

**Read the article on succeeding at university as a non-traditional student and answer the questions.**

## **How to Succeed at University as a Non-Traditional Student**

Starting university as a non-traditional student—whether you're returning to education after a break, balancing work and family, or adapting to the UK education system—can be both exciting and daunting. However, with the right mindset and strategies, you can thrive. Here are some common challenges and practical ways to overcome them.

### **1. Mastering Time Management**

Balancing university with work, family, and other responsibilities is one of the biggest hurdles. Working to deadlines (which often occur around the same time) can also be a source of stress, and it can be easy to start feeling overwhelmed.

Success starts with planning. Use a calendar or digital planner to map out your week, including lectures, study time, work shifts, and family duties. Break tasks into manageable chunks and set realistic goals. Prioritise urgent and important tasks, and don't be afraid to say no to non-essential commitments.

### **2. Embracing Independent Learning**

University requires a shift from being taught to taking charge of your own learning. This means reading beyond the lecture slides, asking questions, and seeking out resources. Make use of the library, online databases and academic support services. If you're unsure how to approach an assignment, ask your tutor or make an appointment with the ACE Team. Learning how to learn is a skill—and it improves with practice.

### **3. Building Academic Confidence**

If you haven't written an essay or studied formally in years, it can be difficult to know where to start with academic tasks. You might not be familiar with how to structure an essay, reference sources, or write in academic language. However, help is at hand! Part of the course will focus on the academic skills you need to develop, and the ACE Team also offer additional support as and when you might need it. Again, the ACE Team can help with tutorials, workshops and materials. Don't wait until you're struggling—seek help early and often.

### **4. Managing Money Wisely**

Financial pressures are real, especially if you're supporting a family or having to cut your working hours due to studying. Be sure to adapt your budget to take into consideration any changes in circumstances now that you are managing studies as well. If you're struggling, speak to the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing team—they can help you explore options and cope with stress.

### **5. Preparing for Life's Curveballs**

Life doesn't pause for university. Illness, childcare issues, or unexpected events can disrupt your studies. The key is to communicate and reach out to take advantage of the help and support available. The Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team are on hand to provide guidance and support on all aspects of welfare, such as mental health, accommodation and neurodiversity.

## **6. Staying Connected**

It's easy to feel isolated, especially if you're older than your classmates or from a different background to your classmates. Make an effort to connect with others—join student groups, attend events, or simply chat with classmates. Building a support network can make a huge difference to your motivation and sense of belonging. And don't forget that your classmates could also form part of your professional network as you move into graduate employment.

### **Final Thought**

Being a non-traditional student isn't a disadvantage—it's a strength. Your life experience, resilience, and determination are powerful assets. By staying organised, seeking support, and staying engaged, you can not only succeed at university but also inspire others along the way.