**, which compares overseas qualifications to the UK education system, comparing them to UK qualifications and framework levels. The

service does not provide grade comparisons.

The Statement of Comparability service can evaluate part-completed school qualifications. This may help people arriving in the UK from overseas who want their children to study A-levels.

When you request a statement of comparability you will need clear colour photographs or scans of your final certificate(s) and/or transcript(s), and certified translations of your documents if your documents are not in English and you are not going to use UK ENIC Translation Waiver Service.

Note that there is a cost for this service. For more information and to apply for a Statement of Comparability visit <https://www.enic.org.uk/Qualifications/SOC/Default.aspx>

Studying at University

University education is not free in the UK. If you have refugee status you are eligible for home fee status for tuition fees and to apply for student loans to help with tuition fees and living costs.

If you have Humanitarian Protection status, you will need to live in the UK for three-years prior to your application to qualify for home fee status and to be eligible to apply for student loans.

What qualifications and documents do I need for university?

Each course will have its own entry requirements. Universities tend to express their entry requirements in a variety of ways. The university's website will also list the qualifications that you will need to study your chosen course. You can also email or call the admissions team at the university to ask whether your qualifications will be acceptable. If not, you may need to explore doing one of these qualifications at your nearest college before you can apply for university.



- A Levels
- BTEC awards, certificates and diplomas at level 3
- International Baccalaureate
- NVQs at level 3
- Access to HE courses

What English Language requirements do I need to go to university?

Universities want to know that you have the language and academic skills to cope and complete your course. You should ask the admissions team at the university you are applying to for more information about their particular English language requirements.

Universities will usually state which test they prefer, the minimum overall grade they expect, and the grades they require in writing, speaking, listening, and reading.

IELTS, TOEFL, PTE Academic and Cambridge English Advanced are the most common English tests accepted by the universities.

What is an Access Course?

The Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma is a qualification designed specifically to prepare you for degree level study. It is equivalent to A-levels.

The course was designed for people who are above 19 years old and have been out of education for some time, or who have had interruptions in their education, or who have not had an opportunity to take A-Levels to apply to university. The course will help you gain relevant academic knowledge, develop techniques, and prepare you to study at university level.

If you are over 19, finished high school in your home country and have a good level of written English then an Access course might be right for you.

How much does it cost to enrol on an Access course at college?

Access to HE courses tuition fees vary between colleges and change each year.

Depending on your age and immigration status you may be entitled to funding. It is important that you contact the college that you want to study at to find out about the course fees and how they apply to you. You can also ask them for more information for example, how the course is delivered, study hours, and any additional available support such as books and equipment.

Other Qualifications

National Vocational Qualification (NVQs)



NVQs are nationally recognised qualifications that give you an academic qualification which are entirely based on practical work-related tasks. You need to be over the age of 16 and have the right to work to access NVQs.

NVQ courses can offer you the opportunity to improve your career and they are especially good if you enjoy practical, hands-on learning, outside of the traditional classroom environment.

NVQs are available in many subjects ranging from childcare to plumbing. They are usually a good choice if you know and understand what job you would like to do. There is no age limit and special requirements to study at NVQ level. However, to start a higher level, you need to have completed the previous one, for example, complete a Level 2 NVQ before starting a Level 3.

NVQs are designed in five levels. Before you start a NVQ course, you will be assessed to verify what level suits you and then work your way up. The courses can be full-time or part-time.

Apprenticeships

What are apprenticeships and who are they for?



An apprenticeship is a paid job where you can also study at the same time. That means that while you are working, you are also studying. You will usually spend 20% of your working hours studying at a college. You need to be over the age of 16 and have the right to work to access apprenticeships.

With an apprenticeship you can earn a wage, gain skills, and achieve a nationally recognised qualification. There are a wide variety of apprenticeship options available from animal care and accounting to marketing and software development. It has become an exciting option for those wishing to continue their studies while gaining real experience from their chosen industry.

Find out more about apprenticeships in North Somerset by sending an email to

skillssupport@n-somerset.gov.uk or visiting – <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>

Where to go for help: National Helplines and networks

Refugee Education UK:

Refugee Education UK is a charity based in London that can help you with more information about studying in the UK. They support refugee young people to be able to access the level of education that's right for them – from primary school through to university.

Their advice line email address is advice@reuk.org

Website: <https://www.reuk.org/home>

Refugee Council:

The Refugee Council has an 'Infoline' which aims to connect refugees and people seeking asylum with services which can help them (England only):

Phone: 0808 196 7272

Their website: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

STAR (Student Action for Refugees)





Student
Action for
Refugees

STAR (Student Action for Refugees) is the national network of students building a more understanding and just society where refugees are welcomed and can thrive in the UK.

Their website: <https://star-network.org.uk/access-to-university/>

South West Region

Bristol Refugee Rights:

Bristol Refugee Rights provide advice, information, and support to refugees and asylum seekers in the local area, as well as a directory of local resources.

Website: <https://www.bristolrefugeerights.org/how-we-help/i-need-help-i-start>

Red Cross Refugee Support (Avon)

The British Red Cross is the UK's largest independent provider of services and support for refugees and people seeking asylum. They offer emergency help, one-to-one support and casework, special services for children and families, and family reunions.

Email: refugeeservicebristol@redcross.org.uk

Phonel: 0117 9415040

Website: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee>

North Somerset

Refugees Welcome North Somerset

Refugees Welcome North Somerset (RWNS) is a community-based, volunteer-led charity that offers friendship and support to refugees, asylum seekers, and other displaced people across North Somerset.

Email: projects@rwns.org.uk

Website: <https://rwns.org.uk>