

## **Pathfinder University Grantees: 2006-07 Project Summaries**

The following 12 universities were awarded Pathfinder University Grants by the CARA/SAR UK Universities Network in November 2006 with the financial support of the Sigrid Rausing Trust. The objective of these grants was to provide selected UK universities with seed funding to assist efforts in identifying, coordinating and developing internal and external capacities, mechanisms and infrastructures to support refugee and other threatened academics in the UK into appropriate employment or engagement.

### **1. Birkbeck College, University of London**

Birkbeck's Pathfinder Grant will allow it to develop a Refugee Academic Development Programme, to be led by the Pro-Vice Master and Dean of the Faculty of Continuing Education. The Programme will provide English Language training as appropriate, academic staff development, and opportunities to engage in regular paid sessional (part-time) lecturing to gain the necessary level of teaching experience to support applications for more permanent higher education positions. This will be complemented by the development of a support infrastructure within Birkbeck's Faculty of Continuing Education to ensure necessary support structures for academic refugees are in place. The Birkbeck model will be developed and piloted over the grant period and disseminated through the University Association of Lifelong Learning (UALL). A presentation is also proposed in April 2007 to the UCEA conference, through the School for Continuing and Professional Studies at New York University.

### **2 Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)**

GCU Pathfinder grant will be used to develop a 'recognition of prior informal learning' (RPL) profiling and guidance model, targeted at refugee and threatened academics and scholars. The model will provide IELTS benchmarking/guidance in partnership with Anniesland College; professional induction to the Scottish HE system; provide opportunities for peer support from academic staff at GCU within the individual's subject area, through work-shadowing and discussion; support recognition of existing prior informal learning and achievements within the context of the Higher Education Academy Professional Standards Framework, to build confidence and identify professional development goals; map prior qualifications within the context of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF); and provide guidance on professional development required to meet career goals and signposting to relevant services/courses. The aim will be to assist individuals in their understanding of and adjustment to a new academic context to facilitate their career progression routes within Scottish HE institutions and build their capacity to enter the labour market through suitable employment. The model will be piloted by 5 to 10 refugees in collaboration with the Bridges Programme, Anniesland College, New Roots Scotland and the University of Glasgow. It will be embedded in the planned SCQF Recognition and Guidance Centre for Asylum seekers, Refugees and Overseas workers based at GCU and will be disseminated to the wider community via the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning and the Caledonian Academy.

### **3. King's College London (KCL)**

KCL will develop and pilot a programme of academic support for 5 refugees attempting to gain relevant employment in the UK. This will introduce threatened scholars to a network of people in a similar situation to encourage the sharing of experiences and mutual support; integrate threatened scholars into KCL with access to library and IT facilities to help them regain a sense of connection to academia and their academic discipline; provide pro bono access to KCL Graduate School training opportunities in research skills and generic and transferable skills; provide an individual training and needs-assessment and action plan; and provide academic mentoring over a six-month period through matched senior academics able to offer support and guidance on re-entry to the labour market. The pilot is a capacity-building exercise to build expertise within the Careers Service and academics in Careers Management. KCL academics will form a nucleus of a group with interest and expertise in the integration of scholars into academic social and discipline networks.

### **4. Leeds Metropolitan University (Leeds Met)**

Leeds Met will use its Pathfinder Grant to develop a regional Refugee Scholar Networked Support Service, extending the work of the University's Community Partnerships and Volunteering Office (CPVO) in the field of refugee support, and working in partnership with the Regional University Network – 14 FE institutions stretching from Tyneside to Nottinghamshire who have partnership arrangements with Leeds Met – and the West Yorkshire Universities Community Network to ensure the service is fully extended across the wider Yorkshire and Humberside area. The service will coordinate, consolidate and extend advice, guidance and support structures to refugee academics in the region; provide information training and support to those services to sensitise them to the full range of emotional, material, educational and career needs

of refugee scholars and their families; and raise awareness of the threats to academic freedom and to individual academics across the world. The programme will develop web-based materials to advise and support colleagues to ensure that the necessary support mechanisms are in place at the end of the grant period. The CPVO will ensure the continued function of the Service into the future.

### **5. University of Lincoln**

The University of Lincoln's Pathfinder programme seeks to offer refugee academics seeking employment in the UK a complete and intensive preparation through an initial 'health check' and guidance on appropriate language registers in English from Bhaskaran Nayar, an expert in this field; an introduction to, and advice on, UK University appointment practice, including practical guidance on the drafting of application letters and CVs; advice on self-presentation and interview techniques, including mock interviews with experienced senior staff and a professional actor with whom Lincoln has long-standing training links; a workshop on radio and web broadcasting using a professional studio, for the purposes of enhancing presentation, information organisation skills and self-confidence. This programme of training will be made available through Minerva Productions, the Faculty of Media and Humanities' commercial training company, which has delivered similarly customised training to a wide range of organisations – eg. NHS, Trade Unions and Mediawise – an organisation that assists exiled and refugee journalists. Lincoln is the only UK university to have been granted a full OFCOM community radio licence – SIREN FM – a community service sponsored by the university and through which the Programme will be disseminated, raising awareness of the plight and needs of refugee academics. The Programme can then be used to meet the needs of subsequent cohorts of refugee academics, subsidised by other Minerva activities and extended sponsorship from existing sponsors.

### **6. LSE**

The LSE aims to use its Pathfinder grant to develop a 'human rights guardians' scheme and establish the basis for an effective and sustainable system of support. We will appointed a part-time coordinator for an initial period of 8 months (2days/week) to provide the research and information necessary to build a sustainable community at the LSE, through which existing support structures can be coordinated and the professional contribution of various staff members facilitated, to ensure relevance to refugee academics. We aim to create a system that will contribute efficiently to the refugee or at-risk academic's time at the LSE, to prepare him/her for what may follow professionally and practically – including the provision of advice on housing, legal advice, careers advice – and seeking to contribute, in so far as possible, to the longer term development and security of the scholar.

