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An evaluation of the survival of mature students on degree courses in hospitality management in the UK

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AN EVALUATION OF THE SURVIVAL OF MATURE STUDENTS ON DEGREE COURSES IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE UK

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
Open University for the degree of Master of Philosophy

Sponsoring Establishment
University of Wales Institute
Cardiff

JUNE 1996

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry can claim to be a significant contributor to the British economy both in terms of consumer spending and employment. Two million four hundred thousand were employed in the industry in 1994 (HCIMA, 1996). Strong demand for degree educated managers has prompted rapid growth of degrees in hospitality management. Given trends in the employment market and the objective of government to increase HE student numbers, there has been a general concern to widen and improve access, especially to mature students (NCE, 1993). Hospitality management undergraduate courses have been subject to a general shift in the education system but little research has been conducted to gauge the extent and success of this strategy in this particular sector.

Criticisms of the response of institutions to mature students have been tied with a wider argument about maintaining standards at a time of rapid expansion but little empirical work can be found on the hospitality sector to support or counter such claims.

This study explores the extent of the enrolment of adult learners on hospitality degrees in the UK and examines the relationship between entry requirements, institutional support and completion of courses. It evaluates what tutors and students perceive as important issues and makes suggestions for improving the framework for learning.

Data was gathered from postal questionnaires, interviews and visits to universities in the summer of 1995.

The thesis concludes that whilst increasing numbers of mature hospitality management undergraduates have gained access to courses they have a significantly lower survival rate than younger students. There is a difference in perception between students and tutors concerning factors which improve or otherwise the learning scenario. Equality of access does not necessarily equate with equality of opportunity. The evidence from this study indicates that institutions need to enhance support mechanisms to ensure completion once enrolled, as well as further widening access to under represented groups of adult learners.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1 · INTRODUCTION

THESIS TITLE :   An Evaluation of the Survival of Mature Students on Degree Courses in Hospitality Management in the UK

Thesis Author and   **Martin Honey**
Researcher :   **June 1996**

This study investigated contemporary issues surrounding mature students in higher education and in particular focused on mature undergraduates on hospitality management degree programmes in the United Kingdom.

The author is a lecturer in hospitality management at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff and has been aware for some time of the problems and difficulties often experienced by mature students. Subjectively, it appeared that the educational system was largely orientated towards nineteen year old school leavers and did not adequately address the needs of older learners. As a lecturer the author enjoyed the presence of mature students in the classroom as they often enriched the learning scenario with their wider experience of life. In the past such adult learners were very much in a minority but in recent years such students have started undergraduate programmes in ever increasing numbers (see Section 2.1.3).

In 1991 the author's wife began an undergraduate programme at the age of thirty-five and he became painfully, personally aware of the difficulty involved in balancing the needs of course and family and the fact that this lady had been absent from education for many years. Some of the peer group of the author's wife were unable to complete their studies for various reasons. The researcher observed older students who seemed to experience anxieties and problems which appeared different and more profound than those experienced by younger recruits.

The idea for this research began to crystallise as the author became concerned as to whether institutions were doing enough to ensure the survival and success of their mature learners. The researcher wondered if the problems and experiences of the adult learners he was in contact with were shared by mature students generally.

Eventually the aims of this study began to emerge and a research hypothesis formulated. Thus an evaluation of primary data and relevant secondary data aimed to test the validity of the stated hypothesis :

> "MATURE STUDENTS ACCEPTED ONTO HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT UNDER-GRADUATE PROGRAMMES HAVE A LOWER SURVIVAL RATE THAN YOUNGER STUDENTS."

"Mature students" were defined in this study as students aged 21 years and over when they applied for enrolment to full-time first degree courses.

In the last decade initiatives designed to increase the numbers of mature students in higher education have been progressively developed. In its 1992 Mission Statement, Cardiff Institute of Higher Education stated, as one of its primary aims : "To widen access to higher education, particularly for those from non-traditional backgrounds, minority groups and those with special needs". Such a philosophy has become common in universities and colleges. Government reasons for allowing a massive expansion of higher education in the 1980's and 90's were explained in the 1987 White Paper, "Higher Education : Meeting the Challenge". "By the year 2000, Britain will have transformed its elite universities and colleges into a system of mass higher education" (Arksey et al, 1993). The effect of demographic change on the profile of students in higher education is well documented (see Section 2.2.3). The number of 18 year olds declined by 10% between 1982-1989 and by 24% between 1989-1995 (Fulton and Elwood, 1989). In the early 1990's polytechnics became universities and

degree course provision increased, non-traditional entry, mature students increasingly became the new customers (McGivney, 1991).

A preliminary literature search indicated that whilst there was evidence of research undertaken concerning mature students, it was largely of a general nature and not specific to the discipline of hospitality management education.

Hospitality undergraduate education is a very appropriate area of study as the service sector of the economy has continued to grow in economic importance and at the same time the volume of degree courses in hospitality management has significantly increased. From a handful of degree courses twenty years ago there were by 1993 nearly 5,500 students enrolled on over 40 first degree courses in the management of hotel and catering operations in UK institutions (HCIMA, 1993).

The hotel and catering industry could claim to be a significant contributor to the British economy. According to recent government statistics, consumer spending on meals and accommodation away from home rose by seven per cent in 1994 to £36.6bn and in 1994 over 2·4 million people were employed in the industry (HCIMA, 1996). The demand for degree educated managers and supervisors was considerable and has led to a rapid growth in the provision of undergraduate programmes in hospitality management. Given trends in the employment market and the objective of government to increase the number of students in higher education, there has been a general concern to consider questions of widening and improving access, especially to adult learners (NCE, 1993). Hospitality degree course directors have, therefore, been subject to a general shift in the education system but little evaluative research has been conducted to establish the extent and success of this strategy in this particular sector.

General criticisms of the response of institutions to mature students have been bound together with a wider argument about maintaining standards at a time of rapid

expansion but little empirical work could be found on the Hotel and Catering sector to either support or counter such claims.

Hollinshead and Griffith (1990) indicated that, when dealing with mature students, institutions needed to improve their admissions practice, train personnel, target particular groups of mature students and communicate more effectively with them. This study aims to be of benefit to higher education institutions generally and to university hotel schools in particular in providing evidence of the needs of mature undergraduates. It attempts to create a greater awareness of adult learners particular problems and will suggest ways to improve the quality of their learning experience. The study also aims to be of value to mature students themselves or those considering starting courses in that it hopes to create an awareness of what adult undergraduates perceive as important issues and as such aimed to help learners in their construction of a personal strategy for survival. The author felt such research particularly appropriate in the context of 1996 as "The European Year of Life Long Learning". In conclusion this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning the experiences of mature students but more specifically it considers the problems of the many hundreds of mature students currently working towards a degree in the management of hospitality operations.

This research exercise was undertaken by gathering and analysing information in two distinct but linked stages. Initially a quantitative study was undertaken during 1994 in which data was collected by means of questionnaires sent to admissions tutors in all UK colleges and universities offering degree courses in hospitality management. The second stage was a qualitative exercise when data was gathered by interviewing small groups of mature undergraduates and the degree course directors in five institutions in different regions of the UK. These institutions were selected to form a representative sample of the total population.

Analysis of the primary data from the two exercises together with an on-going review of the relevant secondary data then provided a platform from which to draw conclusions about the research problem.

Thus the objectives of this study were :

- To document the extent of the enrolment of mature students on hospitality degree courses in the United Kingdom;

- To examine the relationship between entry requirements, institutional support and completion of courses;

- To establish what both course directors and mature students themselves perceived as important issues concerning their educational experience and to evaluate any differences in such perception;

- To suggest strategies or institutional changes to improve student's perception of the quality of their courses.
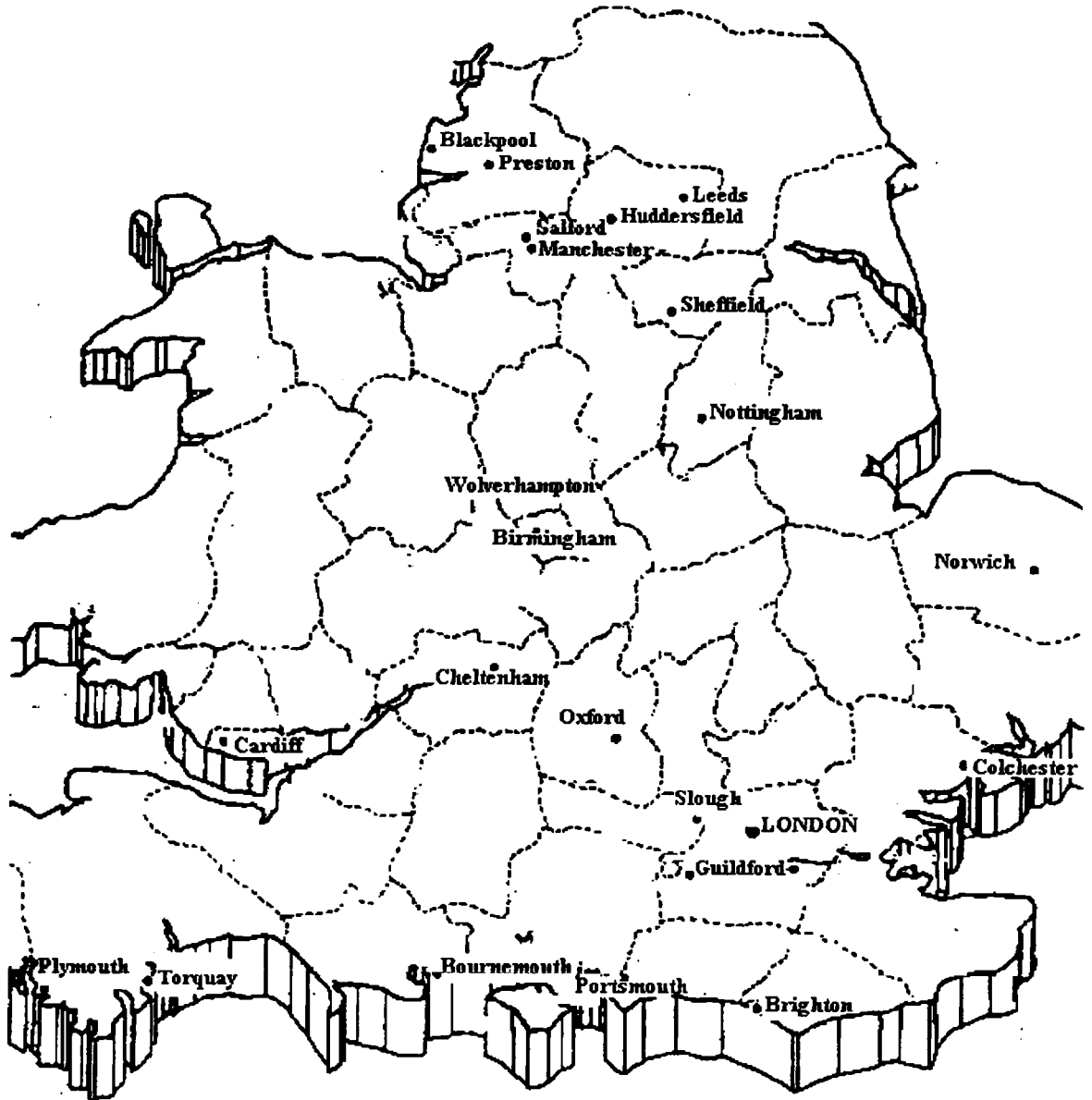
Figure 1.1   Geographic location of full-time degree courses in hospitality management subjects, in England and Wales as at Summer 1993

Note that some locations had more than one institution offering different degrees. For example, London had 4 universities, Cardiff had 2 institutions, Birmingham had 2 institutions.

Source: HAYTER, R (1993)
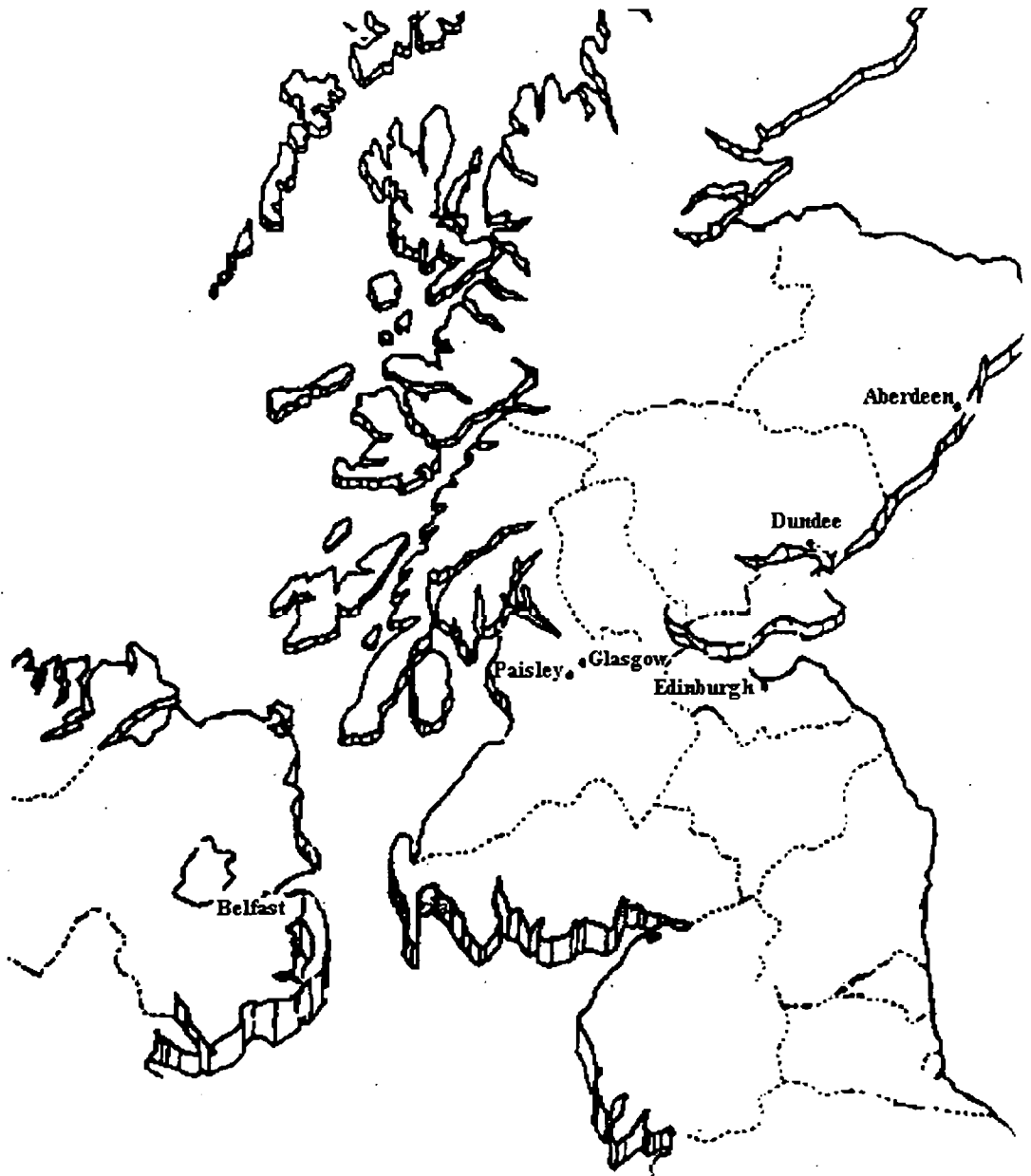
Figure 1.2   Geographic location of full-time degree courses in hospitality management subjects, in Scotland and Northern Ireland as at Summer 1993

Note that some locations have more than one institution offering different degrees. For example, Glasgow had 2 universities, Edinburgh had 2 institutions.

<u>Source</u>:   HAYTER, R (1993)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Mature Students - Who are they?

2.1.1   This section investigates how authors have defined mature students and how these attempts at definition are confounded by the very diverse nature of adult learners, a frequently occurring theme, in the literature. It also considers the concept of "life-long learning" and how certain groups in society are still very much under represented among the ranks of mature students. It further evaluates the dramatic growth in mature student numbers recently and the distribution of students across different courses.

2.1.2   Definition of Mature Students

Osborn et al (1980) and Hollinshead & Griffith (1990) defined mature students as those persons over 21 who have completed the initial stage of formal education and have returned to learning after a gap of at least 3 years. To be 21 years of age before starting a course, is generally accepted to be the definition of mature students. Local Authorities regard students as of "independent status" if on the first of September before their courses start they are over 25, or have been married for at least two years or have been self supporting outside full time education for at least three years.

> "Mature students do not form a single homogeneous public but rather several small publics requiring a heterogeneous array of services".
>
> Osborn et al (1980) p17

Many writers have described the theme of diversity with reference to adult learners for example, Osborn et al (1980). Major reports by Fulton & Ellwood (1989), National Commission on Education (1993), Hollinshead & Griffith (1990), McGivney (1991) and Cross (1981) make reference to diversity as a principal characteristic of mature students. The wide variety of mature student groups includes :

- people in employment seeking new skills or updating skills;
- people looking for employment or career changes;
- returnees to the labour market;
- people preparing for entry into higher education;
- people preparing for retirement.

Cross (1981) considered the concept of "life-long learning" and the progressive spread of education to all people in society and yet the reality displays a less than equal distribution to all sectors of society.

> "The pace of change being so great in society now that no amount of education during youth can prepare adults to meet the demands that will be made upon them."
>
> Cross (1981) p.2

Woodley's extensive studies of 1984, 1985 and in particular 1987, looked at large numbers of mature students across a wide range of courses and institutions in Britain. He concluded that mature students do not represent a cross-section of the population, rather such students did better at school than the population as a whole, in other words, students already relatively educationally advantaged. Woodley also found that in terms of social class, the picture is skewed towards those already advantaged.

> "The working class was massively under represented among mature students."
>
> Woodley (1987) p.74

Osborn et al in their 1980 "Review of Existing Research in Adult and Continuing Education" which summarised the findings of over a hundred other writers concluded that mature students at universities and polytechnics came from broadly similar social class backgrounds to other students. Most had attended selective schools, leaving with a modest level of achievement and most had been in non-manual occupations before entering higher education.

Osborn's powerful message in 1980 contained three conclusions :

- mature student success rate is high;
- the educational system gives more to those who already have taken greater advantage of it;
- women receive (and perhaps demand) less than their statistical share in higher education.

Cross (1981) reported on the elderly, blacks, those who failed to graduate from high school and low income earners as the main under represented groups of mature students in the US. The disparity in the involvement of segments of the population situated at different levels of the social hierarchy is documented by McGivney (1991) in the UK. McGivney considered under representation from an Equal Opportunities perspective (see Section 2.4.6). She concentrated on an evaluation of the initiatives in Britain in the 1980's and 90's, to support the participation of three groups, namely people with special needs, ethnic minority groups and women.

In the early 1980's there was concern about the under representation of women. Cross (1981) pointed out that in the US women expressed more interest in learning than do men and "... in recent years women have closed the gap in participation rates - no doubt due to increasing opportunities", (Cross (1981) p.59).

The situation seemed to be mirrored in Britain and by 1995, substantial changes in the participation of women had occurred. In 1996 UCAS reported that the trend for women to out perform men academically and gain more University places seemed likely to continue as 53·1% of applicants for October 1996 places were female, up from 52·8% in 1995.

Hollinshead (1990) asserted that in the past most students starting undergraduate courses, did so straight from school and possessed 'A' levels. The propensity to take 'A' levels and higher qualifications was closely correlated to social class, gender, the educational background of parents and other social factors. Smithers & Robinson (1989) reported that the examination system itself was designed to produce failure.

> "There is a large and increasing pool of mature
> students who have the ability to benefit from
> higher education who for obvious reasons have
> not had the opportunity to do so".
> Hollinshead & Griffiths (1990) p.4.

2.1.3 Mature Students - Growth in Numbers

The massive expansion of Higher Education in the 1980's and 90's is very well documented (NCE 1993). Care must be taken to distinguish between students in the whole of higher education and those on undergraduate programmes, although both have increased.

