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**THE OPEN  
LEARNING  
INITIATIVE,  
OLIVE 2025:  
SUPPORTING  
PEOPLE FROM  
REFUGEE  
BACKGROUNDS  
TOWARDS  
HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

# Contents

Summary: 3

The OLIVE programme: An overview: 4

The short OLIVE programme: 5

OLIVE Creative Writing courses: 6

OLIVE tutoring: 6

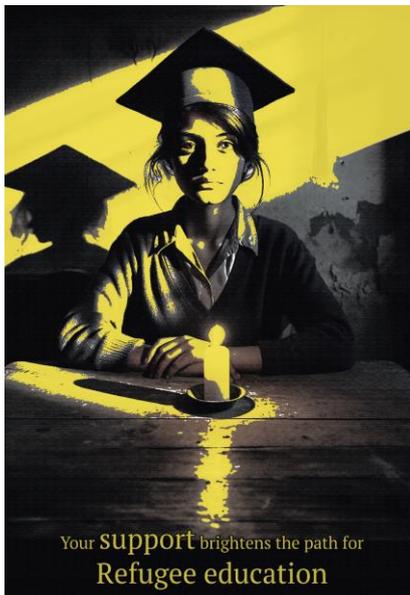
HE information workshops, academic seminars and discussions, Creative Writing facilitation: 7

Catch-up materials: 8

Looking to the future: 8

Appendix 1: OLIVE Creative writing programmes report: 10

Appendix 2: The OLIVE short programme report: 16



*Reza, Your support brightens the path for refugee education (University of East Anglia, 2024)*

# OLive – The Open Learning Initiative

## Supporting people from refugee backgrounds into Higher Education

### 2025 report

Soni Sharan and Corinne Squire, March 2026

### Summary

Refugees frequently have strong educational aspirations and backgrounds. HE improves refugees' employment and wellbeing, promotes inclusion, and strengthens UK productivity. Yet, refugees face multiple economic, social, cultural and linguistic barriers to accessing HE. HE preparation for refugees is also restricted in scope, although research indicates that it has considerable benefits. UNHCR has set an HE '15% by 2030' participation target for refugees. However, currently, only 9% of refugees worldwide are able to access higher education (HE).

The Open Learning Initiative (OLive) aims to address this problem in England by supporting people from refugee backgrounds in their journey towards university. In 2025, OLive delivered short programmes of courses in Academic English and IELTS, and Routes to University, Education, Training and Employment, as well as in Creative Writing, alongside providing other resources such as online materials, resources, tutoring, meet-ups, university information presentations, and academic seminars. In this way, we endeavoured to offer an ongoing, sustainable OLive 'e-campus' for around 150 new students, and for the many OLive alumnae and alumni still in touch with the programme.

OLive 2025 was organised by colleagues at University of Bristol (UoB), with support from colleagues in University College London (UCL), the Bloomsbury and University of East London Doctoral Training Programme (UBEL), and Manchester University., as well as colleagues in refugee NGOs in Bristol and nationally.

#### **What is Olive?**

*OLive supports people from refugee backgrounds who want to go to university. It operates online across England, with in-person hub meetings in Bristol, London, Birmingham and Manchester, and occasional face-to-face meetings elsewhere. OLive is free, open to all, holistic, and refugee-centred. It offers classes in Academic English and IELTS; Paths to HE, Education, Training and Employment; Digital Skills; and Creative Writing. OLive also provides a catch-up YouTube channel, online resources, one-to-one tutoring for university and scholarship applications, and follow-up and between-programme support, outreach information workshops and short courses, university information sessions, conversation classes, and academic seminars. It is well-integrated with refugee-sector NGOs, and relevant local authority, Further Education (FE), and Higher Education provision.*

## 1. The 2025 OLIve programme: An overview

This year OLIve's focus shifted from its 'flagship' term-long programme – which we will still retain – towards a broader and more flexible approach, addressing the complex and changing realities of refugees' lives, and the multiple sectors involved in supporting refugees towards HE engagement. Our 2025 work, funded by the University of Bristol, therefore emphasized long-term engagement, outreach, cross-sector working, and breadth of provision.