### **7. London South Bank University (LSBU)**

The LSBU Pathfinder project will identify and plug the gap between existing LSBU resources and the needs of refugee academics. It aims to help refugee academics rebuild careers through the provision of focused support, to include language training, mentoring, development of CV writing skills, presentation opportunities through a seminar series, validation of qualifications, IT training and the pairing of refugee scholars with experts in their field. LSBU has established excellent existing relations with the local community based organisations (CBOs) in South London through its Community Outreach programme. Its location and mission encourages a proactive approach to serving less privileged communities. To ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of this new Refugee Assistance Programme (RAP), a part-time Coordinator will be appointed to liaise with local refugee community organisations, major London-based players such as the Refugee Council and key University individuals to establish a network of support mechanisms. It is hoped that through the assistance provided by the university these individuals will achieve their goals at LSBU and contribute to the work and development of the university as a whole.

### **8. University of Nottingham**

The University of Nottingham's Pathfinder Grant will be used to develop a holistic needs-based programme for scholars at risk of persecution in their home countries: The At Risk Programme. It will be based in the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC) and will, through a process of broad consultation, seek to identify and develop academic opportunities across the University, and build on the infrastructural support available both within the university and through partnership with local refugee community groups. Funding opportunities will be sought within the University, the wider community and relevant funding bodies to help sustain the At Risk Programme into the future. The Programme will be captured in a pamphlet '*Supporting Scholars at Risk: the Nottingham Approach*' in which findings from the consultation process will be documented and recommendations made for improving academic opportunities and welfare support for at-risk scholars and experts. 300 copies will be produced, 200 for circulation within the University and 100 for wider dissemination through CARA. A dedicated web page on the HRLC website and other relevant points of enquiry will ensure accessibility of information, including a database for at-risk scholars and experts. The

HRLC will provide a senior advisory and supervisory support to the programme team, making an in-kind contribution of over £7,000.

### **9. University of Sunderland**

The University of Sunderland's Pathfinder project will help to establish the new post of Refugee Support Officer as a central point of contact for refugee scholars and to facilitate the launch of a new Refugee Support Service. The Officer will pull upon relevant services identified within the university and the local community, to meet the particular needs of each refugee scholar, from financial advice to health and accommodation, from relevant courses to careers advice. The Officer will become a focus of expertise in issues particular to refugee scholars, with a view to the individual tailoring of support programmes. The Officer will work with all five of the university's academic schools, other regional universities and city/regional groups such as the Washington Asylum Seekers Project (WASP), the North of England Refugee Service, Refugees Into Sustainable Employment (RISE) etc, to identify academic opportunities for scholars at risk, including part-time research and job opportunities. The University will also introduce a seminar scheme to provide scholars at risk with opportunities to present to academic colleagues within the University. The Refugee Support Service will be mainstreamed following the grant period and become part of the University's standard provision. This one-stop shop approach will be replicable in other universities and the process fully documented to identify and capture emerging lessons and for ease of dissemination.

### **10. University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)**

UCLAN aims to establish systems that represent best practice in supporting refugee scholars. The project will be based at the Centre for Employability Through the Humanities (CETH). UCLAN aims to build on its track record of widening participation to those students traditionally under-represented in higher education. An experienced Project Manager, supported by an advisory panel of senior academics and heads of services, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, will undertake a period of consultation to clarify needs and identify sources of expertise, goodwill and assistance across the university and beyond, to build an ethos of understanding of the needs of refugees and an informed network, to identify staff training needs and additional sources of funding, and to build a systems manual for wide dissemination ensuring appropriate support routes are available within the university. UCLAN has made available £20,000 from central funds as a first step towards sustainability.

### **11 University College London (UCL)**

UCL aims to use its Pathfinder Grant to establish an internal framework for the provision of specialist advice and support to students and academics from refugee communities. It will bring together existing UCL expertise in teaching, language tuition and learning technologies to support refugee academics in transitioning through to the UK higher education system and more generally to contribute to their professional development. The grant will enable UCL to set up a dedicated web portal as a single entry point for information relevant to students with refugee backgrounds, refugee academics seeking to establish themselves in academic careers, and UCL staff requiring advice on cultural/community specific issues or with the capacity to accommodate a refugee academic in their department. Amongst the resources that will be drawn on is the HEFCE funded Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning – the result of a partnership between UCL and SOAS. Central to the process will be the introduction of an Academic Transition Programme offered *pro bono* to refugee academics who require support to establish themselves within the UK higher education community. UCL will offer 10 places a year. The Pathfinder grant will cover the course set-up costs and UCL will meet running costs from central funds. The project will be led by the Vice Provost (Academic & International) with a small project board to advise on the development and content of grant-related activities.

### **12. University of Wolverhampton**

The University of Wolverhampton will establish the new post of Refugee Scholar & Academic Coordinator. This role – part of a cross-university group including key decision-makers – will be to engage with the early champions within the university, the wider university, and the local refugees and displaced persons community. Wolverhampton will use the grant to ground a humanitarian ethos within the institution, which will help refugee and other threatened scholars adapt to the UK style of higher education through free access to taster sessions, fully accredited modules and lectures. The cross-university group will develop and implement a project plan focusing on the care and education of refugee or displaced scholars or academics. The grant will also enable the University of Wolverhampton to explore ways in which it can access other streams of funding to help establish it as a centre for Refugee Education.