

THE MATURE STUDENTS' GUIDE

DAN MCDONALD-SMITH



University of
Nottingham
Students' Union

EDITION HISTORY

First Edition 2022

Second Edition 2023

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DISCLAIMER

The Mature Students' Guide (MSG) is intended as a resource for mature learners and potential students of the University of Nottingham as a one-stop guide through their higher education journey.

While I have made extensive effort to ensure the information is accurate and adheres to the highest standards, with time comes changes. If you feel something is amiss or a resource could be updated, please email the University of Nottingham's SU (su@nottingham.ac.uk).



**University of
Nottingham
Students' Union**



**Mature
Student's
Network**



THE **MATURE STUDENTS'** GUIDE

DAN MCDONALD-SMITH



Preface

As Pro Vice Chancellor for Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and People I want all our students to feel like they belong and are able to bring their authentic selves to study at the University. One of the big challenges to mature students feeling a strong sense of belonging in Higher Education is you are often at a different life stage to your contemporaries who have gone straight into education from school. Mature students join the university community later in their lives for reasons as diverse as the students themselves. For some it has been a deliberate choice to delay higher education whilst they work out what their academic passion is, for some it is because they have had or still have caring responsibilities, others wish to retrain to change career track and for some finances have dictated when they could enroll. The University offers a wide range of support to mature students to help you settle in, integrate into the student community and reach your potential. The University is aware that you may be juggling many aspects of your life along with your studies. Our support resources are all designed to facilitate sense of belonging at the University and I would strongly encourage you to engage with them, give us feedback and help us to codesign resources in the future so that they meet your needs.

Mature students often feel under confident about their own abilities, especially if they have been away from education for a while, and this can com-

pound a sense of estrangement from their peers. Always remember you are a critical part of the university community and indeed outperform younger learners in terms of degree outcomes. Students who come to university directly from school report valuing the skills that mature students bring to the learning community. They envy your ability to have a holistic perspective, to critically reflect and to be able to determine salient points and they really benefit from having support from you to develop these skills themselves.

Next time you are in a situation at the University where you question whether you belong here, please remember that we are a community where everyone can contribute and be appreciated for who they are. Our strong commitment to inclusion as a university and our desire to celebrate and benefit from difference is what makes Nottingham University a world beyond ordinary!

Professor Katherine Linehan

Pro Vice Chancellor for Equality, Diversity,
Inclusion and People



Introduction

Mature students provide an invaluable contribution to the University and bring years' worth of experience and knowledge to Higher Education.

It takes courage to start or continue education later in life, especially because we both know life has a tendency to become more complicated as time goes on. Some of you have significant others; some of you have children; some are commuting. Others are distance learners, self-funded or are from abroad. Regardless of your *why*, you have each chosen to fulfil your dreams at the University of Nottingham and as someone who entered university through unconventional means, I stand in solidarity with you and commend you.

The role of Mature Students' Officer (MSO) is centred in ensuring the needs of mature students are met and you are represented at the highest levels because your journey is equally as important as your peers. To this end, the University of Nottingham have support resources for mature students such as Accommodation Services, course/faculty representatives, personal tutors and Support and Wellbeing Services, and much more.

Additionally, the SU also provides vital services for mature students. Services such as SU Advice and the Mature Students' Network (MSN).

The MSN are a wonderful group of mature students and alumni who have bonded over experiencing higher education later in life. It's a safe space for us, and full of tips, advice and activities for every everyone because that is what we're about, community, and always will be.

I wish you the very best at the University of Nottingham and every success.

Dan McDonald-Smith

Final Year Medical Student

Mature Students' Officer 2022-23

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CHAPTER 1:

WHO ARE MATURE STUDENTS?

Although there is no true definition of 'mature student', the two most widely used are:

- anyone going to university or college after a period of time out of full-time education.
- students who are over 21 years of age at the beginning of their undergraduate studies, or over 25 years of age at the beginning of their postgraduate studies.

Mature students are not easily defined as a student may feel mature for different reasons not mentioned above. However defined, all students are welcome to participate.

CHAPTER 2:

HOW UON SU SUPPORTS

MATURE STUDENTS

Mature Students' Officer

The Mature Students' Officer is the elected representative for mature students. They voluntarily seek to improve the university experience for mature learners and chair the Mature Students' Network (MSN). They are responsible for:

- Defending and extending the rights of mature students.
- Being the representative of mature students within the Union, University and to external organisations.
- Working with the full- and part-time officer committee and stakeholders to improve the student experience of mature students.
- Campaigning on issues of concern, interest and relevance to mature students.

