



**ASHLEIGH HARRIS**  
**PSYCHOLOGY (EDUCATION)**  
**SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT UNIVERSITY**

**WHAT PROMPTED YOUR DECISION TO GO BACK INTO EDUCATION?**

I had worked for over 12 years in different industries when I realised one day I was frustrated with my lack of career progression and the feeling of being unfulfilled. I originally looked at university options in social sciences and social care. I had completed a HE Access course the year before and it allowed me access to shadowing an Educational Psychologist. The degree was the needed starting point for becoming one myself.

**DO YOU BELONG TO ANY CLUBS OR SOCIETIES?**

I belong to several which include the postgraduate and mature society; 'Language Swap', 'Psychology Society', 'TARDIS', D20 and the local rock MARS society.

**IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD WANT TO TELL A PROSPECTIVE MATURE STUDENT?**

Finding out about your course is essential, taking the time to go to open days and individual course days is essential; I found talking to current students there could offer good insights too. Finding out what support universities offer financially and the ways they can support other commitments was a key decider for me.

**WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WAS AVAILABLE?**

Due to the excellent services offered by the Access team and teaching staff, I was offered ample outlets of support that allowed me to get my assignments handed in on schedule and to a better standard each time. I have received

constant support from the Student Hub and have been offered tutorial sessions as needed to help with my dyslexia and extra considerations around my exams.

**HOW DO YOU FIT YOUR STUDIES AROUND YOUR OTHER COMMITMENTS?**

I choose to study full time but was able to have changes made to my timetables each semester as required to fit my family and other commitments. To support myself financially, I also work as a Student Ambassador for the University. The flexible working arrangements of the Student Ambassador role means that I can fit it around my timetable, it's also a great opportunity to gain new skills and make new acquaintances across the University.

**WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?**

After my degree I hope to progress into teaching and then on to an Education Psychology Doctorate to qualify as an Educational Psychologist.



**TOM STONE**  
**BA (HONS) TELEVISION PRODUCTION**  
**BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY**

**WHY DID YOU APPLY TO UNIVERSITY?**

Before I returned to education I was working on building sites. After a while I began to feel that some of my skills were wasted in that environment and that the culture didn't match my ambitions. I made the decision to quit my job – the most difficult step in the process.

I had always had an artistic side to my personality. I began looking for courses locally that could help me find an outlet for my passion and discovered I could do an Access to Higher Education diploma that would give me the credits I'd need to qualify for BU's BA (Hons) Television Production. I passed the Access course and was accepted, after interview, onto the Television Production degree.

**WHICH ASPECTS OF YOUR COURSE DO YOU ENJOY THE MOST AND WHY?**

I enjoy the collaborative and creative demands of the course. It's great to work with like-minded students on a range of challenging projects. In addition I get the opportunities to work for the university in roles such as Student Ambassador, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) leader and other extra-curricular activities.

**HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP YOUR EXPERIENCE OF STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY SO FAR?**

As someone who never believed they would be good enough to attend university, it was a great honour to be accepted at BU. I have another year left before graduating and I am confident that in that time I will be fully prepared for work in a new industry.

Since I am local to Bournemouth, I haven't really lived the typical student life. I live in a rented house with my girlfriend and have my own group of friends, so the social side of university has largely passed me by. I sometimes wonder if I'll look back and regret not socialising more, but equally, avoiding those distractions has helped me focus on my course work.

**HOW DO YOU FIND BEING A MATURE STUDENT?**

To be seen as 'mature' is an interesting position for me. I always saw myself as a bit of a silly student at school, often messing around and always up for a laugh. It's nice now when students look up to me as being organised or well disciplined, because these are things I've only learnt to be in the last three years.

**HOW DID YOU FIND THE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES?**

I've used the CV support staff who are really useful for giving general advice on CVs, how best to format them and what experience to include. Overall, I think there is a student support service for every eventuality, which can be really important to help students settle into life in a new town.

**WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?**

My long-term dream is to write and direct feature films and and TV/online series. In industries like TV and film, contacts can be worth more than qualifications, so I'll be networking as much as possible.

**FIND OUT MORE**

If you're wondering whether higher education is right for you, or if you have specific questions about life as a student, there is a range of information and guidance available to you. These cover choosing a course that's right for you, applying to university, accessing financial and other types of support, and the wider experience of being a mature student.

