STUDYING AS A MATURE STUDENT

If you're returning to study as a mature student, you may be concerned that you'll be a bit isolated among all the younger students. Actually mature students make up about a third of the total undergraduate population in the UK, so you're in good company. Students returning to study are usually highly motivated, well-organised and used to the kind of independent thinking that's crucial for success at university in the UK. However, they may also lack confidence in their academic skills and abilities, and have commitments and situations outside of university that can impact on their studies.

The Study Advice team are always happy to work with mature students at the University of Reading to develop their practices and negotiate the new (and often baffling) world of university study. Come for an individual advice to chat about your experiences and concerns, or attend our Wednesday afternoon seminars. You will also find our guides and video tutorials helpful.

We also work with the RUSU Mature Students' Officer and the Mature Students' Society on events throughout the year for new and current mature students. Building friendship networks with other students is one of the most effective things you can do to improve your experience at university, so it's worth getting involved.

In this guide, you will find some study tips for students who are returning to study. You can also find out more about what it's like to study as a mature student at Reading and see the answers to some frequently asked questions.

Returning to study

Starting a university course can be daunting, whatever your previous experience or age. As a mature student, you have advantages: you are probably well-motivated; have many experiences and skills; are used to being organised and independent. You may also have questions, for instance:

"Will I be able to fit studying around my other commitments?"

"How can I get the confidence to speak up in seminars?"

"Are academic reports different from the ones I write at work?"

"Can I criticise what I've read, or what my lecturer says?"

These and other questions are shared by students of all ages in their first few terms. It is natural to think that everyone else is confident and knows what they are doing. In fact almost everyone, whatever their background, finds the transition to university challenging. Developing effective study practices early will make university life more enjoyable and help you succeed in your chosen discipline. Here are our top tips for anyone returning to study.

Get organised

As a mature student, you are probably used to acting independently, at work or in your home life. However, you may have to work around other commitments, or someone else's timetable. Getting organised and developing a workable routine can make the difference between enjoying your degree and having a stressful time.

Get informed

In your first weeks you will be given a mountain of information and you'll probably forget most of it, so know where you can find it again when you actually need it. For instance, your course handbook is usually on Blackboard and includes contact details, procedures, marking criteria, referencing practices and lots more. Find out how your dept will contact you - usually your university
email or via 'pigeonholes' in your dept. Know who to talk to when you have a problem: Support Centre staff for administrative queries; your academic tutor for general academic or personal issues; your course tutor for more specific course-related questions; the Study Advice team for any issues with study practices.

*Make space for study*

It will help to decide on places and times for study. Defining study times and spaces also means defining times not to study and spaces where you do not work. That way it doesn't feel like your whole life's been taken over by studying. Find a place to work (it helps to have a door you can close if necessary), make space for everything you need and plan a weekly timetable. Book in study times as you would book in commitments like lectures, paid work and your child's swimming lessons.

*Don't make it complicated*

Have a simple filing system - if it's complicated, you won't use it. One way is to use a box file for each module to keep lecture notes, handouts, notes from reading, photocopies, even small books. Stick lecture/seminar times, rooms, and deadlines inside the lid. A noticeboard in your study area will keep your assignment schedule and timetables immediately visible. Add short term reminders ("Take library books back" "Room change next week" etc) on post-its. Other mature students have recommended Evernote and Remember the Milk as good tools for keeping on top of your workload.

*Plan your workload*

Plan ahead by making a term plan with deadlines and other significant events (family occasions or key meetings at work) so you can see when your busy times are. When you have to work around commitments to other people, it's as well to be prepared for the unexpected! So learn to lie to yourself about deadlines - set them a few days early for a bit of flexibility. Develop your study practices so you use your time as efficiently as possible. The tips in this booklet are a start, but for individual advice, come and have a chat with a Study Adviser - 30 minutes with us might save you hours.

*Stay motivated*

The first flush of enthusiasm can vanish when you have so much to do, and you don't know where to start. If it's hard to keep going, step back and make a list of jobs. Break big tasks down into bite-size chunks that you can tick off as they're achieved. Remember why you chose to do this, and how hard you worked to get here. Think of studying as a treat that you deserve, not a chore.

*Don't be a superhero!*

If you're doing all this already and you still don't have enough time, you may be doing too much. Studying at university is a significant commitment of time and mental effort. You may have to temporarily cut down or give up something that you are used to having time for - lower your housework standards, replace a 1 hour gym session with a half hour brisk walk to campus, resign from the PTA committee. Remember, you only have a short period to make the most of this opportunity. So you deserve the time and the space to enjoy your studies and achieve the best possible results.

