

Welcome

The University of Bristol welcomes mature students, both full-time and part-time. We value the contribution mature learners make to the University and the important role they play in achieving a more diverse student community. You are considered a mature student if you are aged 21 or over on starting your programme. Age is no barrier to undertaking a degree and can be a distinct advantage in the skills, motivation and life experience you bring with you.

This leaflet is intended to provide you with some of the essential information that you need to consider when thinking about a return to studying. It contains guidance on applying and information on entry requirements, support services and life at university. We hope you find it useful and that it answers any questions you might have. If there is more you want to know, please ask us.

Contacts

Mature Students' Adviser

Tel: +44 (0)117 954 5937

Email: wpur-office@bristol.ac.uk

www.bristol.ac.uk/study/mature

Student Funding office

Tel: +44 (0)117 331 7972

Email: student-funding@bristol.ac.uk

www.bristol.ac.uk/studentfunding

Further information

Student Finance

www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

UCAS

www.ucas.com

Unistats – Subject comparison site

www.unistats.com

Access to Higher Education

www.accesstohe.ac.uk

Open College Network – South West Region

www.ocnsw.org.uk

Undergraduate prospectus

www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate

Accommodation

www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation

University nursery

www.bristol.ac.uk/nursery

Living in Bristol

www.bristol.ac.uk/citybristol

If you need all or part of this publication in accessible format (eg in Braille, in larger print or on CD), please contact Widening Participation and Undergraduate Recruitment tel: +44 (0)117 928 8623 email: ug-publications@bristol.ac.uk

The information contained in this leaflet is correct at the time of printing (August 2010). Programmes and facilities are liable to alter or be withdrawn at the University's discretion.

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Information for
mature applicants

Why choose Bristol?

- **Wide range of courses** – we have over 200 undergraduate degrees to choose from. In addition, the University has a portfolio of short courses at every level and postgraduate study opportunities in all faculties.
- **Reputation** – we have consistently ranked in the top tiers of universities in the UK. This rating is based not only on our teaching and research, but on the entire university experience we offer.
- **Great opportunities to pursue cultural and sporting interests** – the University has excellent sporting facilities including the Centre for Sport, Exercise and Health. We have sports facilities for all levels and there is also a wide range of clubs and societies to cater for your interests.
- **Targeted by employers** – the University's employment record for graduates is among the best in Britain. Many major organisations have built up strong links with the University.
- **Civic campus in the heart of the city** – if you want to live and study in a vibrant and diverse city, then Bristol is for you. We are right in the heart of the city.
- **Traditional meets modern** – Bristol is an exciting mix of the traditional and the modern. If you want a university that has both cutting edge technology and is steeped in tradition, then Bristol is an excellent choice.

What can I study?

Full-time undergraduate programmes

There is a wide range of degree programmes available at Bristol from Archaeology to Engineering Design to Childhood Studies. There are mature students in all faculty areas at the University – Arts, Engineering, Medical and Veterinary Sciences, Medicine and Dentistry, Science, Social Sciences and Law. You can get more detailed information from the prospectus which can be accessed at www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate. Alternatively you can order a print copy by completing an online form at www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectusrequest. You can also contact the Mature Students' Adviser who will be happy to discuss courses and entry requirements with you. Contact information can be found at the front of this leaflet.

Part-time undergraduate degrees

There are several undergraduate degrees that can be studied on a part-time basis during the daytime alongside full-time students. This normally means that the degree takes twice as many years as the full-time. There are also degrees that can be studied part-time in the evening or at weekends. These include Archaeological Studies and English Literature and Community Engagement. The undergraduate prospectus provides details of all part-time provision.

Part-time lifelong learning courses

These courses cover a range of subjects at undergraduate level, with a few at postgraduate level. They run at different times of the day but some operate in the evenings and at weekends to fit in with other commitments which mature students also have to manage. For more information, please visit www.bristol.ac.uk/lifelong.

Postgraduate taught programmes and research

These are a major part of the University's portfolio of work. Full details of the subjects offered can be found in the University's postgraduate prospectus. Many of these programmes can be followed by part-time study and are designed to build upon experience as well as previous formal study. For more information, please visit www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/postgraduate.