We:

- Offered shorter, easier-to-complete programmes, still with core academic English and HE content, and with diverse other aspects like Creative Writing associated with them.
- Provided more information-giving workshops that set the HE scene for people from refugee backgrounds newly arrived in the UK
- Encouraged OLIve students and alumnae/i to tell their networks about OLIve, thus moving outside of regular HE, FE and NGO referrals.
- Addressed the gap between refugee NGOs and HE by running Creative Writing online and in-person short courses as preludes to HE engagement, using NGO-based recruitment, and inviting NGO colleagues' own engagement with such work as facilitators.
- Focused on the long-term nature of refugee paths to HE by providing ongoing tutoring across OLIve cohorts, and highlighting the possibilities for OLIve alumnae and alumni to re-engage with OLIve and HE possibilities, even several years after their initial expressions of interest.

In these ways, we hoped to improve the sustainability and integration of the OLIve programme, while serving the changing needs of the shifting cohorts of asylum-seekers and refugees who use the programme for support.



**Rana Haidari, *Exploitation, education* (University of East Anglia, 2024)**

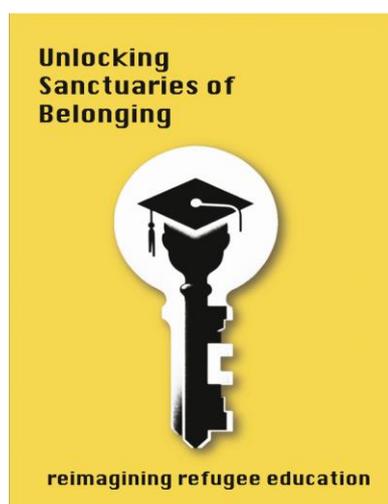
### **a. The short OLIve programme**

We provided a four-week short OLIve programme, with two classes a week on 'Routes to University, Education, Training and Employment' and 'Academic English and IELTS', taught by highly experienced colleagues who have worked extensively with refugees and specifically with the OLIve programme over many years. The course recruited 63 students, half of them women, slightly over one-third asylum-seekers. All were also allocated individual tutors so that they could pursue their specific HE and other educational interests during and after the course. Almost one-third of these students were brought into the programme through their involvement with the OLIve Creative Writing short courses which ran slightly earlier in 2025.

A fuller account of this course is in Appendix 1.

#### ***What did students gain from the OLIve short programme? Students respond***

- *Necessary and constructive information*
- *It helps me (with) what am I going to do to join university or college*
- *Very informative*
- *Good presentation*
- *Nice experience. Thank you so much.*
- *Thanks, GOD bless your life for giving us this opportunity*



**Mir Abdullah Miri, *Reimagining refugee education* (University of East Anglia, 2024)**

## **b. OLLive Creative Writing course**

OLLive provided two four-week short courses on Creative Writing in person at the Bristol Hospitality Network, reaching 39 people, and online, through a range of NGOs' referrals, particularly Breaking Barriers, and for people on the OLLive waiting list, reaching 30 people. In each case, around a third of the students attended three or four classes and received certificates to recognize their engagement. In addition to the very experienced teacher/facilitator, two ex-OLLive students acted as facilitators during the online course and ESOL teachers and current tutors were heavily involved with teaching and facilitating, respectively, the in-person course. Participants were 50% women – slightly higher for the in-person course; of varying ages; refugee status was not recorded. Almost one-third of the Creative Writing students later involved in the HE-oriented short OLLive programme (see a). They also constituted nearly one-third of the students on that programme. This demonstrated the value of providing 'gateway' courses, less HE-connected, to encourage people into more HE engagement through the OLLive short programme's HE 'bridging' provision.

### ***What did students gain from the Creative Writing classes? Students respond***

- *Good class, learning new things, friendly teaching*
- *It was very nice and helpful, participatory and good group works and very helpful to advance my writing skills.*
- *Interactive, supportive and interesting*
- *I like the way teacher explained poetry*
- *1/Open discussion. 2/Advanced writing skills. 3/Helpful.*
- *It is amazing course I love it*

A fuller account of the Creative Writing courses is in Appendix 2.