Get in contact to find out what they're up to and see what they can do for you, email: os-sumatureofficer@nottingham.ac.uk

Mature Students' Network

The SU's Mature Students' Network exists to represent all mature students studying at the University of Nottingham. It organises social activities throughout the year, allowing you to meet like-minded individuals and create incredible memories together.

The three main functions as a Network:

- To signpost the various welfare and outreach programs available at the University and in the wider Nottingham area.
- To run campaigns with the interests of the constituents of the Network in mind that defend and extend the rights of mature students
- To host social events and activities that are a way to meet fellow mature students and build a community.

To join the Network and see what we've been up to visit:

<https://su.nottingham.ac.uk/activities/view/mature-students-network>

Or get in contact via: mature-students-network@uonsu.com

CHAPTER 3: KEY DATES & CELEBRATION MONTHS

The Students' Union (SU) and University recognise and celebrate key dates throughout the year.

If there are certain events you'd like to see, please let the Mature Students' Officer know using this [form](#).



CHAPTER 4:

HOW UON SUPPORT MATURE STUDENTS

The University offers support to help you start at pre-entry and once enrolled.

Ambition Nottingham

Are you hoping to start university in September 2023? Do you need some advice, guidance and support? If you are aged 21+ or are studying an Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma, you can join the University's online access programme, [Ambition Nottingham: Access](#).

Ambition Nottingham: Access, is a free programme available for Access to HE students. This programme provides information about university, what it is like to study as a mature student and knowledge about particular subject areas. The University will also help you to apply by developing your application writing skills and knowledge of the UCAS process.

Open Days

Open Days are versatile to the student needs. [Virtual Open Day](#) talks, are pre-recorded lectures and general talks to learn more about subjects, student life and to see some Nottingham academics in action.

If you fancy an in-person experience, [bookings](#) are now open for anyone who would like to visit the University in person. There will be a mature student stand on each day where you can come along and ask questions. Campus tours last approximately 60 minutes.

There are also online sessions for adults who have had a break in their education and want to study for an undergraduate degree. You will have opportunity to talk to a member of University staff and find out more about topics such as finance, student support and university-level study.

Eligibility for Lower Grade Offers

Some students are eligible for contextual offers at the University. Although being a mature student is not one of the criteria for this, I would encourage you to [visit this page](#) to check your eligibility. A contextual offer is usually one A Level grade lower than the entry requirements on [our course pages](#).

If our standard offer includes a specific subject grade, this will generally remain. For example, if the standard offer is AAB with an A in Maths, the contextual offer would be ABB with an A in Maths.

The University also welcome students with a broad range of experience and qualifications. Their [table of alternative qualifications](#) provides details of qualifications for specific courses. For details of Access to Higher Education courses provided by further education colleges in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire; please visit the [Access to Higher Education](#) website.

Part-Time & Flexible Study Options

Mature students come from some of the most diverse backgrounds. You could balance your study with family or professional commitments by studying part-time and spreading your degree over four to seven years. Many of the University's courses are available [part-time](#).

Please note, the University only offers part-time study to students from/who reside in the UK.

Apprenticeships

Dr Katharine Whittingham is the Lead Apprentice Tutor. Katharine's role is to act as link across all Apprenticeship Programmes in the University to ensure Senior Tutors and Personal Tutors are informed of new developments and upcoming activities aimed at maximising students' academic and personal development alongside offering wellbeing support.

As part of the UoN student support, development and personal tutoring programme, all Personal Tutors in the University are expected to support, encourage and guide their tutees' development so that all students are supported in maximising their academic potential, personal development, and professional acquisition throughout their time at the University.

Personal Tutors can enable their tutees to achieve this by helping them to review their progress regularly by encouraging self-appraisal and self-development strategies, by helping them to identify learning needs or goals and monitor their progress towards achieving their goals, as well as by exploring developmental opportunities available both within and outside the University. The Personal Tutor will also act as a gateway to the wider support and development provision at the University.

Detailed information and resources to support students on apprenticeship programmes is available on the Apprentices Community Hub on [Moodle](#).

Accommodation

Both the University of Nottingham and the [SU](#) want you to find the best accommodation. After all, you may need to consider commutes, dependants and significant others. All full-time undergraduates are guaranteed a place in university accommodation during their first year of study, should you decide to live on campus.