Government reasons for allowing such a growth were explained in the DES 1987 White Paper "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge", however

> "... participation rates have already outpassed expectations. Growth is likely to continue in spite of recent attempts by the Government to put the brakes on".
> National Commission on Education (1993)p.293

Department of Education statistics (Oct 94) reported in the 25 November 1994 edition of the "Times Higher" stated that in 1992 more mature students entered Higher Education than young students for the first time and they were clustered in institutions in the former polytechnic sector. The same article quantified the expansion thus - the number of mature home first year students in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges more than doubled from 139,000 to 319,000 between 1982 - 1992.

The Committee of Vice Chancellors and College Principals 1995 (CVCP) report showed all full-time home students in Higher Education had risen from 668,000 (1990/91) to 1,016,000 (1994/95) and that mature students now made up a third of full-time home undergraduates. Students over 25 years made up 16% of students and less than 60% of admitted undergraduates had 'A' levels. Thus in absolute terms and as a percentage of total student numbers mature student entry has substantially increased.

2.1.4   Mature undergraduate recruitment: The current scenario as at Spring 1996

According to UCAS figures published in February 1996 applications to Universities had fallen this year for the first time in memory. A fall of 1·6% on 1995 applications was reported. The number of 18 year olds applying, however, rose by 3·6%. The overall fall was caused by a drop in the number of mature student applications. The report blamed the recent abolition of the means-tested Older Students' Allowance available to those aged 26 or over (see Section 2.5.5) as an unintentional consequence of a policy to constrain expansion.

2.1.5   Matures Students - Distribution across courses and Universities

According to a HESA Data Report of July 1995 large numbers of mature undergraduates were enrolled in :

- Education;
- Social, Economic and Political Studies;
- Humanities;
- Business and Administration;
  Engineering and Technology;
- Subjects Allied to Medicine;
- Combined Studies.

According to Department of Education and Science (1991) figures Education, Social Science subjects and Business Studies were the "choice" of the majority of all mature students, but especially mature women.   Combined Studies was the most popular option for undergraduates over the age of 25. A reason for the greater numbers in areas like Education and Social Science could be the greater availability of "Access" courses in these subjects. There were relatively very few Access courses in the UK specifically preparing students for Hospitality Management degrees.

2.1.6 The Changing institutional perception of Mature Students

In the past adult learners on degree programmes were in a minority and were to some extent "a bit of a novelty". As Osborn et al (1980) said :

> "... the adult population engaged in degree studies is a somewhat marginal one although growing in significance".
>
> Osborn et al (1980) p.13

By 1994, however, the views of HE institutions in respect of mature students in the 90's had changed radically :

> "It is now a misnomer to talk about 'non-traditional' students, because quite simply in some Universities it is the 18-21 olds who are in the minority".
>
> Department of Education report Times Higher (25 Nov 1994) p.6

The National Commission on Education (1993) observed that 80% of mature students were in the new Universities. It also noted that people from various backgrounds with different motivations and requirements in terms of teaching methods, curriculum content and course structure were coming into the system at different stages in their lives. Inevitably they make different demands on teaching staff, library and other support services. Women and part time students now make up a much greater proportion of the total. Tables compiled by and published in the "Times Higher" of 27 May 1994, ranked UK Universities in terms of the percentages of mature students enrolled as follows :

TABLE : 2.1
Percentage of Mature Students Enrolled on Undergraduate Programmes in Rank Order, as at May 1994

MATURE STUDENTS

Rank	Institution	Percentage
1	John Moore's University	69
1	Guildhall	69
3	Anglia	64·5
4	University of East London	64
5	Greenwich	62
5	University of North London	62
7	Notts Trent	58
8	Oxford	57
8	Middlesex	57
8	Oxford Brookes	57
11	Brighton	56
11	Kingston	56
13	Luton	54
13	Coventry	54
15	Humberside	53
16	South Bank	52
17	Glamorgan	51
18	Teesside	49
18	Wolverhampton	49
20	Northumbria	48
20	University of Central England	48
22	Hertfordshire	47
23	Staffs	45
24	Kent	42
25	Buckingham	41
26	Sunderland	40
27	Central Lancs	38
28	Manchester Met	37
29	Essex	35
30	Sussex	33
31	DeMontfort	30
31	Strathclyde	30
33	Glasgow Caledonian University	29
34	University of Wales, College of Bangor	28
34	Aberdeen	28
34	Napier	28
37	Stirling	27
38	Bournemouth	26
39	University of Wales, College of Cardiff	25
39	Ulster	25
39	Portsmouth	25
39	Newcastle	25

Source: Times Higher Education Supplement, 27 May 1994

2.2   Mature Students : Why are they undertaking undergraduate programmes?

2.2.1   This section considers the reasons for the high expansion in mature undergraduates numbers. It considers the impact of demographic change and the effect of government policy on widening access to higher education for minority groups. It also analyses the changing employment market and considers the personal motives of adult learners. It considers what the commentators perceive as important pre-requisites to ease the transition of mature students onto degree courses.

Arksey et al (1993) pointed to profound changes in society and higher education which have attracted mature students onto courses in increasing numbers.

> "By the year 2000, Britain will have transformed
> its elite Universities and Colleges into a system
> of mass higher education".
>   Arksey et al (1993) p.1

The National Commission on Education (1993) talked of a growing stream of adult learners, aged 21 or more entering higher education after an interval. "Of today's 18 year olds, perhaps 40% will have degrees by the time they are 35". (NCE (1993) p.8).

2.2.2   **Reasons for mature student expansion**

Major work by Cross (1981), Fulton & Elwood (1989), Hollinshead & Griffith (1990), McGivney (1991) and Edwards (1993) list similar reasons for such expansion, namely :

- Demographic change;
- Skills shortages and updating needs;
- New training needs;

- Educational changes;
- Social change;
- Technological change;
- Universities needs to find new markets.

The most important of these are discussed below.

2.2.3 Demographic change

Fulton & Elwood (1989) noted that the number of 18 year olds declined by 10% between 1982 and 1989 and would by 24% between 1989 and 1995. In the early 1990's Polytechnics became Universities and degree course provision increased. Non-traditional entry mature students increasingly became the new customers. McGivney (1991) considered the downturn in numbers of traditional 18-20 year olds which sensitised many institutions to the need for a broader entry base.

Cross (1981) considered demographic change in the US and its effect on higher education provision. Similarities with the UK are very apparent. Cross states that by the year 2000 the US population will be dominated by persons in their middle years. For most of the years of this century the US was numerically dominated by young people. Cross documented the effect of the post war baby boom generation growing older and causing pressures for educational expansion to move from elementary to secondary to post-secondary to adult education. There are obvious similarities with the UK population.

2.2.4 Educational changes and Government Policy

The recognition that higher education is not just for an elitist few but that undergraduate entry should be available to all who can benefit is a recurring theme and appears well entrenched in University operating philosophies and government statements. Hollinshead (1990) charted

the increasingly positive attitude of the government to increasing numbers of mature students. The 1987 DES White Paper "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge" made the statement that :

> "... places should be available for all those who have the necessary intellectual competence, motivation and maturity to benefit from higher education, and who wish to do so".

The same report commented that many students will not possess the traditional qualifications for entry and that Universities will have to adapt the design of courses and methods of teaching to help new types of undergraduate. In 1988 the CNAA required Polytechnics and Colleges to admit all students onto CNAA approved courses if they were perceived as having a reasonable chance of success. The evidence of such policies is to be found in the mission statements of institutions. For example the first aim listed in the Mission Statement of Cardiff Institute of Higher Education was :

> "To provide opportunity for all those with the necessary ability and motivation to benefit from higher education and from a range of other educational, vocational and professional activities".
>
> CIHE Student Handbook (1995) p.2

Similarly another listed aim in the same document was :

> "To widen access to Higher Education, particularly for those from non-traditional backgrounds, minority groups and those with special needs".
>
> CIHE Student Handbook (1995) p.2

Such stated aims were very common in prospectuses and handbooks published by institutions, the new Universities in particular, and illustrated very well how government policy had been incorporated into institutional operating policy.

Adult access to higher education has also been improved by other initiatives. McGivney (1991) listed Access courses; Professional, Industrial and Commercial Update (PICKUP); National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) developments (which stress mapping of competences); Accrediation for Prior Learning (APL) and Open College networks.

The literature pointed to a growing emphasis on access, equity, curriculum entitlement and attainment. Edwards (1993) considered the drive to widen access for mature students, women, the working class and minority ethnic groups. Edwards also considered the Report of the Department of Education and Science (DES) in 1987 and "HM Inspectorate" in 1991 whose main aims were to broaden access for such groups. Edwards compared specific routes into higher education for mature students in other countries in particular "gateway" or "bridging" courses in the US and Access courses in Britain.

2.2.5   **Changing employment market**

> "There is evidence that mature students will be
> needed to help bridge the gap between increasing
> employer demand for graduates and declining
> numbers of young graduates".
>   Hollinshead & Griffith (1990) p.4

The National Commission on Education (1993) documented changes in the working and labour market scene in Britain and commented that to

compete in a changing world economy higher education is of prime importance.

Cross (1981) maintained that job-related education dominated the scene for adult learners but that learning for recreation and leisure was the most rapidly growing field of study for adults. McGivney (1991) estimated that in the UK between 1991-95 over a million new workers would need to be recruited to the workforce. She identified women, older adults and unemployed to make up the shortfall in younger labour force entrants. She stated that the recruitment of such groups would increase the demand for education and retraining. This is a view echoed by Edwards (1993).

Hollinshead & Griffith (1990) expressed government concern about Britain's workforce being under qualified, under trained and under educated compared to its competitors. Further, that skill levels and knowledge required for jobs would increase.

2.2.6 **Personal motives for adults learning**

Courtney (1992) found that adult education is most likely to be undertaken for vocational or practical reasons connected with the world of work. Other motives explored in the literature such as "to become better informed" and "to meet other people" are generally subsidiary to a vocational imperative.

Cross (1981) considered the link between rising educational attainment and changing career patterns and agreed with Aslanian & Bricknell (1980) who stated :

"The thing most likely to motivate people to seek new learning opportunities is a job or career change".

Aslanian & Bricknell (1980)

McGivney (1992) summarised available evidence and indicated that progression from adult or community education to University or College courses depends less on the subject or level of course than on a range of diverse factors and preconditions (see Section 2.4.2).

2.3   Mature Students : What have their experiences been?

2.3.1   This section concerns itself with a comparison of degree performance and wastage rates between mature students and younger colleagues. It also considers aspects of mature students ability to learn and levels of motivation. Included here is an analysis of barriers to learning and a consideration of student financial concerns and access to funding. In addition this section considers the reasons why adult learners drop out of courses. There is also a discrete section on issues surrounding women mature students.

2.3.2   Mature Students : degree performance and wastage rates

Considerable research has been undertaken comparing degree performance of mature students with younger colleagues. Perhaps the most comprehensive study was by Walker (1975) at Warwick University who attempted to unravel the relationship between age and performance. The analysis was separated into wastage and degree classification. Walker found no significant differences in wastage rates but overall mature students obtained better grades than non-mature students. In particular students aged 26-30 years achieved better results than all other mature students.

Bourner & Hamed (1987) considered examination results in over 80 Polytechnics and Colleges and showed that the proportion of better degrees increased with age up to age 40 years, then declines towards that of younger students. Recent (1995) unpublished work at the University of Plymouth compared the results of 7000 students over 5 years and found that students over 25 who had not taken 'A' levels gained better grades in all subjects. The common reason in the literature for this better mature student performance seems to be strength of motivation. As Walker commented :

> "... there is also the possibility that mature students greater experience of life and non-academic world may lend a greater perception to their study and work".
>
> Walker (1975) p.11

In terms of wastage rates, however, the picture is different. Walker's 1975 conclusion that there was no significant difference between mature and younger student drop out rates is now contradicted by a CVCP (1995) report which found that whilst mature students made up a third of full-time home undergraduates they account for 40% of the drop outs.

2.3.3 Ability to learn and motivation

Adults tend to underestimate their ability to learn by giving too much emphasis to their school experience whilst overlooking the value of their more recent extensive informal learning experiences (Lovell, 1989). Rickards (1992) emphasised the need for relevant and suitable learning programmes for older learners in that learners in their forties and fifties have similar learning ability to people in their twenties and

thirties but the older learner will learn to his maximum capacity only if the teaching programme is suitable. Rickards says :

> "There does seem to be some decrease in memory with age, but it is relative to what the person's memory was like earlier in life and depends more on training than anything else. Younger people will have less to remember, in general, than older people and their recall for subject specific detail will thus probably be better. They will also have fewer distractions such as family responsibilities".
>
> Rickards (1992) p.73

Schlossberg et al (1989) thought short term memory capacity hardly declines with age but is much more likely to misfunction through the effects of overloading into the 40's and 50's. Thus assessment models which place greater emphasis on coursework rather than examinations may help older learners. Webster (1996) strongly supports the view that degree standards have been maintained by the switch in emphasis from examinations to coursework.

Lovell (1989) pursued the theme of how education and socio-economic background influence an adult's attitude and motivation towards new learning. An adult with successful educational experiences in childhood will be more strongly motivated to achieve and approach new learning experiences with a positive attitude than an adult with a poor school record who will probably see any formal learning situation as yet another opportunity to fail.

2.3.4 Barriers to Learning

Major studies in the US by Boud & Griffin (1987) and Cross (1981) classified barriers to learning into 3 main types. Hollinshead and Griffith (1990) in the UK supported this.

The three categories of barrier being :

(a)   Institutional barriers :

Practices and procedures which discouraged mature learners. Such things as inflexible time tabling, difficult location of classes, inconvenient schedules, fee structures and difficulty in obtaining information.

(b)   Situational barriers :

Barriers arising from one's situation in life at a given time (lack of time because of home and family responsibilities, lack of money, lack of child care and transport problems).

(c)   Psychosocial barriers :

These could be internal factors such as lack of confidence and self esteem and external factors such as social and economic status and social pressures such as the opinions of others.

2.3.5 Mature Student Financial Problems and Student Dropout Rates

It appeared that by early 1996 financial pressures had become the primary reason for mature students dropping out of courses or not starting them in the first place (UCAS, 1996). Mature student applications for courses starting in October 1996 showed a down turn for the first time. Financial pressures, in general, and the recent abolition of the means-tested Older Students' Allowance, in particular, are blamed for this (UCAS 1996), and might have been predicted :
"Lack of financial support and child care are cited by many people as

major reasons for not seeking more advanced education. (McGivney, 1992, p.39).

Hollinshead & Griffith (1990) considered a group of 166 mature students who had withdrawn from their first degree courses in 35 British higher education institutions. Thirty percent of the sample cited personal/family reasons for dropping out whilst 25% cited financial problems.

TABLE :   2.2
Reasons for Mature Students Withdrawing from Degree Courses

	No.	%
Personal/family problems	50	30
Financial problems	41	25
Study problems	37	22
Work overload	31	19
Adjusting to student life	31	19
Health problems	21	13
Accommodation	15	9
Student relations	14	8
Lack of child care	11	7
Examination pressure	8	5

Percentages are given as a proportion of the total sample.

Source: Hollinshead & Griffith (1990) p.20

Mature students' drop out rates are now outpacing growth in mature student numbers (CVCP 1995). The same report showed a sharp increase in drop outs due to examination failure and considers examination failures as often having non-academic causes, in particular financial. It states that when students are forced to do part time work to support themselves it has a "knock-on" effect on their studies. This survey highlighted the basic unfairness of student support and showed

that mature students returning to learning in mid career are among the most severely disadvantaged students in the country.

A monitoring scheme in place at Manchester College of Arts & Technology and cited in the 21 January 1994 Times Higher Ed. indicated that over 50% of mature student drop outs were for financial reasons.

Mature student allowances were abolished for new entrants in 1994. The system gave adult learners, over 25 years, up to an extra £1,000 per year grant aid if they had earned over a certain amount in wages in the previous 3 years. Also for the year 1996/97 the government recently announced a further 10% cut in student grant aid with a corresponding increase in student loans.

There appeared to be, in Britain, a very strong contradiction between the Government's desire to expand higher education provision for mature students and its desire to fund individual students (Edwards 1993).

Access Funding is a government scheme administered by individual institutions and students over 25 who make up 16% of students were, in 1995, responsible for 45% of bids for support (CVCP 1995).

Edwards (1993) elaborated on the theme of adult learners financial hardship due to cuts in grant aid, insufficient student loan funding and restrictions in public sector funding which resulted in cuts in "non-essential" areas such as day nurseries. Edwards also points out that with respect to student grant aid, students under 25 are subject to a means test applied to parental income, unless they have worked for 3

years and that married students are assessed on a means test applied to spouse's income regardless of their own age or years of employment.

2.3.6   Women Mature Students

The 1983 film "Educating Rita" starring Michael Caine and Julie Walters, brought to a mass audience in an entertaining way the trials and tribulations of a married, working class, hairdresser who decides to study English literature at the Open University. The literature indicates parallels with real life. The work of Osborn et al (1980, 1984) cited over 120 studies concerning mature students. Many focused on females with family responsibilities who became undergraduates. Such a move, causing a radical change in life style, can cause great stress and with a different orientation to male student stress.

Edwards (1993) estimating from previous surveys calculated that almost half adult women students aged 26-35 were married or co-habiting and 37% of them had children. Woodley et al (1987) found that women were much more likely to lack confidence in their ability than men (49% of women compared to 29% of men). Also restrictions on study time because of family commitments was experienced more by women (53% of women, compared to 46% of men). Smithers & Griffin (1986) found that married women suffered many more problems due to family responsibilities than men did. Edwards (1993) talks of the "Bag and Baggage" of mature women students. Edwards also considered the perceptions of education as threatening to relationships with partners and categorises such threats in 3 main types, namely :

-    partners' desires to have the home as a separate, private and unconnected sphere;

-   partners' fears of losing their central place in the women's attentions and feeling that the time the women spent studying was taken away from them;

-   partners' fears of the womens' educational successes and the potential ramifications of this in terms of independence.

There are obvious psychological and sociological implications here and Edwards talks of education being threatening not just to the womens' relationships with their partners personally, but in some form threatening to their partners' personalities, perhaps as men.

Osborn et al (1980) emphasised the need for family support for mature students, women in particular. Osborn found successful female students often had domestic help and support from husbands, lack of spouse support was found to be a very major factor for either not enrolling or not continuing.

The extensive review of the literature concerning adult learners carried out by Osborn et al in 1980 and 1984 suggested that mature students tended to be in a marginal position at university and were less able to take part in college activities. Other problems with maintaining family life and losing intellectual and emotional contact with spouse and peers outside college were well documented. On the other side of the equation, however, when there are sufficient numbers of older students in a college they tend to sustain one another (Osborn et al, 1984, Schlossberg, 1989).

2.4 Mature Students - Institutional responses

2.4.1 This section considers how writers have urged institutions to modify their teaching, learning and support strategies in response to the needs and demands of increasing numbers of mature students. It investigates accreditation for prior learning (APL) and credit accumulation and transfer (CATS) initiatives and the evolution of flexible, modular and part-time modes of degree study. It further analyses attempts by institutions to become more market orientated and user-friendly. In highlighting the role of student support systems it also focuses on the importance of equal opportunity policies and widening access.

2.4.2 **Helping mature students, pre-requisites**

McGivney (1991) talked of adult learners needing different forms of provision, teaching approaches and forms of support.

> "... tailor programmes and services to identified requirements to a far greater extent than is customary with conventional younger students."
> McGivney (1991) p.7

The National Commission on Education (1993) talked of the value of flexible courses to accommodate mature student needs. It listed modular programmes, CATS and shortened degrees as particularly relevant. It further commented : "There should be closer matching of provision with the requirements of national and local labour markets." (NCE (1993) p.291).

It became apparent during the course of the field work for this research that institutions have modified teaching, learning and support strategies, to a greater or lesser degree, to make life easier for adult learners.