*Make the most of lectures and seminars*

University teaching mostly takes place in lectures and seminars. You may be surprised at how few contact hours you have with teaching staff. So it's worth considering how to make the most of that time.

*Before your lecture*

Think about what you know about the topic, and anything you're hoping to learn. This will form a framework which will make the lecture easier to understand and remember. If your lecture is on a particular text, it will help if you have read that text first. However, if it's on a subject area that's new to you, reading to prepare might not be the best use of your time, as you may struggle on your own to understand ideas that the lecturer is going to explain anyway. It may be more helpful to read after the lecture to fill in gaps, and you probably only need to look at a couple of texts - more later if you write on the topic, or for revision.

*During your lecture*
There's an understandable tendency to treat lectures like dictation and try to write down everything the lecturer says. However, while you're writing you won't be listening properly. A lot of information may also be on a handout or on Blackboard. Leave the pen on the desk and pick it up when you hear something interesting, or when you have a question or comment of your own. Mark out your own ideas: for instance, circle or underline them.

After your lecture

Soon after the lecture, take time to think about what you've just learnt while it's fresh. Write a paragraph (without referring to your notes) of the main points, things you thought especially interesting and anything you want to follow up. This process of ‘digesting’ helps to embed the ideas in your mind - good for understanding and for remembering later when you're revising. If there's something you really don't understand, be pro-active. Get a basic understanding from (for instance) an encyclopaedia, and build on that with further reading. If you're still stuck, it's fine to ask your subject tutor to explain. Some of the concepts you'll learn will be difficult - that's why university is 'higher' education!

Prepare for seminars

Unlike lectures, it's always worth doing some reading before a seminar. Seminars enable you to share your understanding and queries with others in a semi-structured session, guided by a seminar leader. So you need to develop an understanding and think about the queries you have before the seminar. You are likely to be asked to do specific reading for a seminar. Ideally you would read this thoughtfully, making notes as you read to produce your own commentary. If you don't have time, it's better to have skim read the recommended text than not to have read it at all.

Speak up

Almost everyone is anxious about speaking up in seminars and when giving presentations. It helps if you feel properly prepared - another reason to do the reading! You will also find it easier if you have a strategy that puts it under your control. Rather than waiting to be put on the spot to answer questions you may not have thought

about, have some open-ended questions ready to ask the rest of the group - “what did you think about X?” "I wondered if… what did other people think?". Try to relax and make eye contact with other people to make them feel involved. If you can get them talking too, you will feel less 'visible'.

Presentations and group work

You may be asked to take turns to make a brief presentation on the current topic. You're not expected to come up with a brilliant argument here - just present the main points, how the topic fits into your course (how it connects with other topics), list any major debates or theories and end with some questions for discussion. If you're asked to work in a group, you may be surprised to find that younger students often expect mature students to lead! If this is the case, try to adopt a facilitating role - ask them what tasks they think are needed, and what they think they'd be good at doing. Agree from the start on dates for meetings and deadlines for completion of tasks. Remember that, even if you are leading the group, it's not your job to be responsible for other people completing their work - don't be tempted to take a parental role! Instead, pair up members of the group to support each other.

Learn how to research an assignment

Often the most difficult thing about researching a written assignment (essay, report, or dissertation) is knowing where to start. Here are some suggestions.

Be clear about your task

The most frequent complaint of markers is that the student didn't answer the question, so make sure you identify what you're being asked to do. For instance, most essay titles will include an overarching topic, which is the context for your discussion, and an aspect of that topic, which is the vehicle for your discussion. Reports are usually aimed at providing particular information to a specific audience. Start from what you already know about the topic. If you're not clear about the main themes and debates, do some general reading first to get an overview.
Develop your hypothesis

Before you do more detailed research, consider your own personal response to the brief - do you agree or disagree? Do you think your research is likely to show x or not-x? Now add some critical thinking - what is it that makes you think that? This kind of pre-research thinking will give you clear directions and ideas of your own to test when you start your research.

Use active research strategies

With the ideas you’ve already had in mind, make a list of what you need to know to write your assignment. Consider what you already know - what’s missing? What do you not yet know? Where do you need to know more? When you start your research, whether it’s reading or practical work, these are the answers you need to actively look for. Use index and contents pages when reading - you don’t usually have to read the whole book. Don’t get distracted by interesting side-lines - stay focused on what you need for this assignment. Note anything interesting (but not directly relevant) to follow up at a later date.

