

# Centre for Applied Human Rights





Memorial in Athlone Cape Town

## Centre at a glance

The Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) is an interdisciplinary research and teaching centre. It is a friendly community of scholars and visiting practitioners who have a shared focus on the real world challenges of putting human rights into practice and protecting human rights defenders at risk. The work of the Centre is international in breadth and draws on the University of York's rich tradition of rigorous and engaged scholarship. The Centre has particularly strong links to the Politics Department and York Law School.

## About the Centre

Founded in 2007, the Centre:

- Offers a unique Protective Fellowship Scheme for human rights defenders at risk
- Runs 2 masters programmes, a PhD programme and practitioner courses
- Conducts research on human rights defenders, human rights and development, refugee law, and transitional justice
- Hosts the *Journal of Human Rights Practice* (Oxford University Press), the only scholarly journal of its kind
- Organises academic conferences, practice-oriented workshops, and local human rights events.



# Visiting human rights defenders

The Centre sponsors a Protective Fellowship Scheme which enables human rights defenders at risk to come to York.



Professor Paul Gready and Diana (Kyrgyzstan)

Human rights defenders risk their lives to fight injustice and strengthen democracy around the world. The United Nations has declared that they deserve special protection because of their critical work in promoting and protecting human rights. Yet, in many countries, they face imprisonment without charge, torture, and threats of death.

The Centre provides 5-10 protective fellowships per year to human rights

defenders nominated by partner organisations. Defenders spend up to 6 months at the Centre where they acquire new skills, expand their support networks, and reflect on their work so they return to the field re-energized.

The scheme has a multiplier effect. First, the ultimate beneficiaries are the individuals, organisations and communities served by these human rights defenders. Enhancing the capacity of defenders is a sustainable way of bringing about medium and long-term social change in their home countries. Second, University staff and students learn about best practices in human rights work from visiting defenders, who actively participate in the Centre's teaching programmes.

*“As a result of my time in York, I have been able to make contact with many donors to raise funding for the work of my organisation, which is the only network of women’s NGOs in Afghanistan. While in York, I also got the chance to see the curriculum for human rights education in schools. This has led me to work on developing a curriculum with the Ministry of Education, which has been well received.”*

Saifora (Afghanistan)

The Centre has welcomed human rights defenders who work on a wide range of issues from many different countries, including: Afghanistan, China, Colombia, Congo, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

*“During my fellowship in York I designed a Mobile School of Human Rights which my organisation, the Lawyers’ Forum for Human Rights, subsequently established in the remote countryside of Nepal. This involves bringing lawyers to rural areas to provide education in Nepalese law and human rights.”*

Jit Man (Nepal)



CAHR staff and students 2011



# Masters programmes

CAHR offers two Masters programmes that engage students in a nuanced examination of human rights theory and practice, while providing them with the skills necessary to join the next generation of human rights practitioners.

The Masters programmes accomplish this through:

- Integrating class work with actual human rights field work
- Learning from visiting human rights defenders from around the world
- Prioritising relevant knowledge but also vital skills for a career in human rights (eg project management skills)
- Teaching by staff who are both academics and experienced practitioners.

## MA in Applied Human Rights

The MA in Applied Human Rights is distinctive because students:

- Learn how to **apply** human rights to advance social justice in law, policy, and practice
- Have the opportunity to work alongside South African human rights defenders on concrete projects during a two-week field visit
- Gain a truly interdisciplinary understanding of human rights, with a particular focus on the relevance of the social sciences to human rights practice.

*“The LLM is like a year-long internship – it’s really helped me develop the skills and knowledge that I need to hit the ground running when I start work. There is an incredible opportunity to learn from practitioners of human rights from all over the world.”*

Primrose Lovett, LLM Student 2010

## LLM in International Human Rights Law and Practice

The LLM is distinctive because students:

- Work on real human rights issues through a compulsory law clinic, which gives practical skills, hands-on experience and improved job prospects
- Get the opportunity to work alongside Malaysian human rights defenders on specific projects during a two-week field visit
- Focus on how international human rights law is **applied** to national public policy and to local contexts.

## MA/LLM compulsory modules

- Defending Human Rights (MA/LLM)
- Social Sciences and Human Rights Practice (MA)
- Law, Public Policy, and Human Rights (MA/LLM)
- Applying International Human Rights Law (LLM)
- International Human Rights Law Clinic (LLM)
- Dissertation (MA/LLM).

## MA/LLM optional modules

- Asylum, Migration and Human Trafficking
- Cultures of Human Rights Practice
- Development and Human Rights
- Health and Human Rights
- Truth, Justice and Reparations after Violence
- Contemporary Issues in Toleration
- Contemporary Philosophy of Law
- Social and Political Issues in Development: Conflict, Identities and Citizenship
- Teaching and Learning Citizenship and Global Education
- Women, Citizenship and Conflict.