Suggestions for modification are comprehensively detailed in the literature. As mentioned in section 2.2.6, McGivney (1992) felt student success depended less on the subject than on a range of diverse factors and preconditions. She cites the following as particularly important :

1. Systems of credit accumulation and transfer (CATS);
2. Systems to accredit prior learning (APL and APEL);
3. Good educational information and guidance services;
4. Modular or unit based courses;
5. Course timing and delivery that fits in with adult circumstances and needs i.e. part-time and flexible modes of attendance;
6. Student support systems, in particular child-care (creché) facilities;
7. Learning support systems, and special recruitment measures such as information days and open days aimed specifically at mature students.

Osborn et al (1980), Hollinshead & Griffith (1990) and NCE (1993) echo the importance of the factors listed above.

2.4.3 CATS, APL/APEL and admissions criteria

"Credit acquisition motivates people."
McGivney (1992) p.25

Systems to accredit prior learning and transferable credit arrangements are particularly important. As Lovell (1989) argues :

"With adults it is particularly important that new ideas which are to be learned should be related to existing aspects of the learner's cognitive structure".
Lovell (1989) p.53

In other words, build on what has gone on before. Aspects of courses such as module choices, industrial work experience and APL are very relevant to such a sentiment. Developing new clienteles of adult students has involved the recognition of and development of

accreditation and assessment procedures for experiential learning (Moon & Hawes, 1980).

Brookfield (1983) noted that adults with only experiential learning and no formal qualifications were ineligible for entry in the past but that the climate had changed. Brookfield also considered the problem admissions tutors faced when evaluating such prior experiential learning in terms of admissions criteria. Brookfield explained that experiential learning has two components, namely experience and learning. Experience on its own has no intrinsic educational merit but if new competencies are acquired in order to adjust to this new situation then that acquisition must be counted as experiential learning. Osborn et al (1984) talked of "unacknowledged entrance requirements" mainly devised for selecting potential students from school and which took no account of the experiences of mature students.

2.4.4 Modularity and Flexibility

Lovell (1989) reported that older learners had greater problems when they tried to learn something new than when they advanced knowledge in a field that they were already familiar with. Modularity and flexible option choices allow students to build on their strengths and previous experiences. "there should be increasing options in existing educational provision and more opportunity for part-time study". (Osborn et al (1980) p.84).

As long ago as 1975 Richards posed the question,

> "Must the mature student have to conform with
> the standard undergraduate course or could
> some other credit or module system be evolved
> locally in some subjects which would allow him
> to achieve the knowledge he needs whilst still
> remaining at work?"
>
> Richards (1975) p.5

Richards referred to the university lecturer as a convenor rather than a dispenser of scholarly material.

2.4.5 Mature student support systems

The major writers agreed on the need for mature student support systems. McGivney (1992) stated that adults require advice, guidance and counselling before tuition and that there should be emphasis on the counselling role of tutors during tuition. In addition there is a strong need to build up confidence as part of the courses. "The removal of feelings of intellectual inferiority by the development of academic skills" (Osborn et al, 1980, p.83). Personal contact with tutors was stressed as very important in the literature.

Rickards (1992) emphasised the importance of study skills and the need for mature students to acquire them very early on. Rickards reduced study skills to four basic competences namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing which combine in the communication of ideas. Deficiency leads to serious barriers to learning. Lovell (1989) stated that the better educated the learner or the greater the adults formal education -the more likely the new learning can be integrated into existing knowledge. Lovell advocated profiling early in the course to

ascertain what help needs to be given, if any. Lovell also documented the influence of self perception on how an adult approaches new learning experiences. The origins of self-perception lie in our interpretations of other people's perceptions of us.

> "thus those that teach adults can have a significant influence when it comes to convincing a reluctant learner that he can cope with a learning task".
>
> Lovell (1989) p.29

The literature, especially Osborn et al, emphasised the importance of library services for mature students both in terms of library services supporting students work and the role of the tutor in guiding students reading.

2.4.6   Equal Opportunities/Widening Access

Equal Opportunities Commission reports of 1994 and 1995 stated that in the 1990's the number of school leavers fell by a million whilst the number of mature women with children seeking qualifications increased. The reports demanded equal access and treatment for mature students, ethnic minorities and the disabled. They also demanded non-racist, non-sexist learning environments. With respect to women mature students the provision of adequate child care facilities was seen as paramount. The other important issues for mature women were the need for more women lecturers to provide role models, flexible working hours, the cost of a course and the attitude of lecturers i.e. women need good constant support and a good relationship with staff.

Hollinshead (1990) found that two thirds of the Universities in a survey of 26 had written equal opportunity policies. Such policies try to extend educational provision to all who may benefit. Cross (1981) in the US found that nearly every policy statement made by local, state, national or international commissions recommended the identification of target groups of adults who were underserved by educational providers.

McGivney (1992) found a lack of coherent progression routes from further education to higher education and talked of the need for "ladders and bridges". There has been a general thrust towards widening access to higher education since the early 1980's. New funding arrangements for Higher Education has led to institutions being more concerned with increasing numbers than with widening access. An income led approach to recruitment together with the lack of a need for an additional supply of students undermined the principle of wider access even before it started (McGivney, 1992; Edwards, 1993). Reports by DES (1987) and HM Inspectorate (1991) focused on measures for widening access generally and especially for working class mature women and ethnic minorities. These reports listed lack of adequate child care facilities and institutional support mechanisms, together with lack of staff encouragement and lack of financial assistance as the main factors which hindered progression for such groups. Brookfield (1983) said there was no need to argue for "life long learning" as if it were a privilege to be bestowed upon a deserving clientele but that adults should enjoy a greater degree of support and flexibility with regard to their use of educational opportunities at different times in their lives.

2.5 DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

2.5.1   This section aims to profile the catering and hospitality industry in Britain in terms of the employment it creates and the deployment of personnel within it. It explores reasons for a continued strong demand for labour at all levels and points to very low levels of staff holding management qualifications, especially degrees, compared to other UK industries. It indicates a climate within which hospitality education, especially at degree level, can flourish given the right circumstances and level of sensitivity shown to the students.

2.5.2   **The UK Hospitality Industry - An overview of the labour force**

The Hotel and Catering Industry employed in excess of 2·41 million people, approximately 9·5% of the UK workforce in 1992. (This included the self employed) (HCTC, 1994). The industry is split into two main parts with 55% of people employed in the main commercial sectors where catering and hotel services are the main activity. The rest, over one million people are employed in sectors such as offices, banks, hospitals etc. where catering is subsidiary to the main activity (HCIMA, 1996).

Women dominated the industry accounting for 72% of the workforce in 1992 (compared with 49% of total employment in all sectors of the economy). This reflects the large number of part-time jobs in the industry (about 60% of all jobs are part-time) which appeal to females wishing to combine earning a living with their domestic responsibilities (IICTC, 1994).

There was a down turn in overall employment in the recessionary years of the early 1990's but numbers employed appeared to have recovered by 1994 (BTA/ETB, 1995).

TABLE : 2.3

Employment in the Hotel and Catering Sector (000's) - 1994

Analysis by Sector

	Numbers (000's)	Percentage of Total
Self employed	161·3	6·6
Public administration	73·1	3·0
Health care	342·1	14·1
Education	247·8	10·2
Industrial	262·2	10·8
Retail	61·6	2·5
Travel	34·8	1·4
Recreational/Cultural	57·8	2·4
Contract catering	113·6	4·7
Clubs	133·6	5·5
Pubs	324·4	13·4
Restaurants	303·8	12·5
Hotels	<u>312·6</u>	<u>12·9</u>
	2428·7	100·00

Source: Hotel and Catering Training Company/British Hospitality Association in

HCIMA 1996 Year Book

TABLE :   2.4

Types of Job Available

Employment in the Hospitality Industry by Occupation - 1992
(by percentage of overall total)

	1992
Management	
Hotel managers	3·5
Restaurant Managers	5·2
Publicans	3·6
Reception and Portering	
Hotel Porters	0·4
Hotel Receptionists	0·4
Food and Drink Service	
Waiting Staff	6·5
Bar Staff	7·1
Food Preparation and Cooking	
Chefs/Cooks	10·5
Kitchen Porters	7·1
Catering Assistants	8·4
School Meals Supervisors	1·9
Housekeeping/Other	
Housekeeping/Related Services	28·9
Travel Attendants	1·5
Other	15·0
TOTAL	**100**

Overall some 29% of the industry worked in housekeeping and related services in 1992, compared to 28% in food preparation and cooking and 14% in food and drink service.

Source: HCTC Research Report, 1994

2.5.3 Employment within a Tourism Context

The main commercial sectors of the catering and hospitality industry also form part of the larger Tourism Industry. The report of the CBI's Tourism Advisory Group (1994) quantified the presence of hotel and catering within the overall tourism framework. It further stated :

> "Tourism is a huge industry, and one which across the globe is growing very rapidly. It generates huge sums in foreign exchange and is also very labour intensive, a highly attractive feature when many industries are shedding labour".
>
> CBI (1994) p.5

The number of people employed in Tourism in the UK has risen by 31% in the last decade and tourism offers great potential for increased employment in the future (CBI, 1994; BTA/ETB, 1995).

2.5.4 Growth in the demand for labour

Riley (1991) and Boella (1992) predicted a continuing strong demand for labour due to 3 main factors, namely :

- high labour turnover;
- creation of new jobs;
- retirement.

The 1994 HCTC report said that every year the industry loses 30% of its total workforce including 14% of its supervisory staff and 8% of Managers. The same report forecasted real staff shortages between 1992-1995 especially in London. According to the HCTB in 1992 the industry needed to recruit 29,000 new Managers, 34,000 new supervisors and nearly 600,000 new workers. The report also said, that

the hospitality industry could not afford to continue alienating graduates. Boella (1992) described further reasons for increased demand for Managers :

> "... in that as hotel and catering groups become larger and individual establishments become large and more complex, there has been an expansion in the junior and middle management cadres".
>
> Boella (1992) p.24

2.5.5 Labour problems in the hospitality industry

A number of writers indicated a relationship between low pay, poor conditions and high labour turnover. Boella (1992) stated that undoubtedly, low pay rates are very common but it is not a situation which can be rectified overnight. Britain's hotel prices are relatively very expensive and pay scales can only realistically be improved through increased productivity.

2.5.6 Levels of management qualifications in the hospitality industry

This section compares the level of qualified staff in the UK with our competitor countries. It further considers catering and hospitality and its position in relation to other UK industries.

TABLE : 2.5

Vocational Qualifications held by Workforce - 1988

	Britain	Germany	Netherlands	France
Degree	10	11	8	7
Higher Technician	7	7	19	7
Craft	20	56	38	33
None	63	26	35	53
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Note: Degree includes all degrees not just those vocational in nature.

Source :   National Institute of Economic and Social Research in HCTC

(1994) Research Report

Within the UK catering and hospitality industry there were very low numbers of personnel with degree qualifications. The 1994 HCTC Labour Force Survey stated that 30% of managers and professionals in the UK workforce had a degree compared to just 6% of those in the commercial sectors of the hospitality industry.

Such a scenario points to a potential rich demand for degree education for this industry given the correct circumstances.

It is also worth noting that the wastage rate for hospitality graduates was high and that according to the same survey, only half the students who graduated from the former polytechnics in 1991 with catering and hospitality related degrees went on to permanent employment within the industry.

These themes are explored more fully in section 2.6, however, in the period 1986-1990 there was a marked increase in the provision of places on College based programmes leading to catering and hospitality qualifications. The largest increase was at degree level, up 118% over the period.

2.6 Development and Change in the Hospitality Management Higher Education Sector

2.6.1 This section considers the reasons for the growth in undergraduate hospitality management programmes and looks at the location of courses. It further considers degree course content and identifies the recurrent theme in the literature of flexibility of design, delivery and assessment. Most programmes are modular and transferable and form part of a nation-wide CATS and APL network. Flexible modes of delivery and competence based assessment together with part-time degrees are now extremely common. The majority of full-time courses are 4 year "thick-sandwich" courses with 48 weeks spent undertaking supervised work experience. The evidence points to considerable student dissatisfaction with this element of courses and it is cited as a major factor in the relatively high wastage rate of hospitality graduates who desert the industry for other sectors after graduation (Purcell and Quinn, 1994).

This section also investigates developing closer links between business and hospitality education and highlights the fact that the "fit" between products of the UK hospitality education industry and the hospitality industry have often been the subject of extensive controversy. It further analyses aspects of curriculum development for the future.

2.6.2 Increase in demand for hospitality undergraduate courses

There has been a very considerable increase in the provision of undergraduate programmes in hospitality management in the UK during the past 20 years.

> "There is no doubt that the Industry will continue to require hotel and catering graduates and that the 1990's will see an even more rapid expansion of the hospitality industry".
>
> Foskett (1991) p.149

Foskett talked of hospitality education being aimed at helping to sustain economic prosperity and promoting the industry it serves by producing competent and enterprising managers. A number of writers including the CBI (1994) point to strong future demand and growth for hospitality education because hotel and catering services are some of the fastest growing sectors of Industry.

TABLE :   2.6

Table to Show the Growth in First Year Enrolments on Hospitality Degree Programmes 1977-1992

YEAR	NUMBERS
1977	134
1978	274
1979	366
1980	479
1981	614
1982	610
1983	646
1984	794
1985	772
1986	932
1987	1033
1988	1161
1989	1415
1990	1655
1991	1759
1992	2054

Source :   HCIMA   (1993)   Survey   of   First   Year   Enrolments

HCIMA document 93/144 indicated that for academic year 1993/94 5,481 students were enrolled on undergraduate degrees. Approximately 30 universities and colleges offered first degrees in the management of hotel and catering operations in 1994 in Britain. Award titles and programme contents vary to meet the needs of particular target markets within the overall industry. Most degrees are 4 year "thick sandwich" courses which include a 48 week period in industry in the third year of the course (CHME, 1995).

2.6.3 Reasons for growth in hospitality undergraduate courses

The continuing growth of the catering and hospitality industry creates a strong demand for graduate managers. A report by the HCTC (1992) reported an improvement in overall training standards since 1985 but that the industry still lagged behind the average qualification level in the total UK workforce. Despite increases in student numbers by 1992 only 10% of catering and hospitality mangers had an HND, degree or equivalent qualification compared to 41% in all other industries. Britain's managers have lacked the management development opportunities of competitor countries: Further, the catering and hospitality industry often viewed education and training as a cost rather than an asset (Messenger, 1991). Gamble (1992) pointed to the relatively low proportion of UK managers holding formal qualifications and pointed to a conflict between government and educators. He described a government commitment to expanding management education at a time when lecturer salary levels have declined in real terms and thus talked of expansion without resources.

Service industries have become increasingly dependent on an older (25-64 year olds) age group as the 16-24 age group have fallen from about 20% of the work force in 1992 to a projected 14% by 2000 (Gamble, 1992).

Management staff turnover and relatively high wastage rates further created demand for degree educated managers. The Industry loses 30% of its work force every year, including 8% of its managers. In 1989 it was predicted that the Industry would need to recruit 34,000 new managers by 1992 (HCTB, 1989).

> "There has been much debate about the "fit" between hospitality management education and the needs of the hospitality and tourism industries, with allegations of disproportionate "wastage" of vocationally-educated labour market entrants to other sectors of the economy".
>
> Purcell, K and Quinn, J (1994) p.vii

2.6.4 Growth and location of undergraduate courses

The first hospitality degree courses started in 1964 and there has been significant expansion since; 18 courses in 1985, 30 courses in 1989, 40+ courses in 1993/94. The growth reflects the growing importance of formal qualifications, growth in management education generally and increasing professionalism within the catering and hospitality industry (Purcell & Quinn, 1994).

Until 1993 only 4 Universities in Britain offered hospitality management degree courses. Surrey University had 10 students applying for each available place. However, the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) allowed Polytechnics to attain University status, it also changed

funding, quality control procedures and course delivery (Sherrell, 1992).

2.6.5 Hospitality Degree Course Content

UK degrees differ in content but 4 common features in most programmes can be observed.

- Experiential Learning, such as role play through training kitchens and restaurants;
- Business Management, modules which develop organisational and operational skills;
- Emphasis on the importance of links with employers;
- Work Placements, usually 26-48 weeks which assist development through experiential learning. Such experience is justified because practical expertise is considered important for effective performance in initial and junior management jobs.

(CHME, 1995)

Courses differ in focus and target market, i.e. hotel operations, international hotel management, licensed trade management, commercial catering etc. Practical operation studies are the core of most catering and hospitality degrees (Foskett, 1991).

2.6.6 Course Flexibility

A major theme in the literature has been the introduction of new and flexible modes of learning and teaching.

Messenger (1991) and Foskett (1991) document changes in curriculum design, new delivery modes, introduction of competence based learning and the opening up of access. The Council for Management Education proposed a reform of qualifications with respect to three principles :

- Contents should be modular and transferable;
- Assessment should be competence based;
- Flexible modes of delivery.

The development of nationwide CATS and APL systems has aided the advancement of the key theme of flexibility.

> "Good hospitality education must develop flexibility of mind with adaptability of skills because specific skills are likely to be of use for a limited time only".
>
> Foskett (1991) p.149

Most institutions now have semester based timetables. Messenger (1991) considered the move towards a market orientated provision with initiatives like distance learning, open learning, computer based learning and experiential learning. She also highlighted the importance of guidance counselling and tutoring, especially for mature students.

Foskett (1991) noted that the maintenance and increase in student numbers was centred on the introduction of flexible entry routes for mature students with a variety of previous work and academic experiences. An example quoted was fourth year direct entry onto degree courses from HND courses.

2.6.7 Supervised work experience (SWE) as part of undergraduate programmes

There was strong student dissatisfaction with the industrial training/experience offered by the Industry according to Purcell and Quinn (1994). Such experience can account for 25% of the total time taken to gain the qualification. "Supervised work experience is a key factor in encouraging or dampening students enthusiasm for the industry". (Purcell & Quinn (1994) p.viii).

One third of the respondents in Purcell & Quinn's study became less enthusiastic about a career in hospitality as a result of their SWE and were less likely to have remained in the industry than their peers. The type of placement also often affects ultimate career direction within the industry. Robinson (1992) maintained that thousands of specialist trained graduates desert the hospitality industry every year preferring to take jobs in other retail sectors where their skills are better appreciated.

Robinson blamed Industrial Training :

> "A training programme is supposed to be worked out between the Polytechnic, the student and the employer but the Polytechnic is usually so grateful to place a student that they don't care what happens".
>
> Robinson (1992) p.40

Thus in terms of curriculum improvement and development SWE needs urgent attention.

2.6.8 Aspects of curriculum development

Umbreit (1992) in the US commented that hospitality educators must take a lead in providing their students with a relevant curriculum for the 1990's and beyond. He advocated 6 key areas of curriculum development, namely :

Leadership;
Human resource management;
Services marketing;
Financial analysis;
Total quality management;
Communication skills.

Foskett (1991) advocated postgraduate "conversion" courses and "in-company" hospitality DMS and MBA developments. He further advocated master's programmes in hospitality and further development of higher degrees based on APL linked to CATS.

Gamble (1992) took the view that developments in a particular discipline should not be considered outside the world economy. He argued that there is a trend towards globalisation, further growth of multinationals and the internationalisation of media and telecommunications;

> "It will become increasingly apparent that major decisions of an economic/political nature can only be taken in concert with other countries. Such a perspective will have important influences on the nature and type of vocational education to be provided over the next decade".
> Gamble (1992) p.7

There is much evidence in the literature that international student recruitment and exchange programmes, especially with Europe are becoming increasingly common. In 1991 Thames Valley University had 50% of their hospitality undergraduates undertaking industrial work experience abroad (Foskett, 1991). At Cardiff Institute of Higher Education, by 1995, hospitality exchange links existed with institutions in France, Holland, Finland, Austria, Portugal and Ireland.

Robinson (1992) advocated graduates with a greater familiarity with food and beverage (both service and preparation) and with computerised front-office skills. Robinson was concerned that courses were becoming increasingly academic rather than practical. The

conflict between academic and practical skills was described by Purcell & Quinn in that universities have been accused of providing courses which are too theoretical and do not develop sufficient practical skills. Ladki (1993) said, however, "In a University setting, hospitality education aspires to be a professional/academic discipline in an environment that has responsibilities".

Powers (1980) in the US said that hospitality managers need education in 3 areas namely; technical, human and conceptual. He observed that European hotel schools followed a much more craft orientated curriculum whilst the majority of American hospitality schools were management orientated.