Be critical when you read

Just because it’s in print, doesn’t mean it must be right! While you’re reading, keep asking yourself, “Do I agree with this? What makes me agree or disagree with this?” Consider what the author is trying to persuade you to think, and why. Websites provide easily accessible information - but not all of it is reliable. If possible, use websites of academic or respected institutions. Think critically about online texts. Does the author have a particular agenda or bias? Is the information up-to-date? Is it the right level to be used in an academic assignment?

Make useful notes

When you’re reading, if you’ve thought about your research questions you won’t need to have a pen in your hand all the time. Pick it up and write a note only when you read something that answers one of your questions, is relevant, or inspiring. Include anything interesting that you think while reading. When making notes, use a code, so when you read back later, you can distinguish paraphrases from direct quotes (“ “), your own ideas and thoughts (* *), and things to investigate further (???).

Keep on top of references

Always write the details of the text you’re reading on your notes - at least the author’s surname and year of publication. Add the page number when you make a note. Keep a bibliography file on your computer and record full details of all the resources you use while preparing your assignment (could include books, journals, websites, lecture notes and handouts, TV and radio programmes, podcasts…..).

"There are no books in the Library!"

Of course there *are* books in the Library - they’re just not the ones on your reading list! It’s very likely though that there is something else useful available. Try encyclopaedias to give you an overview and some ideas to start you off with searching (but note that these aren’t usually suitable as academic supporting evidence in your actual writing). Try finding out the shelf mark for the book you want on the Library catalogue (Enterprise), then go and look on the shelves to find other books shelved in the same place which will be on a similar subject. Journal articles are mostly available in electronic versions - you can find and access these using the Summon search engine (on the front page of the Library website). Popular texts are often placed in the Short Loan Collection. If you’re really stuck, try contacting your subject liaison librarian.

Find out about academic writing

You may be used to writing at work, but will find writing at university quite different. You need to learn this new genre - just as you would need to learn how to write thrillers if you usually wrote romances.

Answer the question

To answer the question, you must be sure that you know what the question means! So spend time thinking carefully about this before you start writing. What is the big overarching topic? What smaller sub-topic/s are you being asked to look at more closely? What methods are you being asked to use? While you’re writing, stay focused.
Keep asking - does this answer the question? Show your reader how it answers the question.

**Plan your work**

If your work doesn't have a structure, it will be hard work to read and difficult to understand. You know what happens if you go shopping without a list - you wander round desperately trying to remember what you came in for, it takes twice as long to do, then you get home with ten things you didn't need and no loo roll. Make a plan and stick to it - it can be as detailed or as brief as you like. Using a spidergram or mindmap can help to get your ideas organised at this point. If you're writing a report, think carefully about the function of each section you have to include - organise your information according to the job it has to do. If you're writing an essay, you need to select - and be ruthless. Choose only three or four points, themes, or arguments to discuss in detail - any more will be confusing. Put them in order and frame with an introduction and conclusion.

**Develop your argument**

Don't worry about searching for an 'original' idea - combining your research with your own thinking and interpretation will naturally produce an original synthesis. Start from your own ideas about the question. What do you want to say about it? (This will give you a thread that links all the parts of your work.) Then consider what it is that makes you think that. What other views might there be? Why do you think differently? Now use your research as evidence to prove your arguments.

**Beginnings and endings**

Introductions make a focused start from which to expand your ideas. Conclusions draw things back together. A good introduction gives your reader clear directions and contexts in which to read your arguments. It should explain three things - what the work is about, why it's interesting to discuss, and how you're going to discuss it. (In reports, the 'how' may be partly explained in your Methodology section.) A good conclusion summarises the arguments and evidence presented, shows how it answers the question, and makes the final answer explicit.

**Write in paragraphs**

Thinking of your work as a series of paragraphs helps to keep it focused and under control. Each paragraph should concentrate on one idea or argument. Treat them as mini-essays with a sentence introducing the idea, and one showing how it answers the question at the end. Inside this frame, place arguments or statements; for each, include some evidence (what makes me say this? Reading? Personal experience? Results?), and some critical thinking (do I agree or disagree? Why?).

**Find your voice**

You may worry that you will be expected to write in the same dense and difficult style as some of the academic texts you are reading. However, the best academic writing is that which clearly and persuasively communicates an idea to the reader. Keep your expression simple. Don't cut and paste from notes - write it out again in your own words. Avoid colloquialisms and contractions (like 'don't' and 'isn't'). You may not always need to write in the third person (check your dept's guidelines), but never say "I think", "I believe" or "in my opinion". Speculation may be good, but belief without evidence doesn't belong in academic work.