UCAS offers guidance on choosing a course and applying to university, including tips and advice specifically aimed at mature students: [www.ucas.com/maturestudents](http://www.ucas.com/maturestudents)

The National Union of Students offers advice on a range of issues relating to studying in higher education: [www.nus.org.uk/en/advice](http://www.nus.org.uk/en/advice)

The Student Room has a forum where mature students can share their experiences of returning to education: [www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Mature\\_Students](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Mature_Students)

**FINANCING YOUR STUDIES**

Embarking on a course of study at university is a major investment in your future and serious consideration needs to be given to how you will fund your studies, but try not to let this put you off. Loans are available to support your living costs and tuition fees and you may also have access to additional financial support if you have a disability or if you have children or dependents. Many universities also offer scholarships or bursaries, so this is also worth investigating.

To find out more, visit: [www.ucas.com/studentfinance](http://www.ucas.com/studentfinance)

More detailed information about student finance is available at: [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

**STUDYING IN DORSET AND HAMPSHIRE**

More information on courses, entry requirements, facilities and support available for mature learners is available online.

**Arts University Bournemouth**  
[www.aub.ac.uk](http://www.aub.ac.uk)

**Bournemouth University**  
[www.bournemouth.ac.uk](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk)

**University of Portsmouth**  
[www.port.ac.uk](http://www.port.ac.uk)

**Southampton Solent University**  
[www.solent.ac.uk](http://www.solent.ac.uk)

**University of Southampton**  
[www.southampton.ac.uk](http://www.southampton.ac.uk)

**University of Winchester**  
[www.winchester.ac.uk](http://www.winchester.ac.uk)



**GOING BACK TO STUDY**  
**COULD HIGHER EDUCATION BE FOR YOU?**



## GOING BACK TO STUDY – COULD HIGHER EDUCATION BE FOR YOU?

Mature students are students who are aged 21 or over at the start of their studies. There are many reasons why people choose to enter higher education as a mature student. It could be to change career direction, enter a new profession, to achieve personal goals and ambitions having missed earlier opportunities, or to improve current employment prospects.

Whatever your reasons for wanting to study, university is for anyone who has the motivation and academic ability regardless of age. Universities welcome applications from mature students because they can bring a positive difference with their breadth of life and work experience, a strong commitment to study and a passion for learning.

## CHOOSING A COURSE AND WHERE TO STUDY

The key questions to ask yourself are:

- What is it you want to achieve?
- What do you find engaging and interesting?
- When you want to study and for how long?
- What type of qualification do you want?

There are many different types of qualifications, including:

- honours degrees: normally take three years of full time study to complete.
- foundation degree: a vocationally focussed degree combining work based and academic learning and usually take two years to complete.
- HNDs and HNCs: vocational courses covering a wide range of subjects. HNDs take two years and HNCs a year to complete.

Every institution will offer open days, which will give you the opportunity to visit the

When applying to study at university you will need to provide evidence of your ability and experience. Traditional qualifications are not always insisted upon and your employment history and any professional qualifications may be taken into account.

A common route into higher education for mature students is via an Access to HE course or through Open University credits. Universities will have different expectations and requirements, so make sure you do your research on the courses and institutions you are interested in.

university to find out more about the course you're interested in from academic staff and current students.

You might also want to look into the additional support services available to you, including:

- IT support
- academic study skills support
- financial advice
- nursery provision
- careers advice
- sports facilities

Many universities offer a tailored induction or introductory sessions for mature students. There are often dedicated mature student social or support groups. Many mature students will need to balance study with work and family life and there will a range of opportunities and activities to get involved in whilst you study.



### KELLY BURGESS

**BSc (HONS) OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

#### WHY DID YOU APPLY TO UNIVERSITY?

Prior to returning to education I was working in retail full time, which I did not find very rewarding. I enjoyed talking with people and always wanted to work in healthcare. This was a hard decision and due to being a 'mature student', I had to give up a full time job and move to a different city to start university.

#### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS COURSE?

I researched several universities when I was deciding where to apply and chose Southampton due to its academic standing. I wanted to have good job prospects upon finishing the degree. Also, when I visited on an open day I found the lecturers to be knowledgeable and friendly.

#### ARE THERE ANY OTHER MATURE STUDENTS ON YOUR COURSE? HOW DO YOU GET ON WITH YOUNGER STUDENTS?

At least 30% of our cohort are over 25 years old. The cohort is diverse but everyone gets on really well and is supportive of each other regardless of age. I think Occupational Therapy particularly attracts mature students because of the life experience students bring but also we learn a lot from the younger students. Personally I love the mix of ages as it creates a good atmosphere and different opinions in class discussions.

