

Embarking on higher education can entail 'considerable economic costs and material risks' (Archer *et al*, 2002, *cited in* Brine and Waller, 2004) a combination of loss of earnings and the additional costs of studying can add to the strain (Brine and Walker, 2004).

'The process of becoming a student is not an unproblematic one' Waller (2002b, *cited in* Brine and Waller, 2004), more so for mature students however 'many of those who leave school at the first opportunity are capable of completing courses of higher education successfully' Hughes (1973).

The 'process of learning [may] be as important as the outcomes' Brine and Waller (2004). There will always be a 'risk or uncertainty faced'; the decision to attend higher education reflects a 'period of transition, of change and reflexivity' Brine and Waller (2004). Fears include

- Failing
- Entering into debt
- Economic instability
- Pressures and strains of studying
- Strains put on relationships with family or friends

(Brine and Walker, 2004; Wakeford, 1994 *cited in* Brine and Waller, 2004).

As a mature student you are more likely to fear academic failures (Davies and Williams, 2001, *cited in* Brine and Waller, 2004). Miles (2001, *cited in* Brine and Waller, 2004) likened taking the plunge to becoming a student to 'treading a tightrope'. A common feeling is of 'not belonging' or feel that you are 'out of place' according to Archer *et al* (2002, *cited in* Brine and Walker, 2004).

The Government announced on 8 January 2018 that it aims to help mature students enter higher education (UK Parliament, 2018a); many students, in particular those that are older and working low paid jobs are seeking to better themselves by turning to Universities for encouragement and support.

An undergraduate mature student is defined as anyone aged over 25 at the time of entry into higher education (UK Parliament, 2018b).

Do you feel 'trapped' or are you unhappy with your current position; do you wish to follow your passion or simply need a change (Brine and Waller, 2004)? You may just wish to have a promotion in work or ambitions that need to be fulfilled or simply 'wanting more from life' (Brine and Waller, 2004). A feeling of not being satisfied or that there is more may be the reason to spur you on into entering higher education (Brine and Waller, 2004).

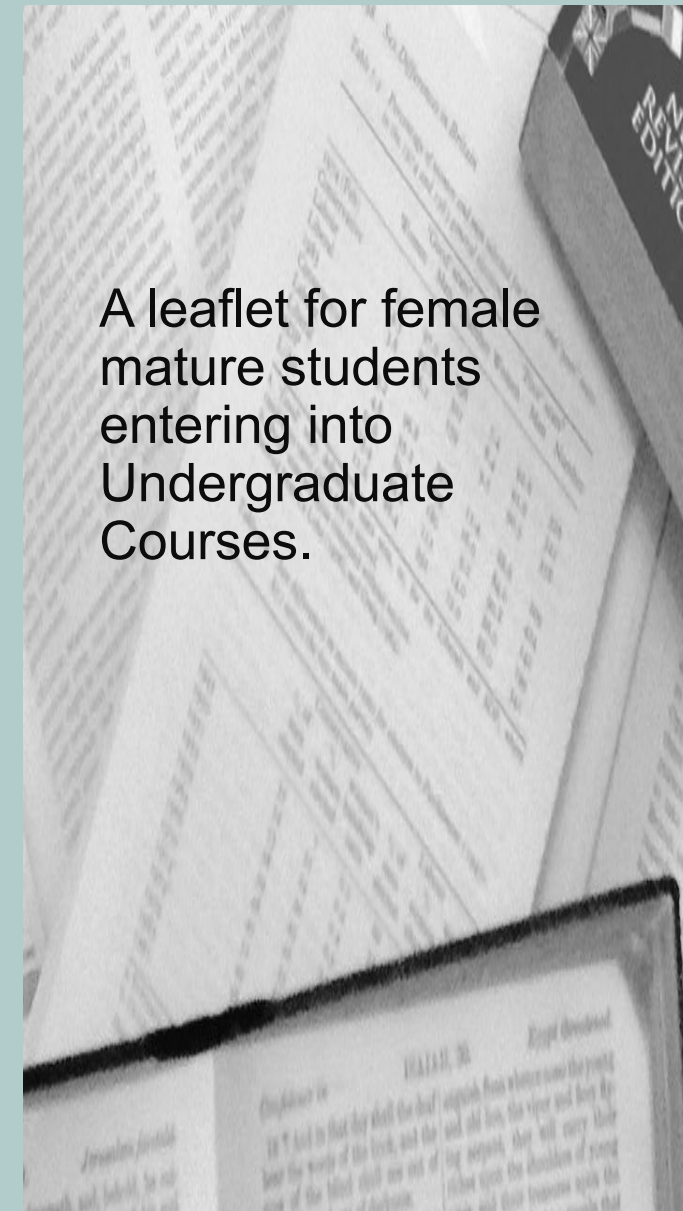


Image 1: Thomas, 2018

Services available at University

Whilst financial support is important the realisation when you attend University and walk through the door that first time is still fraught with fear and unease.