The University of Nottingham has a wide variety of [university accommodation](#) available. Factors such as room type and length of contract will affect the overall cost – this [webpage](#) shows the differences in fees.

Finance

A key factor in making your decision about higher education is finance – this should not be a barrier. There is such a wide range of financial support options available to help you continue your education.

From 2022, undergraduate mature students can access the core bursary which provides £1,000 per year to students with a household income below £35,000 as assessed by Student Finance who meet certain criteria and the Nottingham potential bursary provides an additional £1,000 a year to students entering via an Access route or with vocational qualifications (at further education level) and with a household income figure of up to £35,000.

For more information, please visit the guaranteed bursaries page for more details of the eligibility criteria for these bursaries.

The funding and financial support team at Nottingham provides information and advice on most aspects of student finance to both current and prospective students. The financial support team also provide information and useful advice about managing your money and budgeting.

Information is always subject to change for future years of entry, so I would recommend checking the bursaries webpage regularly for further updates.

The funding mentioned on this page is for undergraduates. Our funding for postgraduate's page explains the finance available for masters or doctorate programmes.

Securing funding for postgraduate study (Masters or Doctorate) can be a complicated and competitive process, but there are usually opportunities available. There is a stepwise guide [here](#).

The steps are:

LOANS FROM STUDENT LOANS COMPANY (SLC)

Investigate whether you are eligible for a loan from the Student Loans Company.



SCHOLARSHIPS & STUDENTSHIPS



TALK TO YOUR UNIVERSITY SCHOOL

Schools administer the University's research funding and have specific funds for certain research areas. They can also advise on external sources of funding including UK Research Councils.



DOCTORAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Take a look at [Doctoral Training Programmes](#) which offer training for postgraduate students and often include an industrial placement. Full funding is usually available for UK and EU students.



EXTERNAL FUNDING

Search the internet for external funding from businesses that relate to your area of specialism or from other external sources. [The University have a web page of links to get you started.](#)



EARNINGS

Consider earning alongside your studies to help fund your course, if necessary. [The Graduate School offers short paid placements and Unitemps is the University's in-house recruitment agency.](#)

Use the links to help find funding for your course.

It is important that when you start your course you have sufficient funds, or an achievable plan in place to obtain funds, to cover both your tuition fees and living costs. Remember, you can always reach out to Students' Union (SU) Advice.

Kick Start

[Kick Start](#) is a two-day induction event for mature, care experienced and estranged students. This is not to single you out, but to help you settle in. A chance to meet other students from similar backgrounds, as well as workshops to give you some key information on finance, academic support and wellbeing, ahead of starting your studies. You will be invited before term starts.

Mature Student Mentor

In your first year, you will be offered the chance to be mentored by a current second or third-year mature student. If you attend our Kick Start programme, you will automatically be allocated a mentor. If you are unable to attend Kick Start but would still like to request a mentor, please [email us](#).

Childcare

The University of Nottingham (UoN) realise how difficult it can be to juggle parenthood with your career or your studies. The University offer an excellent range of [childcare services](#) for students and staff of the University to make life with us as easy as possible. Established in 1995, their [services](#) have a reputation for excellence and demand for places is high. In 2022, the Day Nursery was awarded Good status by Ofsted and in 2016 the Playcentre achieved an Outstanding rating from [Ofsted](#).

Services include:

UON DAY NURSERY

A 50 place day nursery catering for children aged four months to five years.

UON PLAYCENTRE DAY CARE

Offers 28 places for children aged between 18 months and five years old.

UON PLAYCENTRE PLAYScheme

Caters for children aged four and a half to twelve years old. Open during all school closures apart from Bank Holidays, University holidays and in-service training days.

UON PLAYCENTRE TOY LIBRARY

A Toy Library service full of engaging and exciting activities for your child.

The University has set up a small fund to offer eligible students financial assistance towards childcare. For further information on this scheme please visit the Student Services website or [visit the Childcare Services website](#).

Academic

Academic support depends on School, Faculty and course. However, throughout the University, there are [Student Services](#). Student Services support students in a variety of ways, including [Teaching Timetable & Room Booking](#), [Module Choice & Enrolment](#), [Libraries](#), [Support & Wellbeing](#) and [more](#). Student Service centres can be found [here](#).