## **c. OLLive tutoring**

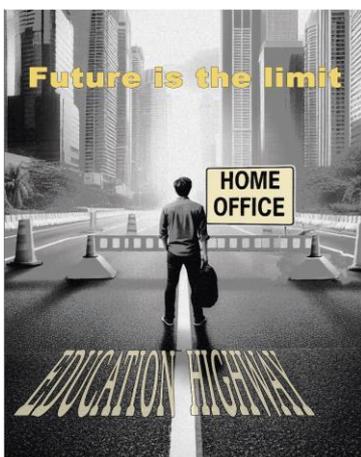
Throughout 2025, OLLive tutors worked one-to-one with students, supporting university and scholarship applications but also students' educational journeys more generally. In the first part of the year, which comprised the second half of the 2024-2025 academic year, 22 tutors worked with around 160 students, many continuing from the previous year, and many also having educational interests not closely related to HE - which explains the very large number. In the autumn of 2025 -

that is, the first part of the 2025-2026 academic year - 20 tutors worked with around 70 students, with some tutors - and a much smaller number of students than previously - continuing from the previous year. The smaller number of students reflected a shift in tutoring remit towards HE applications, rather than other aspects of education, in order to focus more on tutors' own HE expertise, although some tutees with non-HE interests were still involved. In both tutor cohorts, tutors came from across the UK, particularly from Bristol, London, Manchester, and Birmingham; some were staff, some PhD or Masters students, and some were working outside of HE.

**d. HE information workshops**, online and in person, were made available throughout the year. In-person, these workshops focused on NGOs with whom we were working closely on other ways of engaging service users (see 4), and as in the previous year, on carceral environments – in particular, working with NGOs supporting residents of the Napier Barracks. Online, the workshops featured presentations from university Widening Participation and Sanctuary Scholarship teams with whom OLive has worked before.

**e. Academic seminars and discussions:** We provided a number of online and in-person discussion seminars, based on tutors' research work or on readings students had previously indicated might interest them.

**f. Creative Writing facilitation workshops.** In order to develop relations with and possibilities for NGO colleagues, creative writing facilitation sessions were organized online by the Creative Writing teacher. Alongside the NGO attenders, a majority of the 15 attenders were OLive students and alumnae/i with interests in writing and English language teaching, indicating the value for OLive both of drawing on and of developing student and alumnae/i expertise



*Abdullahi Abdi, Future is the limit (University of East Anglia, 2024)*

### **g. Catch-up videos and materials.**

As in previous years, videos of the short programme classes and some from other sessions were uploaded to the OLLive Youtube channel, and course materials were emailed and stored for future student access on the OLLive google drive. This proved a very useful resource for students who could not attend classes because of work, illness, or other commitments or disruptions. It is also of

#### ***How do the videos and materials help? Students respond***

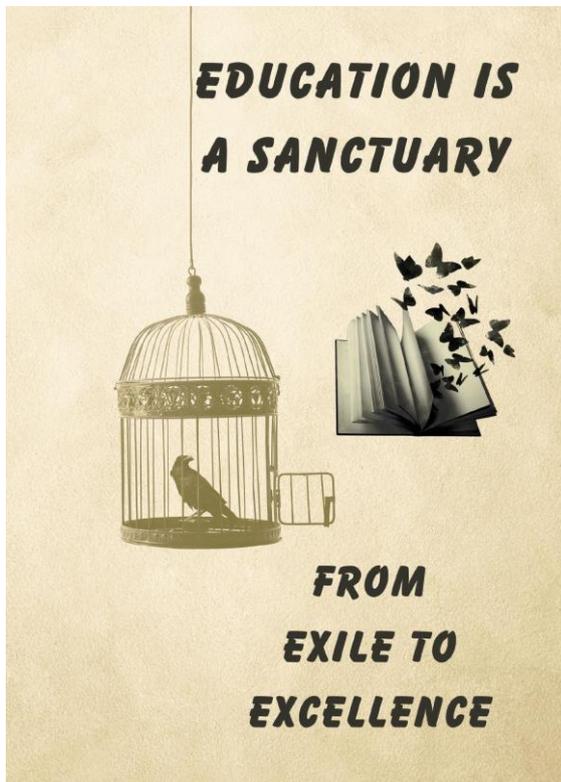
*The way (the programme) was organised was great. The tutors are also very patient and have lots of resources. I also liked the YouTube videos, it's nice going back to them.*

continual use for students waiting for courses to start, or returning to engage with materials as