"I think most mature students are worried about getting back into studying and leaving behind the lifestyle we had before coming to uni." Renata Rez (28), Environmental Management BSc(Hons) (Kingston.ac.uk, n.d.). Remember, you will not be the only mature student there, the 'doubts'; the 'uncertainty' and 'pressures' (Brine and Waller, 2004) are felt by the majority of mature students.

40% of mature students are over 30 (UCAS, 2018), get together, get to know one another. If there is no such group in your University, make one., you will probably not be the only one yearning for company and someone to speak to. The Student Union should be able to assist you (<http://www.codecomputerlove.com/>, n.d.).

Some Universities hold a 'question-and-answer session for mature students in Freshers' Week and may run a students' forum dedicated to mature students (Kingston.ac.uk, n.d.). A Mature Students' Society may also be available with various meeting times allowing you to share your fears and concerns whether about university life or just simply juggling studies and home life (Kingston.ac.uk, n.d.).

Funding - focusing on Wales for students starting 2018

If you are over 60 you are not eligible for student support but are able to get a maintenance loan to assist with living costs, other loans may be available (<http://www.codecomputerlove.com/>, 2013).

A tuition fee loan, a maximum of £9,000.00 per annum is available at Student Finance Wales (www.studentfinancewales.co.uk), this is repayable once you start earning over £25,000 a year however interest will be applied immediately; the amount you repay each month is calculated according to your income (Careerswales.com, 2018). A grant of at least £1,000 which you will not have to repay will be made available to help with living costs. Up to £9,000 per annum will be available through a combination of grants and loans to assist with living costs. You may also be eligible to a maintenance loan and this will depend on the grant received (Careerswales.com, 2018).

If you have a child or adult who depends on you financially or is disabled you may be eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance, Dependants' Grant, Childcare Grant or Parents' Learning Allowance (Careerswales.com, 2018). Bursaries may be available, even for mature students, you should make enquiries with your University of choice to see what they have to offer; a grant may also be available from charities such as Family Action (familyaction.org.uk) (Careerswales.com, 2018) however there are certain criteria that need to be fulfilled (Family Action, 2018). Depending on the course you decide to study grants may also be available from institutions such as NHS Wales (Careerswales.com, 2018).

Although this is aimed at full-time students there is further information available on studentfinancewales.co.uk about what assistance is available to part-time students.

You are not alone in these feelings and this leaflet will attempt to assist those who have taken the step to enter into higher education providing support and information to assist in your enrolment into higher education and provide you with techniques to cope.

The application process

'For full-time courses, you do all your research and apply for courses online through the UCAS website' (www.ucas.com) (UCAS, 2018).

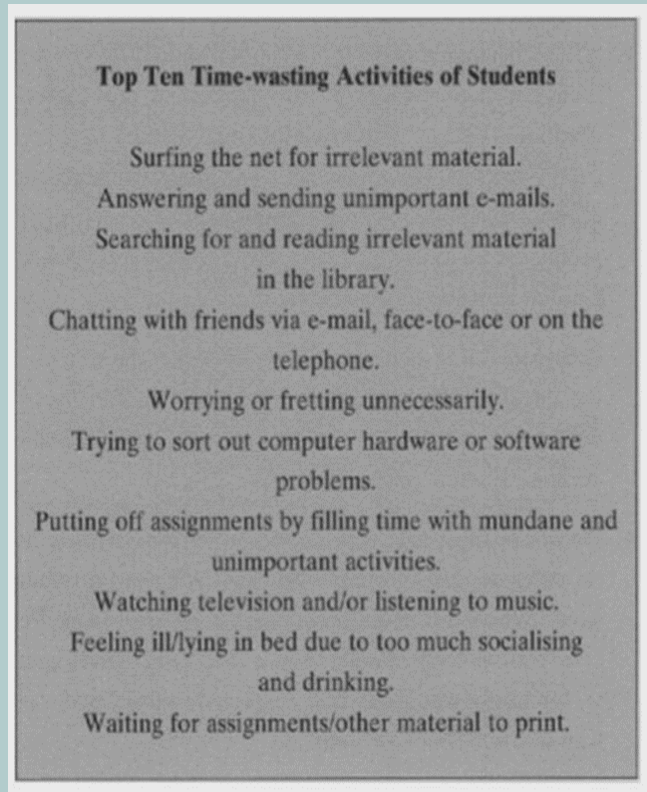
As a mature student you may be able to attend higher education without any formal qualifications (gov.uk, undated), your original education or work experience may be enough to allow you to study at university (UCAS, 2018).

