

## **AccessHE Mature and Part-Time Learner Action Forum – pool funded-project proposal**

### **What are we proposing?**

A data sharing collaboration between London HEIs and the Open University designed to:

- 1) shed light on patterns of mature student non-continuation across different types of HE provider
- 2) understand, by drilling down into the statistics, the barriers to study confronting mature students in these different provider types, and on the basis of this develop appropriate advice and guidance resources

### **Why?**

Mature students are a priority learner group for the OfS and it expects all higher-fee course providers to have in place a clear strategy for eliminating access and outcomes inequalities between mature students and young learners. Yet evidence shows that mature students are in many cases not adequately informed about course options and the cost of study; similarly, they are more likely to discontinue their studies. As such, there is a need for richer data and innovative approaches to IAG if attrition rates for this group are to be successfully lowered. This can only be achieved through cross-sectoral collaboration.

The AccessHE Mature & Part-Time Student forum is uniquely positioned to address this need. Its membership is diverse but is clustered around a sharing recruiting ground in London, therefore the non-continuation data collated by the forum can speak to wider trends and issues, whether locational, provider-specific or common to institutional clusters. The inclusion of OU data provides an instructive counterpoint owing to that institution's very different recruitment and delivery model.

### **Who will benefit?**

**Students:** insights from the project data will help providers to remove barriers to mature student success, improving their chances of continuation. It will also encourage a more honest and considered approach to pre-entry guidance, as providers can draw upon a disaggregated picture of non-continuation.

**Member HEIs:** the project data and associated resources will help providers to improve mature student continuation rates in two ways. Firstly, it will allow for better identification of issues and barriers. Secondly, the comparative data will allow providers to signpost a mature student towards another HEI where there is evidence of a better fit between that student's profile and a different kind of provision/delivery model. This of course requires an altruistic approach but the OfS has indicated willingness to recognise collaborative targets in APPs and in this sense the project demonstrates genuine ambition in reducing outcomes gaps.

## How will we do this?

We propose a collaboration with the Open University in which:

- 1) data in the table below is collected by AccessHE members and by the OU, and then shared between all parties for the purposes of identifying common issues. This close analysis could entail follow-up engagement with certain students/student groups for instance in the form of qualitative interviews, and intersectional analysis with other WP characteristics as required (this is recommended in the OfS' effective practice guidance).
- 2) appropriate forms of community outreach and IAG are then developed by the project partners. This could take the form of documentation for circulation to London libraries and community centres, and/or an outreach advisor toolkit to support effective cross-institutional signposting.

The Mature & Part-Time Student action forum, along with representatives from the OU, would form the project steering group, and the forum meetings would serve as project milestones. AccessHE would support the steering group from an operational perspective.

	HEI	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3 etc
<b>Data</b>				
Mature student discontinuation (institution-wide)				
Attrition by subject	Subject 1			
	Subject 2			
	Subject 3			
	Subject 4			
	Subject 5 etc			
Attrition by age	21-24			
	24-30			
	30+			
Attrition by study mode	Full-time			
	Part-time			
Attrition by prior qualifications	UK first degree			
	Foundation degree			
	Other level 4			
	A/AS level			
	Other level 3			
	Level 2 qualification(s)			
No prior qualifications				