Return to learning

A guide for undergraduate mature students
What is a mature student?

The University of York welcomes applications from mature candidates. A mature student is typically someone who is entering university for the first time following a break from education.

In recent years around 13 per cent of our new students at the University of York have been over the age of 21 and in some departments the proportion is much higher. Overall our student population ranges in age from 17 to 79.

Mature students come to us from a wide range of backgrounds with qualifications ranging from A levels and BTEC National Diplomas to Access and Foundation courses, Apprenticeships, or direct from work and voluntary activity.

Foundation years are also available in some subject areas at the University, as an alternative entry route. This initial year may be studied at York College and prepares you for entry to your chosen degree.

Choosing a course

There are numerous courses to choose from at the University of York. The University’s 30 departments and centres offer a range of subjects in the arts, social sciences and science and technology. York is highly regarded for the quality of its programmes and has an exceptional record in external assessments of teaching quality. The wide range of courses available give you the opportunity to study what is right for you and a subject that you enjoy.

The University of York’s Undergraduate Prospectus provides a full list of the courses available. It is available online at www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/prospectus.
How long will it take?
Most degree courses take a minimum of three years. However in some cases it may take longer. For example, you may decide to take a foundation year as part of an extended degree programme, a study year abroad or a sandwich course with a year in industry.

What if a degree is not for me yet?
You may not be at the stage where you are ready to start a degree programme but would like to study on a more flexible part-time basis. The Centre for Lifelong Learning runs a number of evening and day courses in various subjects. Short one-hour interest sessions may also be available.

You could also choose to work towards a Certificate in Lifelong Learning. Our accredited programmes are geared towards adult part-time learners who may not have studied for some time. You study at the same level as new undergraduate students in a supportive university environment and have access to a range of student services. Module subjects on offer include creative writing, humanities, local history, psychology, social sciences and urban horticulture. For further information visit www.york.ac.uk/lifelonglearning or telephone 01904 328473.

“Three years at York have flown by. I have been faced with many challenges - money, health and my own self-belief being the main ones. I have gone beyond the expectations I had when I started and have completed my degree with (hopefully) a good 2:1. My words to anyone starting out at university are to try something you wouldn’t get the chance to do anywhere else. I played polo and was President of the Mature Students’ Association. These opportunities widened my group of friends and I’ve had some great experiences. I never thought I would say this, but I’d love to do it all over again, even the essays!”

Vikki, Social Policy and Social Work
Financing your studies

When you become a student one of your biggest concerns may be how you will manage financially. Your lifestyle may change if adapting to a large cut in income from previous employment. For most students tuition fees are covered by tuition fee loans which are repayable once you have graduated and are earning above a certain level. Student loans and grants are also available for living costs. In addition you may qualify for:

- A Childcare Grant
- Parents’ Learning Allowance
- Adult Dependants’ Grant
- Disabled Students’ Allowance

Once you arrive at University you may be eligible for:

- A subject-specific grant and bursary
- The National Scholarship Programme at York, York Bursary or Foundation Year Bursary

The University also has hardship funds you can apply for at anytime during your studies if you encounter unexpected financial difficulty after you start your course. For further information visit www.gov.uk/studentfinance or telephone the Student Support Hub on 01904 324140.

It may be a relief to know that accommodation and transport costs are competitive at York, and most places, including the centre of York, are within walking or cycling distance. Students also benefit from second-hand bookshops and discounts in many restaurants, bars and shops across the city. The University Careers Service also provides help with looking for and finding part-time work.

Additional financial advice can be found in the Undergraduate Prospectus or at www.york.ac.uk/studentmoney.

Entry requirements

The specific entry requirements for each department or course are listed in the Undergraduate Prospectus. However, mature students are not required to have the same academic qualifications as school-leaving applicants.

Departments are looking for:

- enthusiasm and motivation
- evidence of your ability to study at the required level
- evidence of relevant experience or interest in relation to the subject.

Departments have a great deal of experience in advising mature students and you may find it helpful to contact the Admissions Tutor of the department you are interested in for advice before you apply. Contact details are provided in the Undergraduate Prospectus.

Application

Applications for all undergraduate programmes are made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) at www.ucas.com. You will also find specific information for mature students on this website.

Your application should provide evidence of the entry requirements criteria detailed above. You may show your ability to study at the required level through previously achieved qualifications or recent study as a mature student at a preparatory level suitable to higher education. Relevant training and work or voluntary experience may also be taken into consideration.

The Admissions Tutor will want to know as much as possible about you and your interest in the subject, including what relevant activities you have been involved with since leaving education. Help with your application including advice on writing a persuasive personal statement can be found on our website: www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/applying.

University accommodation

The University guarantees accommodation to new, single full-time first year undergraduates if they apply by the due date. The guarantee is reviewed annually, please check the Accommodation Services website.