Student profile

At the age of 14 I moved to Portugal with my family and left school permanently at the same time. I spent the next seven years living and working in Europe – all the jobs I had were fairly menial and tended to be temporary as I moved around a lot. Although this suited me at the time, when I decided to return to England on a permanent basis I found that my lack of qualifications restricted me to factory work or entry level retail or waiting positions, none of which seemed appealing long-term! I decided to return to college, but without any clear idea of what I wanted to do next. The Access course looked most interesting and it was for this reason, rather than any real intention of going on to study at university, that I chose to enrol on it. It only took a couple of weeks on the course for me to realise how much I loved being back in education and that I was definitely going to go to university.

Due to family commitments in Bristol I only applied to local universities. I am just lucky that the University of Bristol happens to be a leader in the field of Social Policy.

Never think that a lack of formal education is a disadvantage or that younger students who have followed the traditional route into university will be better equipped to deal with higher education. Mature students bring a determination and focus to their studies that some (although not all!) younger students lack. Also, never underestimate the value of life experience, particularly in the social sciences.

Jocelyn Brown
BSc Social Policy



General Information



How do I apply?

You must first decide what you want to study. You may already have an idea about this, but if not, a browse through the prospectus or a visit on an open day or Information Session may help you to decide. You may also want to have a look at the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) website. UCAS is responsible for the processing of applications for full-time undergraduate study and list all available courses with more detailed information in the entry profiles for each course. The UCAS website is www.ucas.com and includes a useful section for mature students.

Look out for any special abilities a subject requires. Some programmes, mostly in the sciences, engineering and languages, require one or more specific A-levels or the equivalent because the curriculum assumes that all students have attained a particular level of subject-specific knowledge at the point of entry. You can get advice on the acceptable equivalents from the Mature Students' Adviser. You should also consider whether the programme would equip you for the career you intend. You can check this with your local Careers Guidance Service but please note that there may be a charge.

In preparing your application, it is important to demonstrate what you have learned in settings other than education. In both voluntary and paid work you will have had to acquire the organisational and time-management skills essential for successful study at university. It is most important to draw these and other skills to the attention of the Admissions Tutor as they will show that you have thought hard about what studying will involve.

Some of the key things admissions tutors are looking for in applications from mature students include:

- a clear interest in the subject you are applying to study;
- evidence of research into the subject
- explanation of your route into education and why you want to study for a degree now;
- how your life and/or work experiences relate to your chosen degree area;
- a good standard of written English.

Reference

You will need a reference for your application. An academic referee is best, but a work referee can also be acceptable. Your referee should be able to comment on your 'readiness' and potential for higher education.

After you apply

Many departments interview mature candidates. To find out whether or not an interview is part of the selection process for the subject you have chosen, take a look at the departmental admissions statements.

What qualifications do I need?

We welcome students with a broad range of experience and qualifications. Although some mature students applying for degrees do have A-levels, we welcome mature students with other qualifications such as Access. Mature applicants may be expected to show evidence of recent academic study. Whatever course you apply to you will need to demonstrate that you are motivated and committed to degree level study. There may be some flexibility in entry requirements for mature students, eg fewer A-levels may be accepted, but this flexibility is limited and it is important that you check the requirements for each course you are interested in. You can look at our undergraduate prospectus which is also available online or check departmental admissions statements which will also indicate how your application will be assessed.

Access programmes

Access to Higher Education courses are a popular route into university for many mature students. Many local further education colleges offer Access courses. Access courses have been designed with adults in mind. They provide preparation in specific subjects as well as giving you the opportunity to build your confidence and study skills. Details of Access to Higher Education courses provided by further education colleges in the Bristol area are available from Open College Network South West Region (OCNSWR). It is advisable to check the appropriateness of the Access subjects for your chosen degree area. You can check this with the Mature Students Adviser.

Support

What support is available?

We offer a wide range of services and facilities to support you during your time at Bristol. If you need advice or run into any problems you will have the support of the University. Your personal tutor can help and should be kept aware of any particular circumstances that might affect your work. Help can also be obtained from the Union Welfare Office, the Counselling Service and the Students' Health Service.

Study skills support

The Student Development Unit in the Students' Union runs free study skills workshops throughout the year to help students boost their academic proficiency. Topics include essay writing, presentations, critical thinking and exam techniques.

Disability including dyslexia

The Access Unit is the first point of contact for most prospective deaf and disabled students. This includes Deaf students, visually impaired students, dyslexic students, students who have used or do use mental health services, and students with unseen impairments such as epilepsy. The Access Unit works closely with academic departments and other support services to enable them to provide appropriate and accessible support for disabled students. For further information please contact **+44 (0)117 954 5727**; **+44 (0)117 923 8546** (fax) or email access-unit@bristol.ac.uk or visit www.bristol.ac.uk/accessunit.

