

Mature Students

(Dec 2024)

COMMON QUERIES

I am older than most graduates. Will this disadvantage me when applying for jobs?

- Equality legislation (The Employment Equality Acts) outlaws discrimination in recruitment and selection on the basis of age.
- While there may be a typical profile for graduates entering your preferred employment area, this does not mean that you won't be considered for a role. Remember to communicate your key selling points to the potential employer, identifying what differentiates you from all the other applicants.

What can I do?

- Be positive – Focus on your strengths and what you can offer the employer. Use positive language in your CV, cover letter, application forms and interviews.
- Know yourself – Your broad range of work, education, personal, family and community experience can provide you with many great examples of your skills and capabilities which employers love to find in applications and interviews. Communicate clearly how the 'transferable skills' you've gained could be applied to a variety of roles.
- Develop and maintain your network – as a mature jobseeker you will typically have built up a much bigger base of contacts than an inexperienced graduate.

What can I offer an employer that can make me stand out from other candidates (particularly the younger ones)?

Stereotypes aside, consider the areas where, as a mature student, you may have a little more to offer such as:

- Greater experience – When applying for work highlight the benefit of having gained lots of great experience in your career to date. Many employers these days look for examples of where you have shown particular competencies or skills which may be relevant to their company or role. Your greater level of work, academic, personal and life experience should provide you with a range of these examples
- Confidence in interpersonal communication – Through your past and present relationships including those with colleagues, clients and suppliers, you may tend to be more at ease dealing with social situations.
- Self-starter – Having more work experience will often allow you to settle into an organisation far quicker than inexperienced graduates.

- Decision-making experience – Mature graduates tend to have more experience of taking responsibility and making key decisions.
- Valuing the job – Employers often comments that graduates seem to lack enthusiasm in interviews and in their work, an attitude of “if this job doesn’t work out I’ll just find another”. As a mature employee you may tend to value a good job more.
- Salary expectations – Employers often believe that mature graduates will seek higher salaries than younger graduates when this may not be the case. Emphasise your flexibility on this where possible.
- Client trust – Clients may often have greater faith in an older person when dealing with issues or queries, particularly relating to more serious concerns, given the life experience you’ve gained. Use this to your advantage when selling yourself to the employer.
- Greater Focus – Mature employees are often more focused than younger counterparts. An example of this determination to succeed is evident from your completion of degree alongside the range of other commitments in your life.
- Flexibility and adaptability – Employers often fear that mature students will be inflexible and won’t be able to adapt. There is also a misconception that mature applicants may be stuck in their ways, and may be resistant or may take longer to change. However mature graduate have often shown great flexibility in their life/career to date overcoming significant obstacles on route.
- Greater commitment – You may believe that your personal circumstances (e.g. family, mortgage etc.) may mean you are less flexible than younger graduates. However most employers value commitment and loyalty in an employee. The fact that your personal life is more settled can be used as a key selling point.
- Multi-tasking – Mature students and graduates often have a greater experience of juggling many different tasks or events in their lives and this can be seen as real asset by employers.
- Problem-solving – With a greater level of experience through a variety of life events, you will find you can often display a greater knowledge, ability and confidence when it comes to problem solving.
- Ability to work with all age groups – A potential concern for employers is whether you will be content working under a younger manager/supervisor. To counter any such preconceptions, you should cite examples of situations where you have experience of successfully working with or taking direction from younger colleagues: this may be in past work experience, personal experience or perhaps in the academic environment

MATURE STUDENT – USEFUL WEB RESOURCES:

- **Mature Students Ireland (MSI)** is a network of Mature Student Officers and details supports available: <http://www.maturestudents.ie/>
- **Aontas** web resource supporting adult education and learning www.aontas.com
- **The Department of Education and Skills** Website contains Mature Students Information pages including grants information. www.education.ie
- **Student Financial Advice and Information**
<https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/>
- **Qualifax** directory for mature students: [Adult learners | Qualifax](#)
- **Adult Educational Guidance Initiative** (includes contact details for Adult Guidance Services nationwide)
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0da49-career-guidance-and-information/>