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Thinking of returning to education as a mature student?

7 things to consider to help you decide

Choosing to return to education as a mature student (aged 21 years and above) is a pretty big life decision. You might want to go to university to gain a degree for a number of reasons, from changing direction to progressing your career, but whatever the reason it can still be a daunting decision to make.

Some adults considering education won't have many other commitments and so will find it relatively straight forward to start a degree at university. However, others may need to balance their studies alongside work or family commitments, so could have a few more things to consider.

Part of our job is to support adults in the Liverpool city region in achieving their personal goals of gaining skills, knowledge and expertise to progress their future. That's why we've put this blog together - to run through 7 considerations to help you decide if becoming a mature student is the right path to achieve your goals.

Looking for specific advice?

We hope the below helps with your decision, but if you'd like to speak to us directly with any specific questions, please feel free to [contact us](#).

1. Balancing your personal commitments with study

First up, one of the biggest challenges of being a mature student is juggling your time. For many mature students, one of the most challenging aspects of returning to education, is finding a way to juggle other commitments, such as work or family, with the time needed for study.

If you need to continue working while studying, or have parental/caring responsibilities, then it's best to research the amount of weekly study hours required from the courses you are interested in, so that you can work out whether you can fit this into your week. All universities will detail this on their websites and you can contact them directly if you need further information.

If studying full-time is not manageable with your other commitments, then find out if your subject of interest is available more flexibly, for example part-time or in the evenings. This is a common route for many mature students.

2. Think about how important the career benefits are

There are some job roles that require a very specific degree in order to achieve them. If that's the case for your dream job, then going to university is the clear path to achieving the career you want.

In contrast, there are other roles that might offer multiple ways of getting there.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How important is it, to achieving your ideal role, to get a degree in a specific subject?
- Do you need it to retrain for a new industry or new direction in your life?
- Do you need it to progress any further in your existing career and to increase the amount of money you could potentially earn?
- If you need to sacrifice some of your working hours (and current salary) to make time for study, then is the short-term financial loss worth it for the long-term gains, or is there a more cost-effective way to get where you want to be?

Going through these questions should help you determine how valuable the career benefits are to you and your life.

3. What's the right study environment for you?

Most adults returning to education, choose a university or college that is local to them – this is especially useful if you need to be close to home for other commitments such as work and family. However, if you're not limited to staying local, then you should consider other factors when researching courses. For example, you might want to think about the cultural and social benefits a new town or city could offer you if you were to study away from home, or what kind of student body you'd like to be a part of.

4. Factoring in financial support

As a mature student you will have two main expenses to think about, tuition fees and living costs. It's important to know exactly what these will be so that you can consider how funding a degree could affect your household finances.

The financial help available for mature students is similar to younger, dependent students, in that you can apply for [government loans for student finance](#), however there are a few other sources of help you may be eligible for, such as [Parent's Learning Allowance](#) or a [Childcare Grant](#).

Also, some universities offer scholarships specifically designed for mature students, so it's worth checking their websites or contacting them directly to ask if they offer any.

Don't forget those added benefits

One advantage you might not have considered is the various ways that you can save money while studying. There are many businesses and retail outlets that offer student discount to students of any age. You would also get discounted public transport and may be exempt from (or get discounted) council tax.

5. Would you benefit from mature student support services?

All universities have a Student Support department, dedicated to supporting and advising students on a range of matters. This usually covers a variety of topics, from academic issues and personal welfare, to financial advice and legal matters. Some universities have mature student groups, specifically for students returning to education who want to meet and socialise with others in a similar situation. Often, you can join a mentor scheme where you can be assigned another mature student as your mentor – one in their second or third year who has already been through what you’re embarking upon. They can offer valuable insight from their own experiences to support you through your university journey as a mature student.

6. Consider your accommodation

If you’re thinking about living away from home while studying at university, then you will need to arrange accommodation. A lot of universities guarantee a place in their halls of residence for all first-year students, and some will allow you to request a room near to other mature students - so it’s worth researching whether the universities you are interested in offer this, if it’s something that would be important to you.

7. Would it be helpful if your place of study had a childcare service?

Finally, many universities have an on-site nursery for 0 to 5 year olds, for long-term placements and often even emergency or single-day bookings. If this could help you balance family life with study, then it’s worth checking out whether your university of interest offers this.

Here to help

We hope this blog has been a useful summary in considering some of the advantages, challenges and types of support available when it comes to returning to education as a mature student. If you’re still feeling unsure, or would like to discuss anything related to university in more detail, feel free to contact us and our friendly team will be more than happy to assist.

[Get in touch](#) today and let us help you find the best path for your future. It’s what we’re here for.