Messenger (1991) maintained that hospitality educators must move away from developing standard courses towards producing individual learning and assessment programmes especially for groups like women returners and older people.

With respect to teaching staff development, Foskett considered the perennial problem of the difficulty institutions face in recruiting hospitality lecturers with both relevant industrial experience and higher educational achievements. He concluded that, into the future, lecturers will obtain appropriate higher qualifications in line with a university ethos, a point of view of some considerable interest to the author of this study.

2.6.9   Linking business with hospitality education

> "The fit between products of the UK hospitality
> education industry and the hospitality industry
> has been the subject of extensive controversy.
> Neither the industry nor educators can afford to
> be complacent about wastage of highly qualified
> recruits".
>
> Purcell & Quinn (1994) p.1-2

To overcome considerable negativity between educators and the industry, Robinson (1992) called for greater liaison between colleges and industry.   She believed that part of the problem was a lack of communication between educationalists over what employers are looking for. Messenger (1991) felt that industry should be encouraged to decide curriculum content and that there should be increased partnership between education and industry. In particular she felt that languages should be a compulsory element in the curriculum. Foskett (1991) looked towards the future and felt the industry's involvement in education would become more and more important, as the survival of hospitality degree education ultimately depends on meeting the customer's needs.   Foskett suggested making education far more accountable to its industry with more involvement and responsibility placed upon professional managers and representatives from within the industry.

> "The future of hospitality education is dependent
> on the industry which benefits from it".
>
> Foskett (1991) p.150

Gamble (1992) also added to the debate about greater co-operation and saw it as important in widening the perspective of individual learners.

"Essentially this involves a broadening of delivery systems and a widening of access to education and training".

Gamble (1992) p.10

The "compact scheme" launched in 1988 was an attempt to link inner city schools with industry. Ultimately linking business needs to education and training is essential to the economic future of Britain (Jenner, 1992).

The themes identified in this review of the literature set the context for the presentation of the researcher's findings. They also provide in Chapter 6 an analytical framework for the conclusions drawn from this study of mature student survival on hospitality undergraduate programmes in the UK.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 3   METHODOLOGY

The overall investigation was carried out in two distinct but linked phases, each taking approximately a year to complete.

Part I   **The Quantitative Exercise**   (undertaken during 1994)

Part II   **The Qualitative Exercise**   (undertaken during 1995)

3.1   Part I   The Quantitative Study

Part I of this work involved collecting information by means of questionnaires sent to admissions tutors in all colleges and universities in the United Kingdom where there were undergraduate programmes in hospitality management or hotel and catering management.

The aims of this part of the investigation were:-

1.   To document the extent of the enrolment of adult learners on Hotel and Catering Management degree courses in the UK.

2.   To examine the relationship between entry requirements, institutional support and completion of courses.

3.   To provide data to help design a strategy for collecting information in Part II, the qualitative section.

The design, distribution, collection and analysis of the results of the questionnaire took the best part of a year from January 1994 to January 1995.

The questionnaire was sent to all Admissions Tutors in UK institutions which ran undergraduate degree programmes in Hospitality Management. Three and four year programmes only were included in the survey, one year top-up

degrees were excluded. All targeted programmes were full-time courses with the exception of one part-time degree at the University of Ulster. Questionnaires were initially sent out in April 1994 asking for information relating to the academic year 1993/94 and having a cut off date of 1 April 1994. For example Question 23 (see Appendix 1), states "as at 1 April 1994, how many mature students are enrolled on each year of the course?"

Subsequently, second and third requests for information from tutors who had not responded were sent out in May and June 1994 respectively.

Relevant degree programmes were identified using HCIMA data (HCIMA 1993, document 93/144). The geographic location of the institutions is shown on maps in Chapter one (Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

The questionnaire (see Appendix Item 1) was designed to satisfy aims 1 and 2 of the study.

The first part collected information concerning course entry requirements.

The second part was designed to collect information concerning the institutional support system which may be provided for mature students.

The third part attempted to quantify the numbers of mature students in the various years of the course.

A pilot study was conducted using four degree course directors at Cardiff Institute. They were asked to complete the questionnaire, assuming it was for their own course and to suggest possible improvements, deletions and

additions. As a result of the pilot study a small number of valuable modifications were incorporated into the questionnaire design.

By August twenty-nine degree course tutors in twenty-six institutions had responded to the questionnaire whilst ten degree course tutors in eight institutions had not responded. This represented a response rate of 74%. In September 1994 it was decided to begin work on the coding and subsequent computer analysis of the data provided.

The names of the institutions and degree programmes for which information was forthcoming and which has been incorporated into the data analysis are listed below.

TABLE 3.1

INSTITUTIONS and Degree Courses included in the survey

	Name of Institution	Title of Degree Course
01	University of Ulster	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management
02	University of Ulster	BA (Hons) Hotel and Tourism Management
03	University of Ulster	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management (part-time)
04	University of Central England	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management
05	Birmingham College of Food Technology (with De-Montford University)	BA (Hons) Hotel Business Management
06	Blackpool and The Fylde College	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management
07	Bright University	BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management
08	Cardiff Institute of Higher Education	BA (Hons) Hotel Management
09	Colchester Institute	BA Business Studies (Catering Management)
10	University of Surrey	BSc (Hons) Hotel and Catering Management
11	University of Huddersfield	BA (Hons) Hotel and Catering Business
12	University of Huddersfield	BSc (Hons) Catering Management
13	Leeds Metropolitan University	BA Hospitality Business Management
14	London (Ealing) Thames Valley University	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management
15	London (Hendon) Middlesex University	BA (Hons) Hotel and Restaurant Management
16	London (Holloway) University of North London	BA (Hons) Hotel and Catering Management
17	Newton Abbot (University of Plymouth)	BSc (Hons) Hospitality Management
18	Norwich City College	BA Hospitality Management
19	Nottingham, Trent University	BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management
20	Oxford Brookes University	BSc (Hons) Hotel and Catering Management
21	Sheffield, Hallam University	BSc (Hons) Hotel and Catering Management
22	Wolverhampton University	BA (Hons) Hotel, Tourism and Licensed Retail Management
23	Aberdeen, Robert Gordon university	BA/BA (Hons) Hospitality Management
24	Edinburgh, Napier University	BA/BA (Hons) Hospitality Management
25	Edinburgh, Queen Margaret College	BA Hospitality Enterprise with Tourism
26	Glasgow, Caledonian University	BA/BA (Hons) Hospitality Management
27	Glasgow, University of Strathclyde	BA/BA (Hons) Hotel and Catering Management
28	Paisley University	BSc Quality Management and Technology for Hospitality
29	Duncan of Jordanstone College (with University of Dundee)	MA (Hons) Hotel and Catering Management

The data derived from the admissions tutor survey was coded and analysed using the statistical software package "Minitab" (PC version). This package allowed for vast possibilities regarding data manipulation i.e. from the quantification of basic results to cross tabulations and more complex statistical analysis. For reporting purposes, the software packages "Microsoft Excel, version 3.0", "Microsoft Draw, version 1.0" and "Cricket Graph" have been used for the graphics presentation.

3.2 Methodology for Part II The Qualitative Study

Some data collected during the quantitative study related specifically to the Year 1 cohort of students and those students, now in the second year of their programmes became the focus of interest in this part of the work.

The second part of the research was undertaken during the period April to November 1995 and was concerned with gathering data from 5 institutions who had previously responded to the Stage - one questionnaire.

The exact location of the institutions are not revealed in this study, to protect anonymity but five universities in the following regions took part :

- An institution in Scotland
- An institution in Wales and the West
- An institution in London
- An institution in the Midlands
- An institution in the South

The exercise was divided into 2 qualitative phases.

(a)   In depth interviews with course directors at all 5 institutions.

(b)   A mature student satisfaction survey and focus group discussion with small groups of adult learners at 4 of the above 5 institutions. (The South institution was excluded due to unforeseen unavailability of students at time of visit).

The over-riding aim of this stage of the research was to establish what both course directors and mature students themselves perceived as important issues concerning their educational experience and to evaluate any differences in such perception. In addition, to suggest what possible changes to institutional policy and practice could be made to help the students. The research objectives were thus:

(a)   **With course directors**

   (i)   To corroborate the data collected from the admissions tutors survey in the quantitative study.
   (ii)   To establish issues which academic staff saw as enhancing or detracting from the quality of the mature undergraduate experience.
   (iii) To document attitudes of course directors concerning the recruitment of mature students.
   (iv)   To consider what strategies existed in institutions for helping mature students.

(b)   **With small groups of mature undergraduates**

   (i)   To establish what aspects of their educational experience mature students perceived as GOOD and BAD.
   (ii)   To summarise mature student opinion overall with a view to making recommendations to institutions for "fine-tuning" their courses.

(c)   **Through post-interview analysis**

   (i)   To establish if there is a difference in what course directors and mature students perceived as important issues.

It must be emphasised that both parts constitute a _qualitative_ research exercise, concerned with answering the question, "What?" and "Why?" rather than "How many?". When coupled with the Stage I quantitative survey, useful trends and inferences could be ascertained and viable conclusions arrived at.

It is appreciated that the group sizes were relatively small, however, the institutions and courses were geographically dispersed and differ in other ways and did form a representative sample of the total population.

3.3   Rationale behind the choice of institutions visited

All 5 institutions visited indicated that they had significant numbers of mature students on their undergraduate programmes in hospitality management. The institutions had comprehensively completed the admissions tutors survey form in 1994. Geographically the sample was spread across the UK and included institutions in Scotland, Wales and West, London, the Midlands and the South. The institutions had indicated their willingness to take part in this stage of the research. All students involved in the exercise were in the second year of their courses.

The Wales and West institution had significant numbers of mature students in Year II (over 30%).

The University in London had significant numbers of mature students and students from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds.

The University in the South indicated that systems were in place to recruit and nurture large numbers of adult learners.

The programme at the Midlands university was heavily biased towards mature students.

The Scottish university had significant numbers of mature students and was one of seven institutions offering degree courses in hospitality in Scotland.

3.4 SECTION A

In-depth Interviews with 5 Undergraduate Course Directors

Course Director Perceptions

The interviews were moderated according to a Discussion Guide, a copy of this is included as an appendix item (see Appendix item 2). In summary the following subjects were covered :

Mature Students drop out rate.

Segmentation of the total mature student market.

Particular problems that mature students experience.

Are older student problems significantly different from younger learners?

How can Institutions overcome the problems?

Mature students support systems.

Recruitment and entry qualifications for mature students.

Access courses.

Charter Marks.

3.5   SECTION B

A Qualitative Exercise with small groups of mature undergraduates at four Institutions

Mature Student Perceptions

The second part of this exercise concerned itself with eliciting information from small groups of mature students at 4 of the 5 institutions, namely a Scottish University, a Wales and West University, a London University and a Midlands University. Visits took place in May and June 1995 and involved groups of students in their second year of undergraduate courses in hospitality management.

The set of 4 discussion groups were conducted as follows:-

			Mean Age
Scottish University	Number in group: 6	Ages:- 24, 25, 26, 25, 25, 28	25·5
Wales and West University	Number in group: 8	Ages:- 35, 23, 28, 24, 23, 31, 23, 26	26·62
London University	Number in group: 4	Ages:- 26, 44, 22, 25	29·25
Midlands University	Number in group: 6	Ages:- 36, 45, 25, 34, 22, 22	30·66

The over riding aim of this exercise was to establish what mature students in the second year of their courses perceived as important issues. The research objectives were thus:-

(i)   To establish what aspects mature students perceived as good and bad about their educational experience.

(ii)   Through post interview analysis to establish if there was a difference in perception between what course directors and students themselves saw as important issues.

(iii)   To summarise mature student opinion overall with a view to making recommendations to institutions for "fine-tuning" their courses.

The chosen qualitative research methodology was group discussions (focus groups) because this permitted interaction between participants and thus stimulated dialogue about student needs and about whether institutions were satisfying those needs.

In spite of the relatively small group sizes the researcher felt that the students formed a representative sample of the whole population and that it is possible to establish some trends across the 4 institutions visited.

The overall exercise constituted a Group Feedback Strategy (G.F.S.) similar to one used at University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) in its annual student satisfaction survey but amended to suit the needs of this particular study. There were 3 consecutive stages.

3.5.1 **Part 1**

Individually, and then in a small groups, students were asked to state "what is good" and "what is bad" about their educational experience at their institution. The researcher encouraged the small groups to develop 2 hierarchical 'agreed' lists of good and bad experiences. The forms used for this are included in the appendix (see appendix items 3 and 4). A range of issues was elucidated (see Chapter 4.3) and were subsequently prioritised (see Chapter 4.3.1). A summary of individual responses at each institution is detailed in Chapter 4.3.2 - 4.3.5.

3.5.2 **Part 2**

After the G.F.S. each student was asked to complete a questionnaire (appendix item 5) This involved rating the importance of 52 items.

"that over the last 5 years in several institutions, have been raised so often and so consistently, that they are now considered to be core issues"

(Student Satisfaction Survey, UWIC 1995)

Minor modifications to the questionnaire were carried out to take cognisance of the fact that all students were mature. The rating scale ran from 1 to 9. 9 = very important, 1 = not at all important. In addition all items could be rated twice. The first field being:

"- the importance to enhancing your studies"

and second field being

" the importance to enhancing your own sense of well being"

A P.C. spread sheet system was used to collate the data collected. For each institution the total score for each of the 52 items was established followed by a mean score for each item. (see Chapter 4.4).

An overall mean result for each item in both fields was also calculated by combining the results of all 4 institutions. This resulted in the production of 2 tables listing the perceived importance, in descending order, of all 52 items for both fields (see Chapters 4.4.1 and 4.4.2).

It is appreciated that such a merit listing is somewhat crude, nevertheless the researcher felt that some interesting trends could be observed.

3.5.3 Part 3

The third and final part of this section concerned with eliciting information from mature students was a short focus group discussion. The student numbers in each group were as follows:-

No. of students

Scottish University	6
Wales and West	8
London University	4
Midlands University	6
	24

The groups were moderated according to a discussion guide which consisted of the following questions :

1. "As a mature student, do you consider yourselves to be a special group with special needs?"
2. "Are these needs being addressed?"

Advantages of a Group Feedback Strategy

To summarise the methodology :

1. The researcher met with selected groups of mature students, such groups formed a representative sample. The students listed the best and worst features of their educational experience at the institution -

    (a) as individuals
    (b) in small groups (a consensus must be agreed by whole group).

2. Students rated the importance of 52 issues which have been raised repeatedly by students in higher education over several years.

3.   Students in small groups took part in short focus group discussions.

The advantages of this approach were as follows :

- It was student centred (the students defined the issues which were to be investigated);
- It was highly participative;
- It stimulated discussion;
- It was designed to achieve consensus;
- It was quick and efficient;
- The role of the researcher was neutral.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION
OF
DATA

CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION OF DATA

In Chapter 4 the researcher decided to present a descriptive account of the data collected during both phases of the field work prior to conducting any analysis. Such analysis is undertaken in Chapter 5.

4.1 RESULTS OF ADMISSION TUTOR SURVEY

The quantitative Study

RESPONSES

The questionnaire used in the study is shown as Appendix Item 1. Out of a population of thirty-nine potential respondents:

Twenty nine tutors in twenty six institutions responded.

Ten tutors in eight institutions did not respond.

10 did not respond/void questionnaires (2 at Bournemouth, 1 modular course at Brighton, 1 at Cardiff, 2 at Cheltenham, 1 at Surrey, 1 at South Bank, 1 modular programme at Manchester, 1 at Portsmouth).

- 74% response rate.

One year top-up degrees aimed at HND diplomates were not included in the survey.

Not all tutors answered all the questions. The number of respondents (n) is indicated at each question.

Information was sought about mature students on full-time degree courses who enrolled in October 1993. If they had withdrawn from their studies the cut-off date was 1st April 1994.

The following sets out the aggregate answers to each of the questions.

RESULTS

Question 3 At what age do you consider a student to be mature?

       25 respondents answered 21
       1 answered 24
       1 answered 25
       (n - 27)

The modal age was 21 years

Questions 4 and 5 Minimum entry qualifications for any/mature candidates.

(a)   Number of A level points needed   *Any* - Average 12, Highest 18, Lowest 6 (n = 22)
                                              Mature - Average 11.2, Highest 14 Lowest 0 (n = 7)

(b) Accept students with no formal
     qualifications?   Any - Yes 4 [14%], No 24 [86-%] (n = 28)
                                       Mature - Yes 16 [62%], No 10 [38%] (n = 26)

(c,d,e,f)   Do potential students need (i) Maths 0 level/GCSE, English

Language 0 level/GCSE, Additional 0 levels/GCSEs, successful

completion of an access course?

See Figure 4.1
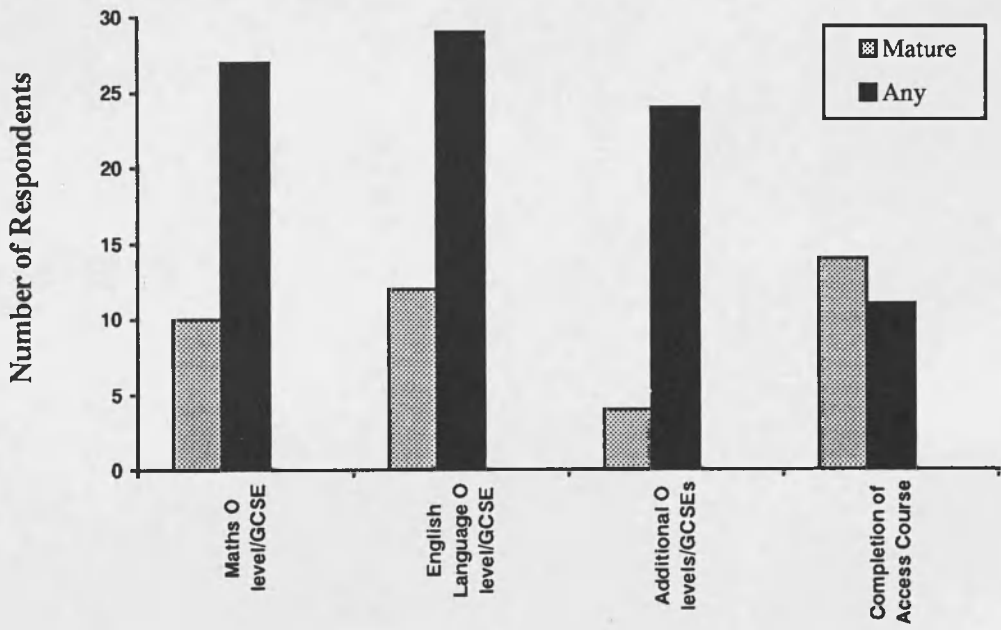
Figure 4.1 : Minimum Entry Qualifications for Candidates

Question 6   Is there an upper age limit for mature entry?

All respondents answered "no" [100%] (n = 29)

Question 7   If Yes, what is this age?

N/A (no respondent answered "yes" to question 6

Question 8 Do mature students need relevant industrial experience before starting the course?

Yes 21 [75%]
No 7 [25%]
(n = 28)

Question 10 For mature entrants, is industrial experience accepted in lieu of formal qualifications?

Yes 26 [90%1]
No 3 [10%]
(n = 29)

Question 11 Are créche facilities provided on site for the children of students?