### **h. Looking to the future**

- This year's OLLive work has demonstrated that short programmes and repeated possibilities of access to them can work well for refugees interested in engaging with HE. Such programmes and their repeated availability encourage students to engage with HE access in a manageable way that is less likely to be interrupted by the unpredictability and precarity of their situations. We aim to continue such work in 2026.
- Emphasising the ongoing and repeated possibilities of all OLLive support, for past and present students, has also been shown to be important, from the levels at which past students have returned to re-engage with programmes, and students from one short course have accessed another. When providing future provision, we will ensure wide outreach to prior cohorts and contacts in order to support such ongoing engagement.
- At the same time, the longer, integrated OLLive programmes still have an important place as a form of HE 'bridging' for refugees that builds a strong learning community and we hope to return to running such programmes soon.
- We will also spend more time clarifying the different levels involved in each class, something that students have themselves suggested.
- Tutoring, long-term and broad-based, has been an important means of making OLLive support sustainable and longlasting for individual students, particularly those close to accessing HE, but also those who cannot access the short courses. We will be supporting continued tutoring in 2026 and will be evaluating its impact on individual students.

- Information provision around HE, while available from many online sources, has also been strongly valued when Olive provides it directly to refugees and particularly, asylum seekers, especially in person. Following up, we aim to provide more 'roadshow' in-person information sessions in 2026, especially in collaboration with NGOs. We also aim to work specifically with those supporting forced migrants who are newly in the UK and to centre their lived experiences to shape the support and information we provide.
- The value of our online resources, mentioned frequently in student feedback, means that their availability for others interested in supporting refugees' HE access should be more widely known, and we will disseminate information about these resources more in 2026.
- We have found that Creative Writing short courses, both in person and online, build productive learning environments that are highly inclusive, educationally and linguistically, and that can then lead to more HE engagement. NGOs themselves can productively engage in such work. We aim to develop this focus further in 2026.
- OLlive students' own involvement in Creative Writing facilitation, and their interest in further involvement with OLlive teaching and other projects, means that we will build on this area of participatory capacity development in 2026.



*Nicosall, Education is a sanctuary  
(University of East Anglia, 2024)*

## **Appendix 1**

### **OLive Creative Writing Workshops**

#### **a. Why Creative Writing?**

Creative Writing courses have been an important part of the OLive programme for many years and are now core aspects of the main online programme.

Creative writing, unlike professional or academic English courses, provides a space for non-English speakers to develop their own creative voice, regardless of their level of English. Rather than prioritising grammatical rigour, the workshops aimed to create an environment where participants could explore poetry, autobiographical writing and bilingual writing using languages they already possess, alongside English, as tools for reflection, creativity and self expression.

In 2025, OLive received some funding from the University of Bristol, with several aims:

- To support Creative Writing short courses, often not part of core HE ‘bridging’ provision for refugees
- To examine such courses’ effects in engaging refugees with writing and discussion that recognized their strengths and that also might encourage them to participate in the more HE-oriented OLive short courses that followed, also with UoB support.
- To see if this Creative Writing-focused approach might have useful impacts on who participates in HE bridging programmes like the usual OLive short courses, particularly for women, who are under-represented among refugees entering HE
- To establish closer links with refugee NGOs for whom Creative Writing might be a helpful ESOL-supporting but also HE-adjacent activity that would further link the NGOs with HE activities and thus help to close the gap often reported, by NGOs and by refugees themselves, between refugee NGOs and HE

This report includes an overview of the programme, descriptions of the online and in-person sessions, attendance, weekly session summaries, and feedback from responders.

#### **b. Programme Overview**

The workshop was delivered over four weeks, with one session held each week. Each session centred on a specific theme or concept, and participants received a study guide containing short readings such as poems, essays, and excerpts from books related to that week’s focus. These materials were paired with writing exercises that participants completed during the sessions, either independently or in small groups. When time was limited, participants were encouraged to continue the exercises on their own after the class.

We recruited students for the programmes through in-person information meetings at the NGO where some of us volunteered and where we had also worked previously providing academic and writing short courses, and by announcements circulated in person and by email and social media by that NGO. For the online course, we recruited through a number of other NGOs working across the country who again disseminated information in-person, and through email and social media.

