

Increasing access to English language learning for refugees and asylum seekers

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)

Global



***Access to English for Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, originally a staff initiative at Cambridge Assessment English, is now a major programme of activities designed to improve access to English language learning and support for refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. The initiative includes two MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), developed by Cambridge English with partners Techfugees, FutureLearn and Crisis Classroom, which have so far attracted over 10,000 participants.**

As world leaders in English language education, Cambridge English staff knew they were ideally placed to help refugees and asylum seekers (also known as forced migrants) develop the English language skills required both to survive and thrive. To determine the best way to help, in early 2017 Cambridge English held a joint conference with Techfugees (a non-profit organisation with a mission of 'empowering the displaced with technology'). The conference aimed to identify the specific linguistic challenges facing forced migrants, and possible solutions, and generated a range of ideas, including two MOOCs which were developed and launched by Cambridge English later the same year.

The first MOOC, *Aim Higher*, supports those forced migrants wanting to study at a UK university. Delivered by MOOC specialist FutureLearn, the three-week course covers admissions, student applications and the post-admissions process, with opportunities to interact with expert moderators and other participants. *Aim Higher* proved an immediate success, and has now been run twice with over 2,000 participants taking part so far.

The second MOOC, *Volunteering with Refugees* (again delivered by FutureLearn) was developed with Crisis Classroom, a community interest company which trains refugee educators. *Volunteering with Refugees* develops an understanding of forced migrants' social and linguistic needs, and is designed for those planning to volunteer, or already doing so. Over 8,000 participants have registered for the MOOC, a clear indication of its relevance and value.

Cambridge English continues to support the *Access to English for Refugees and Asylum Seekers* initiative, and staff presented a summary of the programme at the 2018 IATEFL Conference to encourage further collaboration across the English language assessment community.

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“Participants are able to interact with expert moderators, but also with others that are going through the same experience and are facing similar challenges.”

Chloe Shaw, Partnerships Strategy Manager,
Cambridge Assessment English