Yes 15 [54%]
No 13 [46%]
(n = 28)

Question 12 Types of créche facility

See Figure 4.2.
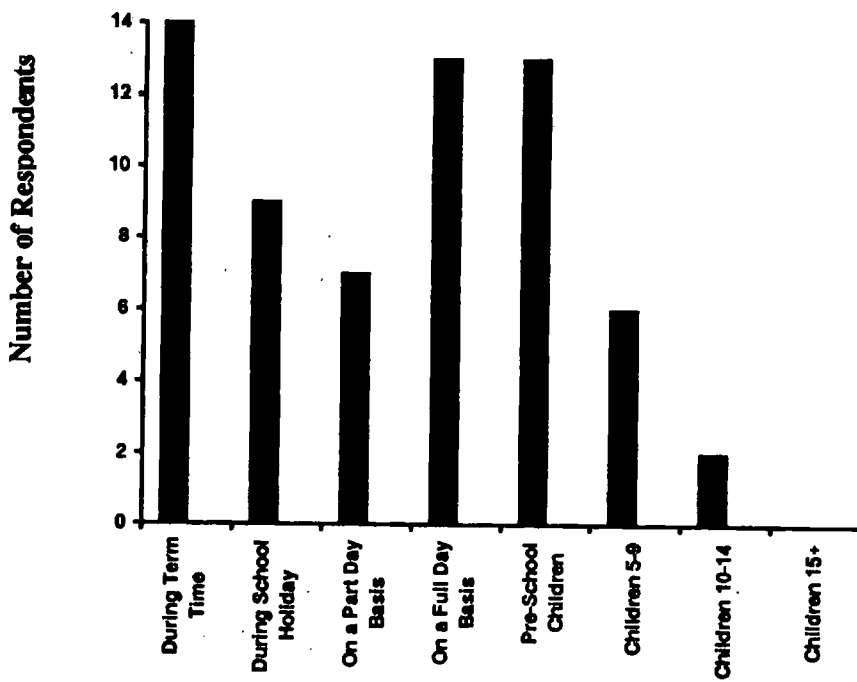
Figure 4.2 : Types of Créche Facilities Provided

Question 13 Does the Institution subsidise créche provision?

Yes 9 [56%]
No 7 [44%]
(n = 16)

Question 14 Is there a charge to the students for the use of créche facilities?

Yes 10 [71%]
No 4 [29%]
(n = 14)

Question 15 If Yes to Q14, please specify the charge

Only two responses - question void

Question 16 Has the teaching programme been modified to take account of the needs of mature students in respect to study skills, special tutorials, special consideration for work placement or scheduling of-timetables?

See Figure 4.3.
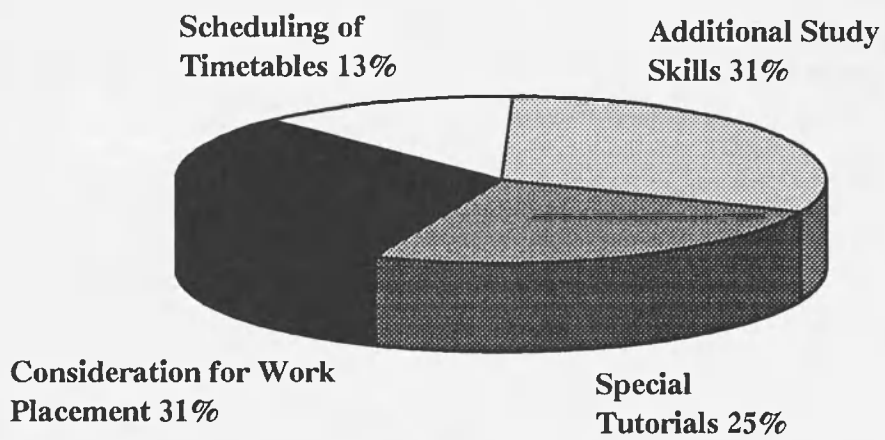
Figure 4.3 : Modifications to the Teaching Programme

Question 17 If study skills are provided for mature students, are they:

(i)   Provided as part of a programme of study skills?

                                                     Yes 19 [76%]
No 6 [24%]
(n = 25)

(ii) Provided on a one-off basis?

      Yes 13 [72%]
No 5 [28%]
(n = 18)

(iii) Is participation voluntary?

      Yes 16 [70%]
No 7 [30%]
(n = 23)

Question 18 If ongoing tutorials are provided for mature students;

(i)   Are they provided as part of the overall programme?

      Yes 9 [69%]
No 4 [31%]
(n = 13)

(ii) Are they on a one-off basis?

      Yes 7 [64%]
No 4 [36%]
(n = 11)

(iii) Is participation voluntary?

      Yes 10 [77%]
No 3 [23%]
(n = 13)

Question 19 Are mature students able to draw upon Access loans and funding through the Institution?

      Yes 20 [80%]
No 5 [20%]
(n = 25)

Question 20 Is there a mature student support group at the Institution?

      Yes 13 [50%]
No 13 [50%]
(n = 26)

Question 21 If Yes to Q20, who runs it?

See Fig 4.4.

Note: There were only 7 responses across the three categories.

Students Themselves
36%

Student Union
46%

Teaching
Staff 18%
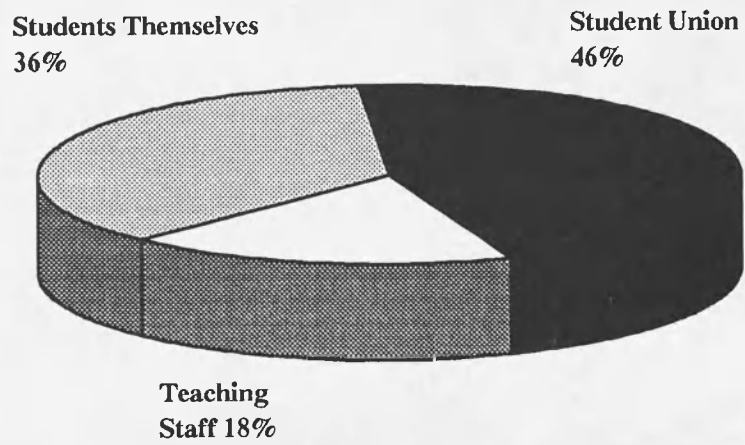
Figure 4.4 : Who Runs the Mature Student Group?

Questions 22 to 25   Totals of all mature students on the course, and how many students (all mature) have left the course since the start of the academic year.

(a)   Student totals (mature, others, total, and % of mature students in each year):

FIGURE 4.5.1

YEAR	1	2	3	4
Mature	215	139	121	81
Others	1231	1082	884	619
All Students	1446	1221	1005	700
% of mature students	15	11	12	12

n = 21

(b)   Student leavers (mature, others, total and % of mature students in each year):

FIGURE 4.5.2

YEAR	1	2	3	4
Mature	22	13	4	3
Others	92	20	8	10
All Students	114	33	12	13
% of mature students	19	39	33	23

n = 18

(c)   Leaving rate amongst mature students:

FIGURE 4.5.3

YEAR	1	2	3	4
Mature Students who have left	22	13	4	3
Total Number of Mature Students	215	139	121	81
% of Mature leavers	10	9	3	4

n = 18

Question 26 How many mature students starting Year 1 of the degree, had completed an access course?

Average 1.43
Highest 8
Lowest 0
(n = 23)

Question 27 Profile of Mature students in Year 1 of the course:

	Male	Female	Total
Absolute	89	91	180
Percentage	49	51	100

	White	Ethnic	Total
Absolute	145	35	180
Percentage	81	19	100

n =25

Question 29 How many mature students graduated in 1993?

Average 4.18
Highest 22
Lowest 0
(n = 17)

Figure 4.6 : Graph to Illustrate Correlation Between Qualifications/Experience and % of Mature Students Across All Years

NOTES TO ACCOMPANY GRAPH - FIGURE 4.6

This graph illustrated the trend between the percentage of mature students on hospitality courses in the 29 degree programmes surveyed, and the level of qualifications and experience required to gain acceptance to the respective courses.

The percentage of mature students on the courses was calculated by deriving the proportions for each of the four years of a course (by using the absolute totals in *questions 22 and* 23), and then averaging these figures to produce one value. This then formed the basis for the "x" axis.

The index of qualifications/experience was derived by taking into account the following questions:

Question 5b   Do you accept mature students with no formal qualifications?

Question 5c   Do potential mature students require Maths 0 Level/GCSE?

Question 5d   Do potential mature students require English Language 0 Level/GCSE?

Question 5e   Do potential mature students require additional 0 Levels/GCSEs?

Question 5f   Do potential mature students require completion of an Access Course?

Question 8   Do mature students need relevant industrial experience before starting the course?

With the exception of *Question 5b,* where a "yes" answer was recorded, one value was added to the index. In the case of *Question 5b,* all "no" answers were included in this exercise. The result was an index value between 0 and 6, which formed the basis for the "y" axis. Best described as an index of "ease of access".

The PC program "Cricket Graph" was then used to plot these "x" and "y" values onto a graph. The interpretation of the graph is explained on page 129.
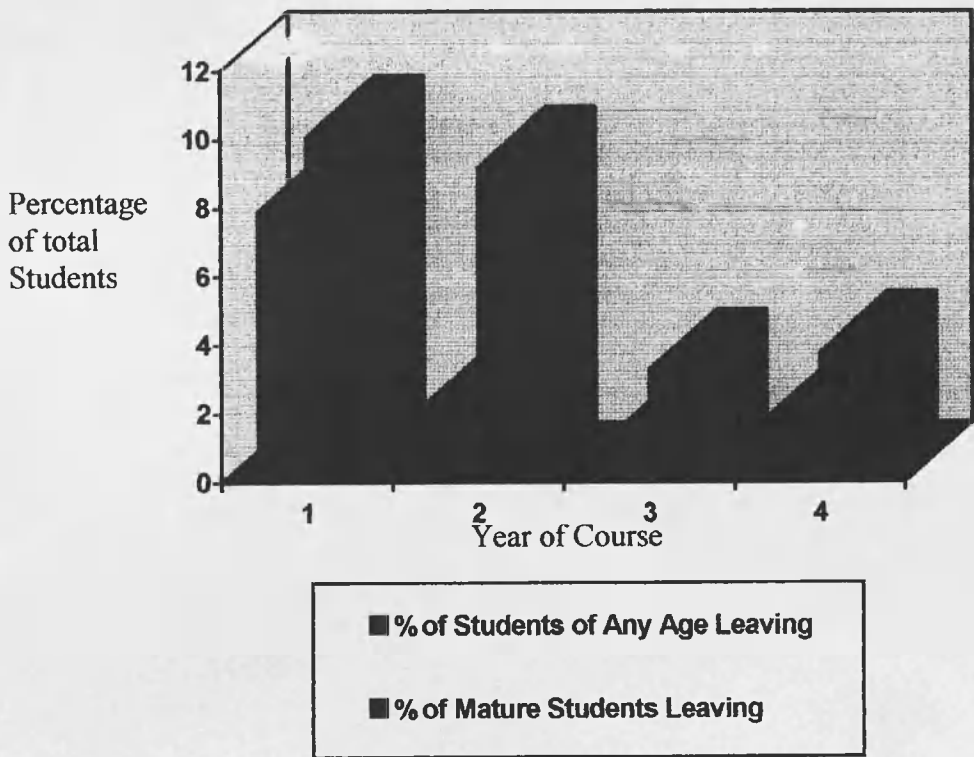
**Figure 4.7 : Graph to illustrate Proportions of Students
(All and Mature) Leaving**

4.2   RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE STUDY - SECTION A

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH FIVE UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DIRECTORS

4.2.1 MATURE STUDENTS DROP OUT RATE

Results from the initial quantitative study had indicated that mature students drop out of courses at a rate which is significantly higher than younger undergraduates. All course directors disagreed with this and felt that in fact the survival rate of older learners was <u>better</u> than younger students

"We have more of a problem with younger students, who start the course and then feel disappointed with Hospitality Management".
<div align="right">(Scotland)</div>

"Younger students may not give the same considered thought to their choice of course in the first place".
<div align="right">(Wales and West)</div>

"Maybe older students have more idea of what they are getting into, as far as the hotel industry is concerned".
<div align="right">(South)</div>

"Some of our mature students have considerable experience of Hotel & Catering work before starting and are less surprised by the technical content of the course".
<div align="right">(London)</div>

"More of our younger students enter through clearing and may have given insufficient thought to their choice of course. Older students have given more thought to their choice of course"
<div align="right">(Wales and West)</div>

"Mature students tend to live locally and don't have the homesickness problems in year one".

(Scotland)

"It is a far bigger culture shock for an 18 year old to leave home and start a course. Older people usually live in the area anyway and maybe find the work harder but they don't have to cope with as many other changes"

(Midland)

4.2.2 How is the market for mature students segmented?

All course directors agreed that age 21 was a false and arbitrary way of distinguishing mature students from others. In fact it was really quite difficult to put mature students into groups. Directors agreed that the level of entry qualifications could act as a divide as for most mature undergraduates the level of entry qualifications, in particular 'A' Levels was relaxed (see separate section on entry requirements). It was also felt that there were two types of mature undergraduate. Those who already had an awareness of the rigours of higher education and others that needed early care and support to initiate them into university life.

"Generally there are two types of mature student. Those who have been in higher education before, usually post-graduates and those who are doing a vocationally orientated course for the first time. The first group know the system, the second group, usually undergraduates don't, and have very different needs. The market is not really subdivided by age".

(South)

"Mature students with prior experience of Higher Education usually have the mentality needed for learning. First time undergrads need to acquire the right mentality for learning. They are disadvantaged compared to a youngster with 'A' Levels and need access to a central resource to acquire library skills and learning skills".

(Scotland)

"There is also a difference between mature students who may be sponsored by a company and those doing it off their own backs. The latter often face severe financial strain".

(Wales and West)

"21 is an artificial divide. The presence of a "break" however long in their education is a better indicator".

(London)

"We have students starting at 21 who are not really different from those of 18. Students over 30 or 35 usually have different needs and carry a lot more responsibility".

(Wales and West)

"Real mature students, the main markets are women returners and redundant men".

(Midland)

"Age 21 is an artificial point. There is a big difference between, say, a junior hotel manager of 25 years, single, with no money worries and maybe an 'A' Level and a woman of 28 with children and family who may have been out of education since age 16. The latter is under much greater pressure and will need much more help early on".

(Wales and West)

"Simply there are those that need support and help and those who are able to cope on their own".

(London)

"Entry qualifications are relaxed for older people - a major difference".

(Midland)

"Mature students at a university can be divided into postgrads and undergrads. With undergrads, there are those with an awareness of what is expected of them at university and those needing guidance and support to initiate them into university".

(South)

4.2.3 What specific problems do course directors feel mature students have?

All students experienced personal and academic problems but directors perceived mature students as having greater difficulty in certain areas. Financial and money worries were often exacerbated by the course length and changes in the student grant system. Most mature students lacked the level of formal entry qualifications of their younger colleagues but may have industrial experience in lieu of 'A' Levels. They may be very weak initially in study skills and whilst they have work and life experiences to bring to a course, they may be unable to use such experiences in an evaluative way. Directors generally perceived older learners as more conscientious who tended to get frustrated with younger colleagues especially in group work. They may also have to balance the demands of family, degree course and part-time work. This may engender feelings of guilt about neglecting partner and family. Directors commented that it was vital for mature students with partners, that such partners were supportive. In addition low confidence levels especially in Year 1 was mentioned by some directors. Mature overseas students from certain cultures may have particular problems integrating into course and university life. What was expected of them must be made very clear. Course directors are also aware of the annoyance felt by older learners when assessed work is not returned fairly promptly with sensible comments and adequate feedback.

"Mature students are more conscientious, tend to work harder, they get frustrated in group work because the younger students don't take it seriously enough. Also money problems!"
(Scotland)

"Low confidence in Year 1. Worried about not being good enough. Financial worries. Personal relationship problems, with female students, husbands sometimes get shirty. With male students, wives get fed up with the husband not earning money. Some older students have memory problems."

(Midland)

"Harder to get into group work because of external distractions. - Have to be home on time. They are often fathers or mothers with all of that responsibility. Money worries causes problems".

(Wales and West)

"It depends on their age, past 40 is more of a problem, academic life is not really what they imagined. The course can be too long."

(London)

"Financial problems and needing support. Many students are put off by the money side of things."

(South)

"Mature students bring their experiences to the course but often don't do it evaluatively. There are some problems in interacting with youngsters, especially in group assignments. They can be dogmatic and put up barriers, but not often. One woman in her mid 30's has used her work experience to really underpin her studies".

(South)

"Sometimes they are too subjective and anecdotal, in using their previous experiences as part of their course".

(Wales and West)

"The courses are often too long for older people".

(London)

"The redundant men on the course, with family responsibilities have pressure on them to return to work quickly - often the course is too long".

(Midland)

"Many mature students have part-time jobs to boost income, this can interfere with their studies and family life, but most younger students work part-time as well".

(Scotland)

"Older students sometimes have memory problems"

(Midland)

"Money problems seem more pronounced with mature students. This problem could get worse with changes in the mature students allowance".

(Wales and West)

"Low confidence levels early on. Courses are often too long for mature students".

(South)

"Financial problems with older students are very common. Many potential students are put off by concern about money".

(London)

"There are some problems unique to international mature students. Some male students from Saudi Arabia had problems with being taught by a woman. Some overseas mature students have problems interacting with technicians and younger students".

(South)

"Support of the partner is absolutely vital for a mature student as at home a wife may take on the role of both mum and dad if the husband becomes a full-time student".

(Midland)

"Guilt problems, neglect of family and kids".

(London)

"Two main types of problem, academic and personal and in that sense they are no different from youngsters".

(South)

"They can lack an awareness of what Higher Education is all about when they are often accepted onto courses with few formal qualifications, but they often have work experience in lieu of 'A' Levels. They can have serious weakness in study skill areas".

(Wales and West)

"Confidence problems and problems mixing socially and academically with younger students. They are often impatient about length of course and the attitude of their younger colleagues. They often seem more determined to get more out of the course, more quickly than youngsters. They can be very unaware of how to use the system to their advantage, naive really".

(Scotland)

"Overseas mature learners often have particular problems, culture shock, etc."

(London)

"They get frustrated by the system particularly annoyed by delays in handing back work with adequate feedback. Group work with younger colleagues - they need patience and flexibility to cope with youngsters".

(Scotland)

"Financial problems can be very severe"

(Midland)

4.2.4 Course Tutor suggestions for alleviating perceived mature student problems

Course Directors were aware of the huge range of ages, backgrounds, entry qualifications and past experiences which mature students brought onto a course. Thus very mature students would have different needs and expectations. Tutors felt that students with gaps in their study skills must be identified very early and remedial help offered. Modular degrees increased flexibility and allowed students to play to their strengths and put together programmes which built on past work and

academic experiences. The degree at university in the South contained optional modules in study skills which could count towards a final award. Tutors stressed the importance of a central resource within an institution to deliver library and learning skills. Tutors also stressed the importance of personal and year tutors in adopting a flexible approach and helping to engineer a careful integration with younger colleagues. Accreditation for Prior Learning (A.P.L.) and Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning (A.P.E.L.) could shorten courses. Such schemes granted exemption from some modules and from all or part of industrial work experience components. A.P.L. and A.P.E.L. in shortening courses could alleviate financial and academic strain. It was important that students were treated individually and a profiling system should exist to ascertain particular strengths and weakness such that help can be targeted effectively. In addition it was important to monitor progress with respect to such action. Other areas of a support system which needed consideration were; (i) The Provision of a créche, (ii) Flexible timetables, (iii) Mature Student support groups, (iv) Flexible assessment, (v) Representation on course committees. Such considerations are dealt with in the next section (Section 4.2.5). Central to all aspects of the alleviation of student anxiety seemed to be the presence of year and personal tutors and the development of useful channels of communication.

"We can help by operating on a more individual basis. By trying to integrate them into a cohesive group. I try to make allowances for them".

(London)

"A.P.L. and modular degrees which offer exemptions. Exemption from work experience due to previous experience can shorten courses. Student can "Fast-track" using the "pick & mix" modular programme and lighten the load".

(London)

"A.P.L. is a useful device to shorten courses. Courses are seen as far too long by many older people. Here they can cut the whole industrial year out".

(Midland)

"Two of the 3 students who were given major A.P.L. this year (and thus shortening the course by 25%) are over 30 years of age with wives and families. Such consideration will ease their financial predicament considerably. We must be vigilant into the future and ensure that previous work experience is the right type and quality or the quality of their degree will be compromised. Some mature students have gained module by module A.P.L. exemption, one mature student of 47 years, very considerable exemption".

(Wales and West)

"Exemptions for modules via A.P.L. does exist but not used a great deal at the moment. Students should be profiled to find out strengths and weakness early on. The tutor's role is very important. If they need help with study skills they should get this early on".