Teaching was conducted largely by Dr Erica Masserano, a Creative Writing teacher who has worked with refugees as well as with other HE-marginalised groups for many years. In the case of BHN however, Dr Masserano's in-person input alternated with that of BHN ESOL teachers who supported the course. At BHN, as well, a range of university Masters and PhD students, some with multilingual skills, supported the student groups. This enabled the engagement in the course of many service users whose

### **c. Settings**

The course was delivered in two formats: an in-person programme at the Bristol Hospitality Network (BHN) and an online programme, both conducted in summer-autumn 2025.

#### ***(i) In-person programme at BHN***

For the in-person version, we partnered with colleagues at BHN, where 33 participants registered for the short course. BHN provided a comfortable and welcoming room that accommodated both participants and volunteer facilitators. The space also included a play area for young children and toddlers, allowing parents to participate more freely and without interruption.

The seating was arranged in a round-table format to support open discussion and shared learning. Participants received printed handouts with space for notes, along with reading materials to guide each week's activities. After each session, attendees were free to continue engaging with the material independently, and we maintained contact through follow-up emailed newsletters. Of the 33 people who registered, 13 attended three or four sessions and received certificates of participation.

#### ***(ii) Online programme***

The online version of the course was conducted through a dedicated OLIVE zoom account. A total of 39 people signed up for the programme, of whom 10 attended three or four sessions and were awarded certificates.

### **d. Sessions**

### *Week 1: Your Life*

The theme of the first session was autobiographical writing, with a focus on self-expression and documenting personal experience. Participants were introduced to a selection of autobiographical texts, including excerpts from *Persepolis*, *The Lonely Londoners*, and shorter pieces such as *How I Found Poetry in Childhood Prayer*.

The session began with an interactive exercise in which participants reflected on the origin and meaning of their names. They were encouraged to think and write about the meaning of their names, who gave it to them and how they feel about their names. This was followed by a reading of an autobiographical poem by Nazim Hikmet, which served as a model for participants' first writing task. They were then invited to draft a short autobiographical poem of their own, supported by prompt questions (who, what, where, when) to help structure their ideas.

The session concluded with additional autobiographical poems and short stories, which participants read before attempting a second reflective writing exercise: to explore why they write, what motivates their storytelling, and what insights they took from the readings.

### *Week 2: Memory*

The second session explored the role of memory in autobiographical writing. It began with participant reintroductions, which also served as an icebreaker for those who had not attended the first session. In keeping with the workshop's focus on self-expression, participants were invited to write about personal likes and dislikes, helping them reflect on their experiences while fostering engagement with the group.

The session included a reading of Joe Brainard's poem "I Remember", which provided a model for the main exercise. Participants then created their own "I remember..." sentences, using memory prompts to document moments from their lives and build a narrative of their personal journeys.

### *Week 3: Multilingual Poetry*

The third session focused on multilingual poetry, recognising that many participants were proficient in languages other than English. The session aimed to explore how participants' native and familiar languages can be used creatively in poetic expression.

The session began with an exercise in which participants selected a word from their native language (or another language they knew) and reflected on its meaning and personal significance. This was followed by a reading of Aryaana Khan's multilingual poem, 'A Poem About Language', which served as a model for discussion and creative inspiration. Participants formed small groups to discuss the poem's meaning and themes.

For the second exercise, participants explored proverbs from their native languages, translated

them into English, and shared them with the group. They were also encouraged to discuss the meaning of the proverbs and reflect on how these ideas relate to their own lives.

#### *Week 4 : Language and Culture*

The fourth session explored the connection between participants' native languages and their cultural heritage, with a particular focus on food. The session began with a reading of Oliver Sopolu Odo's poem "The Food of Our Ancestors", followed by a group discussion on its meaning and significance.

Participants then completed a writing exercise in which they created short poems about their favorite foods, reflecting on how these foods connect them to their ancestors and cultural traditions. The session concluded with a discussion prompted by a bilingual poem, which encouraged participants to consider the experience of speaking different languages at home and in public, as well as the challenges and richness of navigating multiple linguistic environments.

