

St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London



Guide for Mature Students

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With special thanks to Lesley Talbot (BA Hons Technical Theatre) for her contributions, and to Joanne Matthews for her hard work and expertise in compiling this guide.

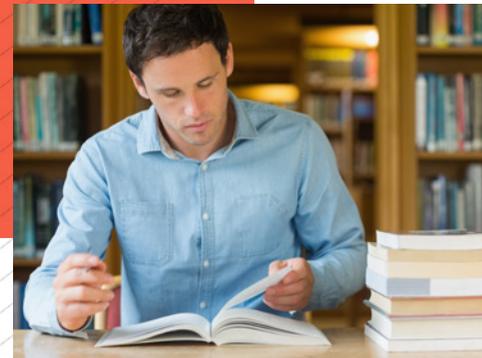
“Coming back into education is definitely the best decision I made... when you are studying something you are really passionate about, the time flies by”

Lesley, BA Technical Theatre

Welcome

A mature student is defined as any student who is over the age of 21 when they start their degree course.

It may have been several years since you were last in a formal education setting, and we understand that you may not have the standard required qualifications for your chosen course. This does not mean you cannot apply: if you are self-motivated and committed to studying then any university, including St. Mary's, would be happy to hear from you. You are sure to have gained life skills that will benefit you in your studies.



Whether you intend to develop your career prospects, or to follow your passion for a subject area, it is important that you choose a course that will deliver the syllabus you want. Check university websites or speak to the Admissions teams if you have a question about what a particular course covers.

As a mature student, you will have full and equal access to all the courses, facilities and support networks that are available to other students.

Choosing your course

- The UCAS website is a good place to start to find the right course for you, and then check your chosen university's prospectus.
- Check the content to ensure you are happy with what you will be studying.
- Visit any Campus you are considering applying to - can you see yourself studying there? Universities hold Open Days in autumn and summer. If you're balancing work commitments, universities may host Open Evenings, and most deliver regular Campus Tours.
- A Full-time, 3-year degree course should be thought of as a full-time job. St Mary's recommends that around 30 hours per week should be dedicated to your studies, which will be a mix of timetabled lectures on campus and self-directed time at home or in the library.
- When choosing your course and its location, consider how it can work well alongside your other commitments, such as employment, childcare, and your commute to university. How would your lifestyle adapt, and how would your university support a positive balance?



Find out more

www.ucas.com

Search – Mature student

Entry requirements

- Universities recognise a wide range of qualifications, and also the overall experience of Mature applicants.
- If you have been out of education for some time, or do not have at least one Level 3 qualification, Universities may suggest you complete an Access course with a F.E. college, or complete a Foundation year, before you begin an undergraduate degree.
- The Admissions team at your chosen university will be happy to talk to you before you submit your application.
- Once your application is submitted, they will look at your personal statement, your existing qualifications and your previous experience, and you may be invited to attend an interview. An offer will be made to you based on all this information.



Applying for your course

Applications are made online via the UCAS website, and you can apply for a place at up to 5 universities. You will need to supply:

- Your Secondary and Post- Secondary Education & Employment History.
- You will need the certificates for any qualifications you have gained.
- **A Personal Statement**
Let your personality shine as you write a short piece about yourself and what has brought you back to education.
- **A Personal Reference**
Ask your employer, teacher or supervisor to act as a referee. They will be contacted directly by UCAS after you submit their details on your application.



Your personal statement

“I found the UCAS application quite straightforward, and received email notifications updating me of my application progress”

Student, BA Technical Theatre

Find out more

www.ucas.com

Search – Personal statement

Your Personal Statement is an important part of your university application, and there is plenty of advice available to help you.

- You will write ONE statement to support your UCAS application, and it will be seen by all the Universities that you apply to. It should outline your reasons for wanting to study, why you have chosen your preferred course, and what skills and experience you have that make you a good candidate.
- If you're applying with 'non-standard' qualifications, explain how your experiences in life and work have helped you develop your skills. Problem solving, communication and balancing your time could be examples - how could these help you at university?
- Allow yourself plenty of time to redraft and edit your statement until you are happy with it, and ask friends and family to read it and offer feedback.
- There is a limit to how much you can write, (4,000 characters) so you will need to be concise.
- UCAS have a Personal Statement Tool on their website, and there are examples to get you started.





Find out more

www.gov.uk/student-finance

www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas

www.ucas.com

Search – additional funding

Funding

There are two types of Student Finance loans available.

Loans to pay for Tuition Fees are available to all students, regardless of age, provided it is for your first Higher Education qualification.

Maintenance Loans, based on household income, are also available to students under the age of 60 to help with living costs.

Repayments on both Tuition and Maintenance loans do not begin until after Graduation.

Once repayments start, they are based on what you earn, not on what you owe.

Applications are made online and you do not need a confirmed offer from a university before you apply for Student Finance loans.

Grants are also available for those with dependant family members or disabilities. Search online for DSA - Disabled Student Allowance.

Council Tax discounts may be available if you meet requirements. Contact your local Borough Council.

And don't forget that your chosen university may offer scholarships or bursaries that can help you to support yourself. Mature students are often a target demographic for universities so it is worth applying for any bursaries that are offered. Search your chosen university's website.

“ As a single person, I get the highest rate of Maintenance Grant and I also have a part-time job, working about 25 hrs a week. Money was a big concern as I pay rent and was worried about meeting my bills, but I am actually living quite comfortably. I socialise at home more now, and I buy less clothes and takeaways, but I am certainly not as broke as I feared. My current income is not very much lower compared to when I worked full-time, it just comes from different sources.”

**Joanne Matthews, BA (Hons)
Theology, Religion & Ethics**



Opportunities & support

Did you know...?

Most universities have a social Society run by Mature Students for Mature Students, to ensure you can have fun and feel supported.

Useful Links:

Your main source of information about applying to university should be the UCAS website:

<https://www.ucas.com>

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/student-life/mature-undergraduate-students>

Another good source of information is:

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/mature-students'-university-guide/>

For information about Student Finance and loans:

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/funding-uni>



Please visit our website to find out more about studying at St. Mary's:

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk>

Search online for 'St Mary's University Mature Students' to find more tips and advice.