Academic Language & Communication Skills (ALACS)

[The ALACS team](#) has been supporting students at the university for 40 years. We offer a wide range of in-depth, practice-based courses on vital skills, including writing successful assignments and dissertations, criticality, academic integrity, understanding feedback, effective presentation and discussion skills, and courses to develop important language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or social conversation - all delivered by experienced and qualified tutors. We also offer subject-specific courses rooted in thorough research on what you need to succeed in your studies and future career.

For individual support to suit your needs, you can book our very popular [one-to-one consultations](#).

They are here for you all-year-round from registration to graduation.

Further Avenues for Support

- University Funding, GOV.UK- <https://www.gov.uk/mature-student-university-funding>
- Benefits, GOV.UK- <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>
- UCAS Undergraduate for Mature Students- <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/undergraduate-individual-needs/mature-students>

CHAPTER 5:

GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES OFFERED BY THE UNION

Liberation Forum

Have a liberation related issue within the Union, University or wider community you want to voice? Want to make your officer team to help elevate you and broadcast your concerns to a wide audience? Come along to Liberation Forum.

Liberation Forum meets throughout the year as an open space for the discussion and development of liberation efforts, bridging student actions across the Students' Union membership.

The forum values diversity and aims to promote equitable practices, working to develop a culture and working environment that encourages people to challenge themselves and others – openly, constructively, and with respect – to raise the quality of all we do together.

Issues discussed at this forum are directly fed into the University's Student EDI Board which brings together staff from across the University into one room to directly talk to student representatives on issues and create plans for change.

For updates and advice message your Liberation Officer by emailing os-suliberation@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Students' Union Advice

SU Advice can help with information, advice and representation around all aspects of student welfare and education, such as financial, housing and course issues. They offer a confidential service, and won't tell anyone you've spoken to them, or what you've spoken about, unless you give consent (or unless there's a risk of harm to you or others). As of 26 September 2022, the Advice desk will be open as follows*:

	Term-time
Monday	10:00am - 4:00pm
Tuesday	10:00am - 4:00pm
Wednesday	10:00am - 4:00pm
Thursday	suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk
Friday	10:00am - 4:00pm

*SU Advice would advise you to email or telephone them in the first instance so they can either give you the information you need or arrange an appointment to speak to an Adviser. As well as advice and information by email, they can offer an appointment to suit you – by telephone, by MS Teams or in person in the Portland Building on University Park.

Email: suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk

Call: (0115) 846 8730

Visit: C Floor, Portland Building, University Park, Nottingham

Nottingham Nightline

A non-judgemental, non-advisory, confidential and anonymous listening and information service. They are proudly run by students, for students. Nightliners are on duty every night from 7pm - 8am during term-time to listen to any problem you may have.

Website: <https://www.nottinghamnightline.co.uk/>

Email: nightline@uonsu.com

Student Union Policy

Policy is decided at Union Council, where any student can bring an idea that aims to change something about how the Union operates or asks the SU to take a stance on an issue, providing power and support when lobbying the University or the wider world to make change.

For a full list of the Union Policies visit: <https://su.nottingham.ac.uk/make-change/union-policy>

To ask a question or find out how you can submit or update a motion, contact: suelections@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

If you would like to get involved in actioning work around any policy, get in contact with your Officer team via <https://su.nottingham.ac.uk/make-change/your-officers>

CHAPTER 6:

GENERAL SUPPORT

STRUCTURES WITHIN THE

UNIVERSITY

Your Local GP

Be sure to register at your local health centre or GP surgery such as Cripps Health Centre.

Tel: 0115 846 8888

HealthyU and Wellbeing Team

To support you to make the most of your time at university, HealthyU is here to provide information and advice on a range of health issues important to students.

Check out their services and events here: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/current-students/healthyu/index.aspx>

For more information on mental health and wellbeing support, including self-help strategies, advice on managing stress, addictions, sleeping problems, healthy eating, bereavement, concerns about suicide, please visit <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthyu/mental-health/bodymind.aspx>

Support and Wellbeing Officers

These officers based in Schools and Student Services, they are on hand to help support you alongside your personal tutor. They can provide guidance, help and advice if you're experiencing difficulties.

To find out more visit: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/services/support-and-wellbeing-service.aspx>

Support & Wellbeing Manager for Mature Undergraduate Students

The university recognises that mature undergraduate students sometimes require additional support. There is a Support and Wellbeing Manager available for you to talk to, who has specific responsibility to provide advice and guidance to mature undergraduate students. They will provide practical and emotional support, refer you on to specialist services, or can just be someone to talk to during your time at the university. Alongside your personal tutor and other support staff, they can provide enhanced support and will also be responsible for running events, activities, and information sessions specifically for our mature undergraduate community.