#### **e. What did students expect from the creative writing course?/Why do students come to OLIVE**

Over one-third of the registrants for the creative writing course stated that they want to practice their writing skills in some form for various reasons (45%). One student wanted to improve their writing skills for their personal statement to better their chances with university applications. Another student wanted to improve their writing skills to be able to get a good score on their IELTS exam. In a similar vein, a large proportion of the registrants (32%) wanted to practice their English. One student wanted to improve their English to be able to communicate better with the people they meet. Another student wanted to support the refugees that they work with. This demonstrates the empowering aspect of the courses that goes beyond reading and writing skills to NGO workers. Creativity and ideas were other drivers that were mentioned. 13% of the registrants brought up new ideas to write as reasons for joining the course. One student mentioned gaining a certificate and going to university.

#### **f. Feedback Summary**

Feedback was collected from both BHN and online participants to assess the impact of the workshop and inform future offerings.

##### ***1 Offline (BHN)***

The offline course was described as 'amazing' by two responders. One respondent appreciated the teacher and the guidance that they provided during the course. Another student found the interactive elements of the course helpful. Students also mentioned that the course has made

them more confident with their writing.

***What did you like about the Creative Writing course?***

- - *The teachers and their support , the environment of the place*
- - *To make confident and how to write poetry*
- - *1/Open discussion. 2/Advanced writing skills. 3/Helpful.*
- - *It is amazing I was start writing*
- - *It is amazing course I love it*
- 

***ii Online***

The most highly rated aspect of the online course was the teaching. More than half the responders commented on the method of teaching in this course (4). When asked to specifically provide feedback on the teacher, nearly all but one student said that the teacher was 'very helpful'. One student found the teaching 'quite helpful'. Students also appreciated the interactive elements of the course (42%), with one student mentioning how beneficial group work was for their writing skills. Additionally, students found this as an opportunity to learn new things (57%). Two students described the course content as interesting and appreciated the new insights it brought to their writing. One student mentioned poetry as a strength of the course. The material used for the course was also highly praised with 100% of the respondents mentioning that the material was 'very useful'.

***What did you like about the online Creative Writing course?***

- *Good class, learning new things, friendly teaching*
- *It was very nice and helpful, participatory and good group works and very helpful to advance my writing skills.*
- *Interactive, supportive and interesting*
- *Easy , interesting and nice tutor*
- *New insights into writing, Hearing other attendees work, Erica's interpretations of our work*
- *I like the way teacher explained poetry*

### ***Suggestions for improvement***

Two students did not have anything they would want to change about the course. One student brought up the problem with not having access to a laptop or a smartphone to be able to participate in the class freely. Two students mentioned the timings of the course as something they would want to change, with one student stating that they would prefer the classes to be held in the evening. This points to the varying needs of students from a diverse demographic and the steps that OLive would need to make in the future sessions.

## Appendix 2

### The OLive short programme

#### a. Overview

The OLive 2025 short programme:

- - Provided a 4 week short course to students in the middle of the academic year to allow students more time to understand the opportunities to pursue higher education and prepare applications to university
- - Provided an online course delving into the routes to HE, job market and training that are available to people in the UK who have experienced forced migration
- - Provided an online course on Academic English along with IELTS training
- - Supported students who were unable to attend the live sessions with YouTube recordings of the classes, that are now available publicly
- - Compiled online resources from societies such as Student Action for Refugees and Breaking Barriers to build a resource bank for students
- - Set up a one-to-one tutor support system, where each student was assigned a tutor. The tutors stay in contact with the students during and after the programme to help students with university applications, scholarship applications and personal statements
- - Provided certifications to all the students who participated consistently in the short course
- - Involved volunteers and tutors from migrant background who informed the structure and implementation of the programme
- 

#### • ***b. Routes to University, Education, Training and Employment: Course structure***

- This course focuses on providing students with tools to navigate the HE and job market in the UK. Each week, the classes addressed information across a range of subjects. The course provided:
  - A framework to understand the UK education system
  - Support with understanding where the student stands within the education system

- A comprehensive overview of university requirements such as language requirements and information on how to meet those requirements
- Information on how to navigate the UCAS hub and help with building a UCAS application
- Information on the entry requirements and application process for Masters courses in the UK
- Information on accessing university scholarships and sanctuary scholarships
- An archive of refugee support services, networks and newsletters that would be useful to students
- Information on finding vocational training and apprenticeships in the UK
- Information on accessing funding for vocational training and finding volunteering opportunities for people holding refugee and asylum seeking statuses

