

SUPPORTING NEW ARRIVALS LIVING AND WORKING THE UK

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Refugees and new arrivals to the UK are finding the support they need at England's further education colleges

thanks to work spearheaded by London's Harrow College (Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges, HRUC) in conjunction with Gateway Qualifications. Living and Working in the UK, a suite of qualifications now delivered across the country, came about after one woman's experience as the country readied itself for Brexit.

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Therese is Head of School at the London college. She has lived in the UK for over 35 years, is married to an Englishman and, among other subjects, she teaches English. Therese explained: "As the UK was getting ready for Brexit, I had to get ready to become a British citizen.

"In 2016 I had to go through the process to ensure that I could continue living and working here after Brexit. So, while I was going through the process, studying for the citizenship exam, I decided to test those citizenship questions with my husband who is British, and with friends who are British. And... nobody could answer those questions!

"I thought, wow, what about my students who were not born here? If there was an accredited course, it would give them a competitive edge, it would help them settle here more effectively, in what is a totally new environment. Because most of our students come from outside the EU.

"So, that's how the idea started for creating Living and Working in the UK qualifications. Gateway Qualifications always listens to us about new ideas, but at the core of this initiative, there was something far more important: at Harrow College we have always believed that for our students to progress into further study and employment, and be fully integrated into British society, and make sufficient language progress... they need to do more than just English (ESOL)."

Therese approached Gateway Qualifications, and around eight months later, after the programme had achieved national accreditation via Ofqual, Harrow College enrolled its first students.

Living and Working in the UK qualifications are now helping refugees to understand the culture, expectations, and norms of life in Britain. There are different levels, and as students' progress, different topics are introduced.

Liz Njuguna-Wyatt is an ESOL Section Manager at Harrow College, she also teaches Living and Working in the UK, she said: "At Entry level 2 we look at religion, customs and culture. It's really interesting to teach, because it gives you the opportunity in the class to focus on the subject and the knowledge, and the language follows.

"We are developing people's language alongside interesting topics, and we are able to ask – have you been to these places? Do you know who these people are? What do you know about art and culture? What books have you read, or films have you seen?"

Ameeta Jethwa is a Section Manager who teaches on the higher levels of Living and Working in the UK. She said: "Many of our students come to us with high-level qualifications. They've got degrees from their home countries; they've got work experience from their home countries – some are doctors and scientists. But there are barriers here, and it's not just the language. By Level 2, students have enough English language, but they don't have any work experience here."

One of the biggest barriers to refugees is that they cannot get into jobs because they don't have experience.

"It's a cycle that they can't get out of," explains Ameeta. "So, we work on their CVs, help develop their interview skills and find volunteering opportunities – we work with museums, art galleries, shops, within the college, the health sector, invite speakers from the Houses of Parliament, etc. "We arrange interviews with people from industry who give their time so that our students can get one-to-one experience of interviewing in a real setting. It's a great experience for them."

Therese added: "I wasn't born here, and I've lived in many countries. There's one thing that Britain does very well, which is provide access to education beyond secondary school: further and higher education. The fact that people can start a new a new career or a job later in life is wonderful.

"Yes, there are options. Unfortunately, often those options can be expensive. So that's why it's so important that the government is supportive and enables loans, reduced fees and the waiving of fees when people are most in need of education."

Harrow College is part of HRUC (Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges). When Harrow had its Ofsted inspection, five out of eight areas were judged to be 'Outstanding'. One of these Outstanding areas was Quality of Education.

Therese explained: "That was lovely to see, to get that you are the 'best of the best' in terms of intent, for example, how you have sequenced the curriculum, its implementation and impact – It's basically all to do with including 'other' qualifications. For example, qualifications that have been written in collaboration with Gateway Qualifications. The additional qualifications that make such a big difference to students' prospects in terms of further study, and employment... those are from Gateway Qualifications."

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Therese Lorphevre

Currently at Harrow College, Therese's team is working with over a thousand refugees and the success of this programme has achieved national attention. Since its launch, it's now run across more than 30 colleges and training providers, nationally.

Therese is delighted by this, she said: "That's a major success, it's almost the acid test, isn't it? It's been successful here and it has obviously been successful elsewhere because these qualifications have been used by other providers, which was always the intention. We make such a big difference to people's lives, and that's why we are all doing this."

Living and Working in the UK

The Gateway Qualifications suite of Living and Working in the UK qualifications is intended to support centres delivering programmes to develop learners' understanding of key aspects of British society. The Entry 1 to Level 1 Awards have been developed primarily for use with learners relatively new to the UK who may also be learning English as an additional language. However, centres may find them equally appropriate for other learners working at Entry and Level 1 who wish to improve their understanding of core aspects of British society.

- Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award in Living and Working in the UK (Entry 1)
– Qualification No: 603/2989/0
- Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award in Living and Working in the UK (Entry 2)
– Qualification No: 603/2990/7
- Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award in Living and Working in the UK (Entry 3)
– Qualification No: 603/2903/8
- Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Award in Living and Working in the UK
– Qualification No: 603/2992/0

The suite covers the following topics:

- Key places & the make-up of the UK
- Getting to know people and places
- Religion, customs and culture
- Education system
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Government and Law



Find out how we can help meet your learners' needs

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