

Care of International Students in England and Wales

Catholic Chaplains in Higher Education in England and Wales

- There is no specific agency that ministers exclusively to international students; however, these make up for a very high percentage of the overall congregation in most Higher Education chaplaincies around the country. The care of international students tends therefore to be high on the agenda of most University Chaplains.
- On the whole, there are few residential chaplaincy, most of which accommodate only a handful of students. The London Catholic Chaplaincy, where our SECIS assembly is meeting the largest of these, with approximately 60 resident students. Besides this, there are also both home students and international students.
- **Some chaplains are welcomed by universities and are very active on campus, other work from nearby Catholic chaplaincies; some do both.**
- International Students face many problems of isolation and culture shock, including within the Catholic Church where liturgy and understanding of the Faith may be expressed very differently from at home. There are also a significant number who arrive with undeclared mental health problems or develop them here. Fear of loss of face or being made to leave university may this group is part of their ministry.
- Most chaplaincies operate on a tight budget and provide spiritual and emotional support, **simple hospitality and opportunities for growth in theological knowledge and understanding of the Faith and of the Word of God.** However, many chaplains are often approached by international students in material hardship, and we try to support them either on an ad-hoc basis or by helping them to access support services in the University or in the local community.
- Our Catholic community in England and Wales is made up from Catholic from across the world and our history in the last two hundred years has been as a Church constantly welcoming migrants and being enriched by their contribution, so our parishes also welcome students in their midst and the presence of young people in the parish is seen as an asset.
- Hostility to immigration has made life more difficult for students particularly in getting and extending their visas and can make them feel unwelcome. University study in the UK is also very expensive both for home and international students, so there is great competition for part time work, much of which is low paid. The fact that many students have to work to survive has an impact on community life on campus. For Catholic students, the Sunday Mass and hospitality linked to it can be an important support.