### The Art of surviving and thriving: a framework for mature learners.

Martell Baines, Progression Manager FHEA & Dr Sam Broadhead, Head of Research, SHEA
Leeds Arts University
February 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTREACH</th>
<th>ACCESS (Pre-HE)</th>
<th>TRANSITION (into HE)</th>
<th>RETENTION (in HE)</th>
<th>GRADUATION</th>
<th>PROGRESSION (further study or employment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mature Learner Easter School</td>
<td>Bespoke &amp; individual campus tours</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</td>
<td>Mock Interviews</td>
<td>FE to HE Orientation Day</td>
<td>Mature Students Welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was very happy to find out there were 10 mature students on my course”</td>
<td>“I applied on a bit of a chance and was lucky to get an interview and a place. It was a real confidence boost that they wanted me on the course.”</td>
<td>“The Student Ambassador scheme gives you fantastic skills to put on your CV. It makes you confident, you participate in events you do not normally know how to do. You build up skills without even realising it”</td>
<td>“Career Track Tuesdays, Start Up Wednesdays 1 to 1 Careers planning”</td>
<td>“Creative Networks Talks”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of Artists, Designers &amp; Makers</td>
<td>Start up Incubation Units</td>
<td>“One thing it has given me is confidence in speaking to art professionals. I have to go to talk about my work in an exhibition”</td>
<td>“The whole bit at the end is as important as the bit at the beginning.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End of Year Show tours</th>
<th>Access to HE 3 day Summer School</th>
<th>Internal Progression support</th>
<th>Student Buddy Scheme</th>
<th>Mature Students Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am the oldest in my year, there is a camaraderie amongst the students. There has been no prejudice from the younger students, they have treated me as their equal.”</td>
<td>Level 2 Diploma in Visual Art &amp; Level 3 Access to HE</td>
<td>“Even though I had a degree I felt I needed something more immersive, like the 1 year Access to Higher Education. It gave me the confidence to do the MA.”</td>
<td>SU Mature Students Officer</td>
<td>Twilight Café: The art of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I had not written an essay since I was at school, my biggest fear was how people would read what I have written”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Broadhead’s (2012; 2018) research with mature students from diverse backgrounds and ‘unconventional educational histories’ argues for a community of mature students to be created that increase feelings of support and belonging within the Arts University.

- Feedback from the National Student Survey indicated that mature students were less likely to be happy with the Students Union and were more likely to be critical of the organisation and management of courses.

- In response to these indicators, interventions were designed to support the academic, socialisation and participatory aspects of the curriculum so that mature students are able to succeed and progress.

- The framework spans the student lifecycle from level 2 (pre-Access to HE Diploma) to level seven and beyond.

- Key to the success of these practical interventions is that they are cross-institutional strategies.

- Activities undertaken by the Progression team; the Academic Support team; the Careers, Enterprise and Employment team and the Student Union ‘dovetail’ together to ensure students are supported throughout their educational journeys.

- These interventions can be used in other institutions; however they have been fine-tuned to fit the particular context of art and design.

- Students are introduced to art and design pedagogical approaches; they are also socialised into various communities of artistic practice.

- The participation of mature students in the student union is a new focus that is now being developed.

---

**References**