If you are unsure how you wish to proceed open days are available at most universities and we would recommend you visit the University as this is 'an excellent way for you to find out about the University and [their] programmes of study' (UWTSD, 2018). At your visit you will be able to speak to staff members, look around the University; you will be able to ask questions about the course, speak to someone about finance and find out what careers you will be able to pursue after courses (UWTSD, 2018). Some Universities offer taster days which can be useful if you are still undecided (Cardiff University, n.d.).

Deadlines

Set yourself realistic timescales, put aside time, ask questions, seek clarification from your tutor as to what is required (Anonymous, 2011). Research suggests that 'students with poor time management are at risk of academic under-achievement' Liu *et al.* (2009). Try not to waste time. The table below sets out some key areas where students state time is wasted.

Dawson, 2014 p. 27



Deadlines continued...

If you do not hand work in on time it is likely to affect your mark (Dawson, 2014).

Techniques to assist include :-

A wall calendar with deadlines written in red , providing you with a visual representation (Dawson, 2014).

Start work as soon as possible (Dawson, 2014).

Talk over problems with assignments with other students or your tutors (Dawson, 2014).

Speak to Student Services who may be able to assist with information and practical advice (UWTSO, n.d.)

Services available at University continued...

Some University have pastoral support as well as educational support and students are assigned a Director of Studies to assist them not only with their academic progression but also their welfare (Undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk, 2018). Make enquiries with your University to find out what support is available that meets your needs.

Most Universities offer study support sessions that meet weekly to assist with examination techniques, how to take notes and essay writing and nursery facilities are often offered by Universities to assist with childcare responsibilities (Brighton.ac.uk, n.d.; Kingston.ac.uk, n.d.).



Image 1: Thomas, 2018

Your Wellbeing

Stay healthy with a healthy diet, exercise and sleep (Dawson, 2014).

Have regular eye tests and hearing tests (Dawson, 2014).

A working environment at home may assist, 'find a quiet space free from distractions' Dawson (2014, p. 15); for mature students who have children we are aware that this is not so easy but setting down rules at the outset can help establish a good routine (Dawson, 2014).

'Recreation and socialising are important for your frame of mind and well-being', Dawson (2014, p. 27).

Your University may be able to assist with Counselling services (UWTSD, n.d.).

'Adult learners tend to be more motivated than younger students' Dawson (2014, p 17). The huge decision you have taken to return to studies will not have been taken lightly (Brine and Waller, 2004) however suffering 'dips' in motivation levels (Dawson, 2014), is natural, do not punish yourself.



'The experience of too much stress over time can have adverse consequences on health and behaviour, but never experiencing any stress would result in inactivity, boredom, and an inability to adequately respond to internal/external demands'.

Conrad (2011, p.69)

A leaflet for female
mature students
entering into
Undergraduate
Courses.



Relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation may assist, talk about your worries with family and friends; take a break; be selective in the tasks that you undertake; try not to criticise yourself too much; avoid competing with others (Dawson, 2014). Relaxation techniques can help with anxiety (Tercelan *et al.*, 2015; Wild *et al.*, 2014). Mindfulness-based stress reduction has 'shown to reduce stress, depression and anxiety' although further studies need to be carried out Khoury *et al.* (2015).

Sleep is important for memory, concentration and restoring energy (Shmerling, 2011). Using mobile phones can lead to sleep disturbance and poses a risk to mental health (Thomée *et al.*, 2011). The amount of sleep required varies from person to person however lack of sleep has been linked with health problems and affects cognitive function (Lim *et al.*, 2010), so has too much sleep (Snerling, 2011).