### ***c. Academic English and IELTS: course structure***

Each week, the course focused on developing English skills, enabling students to progress alongside the curriculum. The course also provided support with IELTS training. This course has:

- Provided students with a range of resources that they could use to practice English depending on their level of fluency
- Carried out multiple activities during the classes to enable student engagement and bolster learning and confidence
- An overview of IELTS exam and the resources that students could access to prepare for the exam
- Knowledge on how to get good score on the IELTS exam

### **d. Short Course Report**

#### ***i. Summary***

This report covers the extended short course, a four-week programme that ran from late October to late November. The course is free and was made available to 64 students from across the UK this year. The course was also made available for students from the main programme who wanted

to re-engage with some OLIVE classes. The focus of this short course was support with university entrance and Academic English classes along with training for the IELTS exam. Certificates were issued to students who attended the classes. The course was designed as an extension of the main OLIVE programme to continue the provision of support for students who arrive in the middle of the academic year. The classes were held on Zoom, every Monday and Tuesday mornings between October 20th and November 11th of 2025.

### ***ii. Who were our students?***

The short course registration document provides insights into the demographics of the cohort including factors such as language, barriers in terms of physical or mental difficulties, and immigration status. Only 50% of the registrants had refugee status at the time of registration with over 35% of the registrants (23) holding asylum seeker statuses. Nearly half the registrants are female (30), 40.6% male (26), 3% choosing not to disclose their gender. The age distribution was diverse with a majority of the cohort falling within the 25-34 age band (36%). Participants were distributed across the UK with a vast majority based in Bristol (42%). The most common language was Arabic with 42% of the registrants mentioning Arabic as one of the languages they know, followed by Urdu (9%) and Farsi (6%). 42% of the registrants identified themselves at beginner level in terms of English skills, and 36% as intermediate. Over 65% of the registrants stated that they don't have any mental or physical issues acting as barriers to their learning. A small but significant number (eight) mentioned some kind of mental health issue that acts as a barrier to their learning and two people stated their difficulty with learning a new language. Other issues that were mentioned on the registration form include challenges with childcare (10), access to a laptop/internet (seven), lack of a study space (two), time management (two), caring for an elderly parent (two) and transportation costs (one).

### ***iii. Why did students come to OLIVE?***

Out of the 64 people who registered for the Short Course, 34.4% of the students required assistance relating to IELTS or general help with English language. Another significant number of students (11) wanted to gain IELTS or some kind of language training to better their chances with university applications. Entrance into university also emerged as a common goal, with about 22 students mentioning that they aim to get admissions into universities in the UK, among which 11 students identified IELTS and language requirements as a crucial barrier to overcome. Out of this cohort, a small number of people (three) mentioned requiring support with vocational training and job applications. Additionally, one student sought assistance with a university scholarship. An overwhelming number of registrants (35) indicated that they would want to academically pursue a STEM major in the future.

#### ***Iv What was the role of the gateway courses?***

Another possibly important factor to students choosing to come to OLIve could be the short courses, such as the creative writing courses, which serve as gateway courses. This can be inferred by comparing registration numbers and tracking students' progression from the 'gateway' courses to the Short Course. nine people who were registered to the creative writing online course conducted earlier in the year. Additionally, six people who registered to attend the creative writing sessions at the Bristol Hospitality Network, also registered for this Short Course. Four students who facilitated creative writing sessions and two people from the short course conducted in Napier Barracks progressed to this Short Course. This provides evidence that short courses, such as creative writing, function as gateway courses, enabling students to access longer-term academic support at OLIve.

#### ***v. Feedback/ Evaluations***

We conducted an online optional survey after the four-week session for students to provide feedback on the short courses. The survey was completed by nine respondents, of which 7 were male and only 2 were female. Two-thirds of the people belonged to the 25-34 age group. In terms of educational qualifications, four of the respondents had graduated high-school, while 3 held bachelor degrees and two held masters degrees. Five of the respondents had attended all or most of the classes, while three had attended some of the classes. Only one one of the respondents had not attended any of the classes.

#### ***Vi Programme strengths***

Overall, the short course was regarded as a learning opportunity that contained information that was valuable to the respondents. The most highly rated aspect of the short course was the organisation and the presentation of the information. One respondent appreciated the clarity with which the information was conveyed and the use of images during the classes. Two of the respondents found the information relevant and tailored to their goals of attaining higher education in the UK.

