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Promotion of UCC as a University of Sanctuary

Action requested

Note

Background rationale

Registration for a University of Sanctuary award was approved by UMTO on 26-09-2017. The University of Sanctuary initiative promotes good practice in HEIs around creating a culture of welcome and inclusion for refugees and asylum seekers (see <https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/>).

Alignment to Strategic Objectives/External Policy Driver

Engagement with this initiative is directly aligned with the University's strategy to "*continue our commitment to widening participation and enhancing access for all students, fostering an inclusive environment that mainstreams diversity and equality*" (Strategic Plan 2017-22).

Resource Implications

Progress in promoting access will require consideration of University support for a small number of scholarships to be determined in discussion with Colleges.

Brief description / summary of the item

The University of Sanctuary award recognises good practice and innovation in welcoming asylum seekers and refugees into the University community. It is a strand of the wider City of Sanctuary movement which began in the UK in 2005. To date there are over 60 Sanctuary initiatives across the UK and Ireland including DCU, UL and AIT.

UCC staff and students have initiated a range of activities which foster inclusion and a culture of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers, e.g. events for children from direct provision centres at Easter and Christmas; creative programmes and internships for children and teenagers at the Glucksman; a voluntary work opportunity provided to an accomplished Nanochemist who lives in a direct provision centre. UCC is well positioned to consolidate and coordinate these existing strengths -not readily visible given their range and dispersal- through application for a University of Sanctuary award.

To be eligible for the University of Sanctuary award, universities need to demonstrate an action plan to promote welcome and inclusion, and progress in promoting access to higher education for asylum seekers and refugee students in their locality. A University of Sanctuary Working Group is developing an action plan to co-ordinate and promote welcome and inclusion initiatives. Progress in promoting access will involve a review of how UCC might respond to the life wide education and training needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

Engagement with the University of Sanctuary initiative is consistent with the University's Strategic Goal to *"Create value for our community through an international outlook and a capacity for informed and creative engagement on local and global issues."* It will:

1. demonstrate UCC's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and strengthen its position as the leading Irish HEI for social inclusion and 'equity of access';
2. promote UCC as a leader in civic and community engagement and enhance its contribution to Cork's UNESCO Learning City; and
3. complement the agendas of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Unit and the Centre for Global Development.