



**HEON**  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
OUTREACH NETWORK



# A GUIDE FOR MATURE STUDENTS

AN INSIGHT INTO STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY

**ACCESS COURSES**

**QUALIFICATIONS**

**UCAS**

**PERSONAL  
STATEMENTS**

**HEON.ORG.UK**

# BEING A MATURE STUDENT

Any student who is aged 21 or over at the start of their studies is defined as a mature student. There are many reasons to consider Higher Education:

- To change career
- To learn new skills
- To improve employability
- To progress further in a profession



Although returning to Higher Education can be daunting, especially if you have had a break from education, there's plenty of information available to help make informed decisions about your next steps. Many students also choose to study part time. Researching your options for different universities, colleges and courses will help ensure you are prepared to make the most out of your time there.

## QUALIFICATIONS



University entry requirements vary. For any course, you will need to demonstrate and provide evidence of your relevant skills, ability and experience. Your previous qualifications and employment history will be taken into account, and some universities will consider professional qualifications, Open University credits and access course credits. Providing you are motivated and are able to cope with the academic demands of the course, having few qualifications doesn't necessarily have to be a barrier to entering HE. If you are unsure about whether you meet a course's requirements, it's worth directly contacting the departmental admissions tutor at the institution.

## ACCESS COURSES

Education course could help you meet the requirements of your chosen course and prepare you for your return to education. The Access to HE Diploma is a full level 3 qualification and can be taken in a variety of subjects. Generally lasting around one year, they are specifically designed for mature learners looking to progress to Higher Education. It's also worth noting that if you take out an Advanced Learner Loan to support you during an Access to HE course, Student Finance England will 'write off' any outstanding balances you owe for this Advanced Learner Loan once you complete a Higher Education course. The Higher Education course must be eligible for Student Finance in order for this to happen.

### FURTHER INFORMATION ON STUDYING AND QUALIFICATIONS

**UCAS Mature Student Guide - [bit.ly/UCASGuideMS](https://bit.ly/UCASGuideMS)**

**Access to HE - [www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk)**

**GOV.UK Advanced Learner Loan - [www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan](http://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan)**

**Which? University Guide - [www.university.which.co.uk](http://www.university.which.co.uk)**

## PERSONAL STATEMENTS AND REFERENCES

When applying to university through UCAS, you must complete a Personal Statement. It is an important opportunity to demonstrate your passion and abilities in your subject area. Try to keep your content as relevant to the course you are applying to as possible. Universities and colleges will be looking for your enthusiasm and commitment to your chosen course. If you apply through a school, college or centre, they will arrange for your reference to be attached. However, if you are applying as an individual, you will need to ask a professional who knows you (perhaps a teacher, adviser or professional colleague) to write this reference for you. You can input their details on your application so that they will be sent a link and password to add their reference. There are also plenty of online resources available which offer tips and advice about personal statements and the application process.

### FIND MORE PERSONAL STATEMENT HELP

UCAS Mature Student Guide - [bit.ly/UCASGuideMS](https://bit.ly/UCASGuideMS)

Which? University Mature Student Statement Tips - [bit.ly/Whichstatements](https://bit.ly/Whichstatements)



## FINANCE AND FUNDING YOUR STUDIES



- Tuition Fees are charged per year to students for their studies
- However, students do not pay this up front, as they apply for a Tuition Fee Loan from Student Finance who then pay fees directly to the institution
- For Part Time students, a Tuition Fee Loan is also available from Student Finance. The amount allocated varies and is course dependent
- If you are studying for your first degree, there are no age limits on eligibility for tuition fee loans
- For both Full Time and Part Time students, there is also a Maintenance Loan and it is paid to students in termly installments. The Loan is assessed on your household income, and helps with living costs during your studies
- Currently graduates pay back loans as salary deductions, just like a tax, and only once they start earning above a fixed amount per year
- Universities also offer many bursaries and scholarships e.g. income assessed; high academic ability; subject choice. Extra support is also available for students with dependents and for students with a disability or learning difficulty

### FIND OUT MORE ABOUT STUDENT FINANCE

GOV.UK Student Finance - [www.gov.uk/student-finance](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

GOV.UK Mature Student Funding - [www.gov.uk/mature-student-university-funding](https://www.gov.uk/mature-student-university-funding)

Martin Lewis Finance Guides - [www.moneysavingexpert.com/students](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students)

Scholarship Search - [www.scholarship-search.org.uk](https://www.scholarship-search.org.uk)

Overview of scholarships, grants and bursaries - [www.thescholarshiphub.org.uk](https://www.thescholarshiphub.org.uk)

# THE APPLICATION PROCESS

UCAS is the organisation that processes almost all applications to study undergraduate courses in the UK. The UCAS process starts in May, when applications open, but they cannot be submitted until September. The deadline for applications is mid January for most courses (excluding the University of Oxford, University of Cambridge or most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/science and dentistry).

On the UCAS website, there is also information and advice specifically for mature learners, including an interactive guide, case studies and top tips and advice.

## APPLY ONLINE

Students can apply for up to **5 courses** through UCAS. The application includes a **Personal Statement**, written to show universities your passion and suitability for the subject. As well as a reference written by an academic referee (usually your teachers) to confirm your suitability for the course you are applying to.

## WAIT TO HEAR BACK

Universities will then decide whether to make an offer, and communicate that decision via the UCAS portal. An offer is usually based on meeting entry requirements, and there may be an interview or test.

## REPLY TO OFFERS

You can then reply to your offers, deciding to accept your favourite course as your **Firm Choice**. You also select an **Insurance Choice**, a back up option in case you don't meet the conditions of your firm choice. Any other offers are then rejected.

## RESULTS - CONFIRMATION OR CLEARING

On results day in August, if you meet the requirements for either of your offers, you can **confirm** your place. If you meet and exceed your offers, it is possible to look for an alternative course or university using **Adjustment** if you want to. If you just miss out on your grades, the university may still accept you onto your chosen course. If you miss the grades and are then rejected by their Firm and Insurance choices, you can still go through **Clearing** to gain a place on a different course or at a different university.

### FIND OUT MORE

UCAS information for mature students - [bit.ly/UCASGuideMS](https://bit.ly/UCASGuideMS)

More on how to apply - [www.ucas.com/apply](https://www.ucas.com/apply)



This guide has been designed by The Higher Education Outreach Network (HEON) in collaboration with Innervate Careers Services Limited. For more information visit us at [www.HEON.org.uk](https://www.HEON.org.uk)