#### WHICH ASPECTS OF YOUR COURSE DO YOU ENJOY THE MOST AND WHY?

I have enjoyed the practical aspects the most. I have enjoyed clinical placement, although it has its own challenges, it is the best way to find your own style and see what is happening in practice rather than via a text book.

#### HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP YOUR EXPERIENCE OF STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY SO FAR?

In some ways it's the hardest thing I have done in my life, but also the most rewarding. There have been times I have doubted myself but taking it one step at a time has been my attitude. The University has a good support network for students and in my experience the lecturers have been available when I needed assistance.

#### WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WAS AVAILABLE?

The student support has been excellent at the University. I was diagnosed with dyslexia whilst at university, since the diagnosis, Enabling Services have been amazing at assisting me with my studies. Once the support was in place I began to enjoy my course and did well in essays.

#### WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?

I have been offered employment in my chosen career, Mental Health OT, which I am looking forward to starting. In the future, I am considering continuing education into Postgraduate study, possibly in Art Therapy/OT to widen my skills in mental health.



### STEVEN McCARROLL

**QUANTITY SURVEYING**  
UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

#### WHY DID YOU APPLY TO UNIVERSITY?

After extensive research, I found that the course at the University of Portsmouth carries an accreditation from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, which for me, was the key selling point.

I left school at the age of 15 and went straight to work as a carpenter's apprentice. I still to this day have a passion for woodworking, I had however reached the limitations of maritime cabinet making. The next logical step was higher education. It was a hard choice as I had to give up something I loved, however, I know it will be best for the future of my family.

#### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS COURSE?

In my career as a joiner I had the pleasure of encountering many different professionals, including multiple quantity surveyors. One in particular truly inspired me; he had achieved a lot in his lifetime and worked in his chosen field for over 45 years and still had a smile on this face at the start of every working day.

#### DO YOU BELONG TO ANY CLUBS OR SOCIETIES?

I belong to a few societies and clubs such as the Civil Engineering and Surveying Society. This is a society specifically for people studying construction and provides a great source of

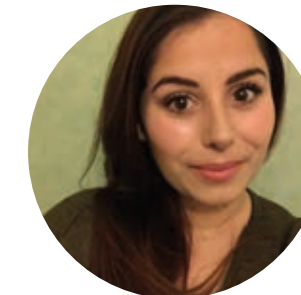
information and the ability to meet like-minded students. I am also part of RAG; which stands for 'Raising and Giving'. It is a volunteering society where you can give back to the community and raise money for charities. To raise money for the Meningitis Research Foundation, I am climbing Mount Kilimanjaro with other RAG members – a once in a lifetime opportunity, made possible through the University.

#### IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD WANT TO TELL A PROSPECTIVE MATURE STUDENT?

Don't feel like higher education is beyond you, or that you've missed your opportunity. That you're 'too old'. I felt all of this at the beginning, but I couldn't have been more wrong. Being a student is the most amazing experience.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

I aspire to one day own my own business as a quantity surveyor, specialising in joinery and timber construction.



### RIA BILLINGS

**BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**  
UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

#### WHY DID YOU APPLY TO UNIVERSITY?

After sixth form I took three years before I decided to go to university. I had originally applied for deferred entry to another university as taking one gap year was always my plan in order to travel and work. However, after a year I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do as a career and didn't want to waste time or money studying a subject that I wasn't interested in or wouldn't aid me in the future.

I worked as an assistant manager at a school uniform shop during my time between education. I also worked abroad for a few months and volunteered abroad for a non-governmental organisation, which helped me to identify what I wanted to do as a career in the future.

After extensive research I found that I needed a degree and also a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in order to fulfil my career aspirations to become a business teacher.

#### HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP YOUR EXPERIENCE OF STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY SO FAR?

As I am living in university-managed housing I have had different experiences to those living in halls. Where you live definitely influences your experience. Being in a house I think made it easier to settle in and, luckily I had friendly housemates and other first year students in the house opposite.

I didn't know what to expect from higher education as it seemed like a big risk to come here, however my experience has surpassed my expectations in terms of the Business Management course. My time spent on main campus has been great, and the library has been so useful. The events I have attended run by the Student Union have been a lot of fun.

#### IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD WANT TO TELL A PROSPECTIVE MATURE STUDENT?

My suggestion would be to embrace the experience by being as open-minded as you can. If you are concerned about the social aspect of university, don't worry! I personally don't enjoy going to clubs very much and I was worried that I would feel left out if I didn't want to go on a night out but it hasn't really been an issue.

#### WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?

I want to complete my PGCE and then go into teaching business in secondary school or college, although I haven't decided where I want to complete my PGCE yet.