(Scotland)

The University in the South was particularly positive and enthusiastic about A.P.L. and A.P.E.L. Evening workshops were run by the university, once students had started their courses, to instruct them in how to put together effective 'Portfolios of Achievement' which were presented to the relevant committee. Such a system helped ensure rapid progression.

"3 or 4 years can be too long for mature students to be undergraduates. The University is piloting accelerated degrees which compress 3 years into 2 using Summer schools".

(South)

The University in the South had also constructed a distance learning programme for a proposed M.B.A. in Hospitality Management, starting, October 1995. Within such a programme A.P.L. and A.P.E.L. would be seen as very important.

"Mature students would thus need to consider their previous academic and other life experiences, and evaluate where they match module learning outcomes. Thus real benefits will accrue to mature students with appropriate prior learning".

(South)

"We must identify students with study skill problems very early on and get them help".

(Midland)

"We must help them to acquire the Higher Education mentality for learning".

(Wales and West)

"A central resource to import library skills and learning/presentation skills can be very useful".

(South)

"At this university 2 out of 27 modules needed for the modular degree can be study skills. Thus basic skills acquired can actually count towards their final award".

(South)

"The role of the tutor is vital in identifying weakness. Profiles and records must be used to monitor their improvement if study skill help is needed".

(Wales and West)

"Careful integration with younger colleagues. We must create an awareness of the needs of both".

(Wales and West)

"An active international officer, which most institutions have in place can help with overseas mature student problems".

(South)

4.2.5 Mature Student Support Systems

(i)   Créche facilities

(ii)   Flexibility with timetables

(iii)   Mature student support groups

(iv)   Assessment

(v)   Mature student representation on course committees.

(i)   <u>Créche Facilities</u>

The quantitative admissions tutors survey indicated that créche provision, on site, for pre-school children was quite poorly provided for in U.K. institutions. None of the 5 institutions visited had on-site provision. However, the research indicated that there were hardly any female students in the second year cohorts who had pre-school children.

All institutions visited had access to facilities on other sites. The University in the South, in particular, had extensive facilities 5 minutes walk from the faculty. Thus overall, whilst tutors agree that créche facilities should be provided at reasonable cost, if appropriate, the actual numbers of students who would need to use them was so low as to cause tutors to perceive the provision as low priority.

"We have had no students with pre-school children on the degree programme, to date".
                                        (Wales and West)

"Very few undergraduates on this course have very young children, those that do tend to be very local and leave them with relatives".
                                        (Scotland)

"We are almost ready to provide on-site facilities but very few undergraduates on this course have very young kids".

(London)

"No second year students on Hospitality Management have pre-school children".

(Scotland)

(ii)   **Flexibility with Timetables**

Generally, tutors did not take the needs of mature students into account when timetabling. The exception was Midland where all classes started at 10.00am and where the course is compact in terms of days per week. There were some concentrated days and some free days during the working week.

"No real cognizance taken of people who have to get the kids to school before attending lectures".

(Scotland)

"We do not consider mature students and any potential difficulties they may have when timetabling, at the moment. If individuals do have problems we can usually find ways around them".

(Wales and West)

"We will try and sort out students on a one to one basis if they can't attend lectures due to family commitments, but we need to make sure they are genuine cases".

(London)

"No classes start till 10. am. There is also afternoon flexibility with tutorials to allow students with children to get away, or students who need to work. The course is also compact in terms of days. In year 4 there is basically 2 concentrated days of attendance per week. Such flexibility must surely help mature students with other commitments".

(Midland)

(iii)   **Mature Students Support Groups**

Generally mature student support groups existed, run by the Student's Union. Course Tutors perceived them as "low-level" and were not particularly aware of them, nor saw them as having a valuable role. Rather it was felt, by tutors, that mature students would rather interact informally, as appropriate. The exception was the University in the South where there was a very active Mature Students' Society and a part time Mature Student's Adviser. The researcher noted that the notice board for this group displayed details of recent, proposed, government changes in mature student allowances. At South University, however 20% of all students were post-graduates and thus over 21 years of age, anyway. This was a higher percentage than any of the other institutions visited. It would seem safe to assume a relationship between the strength, power and influence of a mature students' support group and the total number of mature students, in particular post graduates.

"No group at this Institution"

(Wales and West)

"There is a group, but it is aimed at the "greying-group" much older students. Other younger mature students get together, as and when".

(Scotland)

"There is a group in the student union but I think mature students would rather interact informally".

(London)

"There is a mature society within the University, not particularly for this course. There is also a student services centre and shop that all students can use".

(Midland)

"Yes, there is a very active support group, run by the Student Union".

<div align="right">(South)</div>

(iv)   **Assessment**

All course directors agreed that flexibility in the approach to module and course assessment could help mature students. This was particularly so where students had little or no experience of 'A' Level examinations. Most courses were moving towards more assessment based on coursework and less on examinations and this was seen as beneficial to mature students. At the Midland university the overall degree assessment could be up to 85% - 90% assignment based. Also at the Wales and West institution examination length had been reduced especially in the earlier years. 3 hour exams were the norm a short time ago but have now been reduced to 1 hour 30 minutes or 2 hours.

"Assignment based assessment is a great help to older people when memory problems and the concentrated effort needed to sit exams can cause problems".

<div align="right">(Midland)</div>

"Here the assessment is approx. 40:60, exams: coursework with 2 hour exams where they do occur".

<div align="right">(Scotland)</div>

"Mature students who work conscientiously seem to express a preference for course work based and continuous assessment as it allows them to set their own pace, so to speak, and removes concentrated pockets of revision, which can be very stressful".

<div align="right">(Wales and West)</div>

(v)   **Representation on Course Committees**

Mature Students more than younger learners appeared to want a voice in the democratic decision making machinery of their courses and institutions. All institutions visited had student representation on course committees and other academic boards in addition to support committees such as library users. Tutors felt that mature students were keener to occupy such roles and often present more balanced and thoughtful arguments.

"Usually mature students occupy the places on our course committee and are often very reasoned in their arguments".
(Wales and West)

"They appear to want feedback on their work and other issues more urgently than youngsters".
(Scotland)

"Yes, there is a mature rep. at our monthly course meeting".
(Midland)

"Mature students can have representation on our Board of Studies and are often more eloquent in their points of view".
(London)

"Yes, mature students are very good on committees, are good at pursuing issues which affect them, like library opening hours".
(South)

4.2.6 Entry qualifications and recruitment of mature students

Some of the institutions visited had written mission statements which declared intentions to widen access, particularly for those from non-traditional backgrounds. Course booklets also stated that formal entry qualifications could be relaxed for mature candidates. The researcher was interested in ascertaining whether institutions showed some positive discrimination towards such people in consciously recruiting them and whether tutors viewed such students as a special group with special needs.

All institutions who responded in the admissions tutors survey indicated that previous work experience could be accepted in lieu of 'A' Levels, indeed, in some, even 'O' Level and GCSE requirements could be reduced to an absolute minimum. Such students may be very weak in study skills, which further reinforced the need for selective instruction early in the course and such initial weakness caused some tutors to characterise them as a special group with special needs. Three universities saw such students as a distinct group with special needs.

"It is essential that these students be integrated into the course as quickly as possible, whilst attempting to make allowances for them".
(London)

"It can be a difficult task to begin the process of getting the student to use higher level skills such as synthesis and evaluation and making useful judgements".
(Wales and West)

"Students with few formal qualifications should be screened to see if they need help with learning".
(London)

"We don't do such students, with few qualifications any favours if we don't give them the knowledge and skills to cope with a degree course. It must be done sooner rather than later".

(Wales and West)

"Such students bring valuable work and life experiences into the course but often not in an evaluative way - they needed to acquire the skills to question and use experiences in a different way".

(South)

All 5 institutions said they did not consciously recruit mature students but considered all applications individually on their merit. However, because entry qualifications are often reduced and in view of the fact that it is necessary often to focus extra care and attention onto such candidates the researcher wanted to establish if tutors felt that there was a degree of positive discrimination towards mature applicants.

"There probably is".

(Midland)

"Not really".

(Scotland)

"No, all applicants considered individually".

(Wales and West)

"No positive bias towards mature students".

(London)

All tutors felt it particularly important to interview prospective mature students with few formal qualifications. Such pre-entry interviews to determine evidence of motivation and to assess realistic chances of success take place. In addition a preliminary assessment of A.P.L.

application and to determine if extra study skill help may be required, were all seen as important in improving the survival rate of such people.

"The interview is particularly important and evidence of strong motivation is looked for - we are now quite selective".

(London)

"Strong motivation would be essential for non-traditional entry students as well as a lively interest in the hotel industry".

(Wales and West)

"Previous work experience forms an important part of our selection procedures for mature candidates, as well as the ability to convince us of a strong desire to do the course".

(Scotland)

"Mature candidates with few formal qualifications would be called for interview and we would try and establish the student's chances of future success".

(South)

4.2.7 Access Courses

Access Courses, usually of one year's duration have been progressively developed since the early 1980's. They are aimed at non-traditional entrants to higher education with few or no formal qualifications. Students must be over 21 when starting these courses which attempt to prepare adult learners for entry to undergraduate programmes and other courses.

At the 5 institutions visited all course directors were aware of such programmes and would be prepared to consider candidates who had completed them. At the 5 institutions, however, there were no undergraduates who had entered Hospitality degrees via this route. Tutor's perceptions of this route for entry was, that whilst Access

Courses may be significant in areas such as teacher training, hospitality degree courses had yet to experience significant recruitment from this source.

4.2.8 Charter Mark

The researcher felt that the concept of 'Charter Mark' was worthy of mention at this point. One university had recently been awarded their 'Charter Mark' and another was in the later stages of application having already produced its draft charter. The government awarded Charter Mark illustrates an institution's commitment to providing quality services and sets out standards of service. It demonstrates a commitment to implementing "user-friendly" systems.

The criteria involved in Charter Mark awards are:-

- Standards
- Information and Openness
- Consultation and Choice
- Courtesy and Helpfulness
- Putting things right
- Value for money
- User satisfaction
- Measurable and demonstrable improvements in quality of service over the last 2 years
- The introduction of at least one innovative enhancement to services without extra cost to the taxpayer or user.

Charter Mark is important for the quality of the educational experience to all students but course directors at two institutions, Wales and West and Midland, saw it as particularly important in terms of some of the perceived special needs and circumstances of mature learners in providing a satisfactory framework within which they can complete their studies.

4.3 Results of qualitative study - SECTION B

A qualitative exercise with small groups of mature undergraduates at four institutions

SECTION B Part 1

Student Perceptions of good and bad things about their educational experience

It can be seen from analysis of both the summary of group responses (section 4.3.1) and the summary of individual responses (sections 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4 and 4.3.5) that there are several common areas of concern and also positive issues across the 4 institutions. When issues are listed as "good" or "bad" then they are perceived as important by the students.

Initially students were asked individually to complete a form stating what was good and bad about their educational experiences at university. Then in groups the students had to complete a similar form having first reached a consensus.

Generally library and I.T. facilities were seen as very important and libraries were seen as under resourced at Wales and West and Midland as were I.T. facilities at London and Midland.

Student perceptions of course organisation and assessment was considered an area of concern at all 4 institutions and appeared to cause some confusion with students.

The approachability of lecturing staff was perceived as important at all institutions. Students felt that most, but not all staff were approachable and helpful.

There appeared to be an area of concern at Wales and West, London and Midland with respect to students receiving prompt feedback on assessed work.

There appeared to be some concern about inconsistency in the quality of lectures at all of the institutions and this related to a greater desire to understand the content of lectures and to develop a broader understanding of the subject areas.

There appeared to be a perceived inconsistency in the quality of the organisation and management of courses especially concerning exam timetabling. The handing in of assignments "bottlenecked". Students at Midland felt some of the assignments were constructive.

At all 4 institutions negative comments about wasted time featured. Mature students made the point that their time is precious and as such courses are too spread out. During a working week timetables could be more efficiently managed in favour of the student. At Midland and London some students may be taught on split sites and delays and difficulties with travel arrangements caused frustration.

Students at Scotland and Midland perceived the physical environment and campus as pleasant.

Generally, students at all of the institutions perceived their courses as having good modular choice and of being diverse in nature and that they were learning new skills. Inevitably there was dissatisfaction with some modules.

Student Perceptions of Good & Bad Things about their educational experiences

4.3.1   Summary of **Group** Responses in Decending Order of Importance.

Group consensus rankings.

GOOD THINGS

Scotland	Wales and West	London	Midland
Industrial Placement	Access to I.T.	Food and Drinks module	Good I.T. facilities
Development of transferable skills	Social contact	Off site, créche	Pleasant environment and campus
Majority of staff approachable	Personal Development		Pleasant lecture rooms
	Library Staff		Good audio/visual aids
			Main Lecture Theatre

BAD THINGS

Scotland	Wales and West	London	Midland
Inadequate facilities	Resources	Poor admin and module planning	Not enough computers
Time management of course	Workload schedules		Split sites
Organisation of course structure	Disinterest by some staff	Modules overlap	Poor library
	Lack of corrective feedback	Too much time spent on project presentations	Infrequent transport
Main catering module outdated	Inaccurate course handbook	Placement jobs, too low level	
Poor course image within University	Some modules un-related to industry	Poor computer facilities	
Course name	No industry links	Some modules not relevant	
	Lack of final year guidance		
	Exam timetabling		
	Assessment confusion		
	Lack of Library books		

4.3.2 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

SCOTLAND GROUP   No of Students in Group 6

Good Things/ Bad Things	Respondent Code	Response
Good	3	Pleasant environment
Good	1	Good opportunity (work placement)
Good	2	Experience on placement very valuable
Good	3	Placement, work experience
Good	1	Good friends
Good	5	Made a lot of new friends
Good	6	People I've met
Good	1	Contacts for future
Good	3	Approachability of staff
Good	4	Most staff are approachable
Good	1	Good practical experience
Good	6	A lot of practical experience
Good	2	Good language education
Good	3	Facilities
Good	3	Business orientation of course
Good	4	Student representation on student/ staff meetings
Good	5	Expanded my knowledge immensely
Good	6	Acquisition of a variety of transferable skills
Good	5	Now know my way around a computer
Good	1	Very pleasant campus
Bad	1	No grant, student loan to pay debts

Bad	5	Financial, didn't realise I'd ever be in so much debt
Bad	1	Poor assessment timetable (bottle necks)
Bad	3	Course structure

Good Things/ Bad Things	Respondent Code	Response
Bad	4	Course structure for 4 year not finalised yet
Bad	2	Assessment timetable
Bad	6	Structure of timetable
Bad	6	Assessment timetable
Bad	6	Lack of resources
Bad	6	Disorganisation of entire course at times
Bad	1	Poor time management by lecturers
Bad	2	No account taken of past experience in industry - therefore a lot of work patronising
Bad	3	Course structure and standards of teaching
Bad	3	Administrative background to the course
Bad	5	People's attitude to Hospitality - assume you want to be a waitress
Bad	6	Library - doesn't have fines system, difficult to get books back
Bad	1	Too many lectures from service departments (non hospitality)
Bad	2	Difficult to convince lectures that I'm working, not taking days off

4.3.3 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

WALES AND WEST GROUP   No of Students in Group 8

Good Things/ Bad Things	Respondent Code	Response
Good	1	Certain lectures and lecturers particularly well organised
Good	7	Good approachable course tutors
Good	1	Gaining indepth knowledge in certain management areas
Good	7	Subjects well covered, though some irrelevant
Good	8	Learning new skills
Good	8	Practical skills (kitchen)
Good	2	Good computer classes
Good	2	Students can enter Internet
Good	6	Use of technology
Good	8	Learning how to use a computer
Good	2	Library works brilliantly
Good	5	I.T. and accommodation studies
Good	5	Student exchange programme with Europe
Good	1	Opportunity to change career direction
Good	6	Responding to challenge of work and study
Good	8	Meeting new people and friends
Good	6	Interaction with some lecturers

Good	6	Broadening of outlook and mind
Good	6	Introduction to subject areas
Good	8	Having to research and learn for assignments
Good	8	Have enjoyed the last 3 years
Bad	1	Lack of verbal feedback on Assignment / Seminar work
Bad	4	Lack of communication between staff and students
Bad	2	No feedback on work
Bad	8	Could not approach some staff
Bad	1	Some poor quality lectures and lecturers, some lack knowledge and authority
Bad	1	Ill conceived assignments
Bad	3	Poor quality teaching
Bad	4	Poor lecturing
Bad	4	Lack of staff interest
Bad	5	Some lecturers out of touch
Bad	7	Subject lecturers, good in the main but some difficult to approach
Bad	2	Time scheduling not very organised
Bad	4	Poor timetabling
Bad	3	Lack of library books
Bad	3	Bad timing of issuing coursework
Bad	4	Lack of books

Bad	5	Library has not got enough books
Bad	7	Library and careers service poor
Bad	6	Negative attitude of younger students to high marks
Bad	7	Some lecturer favouritism
Bad	8	Being a mature student and treated like I've just left school
Bad	7	Inconsistent grading of work
Bad	6	Many areas could be covered in less time
Bad	6	Need for more interaction with similar age groups
Bad	6	Mature students who want to learn affected by poor control of badly behaved students
Bad	8	No help with finding work
Bad	8	Work experience didn't take account of my age, marital status and experience
Bad	7	No help with finding a job

4.3.4 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

LONDON GROUP		No of Students in Group 5
Good Things/ Bad Things	Respondent Code	Response
Good	2	Good library
Good	5	Good resources
Good	5	Some helpful lecturers
Good	4	Very helpful lecturers
Good	3	Very interesting lectures
Good	3	Diverse course
Good	1	Gain respect because of maturity
Good	1	No pressure to excel in class as a mature student
Good	3	Diverse degree
Good	4	Emphasis on team work
Good	4	Modular degree
Good	1	Cheap University Bus system between sites
Bad	1	Timetable not flexible enough
Bad	1	Early morning lectures inconvenient for parents
Bad	2	Bulk lecture scheme 300+ bad
Bad	2	Lack of lab facilities
Bad	5	Some irrelevant lectures
Bad	5	Language problems, difficult to pick up some information

Bad	4	Limited options
Bad	4	One lecturer difficult to contact
Bad	2	Modules don't link
Bad	2	Disjointed admin, poor communication
Bad	2	Time wasted due to lecture/seminar split
Bad	3	Too much free time
Bad	3	Not enough importance placed on 1st year
Bad	3	Not very personal relationships between student and lecturer
Bad	4	Practical subjects taught off site – travel problems
Bad	2	Better assessment feedback needed
Bad	5	Lack of communication with lectures
Bad	5	Split site problems
Bad	4	Lack of communication with staff
Bad	4	Split sites - travelling
Bad	5	Poor library
Bad	3	Poor assessed work feedback
Bad	1	Lack of compulsory I.T. lectures

4.3.5 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES
MIDLAND GROUP

No of Students in Group 6

Good Things/ Bad Things	Respondent Code	Response
Good	2	A lot of practical work
Good	4	The practical experience gained on course
Good	6	The practicals in Year 1
Good	6	Gaining on the job experience
Good	1	The course will further my career
Good	3	Gaining degree will enable me to pursue an MA
Good	5	Good module choice
Good	5	Constructive assignments
Good	6	The Industrial training
Good	5	Constructive assignments
Good	1	Assignments done at own pace
Bad	1	Split sites - lack of communication
Bad	2	Problems with being taught on 2 sites
Bad	2	Poor library on one site
Bad	3	Course too spread out
Bad	2	Poor communication with lectures
Bad	1	Lots of wasted time
Bad	1	Assessment bottlenecks
Bad	2	Inconsistent quality of teaching
Bad	3	Poor feedback on assessed work

Bad	3	Irrelevant modules
Bad	4	Too few computer lessons
Bad	4	Split sites - travel problems
Bad	5	Lack of constructive criticism

4.4 SECTION B PART 2

The Student Questionnaire (See Appendix Item 5)

Computer collation of the student rating (1-9) of the 52 items listed resulted in the production of 2 mean lists for all 4 Institutions. The lists rate the items in decending order of importance. (see Section 4.4.1 and 4.4.2)

With respect to items concerned with the importance of enhancing studies (4.4.1). The top 15 items related to items such as the provision of good library and I.T. facilities and the convenience and ease of use of library and I.T. facilities.