**Integrate evidence and personal experience**

You may have practical experience in your subject before you start to study. You can integrate this into your writing by treating it as another kind of evidence. Consider it critically. Are there reasons for believing it is the same or different to other people's experiences? What were the circumstances and how did they affect the outcome? You may also be asked to relate your experience to relevant academic theories. Theories are a structure or outline of a concept, and they provide a framework for understanding your experience from a wider perspective. Consider both the theory and your experience in a critical manner. How does your experience map onto a relevant theory? Is the theory a "good fit" or is it limited in some way? Why might your experience be different to the theory?
Why reference?

As a student you are part of an academic community. Good referencing shows how your work links you into that community. You should give a reference for everything in your work that arises from someone else - direct quotes, paraphrases, and ideas. Many students worry about how to balance their reading with their own ideas. The key is to use references as a tool to support your own arguments - not a replacement for them. So if you use quotations explain in your own words how they relate to your arguments.

Avoid accidental plagiarism

Plagiarism is the deliberate misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own. You can avoid accidental plagiarism by following a few simple principles. Avoid long quotes (i.e. whole paragraphs) unless really necessary. Your work must be your work, and not just a patchwork of other people's. Always start from what you think about the question and why - it doesn't matter if it turns out to be the same as someone else if you can show how you came to think it. Be scrupulous in your notes - make it clear which are your ideas and which are from your reading, and always include details of author, year and page number while you're writing - don't wait to add them later.

Effective proof reading

Proof reading can be the difference between an okay mark and a good mark. Use your computer's spell and grammar checks, but don't just accept the suggestions - check they don't change your meaning. Look out for mistakes you frequently make. Try reading your work aloud - see if it's fluent, or if the expression's too complicated. Offer to check a friend's work in exchange for them checking yours - it's easier to spot mistakes in work you've haven't already read five times!

Prepare for exams

If you have not taken an exam since you were at school (or even if you have) the prospect may fill you with dread. The key to avoiding exam anxiety is to feel prepared - the sooner you get your preparation under control, the less likely it is that anxiety will get a hold. You may find it useful to come to a Study Advice workshop nearer the time. Meanwhile, here are some suggestions to start your preparation.

Start planning early

Find out what kind of assessment your modules use - exam and coursework? Only coursework? If exam, what kind of exam? Essay? Multiple choice tests? Download past papers from the online archive on the Exams Office Home page and look at the kind of questions that are asked. As you work through your course they will become easier to answer - a good way to build your confidence. Try to keep your notes and resources up to date, and if you do not understand something, be proactive about finding the answer. If you do this all the way through your course, revision time will be about consolidating your learning rather than catching up.

Practice makes perfect

Don't wait till you're in the exam room to find out what you needed to work on beforehand. Practise writing timed answers as a regular part of your revision so you know what needs attention: Writing by hand? Making quick plans? Better understanding of a particular topic? See a member of the Study Advice team for individual advice on any exam queries you may have.

Deal with anxiety

Some people suffer from severe exam anxiety that even the most thorough preparation cannot completely allay. It's not a bad thing to feel a bit nervous about exams, but if you are very anxious it may impair your academic performance.

There are various workshops and sessions to help students deal with exam anxiety: look out for notices in the Spring term. Don't suffer in silence. Talking to a member of Student Wellbeing can help you to understand what is causing your anxieties and work out effective strategies to deal with it. If this is a serious concern for you, start dealing with it early - see a counsellor in the Autumn term.
Studying as a mature student

Introduction

Mature students at the University of Reading could be any age from 22-80. They all have different life experiences, educational backgrounds and previous employments. So everyone will have their own experience of studying here. These are a few examples of stories from mature students who have returned to study at the University of Reading.

Julia (Law student)

"Coming to university as a Mature Student has been both challenging and rewarding, I have met some interesting and pleasant people, which I did not have the opportunity to encounter when in full-time employment.

For a Mature Student, university life can be isolating, this could be because of the lack of other Mature Students, so it is important to be flexible and accessible, otherwise, as I found, university life can be a very lonely one. It is also important to work with others, regardless of the age gap, as this can be beneficial to the learning experience.

Each Mature Student has different needs and my situation was certainly different to the next mature student, this was something I was not aware of when I started at Reading University.

Looking back on my first year I believe that part of the success as a Mature Student is to be flexible and try to make the most of what could be an experience which will change your life. Students are all similar when it comes to studying regardless of their age and gender; we all want the success because failure is not an option".