You can find further information about the Support and Wellbeing Service, including contact details for mature undergraduate support via the [Support and Wellbeing team](#).

Counselling Services

The University Counselling Service is a free confidential, bespoke service available to all students and staff at the University of Nottingham. As well as one to one counselling, we offer therapeutic groups and a program of interactive workshops covering a wide range of issues commonly encountered at university.

This service is only available through referral from [Support and Wellbeing Team](#), [ResX Team](#), [Disability Team](#) and [Report and Support Team](#).

To find out more about visit:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling/>

University Mental Health Advisors

Available via referral from specialist services such as your GP, tutor or Support and Wellbeing Officer.

Disability Support Services

Disability Support Services support the University community in creating an inclusive and equitable teaching and learning environment to the benefit of all students. Their specialist service provides student-led support to enable disabled students to flourish as independent learners. They are there to help students who have a disability, including those with mental health difficulties.

To find out more about their services and to arrange an appointment, visit: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/servicedetails/disability-support-services/disability-support-services.aspx>

Get in contact: disability-supportservices@nottingham.ac.uk

The Residential Experience (ResX) Team

Consists of full-time staff, supported by student residential assistants, who provide wellbeing support and promote positive community behaviour within halls of residence and partnership accommodation sites.

You can contact the ResX Team as part of the University's 24/7 residential support, by emailing resx@nottingham.ac.uk

To find out more visit: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/Registrar/DepartmentalStructure/Residential-Experience/Residential-Experience.aspx>

Off Campus Student Affairs

Many students choose to move off-campus during their time at University. We have lots of information available to support you if you decide to take this step and become a member of your local community.

To find out more visit:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/yourcommunity/yourcommunity.aspx>

Chaplaincy

Chaplains are here to support students and staff of any faith or none. They provide general pastoral support as well as supporting students with their journey of faith, practice of faith, or exploration of faith.

To find out more visit: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/chaplaincy/>

University Financial Support

A team at Nottingham who provide information and advice on most aspects of student finance to both current and prospective students and administers a range of funding schemes such as bursaries, scholarships and support funds.

To find out more visit:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/support/financialsupport/index.aspx>

International Students Welcome Kit

This Welcome Kit has been put together by a working group of staff and International Student HealthyU Ambassadors. It aims to provide useful information about being a student at the University of Nottingham. You will find below, chapters outlining university and local wellbeing support services and practical information to help you settle into studying at the university and living in the UK.

To find out more visit: https://xerte.nottingham.ac.uk/play_31140#page1

Report and Support

We hope that in your time here, you never have use to these links, but we thought it best to put them here. If you are ever the victim of hate crime or sexual violence the University's Report and Support measures are there to help you. This page offers all of the resources to disclose/report incidents or experiences - anonymously if needed*.

A hate crime or incident is one which demonstrates or is motivated by hostility based on protected characteristics including race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or

transgender identity. Someone can be a victim of more than one type of hate crime, and within Nottingham a hate crime, or incident, can also be reported under misogyny. Misogyny is the hatred or prejudice against women and girls, they are incidences motivated by the attitude of men towards women and includes behaviour targeted at women by men simply because they are women. Examples of this may include unwanted or uninvited sexual advances; physical or verbal assault; unwanted or uninvited physical or verbal contact or engagement; sexually graphic and explicit obscene language and use of mobile devices to send unwanted or uninvited messages or take photographs without consent.

Via the University:

You can report directly to the University using the [University's 'Report & Support' system](#).

You can directly speak with an adviser or disclose the incident anonymously.

Support is available to anyone who is subject to bullying, harassment and victimisation, discrimination, domestic abuse and domestic violence, a hate incident or crime, and sexual assault and sexual violence.

Via the Police:

You may also prefer to report to the Police. This can be done alongside or instead of reporting the incident to us at Report and Support. If you choose to report to the Police, please note: the Police are dutybound to record and investigate complaints of criminal activity and it will assist the Police if you could provide as much detail as possible. If you would wish to stay anonymous when you report, please report the incident via Crimestoppers.



University of Nottingham Students' Union



Special thanks to...

ArielMedia UK for their input in internal design and editing.