Caring for others

The University Nursery provides full day-care for children from 18 months old and also has a baby unit. There is also a creche facility for children aged two and above. Details are available from the Nursery which is at 34 St Michael's Park, Bristol BS2 8BW, tel **+44 (0117) 927 6077** or email university-nursery@bristol.ac.uk. Student parents have to pay the full fees but assistance towards these and some other expenses may be possible from the University's share of Department for Education and Employment Access funds – enquiries should be made to the Student Funding Office.

Some local schools run after-school activities or holiday playschemes, and there are playschemes in school holidays run by the Sports Centre which are available to students. The Bristol Children and Young People's Services provide a range of information on childcare and schools at www.bristol-cyps.org.uk.

General Information

University accommodation

The University guarantees to provide accommodation for the first year of study to all new, full-time undergraduate students provided they have firmly accepted their offer of study, apply by the deadline in July and live outside the Bristol area (all BS postcodes excluding BS22-28 and BS39-40). This guarantee also applies to mature students.

Undergraduates looking to live with other mature students should consider applying to University Hall. The small blocks of mostly five-bed flats give an opportunity to group students requesting a quiet environment together.

Mature students often take up positions as Hall Tutors, Senior Residents or Student Wardens. Senior Residents look after the day-to-day running of the Student Houses and receive subsidised accommodation in return. For more information please visit the Accommodation Office website at www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation.

Private sector housing

Students wishing to live in the private sector can contact the Accommodation Office for information and advice on renting in Bristol. We can also issue passwords to access the Accommodation Office website to view the Property Search and Student Bulletin Board facilities. Staff at the Accommodation Office will also check contracts and give advice on tenant/landlord disputes.

For further details contact:
The Accommodation Office
Tel: +44 (0)117 954 5740
Fax: +44 (0)117 954 5767
Email: accom-office@bristol.ac.uk
www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation

Can I afford it?

Financing your studies may seem daunting but the University's Student Funding Office can provide you with information and advice on financial support for your studies. Although for funding purposes, you are classed as 'independent' at 25 and over, there are other factors that can qualify you as independent. To see whether you would be classified as 'independent', please visit www.bristol.ac.uk/studentfunding/home Ug/new_system/mature.html.

If you are eligible, financial support is available from the Student Loans Company and consists of loans, grants and bursaries depending upon your circumstances. For more information on financial support from the Government and the University, please visit www.bristol.ac.uk/moneymatters.

Financial support for students with dependants

If you are a student with children that are dependant on you, subject to your income and that of your dependants (including husband, wife or partner), you could be eligible to receive the **Parents Learning Allowance** of up to £1,508 per year.

If you require childcare whilst you are a student and your childcare is registered or accredited, depending on your family income, you may be eligible to receive a **Childcare Grant**. The amount of grant you will receive is dependent on household income and is based on 85% of your actual childcare costs.

If you are a full-time student with a husband, wife or partner, or other adult member of your family who depends on you financially, you may be eligible for an **Adult Dependants' Grant**.

You can apply for the above grants through Student Finance England each academic year. The quickest way to apply is online at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance. If eligible, you will receive

a grant payable in three-termly instalments which do not have to be repaid. If you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, your application for student finance will be processed by the organisation in your region.

Tax credits

Students with dependant children are eligible for **Child Tax Credit** from the Inland Revenue. If you receive the maximum amount of Child Tax Credit you are also entitled to free school meals for your children. If you have children and a partner who works at least 16 hours per week, you should also apply for **Working Tax Credit**. If you are a single student aged over 25 years you could be eligible for **Working Tax Credit** during the long Summer vacation if you work at least 30 hours a week for a minimum of four weeks. To find out more about Tax Credits telephone the Tax Credit Helpline on **0845 300 3900** or visit the website at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits.

Benefits

Single parent students are eligible to apply for either Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, depending upon your circumstances and Housing Benefit. More information on benefit entitlement for students is available at www.bristol.ac.uk/studentfunding/home Ug/new_system/dependants_2009.html.

If you are a new student in receipt of benefits before starting University, you should inform the Benefits Agency that you are going to become a student.

We believe that a degree from Bristol is a great investment in your future but it is worth taking the time to find out about the costs involved and the financial help you could receive.

