



## Case Study

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### **What were you doing before and what made you decide to study for a degree?**

I had been working as a Mental Health Support Worker for 11 years and felt I needed some time out - I moved to Edinburgh in 2003. Shortly after I arrived I saw an advert for the access course at Newbattle Abbey College. Study has been a problem for me since leaving school, where I had been in remedial groups. It had held me back in terms of my confidence. In a number of jobs I had been offered the chance to undertake funded study and to gain qualifications but I always turned them down. Good career offers were being made I just didn't feel able to take them up. At Newbattle I was tested for dyslexia. I was told I had a recognised disability - this helped and I was then able to access appropriate support. When I started the access course I wasn't doing it to access uni. but my confidence grew and then I realised it was an option. I had a careers interview during which we looked at various courses and OT seemed the most attractive. I decided to speak to the course Admissions Tutor. He was very positive about the relevance of my work experience and the access course. I also came to the open-day where I spoke with some dyslexic students and that really helped.

### **You are coming towards the end of your 1st year, how would you describe the experience so far?**

It's been challenging and academically it can be difficult. Some things, like assignments, have been

a struggle. But getting reasonable marks helps. I have been very proactive about discussing how dyslexia affects me. Staff have been very good and we have discussed how assessments and examinations can be adapted to suit my needs. I have also been able to obtain additional funding via the Disabled Students Allowance scheme.

There are quite a few mature students on the course so this gives it a good balance. I think the social life isn't as active as younger students, as many of the other mature students have other commitments, but we do go out and manage to mark special occasions. I've become involved with our Student Union and been a Student Member of Parliament in our new Student Parliament and have also been a student representative for course committees. There are definitely opportunities to get involved you just need to seek them out.

### **Any tips for prospective students?**

Be proactive! I found it really useful to come and talk to staff before I even applied and I have kept up this dialogue.

If you think study might be for you - start with a course that you feel comfortable with and see where it takes you. At school and throughout my working life I had never thought about uni as an option. Now at the age of 39, I'm the first in my family to go to uni.