Richard (Agriculture student)

"To give up a stable, secure job, home and family to undertake a degree requires a certain amount of dedication and a great deal of hard work, acceptance of financial hardship and a temporarily lower standard of living.

Having started my degree at the age of 34, I wasn't sure quite what to expect, especially as I had never considered myself to be anything other than average academically. I thought, somewhat naively, that 18 years working in agriculture was enough grounding for a BSc degree course in the subject. I now liken it to the equivalent of a bricklayer trying to become an architect in the space of three short years. The course was mainly biology, mathematically and computer orientated - rather daunting for an ex-cowman!

However, the help and tuition that I received in all academic and other areas have been exceptional. The staff were always prepared to help and encourage me and my fellow students were invaluable when it came to such areas as computers, email and the Internet. As a result, the use of computer software - standard and specialist - is now second nature to me, and I can even get by with biochemistry and statistics.

The all-night sessions in front of the computer, the nerves before my first presentation, and the sheer horror of biochemistry are all obstacles which, at the time, seemed insurmountable. You need to be absolutely one hundred per cent sure that this is what you want out of life. To say it has been easy would be untrue; it is the hardest thing I have ever done in my life, but definitely the most rewarding.

My only regret is that I didn't do it much earlier".

Diane (Modern Languages student, part-time)

"Even though you will not have taken the decision lightly to embark on a programme of study, whether for a one-term course or a degree, the amount of time and work needed to satisfactorily complete it can seem overwhelming. However much you wish it were possible, there can be no more than 24 hours in a day, and every minute becomes 'quality time'. But never lose touch with the fact that you have chosen your particular course because you have an interest in the subject and so it should also be an enjoyable experience.

Sometimes, 'enjoyment' is not the appropriate word to use when your essay is due in on Monday and there is a busy family weekend beforehand, but it is surprising how much you can achieve undisturbed in a couple of hours on a
Sunday morning before the rest of the house is awake.

As a Mature Student, you have a lot of advantages on which to draw: several, possibly many, years of experience of the workplace and often more self-discipline and financial stability than those less mature. Of modern historical events you have vivid memories, whereas most students can only read about the impact they had on the world before they were born.

To cope with the demands of the day job, domesticity and family, it helps to develop a weekly plan to prioritise your tasks in the limited time available. Grasp opportunities for concurrent activity like listening to audiotapes whilst driving to work or having relevant reading material to hand whilst waiting for the children outside school or for the potatoes to boil. It is frustrating simply not to be able to dedicate enough time to essential reading, let alone background material.

But be assured that this is a problem encountered by all students, whatever their age.

Remember that the younger ones simply have different pressures!"

Frequently asked questions

Introduction

Mature students typically come to university with lots of questions - about study, about how they will manage their university commitments, and about the future. This page collates some of the most frequently asked questions. If you have a question which is not here, or the answer given does not cover your concerns, do feel free to ask someone: your personal tutor, course tutor, or a Study Adviser, for instance.

Academic concerns

How do I know if I am achieving the required academic standard?

The feedback you receive from your tutors, particularly on assessed work will give you a clear indication of the standard you are reaching, and of any areas you may need to work on. You will find an explanation of the University marking scheme in your programme handbook. Don't be surprised if your work falls in the 50-68 range, which may seem lower than you have been used to - this is the most common range of marks and means you are doing fine. If you’re unsure about what your feedback means, or how to respond to it, arrange to meet with your course tutor or personal tutor, or come and have a chat with a Study Adviser.

Where do I get help with referencing?

Your programme handbook should be the first place you look. This will contain information on how your department wants you to reference (including the particular referencing style that they want you to use) and how to avoid plagiarism - you can find it on Blackboard. You’ll also have an opportunity to submit your work to Turnitin before your final submission. Make sure you know how to get the most out of Turnitin: it is an originality checker and not a plagiarism detector. The Study Advisers and your subject Liaison Librarian can also provide advice and guides on referencing. Don't assume that referencing at university will be the same as anything you've done previously: for instance, most A-level and Access courses use a simplified version of Harvard referencing that may not be appropriate for your level of study or subject.

It worries me that I will not be as smart as the other people on my course or be able to complete it easily.

The University only accepts students that they believe will be able to complete their course successfully. It might not be an easy process but there are plenty of people and resources available to you (see above). Mature students make excellent students because they are generally focused and dedicated and bring with them a whole wealth of experience that tutors value. You may feel that you will take a long time to adjust to studying at a higher level but most mature students surprise themselves and adjust very quickly. Mature students often report how helpful it has been to talk to other students - both mature and younger - and find out that they are all having similar successes and difficulties!
What's the workload like?