*“In our work with the Zimbabwean IDPs (internally displaced persons) in Cape Town we crafted our own monitoring forms, negotiated the scope of our work, and learned to respond to unexpected obstacles. There is no substitute for the experience of engaging in fieldwork on the ground.”*

Esther Pun, MA Student 2009

## Career paths

Skills gained in the programmes have opened doors to a range of career opportunities for MA/LLM graduates including:

- Government
  - The Foreign and Commonwealth Office
  - Assistant Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Care Services
  - Parliamentary Assistant to a Member of Parliament
- NGOs and Charities
  - Amnesty International
  - Focus on Africa Development
  - IZWE Project
  - Merlin
  - Oxfam
- International Agencies
  - Projects Assistant to Unrepresented Nations and People Organisation at The Hague
- Law
  - Trainee Solicitor, Social Welfare, Housing and Family Law
- Research
  - Research Assistant in Corporate Social Responsibility at the American University, Beirut.



*The Law and Management Building*

# Studying at the Centre

By any measure, York is one of Britain's most highly regarded – and popular – universities. The University of York has been named University of the Year in the 2010 Times Higher Education (THE) Awards. We regularly appear high up in tables of research rankings and have been particularly successful in external assessments of teaching quality – including being ranked 9th in The Times Good University Guide 2011 and the Guardian 2011 University League Table; in the top ten UK universities for teaching quality in the 2010 National Students' Survey; and 81st out of 40,000 in the world in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

The small class size of the Centre's Masters programmes enhances the learning environment and ensures that students work closely with academic staff. The Centre's staff, visiting human rights defenders, and students come from all over the world and have a wide range of human rights experiences.

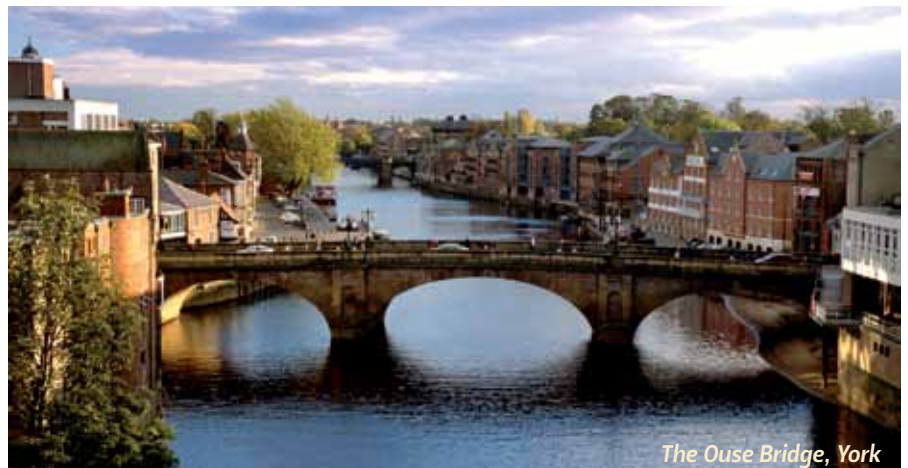
The Centre is housed in a brand-new, purpose-built facility on the new Heslington East campus along with York Law School. The building contains lecture theatres, seminar rooms, Problem Based Learning spaces for collaboration between students, computer rooms and departmental offices.

With a population of 190,000, York is big enough to feel cosmopolitan but small enough not to be overwhelming. It is a friendly place students can settle into quickly and which feels fresh and exciting. York was recently voted Europe's top



*Student working in Cape Town*

international tourist destination, and its historic streets bustle with visitors from all around the world. In 2008, the city was awarded the Best UK City for the second year in a row. There is plenty to impress: the famously soaring Gothic Minster, the winding medieval streets, the specialist stores and boutiques.



*The Ouse Bridge, York*



LLM students, York May 2011

*“The fieldwork experience I gained during the MA visit to Cape Town inspired my PhD’s exploration of transitional justice, masculinities and male victimisation. Additionally, it gave me a head-start on the PhD by facilitating links with a network of practitioners.”*

**Lucy Harding, MA Student 2009 and PhD Student**

## Research

The Centre is involved in ongoing research on a number of human rights topics, including the practical challenges faced by human rights defenders; human rights and development; transitional justice; and refugee law and policy. The Centre’s research is collaborative, international in scope and focuses on developing workable solutions to human rights problems. In addition, Centre staff act as advisors to governments, non-governmental organisations, and transnational networks.

## PhD programme

The Centre supervises a growing number of PhD students who receive their doctorates from the Politics Department or York Law School. Our PhD students work on a wide range of topics, many of which are related to our areas of research expertise.

## Practitioner courses

The Centre offers short courses and on-line courses geared to busy human rights professionals.

The Centre offers a 5 day short-course on International Refugee Law and Advocacy once a year. In 2011, the course was held in Bangkok in partnership with the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network. In 2012, the course is expected to take place in Cairo in partnership with local and regional human rights organizations.

The Centre has recently received funding from the Sigrid Rausing Trust to develop on-line training modules for human rights defenders in the field. The first module will be rolled out in 2012.

*“After working at the International Criminal Court, Amicus, and a human rights NGO in Malawi, I decided I wanted to ground some of my practical experience into a more academic framework. I chose to do a PhD at the Centre because I was interested in exploring how human rights could be applied to improve the situation for prisoners and detainees in Malawi. I also chose the Centre because of the rich and diverse expertise of the faculty. It was very much the right decision.”*

**Marian Cleghorn, PhD student**

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