*- The way it was organised was great. The tutors are also very patient and have lots of resources. I also liked the YouTube videos, it's nice going back to them.*

*- Necessary and constructive information*

*- it helps me what am i going to do to join university or college*

- *Very informative*
- *Good presentation*
- *Nice experience. Thank you so much.*
- *Thanks GOD bless your life for giving us this opportunity*

### ***vii General suggestions for programme improvements***

Two of the respondents suggested changes with regards to the regularity of the classes. One of the respondents suggested that the classes could be conducted two or three times a week instead of once a week. Another respondent suggested that the course should be conducted more than once a year and should reach more people. OLive has uploaded the recordings of the classes that are publicly available on the OLive Youtube channel for all OLive and non-OLive students to access freely. OLive also conducts a main programme in the beginning of the academic year, from January to May, which supports a larger intake of students. Another respondent suggested that “one-to-one personal advice” would be useful. Additionally, another respondent expressed that being referred to the university would be more helpful than the guidance being provided. The short course works alongside tutors which every student is assigned. The tutors provide assistance with university applications, scholarship applications, and personal statements. The tutors can also be helpful with communicating with the university admissions team regarding any queries with the applications. For instance, a common mistake that occurs while processing university applications of people from forced migrant backgrounds is that they could be classified as international students and thus be denied access to student finance and scholarships. Having tutors who can dedicate time and attention to the applications can therefore be crucial in avoiding such oversights.

A key area for improvement that came to our attention while collecting further feedback through a focus group session was communication. One of the participants of the focus group mentioned that they were unaware of the short course run by OLive because they do not regularly check their emails which is our primary mode of contact. This indicates that email might not be the best mode of contact for all students.

### ***Viii Routes to University, Education, Training and Employment***

This module received positive feedback with students describing the course content as comprehensive and very informative. One student found the course meeting their specific needs as a person holding refugee status who is aiming to continue their masters programme. They

mentioned that the course helped them understand the system better which is often a crucial barrier to people arriving into the country newly.

- *It was very detailed, comprehensive and very informative.*
- *They are truly amazing, need to follow and get result from every one.*
- *It helped me to know the system as a refugee to continue masters program*
- *Bana göre iyidir (Translates to: it's good for me)*
- *Good*

### ***ix Academic English and IELTS***

The aspects of this module that were well received include the units focusing on reading and writing. One student mentioned that they appreciated being able to ask questions during the classes which speaks to the positive outcomes of the interactive element of the module. However, another respondent suggested that more activities surrounding interaction between students could improve the module. One of the respondents suggested that students should be given more time to prepare which indicates that the level of difficulty was aligned with the individual needs of the students. This ties into the discussion that ensued in the focus group session where one of the students who attended all the classes reported that they did not find the course helpful further confirming that the classes might have to be updated accordingly.

#### ***- Reading & writing***

- *I was able to ask some questions.*
- *To make more practice like dialog between two or three people*
- *It's very good but need more time to prepare students what they expect.*

### ***x Catch-up and Resource materials***

While students were encouraged to join the live classes, we created an online resource bank on YouTube, where all the recordings of the classes are available to view for catching up or revisional purposes. In the evaluations, Youtube videos were found to have contributed to their learning experience positively, with over two-thirds of the students mentioning that they found the recordings to be very useful. Two thirds of the respondents found emailed material very useful, with one student appreciating the volume of the material provided to them. One respondent who

did not attend the classes stated that they did not use the recordings and also didn't use the reading material which may indicate that the catch up resources and videos may not be a favourable way of learning for all students.

### ***Xi Future plans***

Among this cohort of respondents, the vast majority with one exception are looking to pursue higher education in the near future. While five of the respondents are also concerned with continuing to improve their English, one-third of respondents also mentioned looking for employment as their priority. The survey was also illuminating in terms of the support that the students are seeking from OLIVE. All the respondents are interested in email and online tutorship with regards to higher education. Over 75% of the students would be keen on gaining assistance with university applications and scholarships. Two thirds of students have expressed interest in online English conversation practice. More than half of the respondents have expressed interest in attending digital skill classes and another OLIVE course.