

Refugee Education Special Interest Group

19th August 2021

Dear Professor Jacobs

I'm writing to you in my capacity as the Chair of Refugee Education Special Interest Group, as a co-convenor of the UNSW Forced Migration Research Network, and as a representative of Academics for Refugees. We are writing to all Australian universities to ask for an expression of solidarity and additional support for students in the wake of the Afghanistan crisis.

In the wake of the unfolding crisis in Afghanistan, many of our students are experiencing profound challenges that are likely impacting on their capacity to study. While this is an acutely painful experience for our Afghan students in particular, many other students who have experience of fleeing because of conflict will also be affected. I'm sure it weighs heavily on our colleagues too. As you will undoubtedly be aware, this tragedy is unfolding during a difficult period for students and staff who are already locked down and feeling isolated.

It is important that UNSW communicates a public message of support and kindness—either from a faculty or institutional level, or both—for all our diasporic Afghan students who are now dealing with this crisis. To this end, we recommend:

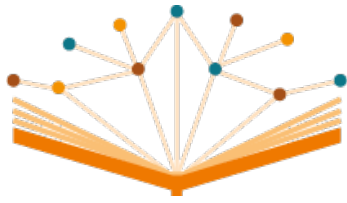
- Offering a statement of support for the Afghan people (see example adapted from Deakin CREATE at the end of this message)
- Making counselling supports especially visible to our forced migration student cohort
- Asking all course convenors to give leniency and flexibility with deadlines and either waive the need to apply for special consideration, or support students to complete the application so as not to burden them further with this administrative task
- Offering the opportunity to resubmit any high-stakes assignments that may have been impacted by the unfolding horror of the news.

We think such a message of support would be invaluable for our Afghan students, and for any other students and staff who have also been impacted by the crisis.

Thank you for considering our advice.

Best wishes,

Dr Sally Baker
Chair, Refugee Education Special Interest Group
Member, Academics for Refugees
Co-convenor, Forced Migration Research Network



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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE AFGHAN PEOPLE

Our thoughts are with students and staff from an Afghan background, as well as members of the Afghan diaspora in Australia, as we witness the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Afghanistan. We are acutely aware of the impact that these events may pose for vulnerable Afghans, including the friends and family members of individuals in our community.

As members of the international community, we recognise our collective responsibility to protect the human rights of individuals in Afghanistan. We support humanitarian aid organisations assisting Afghanistan. We call for respect for the civil rights of all Afghans, especially women and children.