The majority of undergraduate students living in University accommodation are 18-19 years old. If you prefer to share a flat with other mature students, you can request this in your application form but this cannot be guaranteed. There is a very limited University family accommodation. Priority is given to students arriving from outside the UK.

Some continuing students can be accommodated on campus. Most second and third year students rent shared houses in the private sector. There is plenty of rented accommodation available within walking distance of the campus. Accommodation Services advertise properties which comply with the Code of Best Practice management and safety standards.

For further information, please see the Accommodation Services website www.york.ac.uk/accommodation, email accommodation@york.ac.uk or telephone 01904 322165.
“Doing a degree was something I had thought was beyond reach in my 30s. As a lone parent of a two-year-old, relocating for Higher Education has had its challenges, but I can’t stress enough how much support the University makes available to you. The best thing I did was ask for help and this came in the form of support from my Department, supervisor and fellow students, and also, the Student Support team. Attending university in the current economic climate is not a step to take without careful consideration, but I’ve gained so much through my education. Not only have I gained knowledge and access to career prospects, but I have also benefited in terms of self esteem, pride and new friends. I feel I am part of something which gives me the skills to eventually contribute back to society.”

Claire, Politics

Student support

The University of York takes care to provide many strands of support to meet the needs of all students. Mature students may have additional concerns regarding finance, time management, integration and returning to academic learning, which is perfectly understandable, and there are many services and members of staff available to support you through your studies.

Student Support Hub

The Student Support Hub is the first point of contact for central student support enquiries and is located on the upper tier in Market Square.

At the Student Support Hub students can make enquiries and also make appointments to see a range of advisers and practitioners about:
- consumer rights
- disability support
- emotional or mental health concerns
- immigration and other international student support issues
- money matters including budgeting, bursaries and hardship funds
- private sector housing issues
- undergraduate student academic progress issues.

Collegiate support system

The University of York has a collegiate system, which means that each student is a member of one of our eight colleges. Each college provides accessible help and support to students through college tutors and welfare representatives.

Supervisors

At the University of York a member of your main teaching department acts as a supervisor throughout your course. They can advise on both academic and personal problems as they are usually involved in your course and therefore familiar with your academic work and your personal interests and progress.

Childcare facilities

The University and the Students’ Union jointly run York Campus Nursery which caters for children aged three months to five years. There is a reduced fee for student parents. The Nursery is situated in the grounds of the University and operates for 50 weeks of the year, between 8.30am and 6.00pm, five days a week.

The Nursery is fully registered with the Office for Standards of Education and complies with the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is run by professionally qualified staff and assisted by volunteers and trainees, all working to provide a safe and caring environment. For further details visit www.york.ac.uk/univ/nrsry or telephone 01904 323737.

Computing Service

The Computing Service promotes the use of computing campus wide. Each student at York is provided with an IT account which gives them free access to email and the internet. IT training is available through the University’s student IT Essentials programme.

Additional services and support

Students also have access to the Students’ Union, the National Union of Students, the University Library, study skills workshops, social activities, pastoral advice, out-of-class tutor support, Nightline, spiritual support and the campus health centre. For more information see www.york.ac.uk/students/support.

Careers support

The Careers Service is experienced in providing you with support throughout your time here and also after you leave. Information and guidance is available about jobs, employers, qualifications, postgraduate study and research, vocational courses and selection processes. The Careers Service hosts presentations by local employers, careers workshops and networking events.

The Careers Service can help mature students in specific areas of interest and provide personal advice and guidance tailored to your needs. For further details see www.york.ac.uk/services/careers.
Mature student life

Students at the University of York are of all ages and backgrounds so everyone should feel included. There are lots of activities for you to get involved with on campus, which cater for a wide range of tastes and interests, and there are plenty of people on hand to help you settle in.

Mature students are also invited to a tailored introduction and welcome to the University at the start of the first term. Here you can gain information to help you make the most of your time as a student including finding out more about the Mature Students’ Association.

For more information on student activities at York visit www.yusu.org.

Next step

Researching the courses and support systems extensively will ensure that you make the right choice for you and feel confident when taking the next step to apply.

To find out more about what the University of York has to offer, visit our website or order an Undergraduate Prospectus by telephone on 01904 324000 or online at www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/prospectus.

If you have any further queries, or wish for additional advice, please contact Student Recruitment and Admissions.

Visit us

You are welcome to visit the University’s campus at any time. Please contact Student Recruitment and Admissions, or go to www.york.ac.uk/study/visit for further details on making an independent visit and the University’s Open Days.

Contact us

Student Recruitment and Admissions

Telephone: +44 (0)1904 323196
Email: admissions-liaison@york.ac.uk
Website: www.york.ac.uk