Workload will depend on the course you are enrolled onto. Some courses require students to attend classes from 09:00 until 17:00 most days whereas some have relatively few contact hours of teaching per week, but expect to do a lot of independent study. In either case you will be required to study independently for some time each week. It will be up to you to manage your time and ensure that you get your work in on time even though you may have other commitments outside of university. For instance, it is common that you receive details of assignments at the start of term but they are not due until the end of term - and then you might find that they are all due for submission on the same date. If you foresee any problems talk to your tutor as soon as you can - it's really important to keep them updated.

Is there any help with IT training alongside our studies?

We have an IT Helpdesk based in the Library if you have queries about getting connected to wifi, printing etc. There are also training documents on various Microsoft Office programs which you can access online.

I get nervous around exams - what help is there for me?

You won't be the only nervous student on campus at exam time! Schools and Departments often offer revision classes and exam preparation sessions. The Study Advice team offer video tutorials, study guides, seminars and individual advice sessions at exam time. Various people including Counselling and Wellbeing, RUSU and the Chaplaincy offer sessions to help with overcoming anxiety and relaxation techniques. If you find that you experience serious anxiety around exam time you should consider making an appointment to see someone from Counselling and Wellbeing.

How flexible is my timetable in relation to childcare commitments?

Committing yourself to a course of study is like committing yourself to a full-time job. Inevitably there will be some times when other commitments clash with study times or when you really need to spend some extra time that you hadn't planned for on finishing your essays, or preparing for your seminars. It's a good idea to think ahead about the provisions you could make for these times. Once you have got to know some other mature students, you may be able to share half term childcare and school runs if necessary. If there is an unavoidable problem, you will need to speak to your Programme Director or Personal Tutor. However you may need to accept that teaching sessions at 9 in the morning or 5 in the afternoon are sometimes unavoidable.

I have studied previously: can I be accredited for this?

It may be possible to carry forward credits for prior learning and/or prior experiential learning (i.e. learning without a recognised educational qualification) into your studies at Reading. This will be at the discretion of your Department. If you wish to claim accreditation for prior learning (APL) or prior experiential learning (APEL), it is best to discuss this with the admissions tutor in your School or Department as soon as possible: either before starting your course or in the first few weeks.

Personal concerns

I am concerned about fitting in with other students as I don't find it easy making friends.

Give yourself time - there will be plenty of opportunities. There are various clubs, societies and events, some organised by your department and some by the Students' Union. The Mature Students' Society organise informal meet-ups and run an active Facebook Group where students can chat about their interests and concerns - contact them at maturestudents@rusu.co.uk. Most mature students also make friends with younger students on their course - they're much friendlier than they look!

Will I be the only older person on my course?

It's possible but more likely that there will be more than one mature student on any course. The proportion of mature students entering the University in past years has been 12% (1 in 8) so you will not be alone.

How do I keep going for three years?
You will need to employ a combination of hard work, careful time management and making use of the support and opportunities available to you here at Reading. Set yourself realistic and achievable targets, and enjoy the new experiences you will find. Remember how hard you have worked to get there, and give yourself the time and resources you deserve to do well.

Is there any advice available on finance?
You can get advice on financial support either from the Student Financial Support team, who are based in the Carrington Building or from the Student Union Advisors in the Hub at the Students' Union.

Employment
I will graduate aged 40+ - will I have any chances of finding a job?
New legislation came into force in 2006 that makes it illegal to discriminate against employees on the basis of age in most sectors. Employability skills will be embedded in your studying. As a student you will have access to the Careers, Placement and Experience Centre who will be able to give you information, advice and guidance regarding employment. All students benefit from activities that can add value to their CVs, so consider enrolling for the RED Award which rewards extra-curricular training and activities.

Are there any part-time jobs available during term-time?
Yes. the Careers Centre runs a Job Shop and this has details on various positions, including term-time work. You should also look at the local papers for vacancies. You are allowed to work for up to 20 hours a week if you are undertaking a full-time course, but do make sure you have enough time to achieve the results your deserve in your studies.

This guide reproduces the text of our LibGuide on Studying as a Mature Student. The online guide has links to additional information and can be found at:
https://libguides.reading.ac.uk/mature
For tips and guidance on other academic skills, see the Study Advice website at
www.reading.ac.uk/library/study-advice