

Mature students: your future after university

While the strict definition of a mature student is someone who begins their higher education aged 21 or over, mature students do not form a neat recognisable group in terms of age, gender, family circumstances / responsibilities, previous experiences and motivation. The approach of this information sheet is a general one, focusing on areas which might be of interest to some mature students.

Choosing a career

You might want to explore the possibilities for your future in the following ways:

- Complete self-assessment exercises which will help you identify your skills and abilities, understand your personality and help you to think through your values and priorities. Visit the [Explore ideas](#) page and use the [information sheets](#) on **Career planning**
- Trying things out through work experience or voluntary work may also help you in your decision making, as well as building your skills and experience for your CV and helping you to make contacts which might be useful to you in the future, www.york.ac.uk/careers/volunteering
- Look at what other graduates have done through the [profiles of York alumni](#)
- Attend Careers and Placements workshops – see what's on offer this term at www.york.ac.uk/careers/events

Getting a job – turning age to your advantage

The UK introduced age discrimination legislation covering employment and vocational training when the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations came into force in 2006; these regulations are included in the Equality Act which became law on 1 October 2010. Recruitment adverts which identify certain age parameters are illegal, as are age-related questions at interview. For more information see www.gov.uk/government/collections/age-positive.

While age discrimination is illegal, it is essential that you turn your age to your advantage in the recruitment process, in order to minimise possible hidden prejudices of a few employers. Employers look for people with experiences, skills and qualities relevant to the job. All applicants need to do is to demonstrate that they have these by giving evidence from:

- Previous employment
- Work experience
- Voluntary work
- Other activities, such as family responsibilities, hobbies etc.

As an older applicant, you may have a wealth of life experience which you can use as evidence. You may also possess greater maturity and confidence, which employers value. Do not undervalue your experiences, skills and qualities.

All applicants will also need to demonstrate their interest in and knowledge of the job for which they are applying, and their motivation. It may be as a mature student you have more focused career aims. The important thing is for you to be positive about what you have to offer and to make sure that the value of your skills and experience is recognised by employers. Do remember that if you are changing career direction you may need to get some work experience in your chosen career area. There may also be certain skills you feel you need to develop. You can do this through work experience, voluntary work or other activities.

If you have had little work experience in the past, then you may be able to use your time at university to work part time, do voluntary work, to get periods of work experience or work shadowing, to visit employers and attend employer presentations on campus or to get involved with student activities. All these will help you to explore career options and develop skills, as well as to demonstrate that you are familiar with the world of work in general.

Employers often recognise that older graduates may have positive characteristics such as:

- organisational skills, time management and the ability to prioritise
- experience of coping with pressure, and juggling many tasks
- the ability to cope with a heavy workload/commitments
- determination, commitment, tenacity, motivation
- experience of the working environment
- adaptability to change/flexibility
- self-discipline/self-reliance
- greater customer credibility
- experience of solving problems/using initiative
- people skills – interpersonal, communication

You need to give the evidence which demonstrates that you have some/all of these.

However, some employers have worries that older graduates may have:

- less flexibility in their approach to work
- less ability to fit into a young team and cope with younger managers
- a need to take longer to learn new things
- higher salary expectations
- lack of mobility

You will need to be prepared to give evidence which challenges these misconceptions on application forms, CVs and at interview. While direct questions which focus on age are not now allowed at interview,

the questions may still be in an employer's head! Make sure that you are well prepared with evidence which clearly demonstrates your relevant experiences and competencies.

Networking can be useful in the job search process – and you may already be in a position to have developed a network through earlier employment or family life. Use professional networking sites like [LinkedIn](#) to develop your network and attend the networking events we run each term to make new contacts in the career area you are interested in. See also our [Networking](#) page.

Useful general websites include:

- www.york.ac.uk/students/support/mature - click on the link to the mature student web page for more information
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/equality-and-diversity/> - information on equality and diversity www.enei.org.uk - Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion
- **For general vacancies:** Search [Handshake](#) and see further information at www.york.ac.uk/careers/work
- **For local vacancies:** www.graduatesyorkshire.co.uk and www.yorkpress.co.uk/jobs/

Please note: The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers and Placements cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.

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