The quality of the student-lecturer relationship ranked very high as did access to teaching staff in a free and open fashion.

A third important area was the quality of lecturing in terms of students understanding the content of lectures. Receiving prompt and informative assessed work feedback was also very important to the student.

Achieving a balance between work and other demands was another student priority.

The above concerns could well be the concerns of all students and not just mature learners. An interesting finding was that some items such as crêche provision, mature student support groups, social activities and other issues such as the provision of special tutorials for older learners did not rank highly.

Concerning the second field which was concerned with items with respect to "The importance of enhancing your own sense of well being" (4.4.2). Support

systems aimed at helping mature students did not rate highly and as with the first field the top 15 items could well be the concerns of all students. The most important items are also similar to those listed for the 1st field, namely:-

- receiving feedback on assessed work and regular assessment
- the quality of lecturing and understanding lecture content
- achieving a balance between work and other demands
- library facilities
- an easy relationship with lecturers.

In addition both fields highlight the importance of developing independent study skills, using time productively and developing self confidence.

Thus in summary for both fields students perceived such issues as course organisation and assessment, teaching staff, methods and style, the provision of adequate library and I.T. facilities as well as their own self development as more important and perceived social life, student services, canteens, special help for mature students and the general university facilities as less important.

The items in decending order of importance

4.4.1 IMPORTANCE TO ENHANCING YOUR STUDIES

		GAV
21	Getting relevant information in the library	8.6
19	Understanding the content of the lectures	8.5
36	Receiving feedback on assessed work	8.1
17	Using the library at convenient times	8.1
16	Using Information Technology facilities	8.0
6	Developing independent study skills	7.7
42	Achieving balance - work/other demands	7.7
15	Being assessed at regular intervals	7.6
8	Understanding sequence and organisation of the course	7.6
9	Talking to staff freely and openly	7.6
1	Gaining access to teaching staff	7.6
32	Receiving guidance and supervision by staff	7.5
29	Developing a broader understanding of my subject	7.3
26	Using support material (handouts etc) from lectures	7.2
25	Receiving course information in good time	7.2
33	Using up to date equipment	7.1
4	Feeling physically comfortable in the classroom	7.1
7	Getting assistance from technical and support staff	7.0
28	Using time productively	7.0
23	Informally discussing course work with students	7.0
5	Increasing my self confidence	7.0
40	Broadening my experience and outlook	7.0

39	Being made aware of new concepts and ideas	6.9
41	Meeting work demands	6.8
31	Receiving well organised and structured tuition	6.8
34	Being stimulated by studying the subject	6.8
27	Interacting with others in tutorials and seminars	6.8
24	Ease of travelling to and from the University	6.6
22	Applying classroom learning to the workplace	6.5
37	Informally discussing work with staff	6.3
18	Getting Information on Information Technology facilities	6.1
49	Flexible timetabling	5.8
43	Paying my way/spending/budgeting	5.6
14	Learning tolerance of other points of view	5.6
20	Getting on well with lecturers	5.6
48	Having special consideration for work placement	5.3
44	Having base to leave personal property	5.2
3	Using Faculty Learning Centres	5.2
35	Socialising with other students	5.1
47	Taking out Institution Access funding/monies	5.0
11	Getting relevant info. on Faculty Learning Centres	4.7
12	Coping with disruptive building developments	4.6
30	Using canteen facilities	4.3
46	Having access to a mature students support group	4.1
38	Buying acceptable (cost/range/quality) food in canteens	4.1
50	Having special tutorials for mature students	4.0
13	Using Student Services (eg Medical/Counselling/ Careers etc)	3.6
51	Having lessons in study skills	3.6
2	Using the accommodation service	3.0

10	Joining societies and groups	2.6
52	Paying for child care or créche	2.5
45	Using on site créche facilities	2.3

GAV = Mean score across all 4 institutions

The items in decending order of importance

4.4.2 IMPORTANCE TO ENHANCING YOUR OWN SENSE OF WELL BEING

		GAV
36	Receiving feedback on assessed work	7.9
19	Understanding the content of the lectures	7.5
42	Achieving balance - work/other demands	7.2
15	Being assessed at regular intervals	7.2
6	Developing independent study skills	7.1
5	Increasing my self confidence	7.0
40	Broadening my experience and outlook	6.9
8	Understanding sequence and organisation of the course	6.7
34	Being stimulated by studying the subject	6.7
28	Using time productively	6.6
39	Being made aware of new concepts and ideas	6.6
21	Getting relevant information in the library	6.6
29	Developing a broader understanding of my subject	6.6
41	Meeting work demands	6.4
37	Informally discussing work with staff	6.4
9	Talking to staff freely and openly	6.4
43	Paying my way / spending / budgeting	6.3

7	Getting assistance from technical and support staff	6.2
49	Flexible timetabling	6.1
23	Informally discussing course work with students	6.1
24	Ease of travelling to and from the University	6.0
25	Receiving course information in good time	6.0
17	Using the library at convenient times	6.0
48	Having special consideration for work placement	6.0
35	Socialising with other students	5.9
4	Feeling physically comfortable in the classroom	5.9
33	Using up to date equipment	5.8
32	Receiving guidance and supervision by staff	5.7
26	Using support material (handouts etc) from lectures	5.7
14	Learning tolerance of other points of view	5.4
27	Interacting with others in tutorials and seminars	5.4
31	Receiving well organised and structured tuition	5.4
20	Getting on well with lecturers	5.3
44	Having base to leave personal property	5.3
16	Using Information Technology facilities	5.2
1	Gaining access to teaching staff	5.0
22	Applying classroom learning to the workplace	5.0
18	Getting Information on Information Technology facilities	4.4
3	Using faculty Learning Centres	4.4
50	Having special tutorials for mature students	4.4
13	Using Student Services (eg Medical/Counselling/ careers etc)	4.3
11	Getting relevant info. on Faculty Learning Centres	4.2
47	Taking out Institution Access funding/monies	4.2
38	Buying acceptable (cost/range/quality) food in canteens	4.1

51	Having lessons in study skills	3.7
2	Using the accommodation service	3.6
10	Joining societies and groups	3.5
12	Coping with disruptive building developments	3.5
30	Using canteen facilities	3.4
46	Having access to a mature students support group	3.2
45	Using on site créche facilities	1.9
52	Paying for child care or créche facilities	1.9

GAV = Mean score across all 4 institutions.

4.5 SECTION B Part 3

Results of Mature Student Focus Group Discussions

4.5.1 It became apparent that each group of mature students did not want to be seen as particularly different from younger students and did not want to be perceived as a separate group within their overall cohorts.

"We don't really want to be singled out for special treatment because of our age"

(Wales and West student)

"I think we integrate quite well with the young people most of our problems are their problems too"

(London student)

"It's embarrassing if other students think you are getting preferential treatment"

(Scotland student)

"I don't want to be thought of as different because of my age"

(Midland student)

"Our problems are the same as any student".

(London student)

4.5.2 Nevertheless, the students felt that some degree of separateness based on age was apparent.

"I remember the relief I felt on the first day when I met Jane age 23".

(Scotland student)

"What the youngsters talk about is completely different".

(Wales and West student)

"Being at work before you come here helps you get things into perspective".

(Scotland student)

"Mature students must be flexible and versatile or they won't stay".

(Midland student)

"You have to dilute your personality, back off, or you offend younger people".

(Midland student)

"Sometimes I think, hold on, a bit of respect here wouldn't go amiss, I am a mature student".

(Wales and West, student)

"Here they cater for young students, there is little co-operation with those who are mature".

(London, student)

4.5.3   Mature students perceived one of the biggest differences between them and younger students to be the mature students greater dedication to their studies. This sometimes caused problems in group work where a difference in attitude and urgency about completing tasks can lead to frustration.

"I try to be positive, I find it difficulty to cope with the negativity of some young people".

(Scotland student)

"Group work with younger students sometimes leads to problems".

(Wales and West student)

"In group assignments I have to be a little careful what I say and not to be too dogmatic so as not to offend the younger people".

(London student)

"Mature students seem more determined"

<div align="right">(Midland student)</div>

"We seem to achieve more in less time"

<div align="right">(Scotland student)</div>

"Most mature students work harder than youngsters who put their social life first".

<div align="right">(Wales and West student)</div>

4.5.4   Overall mature students did not feel a sense of discrimination either in a positive or negative way.

"There is no discrimination against mature students".

<div align="right">(London student)</div>

"I haven't come up against a situation where my age has been a problem or barred me from anything".

<div align="right">(Wales and West student)</div>

"I think we intimidate some of the lecturers but no one has a down on us due to our age".

<div align="right">(Midland student)</div>

"The staff have been great, age does not come into it".

<div align="right">(Scotland student)</div>

4.5.5   Mature students did have problems but many are similar to those of younger colleagues. In particular financial problems often compounded by the length of courses and resource problems concerning library and I.T. facilities and obtaining assessed work feedback.

"It's a huge shock living on a grant rather than wages".

<div align="right">(Scotland student)</div>

"Most students have to work as well as study. I'll survive as long as the money holds out, but I guess its the same for all students".

(Midland student)

"Pressure of study caused by the need to earn extra money - you get used to having a lifestyle - mortgages just don't go away".

(Wales and West student)

"I'm in real debt now, a shorter course might help".

(Scotland student)

"Most mature students have to earn extra money".

(London student)

"Its time that matters, too much time off, I want to get it over with".

(Midland student)

"I'm only here for the qualification. You have got to get letters after your name these days".

(Midland student)

"The holidays are too long, I'd like to shorten the course and get it over quicker".

(Wales and West student)

"Mature students must be adaptable or they won't survive and 3 or 4 years is a long time".

(Scotland student)

"Money problems are major, we are on our own now, we don't have Mum and Dad to help us out".

(Wales and West student)

"Cut down the length of the course, its too long for mature students and the first year is too juvenile".

(Wales and West student)

"More books needed in the library".

(Wales and West student)

"The library could be much improved and there are not enough computers".

<div align="right">(Midland student)</div>

"Not enough computers".

<div align="right">(London student)</div>

"More feedback needed".

<div align="right">(Midland student)</div>

"Marked work needs more constructive comments".
<div align="right">(Wales and West student)</div>

"Assessment comments and feedback needs to be faster and more comprehensive".

<div align="right">(Scotland student)</div>

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF
MAIN FINDINGS
AND
DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 5   SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

This chapter considers and links the findings of the 1994 quantitative study and the 1995 qualitative study. Where necessary reference is made to the appropriate literature. To aid clarity of expression the 1994 quantitative admissions tutors survey is referred to as the "1994" study.

5.1   COURSE DIRECTOR PERCEPTIONS

5.1.1 Course directors subjectively felt that the drop out rate of mature students was less than younger students. It was felt that this was due to the greater consideration given to the choice of course, before starting. In addition older students were more aware of what to expect in terms of the technical content of the courses, as they often had considerable work experience in the hospitality industry. Mature students also tended to live more locally and not experience the early homesickness problems of their younger colleagues. (see section 4.2.1)

Tutor confidence in older learners was in reality, misplaced. The 1994 study (Figure 4.7) showed that the proportion of mature students who left courses before completion was significantly greater than the rate for all students. This was especially the case in the later years of courses which seemed to indicate that older learners found three and four year programmes too long. This confirmed that findings of the CVCP (1995) report which indicated that mature student drop out rates were outpacing growth in mature student numbers for the first time.

5.1.2 It was quite difficult to put mature students into categories. The 1994 study indicated that virtually all institutions considered a "mature"

student to be 21 years of age before starting a course, however, all directors agreed that using age 21 was a false and misleading way of distinguishing mature students from others. The level of entry qualifications could act as a divide as for most mature candidates such qualifications, in particular 'A' Levels were relaxed. It was also felt that the total market split into 2 groups in that some mature undergraduates already had an awareness or experience of the rigours of higher education and others had not. The latter needed early care and support to initiate them into university life. Generally students over 30 carried greater family responsibility than younger mature students. (see Section 4.2.2).

5.1.3   Mature students experience academic and personal problems as do younger students but course directors perceived mature students as having greater difficulties in certain areas.

Often with few formal entry qualifications mature entrants can have serious weakness in study skill areas such as, note taking, essay writing, report writing, etc. Figure 4.1 illustrated that minimum entry qualifications can be much less for mature students. The 1994 study showed that 62% of institutions (n = 26) would accept students with no formal qualifications at all. Ninety percent of institutions (n = 29) indicated that, for mature students, industrial work experience could be accepted in lieu of formal qualifications.

An investigation of a possible relationship between qualification/ experience and the percentage of mature students across all years of courses was undertaken (see Figure 4.6 and Tables 4.5.1, 4.5.2 and 4.5.3). The variable on the χ axis was the percentage of mature

students on courses (n = 29 courses). The variable on the γ axis was an index of student qualifications and experience, called an ease of access index.

The result of this exercise was to conclude that there is only a weak relationship in a converse to the expected direction between the number of mature students on courses and the level of their various types of pre-entry qualifications/experience. The association would appear to be explained by factors other than "ease of access", probably regional demographic factors.

Mature students often entered courses with industrial experience in lieu of 'A' Levels. They brought work and life experiences onto the course, but often not in an evaluative way. The 1994 study indicated that 75% of admissions tutors (n = 28) saw previous relevant industrial experience as an important pre-requisite for mature applicants.

There could be some frustration or conflict with younger colleagues whom are sometimes perceived as not keen or hardworking enough. This could cause particular problems in mixed group work and group assignments. Overall, directors felt mature students are more conscientious about their study.

Some mature students lacked confidence especially in Year I.

Some mature students had quite severe financial problems and often needed to balance the demands of family, course and a part time job. Financial problems were cited in the literature as the primary source of anxiety for adult learners (CVCP, 1995; McGivney, 1992; Hollinshead

and Griffith, 1990). Courses lasting 3 - 4 years were sometimes seen as too long and can exacerbate financial strain. Such problems have intensified with the abolition of Mature Student Allowances and changes in the student grant system (UCAS, 1996; Edwards, 1993).

Course directors were aware of some older learners who suffer feelings of guilt concerning neglect of partner and or family. It was very important that partners of mature students were supportive. Many writers have made reference to the complex problem of mature students in personal relationships and the strain caused by having to give time to study (Smithers & Griffin, 1986; Woodley et al, 1987; Osborn et al, 1980 and 1984). Edwards (1993) considered relationship problems from a female student perspective and some of the psychological and sociological difficulties they encounter.

Mature overseas students from certain cultures may have had particular difficulties integrating into course and university life. They needed clear guidelines of what is expected of them. The role of the University's International Officer was considered very important here.

Course directors were aware of the annoyance caused to older learners when assessed work was not returned promptly with sensible comments and adequate feedback. There was a faculty ruling at the Wales and West university that all assessed work must be returned to the student within 2 weeks of submission.

Overall, course directors felt that older learners have academic and personal problems as do younger students, but perceived mature students as having a greater propensity for certain difficulties. In

particular (i) Study difficulties compounded by a lack of formal qualifications. (ii) Money problems compounded by family responsibilities and (iii) Lack of intellectual flexibility. (see section 4.2.3).

5.1.4 In view of the diverse range of students in terms of age, entry qualifications and past experiences, course directors indicated that a student profiling system which highlighted an individual's strengths and weaknesses would be very useful. Students with weakness especially in study skills areas must be identified and a systematic programme of remedial help constructed and implemented. Such help should come early in year I and could help boost confidence. Lovell (1989) advocated profiling early in a course to ascertain what help, if any, needs to be delivered.

The value of optional study skills modules which counted towards the final award could be considered and were already in place at one institution visited.

Mature students with appropriate experience could have their courses shortened. Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) could lead to exemption from both academic subjects and industrial work experience. Modular degrees increased flexibility and facilitated ease of application of APL & APEL. Such a programme of exemption may ease considerbly academic and financial strain. Such views are echoed by McGivney (1992), Lovell (1989), Moon & Hawes (1980) and Brookfield (1983).

Personal and Year tutors should be aware of mature students with academic and other worries and institution international officers obviously had a role with respect to overseas mature students.

5.1.5   Course directors did not consider créche provision to be particularly important in view of the very low numbers of students with pre-school children. About half of institutions actually provide on-site facilities. (see Section 4.2.5(i)). Small group interviews held by the researcher at 4 institutions during 1995, with mature students revealed that the provision of créche facilities was rated very low in importance by students. There appeared to be very few learners with pre-school children on the courses and in none of the institutions visited were there on-site créche facilities. It would seem safe to assume that such courses were seen as unattractive to women with young children and as such applications from such people were low. The issue of créche provision is important. The 1994 study indicated that 54% of institutions (n = 28) provide on-site facilities and 56% of institutions subsidise the cost of provision (n = 16). It would appear that the call by the EOC (1994 and 1995) for more adequate créche provision was very valid.

Generally tutors did not take cognizance of mature student needs when timetabling. They acknowledged, however, that a 10.00am start and flexibility with afternoon finishing could be beneficial to some. Also courses designed to deliver some concentrated study days and allow some free days in a working week may be to some students liking. (see section 4.2.5(ii)). Such findings were given priority by Hollingshead & Griffith (1990) and Cross (1981).

Course directors did not perceive mature student societies as particularly useful or well attended by students, rather that students preferred to interact on a more informal basis. (see Section 4.2.5(iii)). The 1994 study showed that 50% of institutions (n = 26) had mature student support groups in place and Figure 4.4 revealed who ran such groups. 46% of groups were run by the Student Union and 36% by the students themselves. Only 18% of such groups were formally conducted by teaching staff.

Course work and continuous assessment was seen as more in the mature students' interest than examination based programmes. Programmes are moving towards a greater proportion of assessment based on coursework. Examinations were seen as particularly stressful and generally the time lengths of exams was shortening, particularly in the early years. (seesSection 4.2.55(iv)).

Student places on course committees were often occupied by mature students. Such students seemed keen to occupy such roles and often presented balanced views. In addition they could be better than younger students at pursuing points of concern. (see section 4.2.5(v)).

Most institutions had written mission statements which indicated their intention to widen access to those from non-traditional backgrounds. Prospectus' stated that formal entry qualifications could be relaxed for mature candidates. Such candidates were generally viewed by tutors as a discrete group with special needs, especially in terms of the need for prompt help with study skills. (see section 4.2.6). Teaching programmes were modified for mature students, as appropriate, at many institutions (see Figure 4.3) with respect to providing additional

study skills (31% provide), special tutorials (25% provide), scheduling of timetables and consideration for work placement. In particular approximately three-quarters of institutions (n = 25) provided a programme of study skills and over two-thirds (n = 13) provide on-going special tutorials for mature students.

In spite of the above statement however, tutors generally felt that there was little positive discrimination in favour of mature candidates during selection and such candidates would be considered individually.

Selection interviews for such candidates were particularly important when tutors looked for evidence of motivation and tried to assess realistic chances of success. (see Section 4.2.6).

5.1.7 Access courses produced relatively few mature candidates who subsequently undertook degree courses in hospitality management. Tutors had yet to experience significant recruitment from this source. (see section 4.2.7). The 1994 study revealed very few students who had started hospitality undergraduate courses having completed Access courses. On average each course had less than 2 students (n = 23). There would appear to be a strong case for the development of initiatives in Access course provision for hospitality management (see section 2.4.6). Such courses may help considerably in the development of student study skills.

Charter Mark initiatives discussed at length at two universities were perceived by course directors as further evidence of a commitment to all students and in particular to providing a more caring, user-friendly environment for some of the special needs of mature learners. (see section 4.2.8).

5.2 MATURE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

From interviews undertaken with course directors it was established that tutors perceived mature students as having a greater propensity for certain problems. In particular (i) Study difficulties compounded by lack of formal qualifications; (ii) Money problems compounded by family responsibilities and (iii) Lack of intellectual flexibility. Addressing these problems would, without doubt, help to create a better learning environment for older students. The second part of the qualitative exercise involved eliciting information from mature students themselves via the Group Feedback Strategy (G.F.S.) and focus group discussions. The findings were interesting because whilst course director perceptions and opinions are very useful the "customers" themselves have a slightly different perspective.

Older learners perceived their primary concerns and worries to be the same as those worries common to all undergraduates. Such worries centred around issues such as:-

(i)   The provision of quality I.T. facilities and computers in adequate numbers.
(ii)   Adequately stocked libraries.
(iii) Open, pleasant relationships with academic staff.
(iv)   Receiving prompt and adequate feedback on assessed work.
(v)   Clear guidelines on all aspects of course management.
(vi)   Full integration of mature students in all areas of the course.
(vii) Financial concerns about supporting themselves through 3 or 4 year undergraduate programmes.

Thus whilst course directors saw mature students as characterised often by their lack of formal entry qualifications and thus weakness in study skill areas, sensitivity should be exercised in providing remedial help because the students themselves may not perceive such weakness as a priority problem. In addition any measures which might engender a sense of separateness must be handled with caution as older learners

themselves wanted as full an integration into their courses as possible. A discrete approach by course directors when seeking to help older learners was necessary.

As the provision of undergraduate courses in hospitality management has expanded across the UK provision has become more consumer orientated. As the number of non-traditional entrants generally and mature students in particular has increased, course directors have become more flexible in their approach and were taking cognizance of student's different needs. In effect they have become more 'user-friendly'. Such a trend should continue. In particular the Charter Mark initiative was very desirable in creating professional and unambiguous channels of communication between institutions and undergraduates. Mature students often had outside pressures which limited study time and as such needed clear guidelines on all aspects of the course and administration. Documents such as course booklets and other strategies for communicating with students were becoming more formalised and of more real use to the student customer.

Mature students wanted approachable, friendly and helpful lecturers and, as such, teaching strategies and styles will need to be even more fine-tuned and become progressively more helpful. The fieldwork undertaken in 1995 confirms that adult learners placed a very high priority on open friendly contact and guidance from lecturers at a more personal level than may have been the practice in the past, at University.

Prompt written feedback on written work was very important to mature students and the policy at the Wales and the West university of

awarding assignment grades within 2 weeks of submission was valued by the students.

Developments in modularity were perceived as good by the students who are often able to construct degrees to play to their particular strengths and previous experiences. This was very applicable to older learners who may have had previous experience in different areas of hospitality management. Such proposed flexibility was very much in evidence at the 5 institutions visited by the researcher during 1995. All had modular programmes which have replaced linear hospitality management degree schemes (allowing considerable choice and flexibility) and all had part-time modes.

The abolition of mature student allowances and changes in the student grant system was causing some anxiety amongst older learners. Financial pressures on undegraduates seemed to be ever increasing. Thus measures such as A.P.L. and A.P.E.L. which can considerably shorten courses are very welcome where appropriate. A 3 or 4 year programme can place great financial strain on mature students. At 80% of institutions (n = 25) mature students were able to draw upon Access funding and loans. There is obviously a case for allocating more funds to this area. Such funds, because they are administered by institutions could be targetted at students with greatest need, by staff who are best placed to observe their plight. The CVCP (1995) report noted that only 50% of Access funds requested by students are paid, providing a clear indication of unmet need.

From the study it appeared that few female mature students had pre-school children. Thus créche provision was not as important as the

researcher initially thought. A number of mature students in different institutions expressed the feeling that family issues such as child care would have been resolved before commencement of the course and that issues such as the provision of I.T. and library facilities is more important to these students.

The research strongly indicated that many mature students enter undergraduate courses with less formal qualifications than younger students. It would seem appropriate that tutors identify such students who are weak in study skill areas. This could be incorporated into a student profiling system. Help and guidance offered, however, should be delivered in a subtle, sensitive way, so as not to emphasise any feelings of inadequacy or difference from the main body of students, as the study indicated that older learners wish to integrate as far as possible with their cohorts and not be treated as special cases.

5.3   Student Perceptions of Good & Bad things about their educational experience (see section 4.3)

The group feedback strategy both individually and in small groups resulted in students listing good and bad things about their educational experience.

The provision of good IT facilities and computers in adequate numbers was perceived as very important, as was the provision of adequately stocked libraries. Students at Wales and West and Midland felt that their libraries were under resourced. Students at London and Midland felt I.T. facilities were under-resourced.

Course organisation and assessment administration was considered to be somewhat confused at all 4 institutions and highlighted the need for clear unambiguous course booklets and other instructions. The provision of accurate 'user-friendly' documentation and information is a primary area of consideration when institutions apply for 'Charter Mark' status.

At all 4 institutions students perceived the approachability of lecturing staff to be very important for their sense of well being and ability to undertake their studies.

Some concern was expressed at three Institutions concerning students receiving prompt feedback on assessed work.

There was concern at all institutions about the quality of some lectures with respect to students wanting to understand lecture content and develop a broader subject understanding.

There was some inconsistency in the quality of the organisation and management of courses especially concerning bottlenecks with assignment hand-in dates and exam timetabling.

At all four institutions students made some negative comments about wasted time and that timetables could be more efficiently managed in favour of the students. Teaching on split sites at 2 institutions caused some frustration with delays and difficulties over travel arrangements between sites.

Students at Scotland and Midland perceived the physical environment and campus as pleasant.

Overall students at all 4 institutions perceived their courses as having good modular choice and that they were learning new skills, although there was dissatisfaction with some modules.

5.4 Findings from the Student Questionnaire (see section 4.4)

Students were asked to rate the importance of 52 items which they perceived as important to enhancing their studies (Section 4.4.1) and to enhancing their sense of well being (Section 4.4.2).

The findings for both fields mirror those of the G.F.S. exercise. Areas perceived as important by the students for enhancing their studies and their sense of well being were:-

- Provision of good library and IT facilities
- Convenience and ease of use of library and IT facilities
- Quality of student-lecturer relationships.
- Easy access to teaching staff in a free and open fashion.
- The quality of lecturing in terms of understanding lecture content.
- Receiving prompt feedback on assessed work.
- Achieving a balance between academic work and other demands.

Support systems aimed at helping mature students (such as the presence of a mature students support group, créche facilities, etc.) were not rated as very important overall. Both fields highlighted the importance students attached to developing independent study skills, using time productively and developing self confidence.

Thus in summary both the G.F.S. and the questionnaire revealed that students perceived course organisation and assessment, teaching staff (methods and style) provision of adequate library and IT facilities and their own self development as <u>more important.</u> and perceive social life, student services, canteens, special help for mature students and the general university facilities as <u>less important</u>.

5.5   FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS
(see section 4.5)

Mature students did not want to be perceived as a separate group within their overall cohorts.

Some degree of separateness based on age was apparent.

Mature students perceived the greatest difference between them and younger colleagues to be the older learners greater dedication to their studies. This may cause problems in group work where a difference in urgency and attitude about completing tasks could lead to frustration.

Overall mature undergraduates did not feel they were discriminated for or against.

Mature student problems were generally similar to those of younger students. Financial problems in particular, often compounded by the length of the course and resource problems concerning library and I.T. facilities and obtaining assessed work feedback.

5.6 Research Hypothesis Revisited

It is appropriate at this point to restate the postulated hypothesis :-

"Mature students accepted onto hospitality management undergraduate programmes have a lower survival rate than younger students."

The primary and secondary evidence strongly supports the hypothesis.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 6   CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Government initiatives and demographic changes have been major factors in increasing substantially the number of mature students in higher education. Increases in both the provision of undergraduate programmes in hospitality management and the numbers of adult learners on those programmes has been in the vanguard of the total expansion. The overall profile of undergraduates has changed and for academic year 1994/95 mature students made up a third of full-time home undergraduates and less than 60% of admitted undergraduates had 'A' levels (CVCP, 1995).

In the past, when mature undergraduates were very much in a minority, Walker (1975) demonstrated that there was no significant difference in wastage rates between mature students and their younger colleagues. This study confirmed that by 1995 mature students were not surviving and completing degree courses as well as younger students. The drop out rate of adult learners on degree programmes in hospitality management was significantly higher than younger students especially in the latter years of courses. This mirrored and confirmed the findings of the CVCP (1995) report which indicated that mature student drop out rates across all courses generally, were outpacing growth in mature student numbers for the first time. CVCP (1995) and UCAS (1996) pointed to financial hardship as the main reason for dropping out.

This study found that degree course directors perceived older learners having academic and personal problems as do younger students but believed mature students had a greater propensity for certain difficulties. In particular :

- Money problems compounded by family responsibilities;
- Study difficulties compounded by a lack of formal qualifications;
- Lack of intellectual flexibility.

The research found that financial worries were causing concern amongst many older learners. Courses of 3-4 years duration could exacerbate them. Older Students' Allowances of up to £1,070 extra grant aid per year were withdrawn by the government for students starting courses from 1995/96 onwards.

> "Reasons for dropping out were difficult to disentangle, financial hardship and academic failure are often connected. Students fail their courses for economic reasons. They may be working their way through university and spending too much time doing a part-time job and not enough in the library."
>
> CVCP (1995)

The same report accused the government student support system of failing to meet the needs of mass higher education and believes that a fundamental review of HE funding, including student support is now urgently needed. Gamble (1992) talked of a government commitment to education, in particular management education but a commitment to expansion without resources. The qualitative study echoed this view.

Quality control procedures and "Charter-Mark" initiatives were positive steps towards a student orientated learning environment, and help to combat dangers inherent in a "quantity" led expansion. The author felt it important that institutions audit and check that such procedures and initiatives really do work for the benefit of the student and if not to amend them appropriately. A concentration on quality with respect to all aspects of courses especially lecture delivery appeared to be needed following analysis of some of the findings of the qualitative study and student responses. Some student responses indicated that they were less than happy with the quality of some of their lecture and learning experiences.

Course tutors and mature students perceive the good and bad things about their educational experiences in a different way. Course directors believed, subjectively, that the drop out rate of mature students was less than younger students. This was not

the situation in reality. The author felt that the reason for this misplaced confidence in adult learners survivability was that tutors perceived older students as more motivated and harder working and this clouded the issue. Also course tutors, isolated in institutions were not aware of national trends or mature student experiences in other institutions. It is also likely that vociferous mature survivers create a positive impression with tutors and mask the fact that some of the more silent students fail to complete. The author concluded that it was important that course tutors were made aware of the reality of the situation and the greater danger of non completion faced by older learners.

From interviews held with course directors, it was ascertained that tutors assumed that some mature students have characteristic needs such as a strong desire to join a mature student support group or to have access to créche facilities, flexible timetabling, flexible assessment and study skills tutorials. Some mature students, without doubt will find such flexibility and provision very helpful in creating a learning environment which eases the strain on themselves and their resources, however, the primary concerns and worries of older learners, appeared to be those worries common to all students.

Such worries centred around issues such as the provision of quality I.T. facilities and computers in adequate numbers together with adequately stocked libraries. In addition students considered that open, pleasant relationships with academic staff were very important for their well being. Prompt and adequate feedback on written assignments was also perceived as very important by these students. It was worth noting that at the Wales and the West university there was a ruling in the faculty which contained the hospitality management degree that all written assignments must be marked within two weeks of submission. Such practice was seen as very desirable by the students. Institutions should also provide clear guidelines on all aspects of course management

and documents such as course handbooks should be accurate, up to date and professionally produced.

Integration of all students was important. Mature students expressed the view that they did not want to feel isolated and treated as a special group but fully integrated into the main body of students. In this context mixed group assignments were of value but could cause frustration when mature students perceived younger students as not pulling their weight or appearing less motivated. Thus staff should exercise vigilance when conducting such exercises as peer groups of students could have great difficulty managing such work themselves.

Very few female mature students interviewed had pre-school children. Thus the provision of créche facilities was perceived as less important by the students interviewed. Indeed of the 5 institutions visited, only one had on site facilities and feasibility studies conducted at 2 other universities indicated potentially low usage. A number of mature students in different institutions expressed the feeling that family issues such as child care would have been sorted out before the commencement of studies. The researcher felt that because relatively few students on courses had pre-school children inevitably the provision of créche facilities would be rated low priority in the qualitative study. It would seem safe to assume that such courses are seen as unattractive to women with young children and as such applications from such people were low. From an equal opportunities perspective, however, McGivney (1992), Edwards (1993) and reports by DES (1987) and HM Inspectorate (1991) focusing on measures for widening access generally and especially for working class mature women, listed lack of adequate child-care facilities and institutional support mechanisms together with lack of staff encouragement and lack of financial assistance as the main factors which hinder progression for this group. The researcher concluded that institutions were not adequately addressing the needs of female students with

young children and that potential students should enjoy a greater degree of provision in terms of créche and child-care provision.

Financial worries obviously caused concern amongst many mature students. Courses of 3-4 years duration could exacerbate them. The abolition of mature student allowances and the framework for grant aid further increased anxiety about financial matters. Thus students saw APL and APEL and other measures which can shorten the time to graduation as very appropriate in certain circumstances. The National Commission on Education (1993) considered the value of flexible courses to accommodate mature student needs. It listed modular programmes, CATS and shortened degrees as particularly relevant. It became apparent during the course of the field work for this research that institutions have modified teaching, learning and support strategies, to a greater or lesser degree, to make life easier for adult learners. Suggestions for modification are comprehensively detailed in the literature. As mentioned in sections 2.2.6 and 2.4.2 McGivney (1992) felt student success depended less on subject than on a range of diverse factors and preconditions. She cites the following as particularly important :

1.   Systems of credit accumulation and transfer (CATS);
2.   Systems to accredit prior learning (APL and APEL);
3.   Good educational information and guidance services;
4.   Modular or unit based courses;
5.   Course timing and delivery that fits in with adult circumstances and needs i.e. part-time and flexible modes of attendance;
6.   Student support systems, in particular child-care (créche) facilities;
7.   Learning support systems, and special recruitment measures such as information days and open days aimed specifically at mature students.

Osborn et al (1980), Hollinshead & Griffith (1990) and NCE (1993) echo the importance of the factors listed above.

Systems to accredit prior learning and transferrable credit arrangements were particularly important. Lovell (1989) said :

> "With adults it is particularly important that new ideas which are to be learned should be related to existing aspects of the learner's cognitive structure".
>
> Lovell (1989) p.53

In other words build on what has gone on before. Aspects of courses such as module choices, industrial work experience and APL were very relevant to such a sentiment. Developing new clienteles of adult students has involved the recognition of and development of accreditation and assessment procedures for experiential learning (Moon & Hawes, 1980). The researcher concluded that institutions must progressively further develop and fine tune APL, CATS and all the other initiatives designed to increase flexibility. The development of shorter programmes and distance learning packages were particularly desirable where appropriate, especially within the context of the further development of aspects of student centred learning.

The research indicated strongly that many mature students enter undergraduate courses with less formal qualifications than younger students. It would seem sensible that lecturers identify such students who may have problems with competences such as note taking, report writing, essay writing, using references etc. at a very early stage. Help and guidance offered, however, should be delivered in a subtle, sensitive way, so as not to emphasise a sense of inadequacy or difference from the main body of students.

Access Courses

The fieldwork highlighted that mature students often had study difficulties compounded by a lack of formal qualifications. The number of mature students starting hospitality management degree programmes having first completed an Access

course was very low. In addition very few institutions included in the fieldwork ran pre-entry Access courses in hospitality management subjects. The researcher concluded that the development of pre-entry Access courses in hospitality subjects and study skills for appropriate mature students should be a priority either within the university itself or in feeder FE institutions. Completion of such courses may help to lower subsequent drop out rates. It was appreciated that such courses may extend the overall length of time to graduation which could be seen by many potential students as undesirable. Nevertheless where sensitive pre-entry interviews exposed doubt about the ability of a potential candidate to survive on a degree course, a third option, an Access course may be a useful alternative to a stark accept/reject decision. Access courses are vocational, transferrable qualifications in their own right and could be of use to students who decided not to enter degree programmes subsequently. The researcher felt that from an equal opportunities perspective institutions do not go far enough both in widening access to certain groups of mature students and in providing adequate support mechanisms to ensure their survival once enrolled. It is becoming apparent that equality of access does not necessarily equate with equality of opportunity.

The Hospitality Industry

The review of the literature indicated a strong continuing demand for degree educated managers for hospitality and related industries (HCTB, 1989; Foskett, 1991 and CBI, 1995). In addition the number of hospitality managers with degree, HND or equivalent qualifications was very low compared to British Industry overall and compared to European competitor countries (see section 2.6.3). There was a strong case, for the continued progressive development of hospitality undergraduate courses. Worryingly, however, Purcell & Quinn's 1994 study pointed to large numbers of students who did not take up positions in the hospitality industry post qualification. Writers such as Robinson (1992), Messenger (1991), Gamble (1992) and Umbreit (1992) debated how such education could be made more relevant to the industry it

serves, in particular the linking of hospitality education with business. "The future of hospitality education is dependent on the industry which benefits from it". Foskett (1991). Purcell & Quinn (1994) referred to the problem of "fit" between the products of the UK hospitality industry and the hospitality industry itself and provided a student perspective on the problem of the "fit".

This research has increased knowledge about the profile of hospitality management graduates and highlights the huge increase in numbers in recent years. The author felt that useful future research could be undertaken to provide an industry view of hospitality management education. The author speculated that the hospitality industry was not very aware of contemporary developments in higher education and felt that a study to gauge the hospitality industry's level of knowledge, together with its perceptions of undergraduate hospitality management degree programmes and the products of such programmes, could be a useful and interesting area for future research.

ADDENDUM

Subsequent to the oral examination in July 1996, the examiners recommended that the following issues be briefly reflected upon and added at the end of the project conclusions. The issues were :

    (a)   the process of the research;
    (b)   the nature of the samples;
    (c)   analysis;
    (d)   critical reflections on the methodology employed.

The author felt such issues best discussed in an integrated way though it will become apparent that all the points have been considered.

The process of the research started with the formation of the research objectives. Such objectives became established by linking a preliminary review of the literature

with the author's research ideas. The ideas crystallised from the researcher's personal experience of teaching mature undergraduates. The quantification of student numbers seemed a logical first step together with a collection of data which would enable relationships between course entry requirements, institutional support and continuation of courses to be explored. A questionnaire which turned assumptions into questions was constructed, piloted and amended. It was sent to admissions tutors in all colleges and universities in the United Kingdom where there were degree courses in hospitality management.

Subsequently a high (74%) response rate was obtained. Such a response was largely due to personal contact and common interests between the researcher and many of the admissions tutors. Some of the data gathered may have been obtained from UCAS statistics but an approach to this organisation revealed that at the time (1994) information available did not readily identify hospitality management undergraduates and issues about confidentiality concerning some of their information were also raised. On reflection the researcher concludes that the postal questionnaire very adequately addressed the need for a supply of valid primary data.

The main aim of the second research stage, the qualitative study, was to establish what both course directors and mature students themselves perceived as important issues concerning their educational experience and to evaluate any differences in such perception. With the students, the aim was to interview approximately 20% of all mature undergraduates in the second year cohorts. In the event just of 17% were interviewed due to the unforeseen unavailability of students at one university visited. Nevertheless because of the diverse geographic location (Scotland, Wales, London and Midlands), the diversity of students within the courses and the differing focus of interest within the programmes, the research team felt that the students did form a representative sample of the total population. In addition, due to the timing of the interviews (very late in the academic year) it was impossible to reschedule the visit.

Thus on reflection the same size and the quality of data gathered was sufficient to draw valid inferences.

A study about the differences between mature student sub-groupings would have provided some very interesting issues as would a comparative study between mature students and conventional entry students. To consider such areas, however, may have caused the research to become out of focus. In the future such areas could form the core of additional further study. With the benefit of hindsight, gender issues which were raised in the literature review, perhaps, should have been investigated more fully in the qualitative stage but again could form the focus of some further studies. In terms of data analysis, probably the main drawback of relatively small sample sizes is that more sophisticated analytical techniques enshrined in the "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" could not usefully be applied to this study.

The second part of the qualitative, group feed-back strategy (GFS) involved students in rating the importance of 52 items. The rating scale ran from 1 to 9. It is appreciated that this was somewhat arbitrary, however it did make it arithmetically easier to rank the overall results.

In summary, the researcher feels that the methodology contributed very well to achieving the overall aim of the study though perhaps with hindsight it could have been further shaved to focus more sharply on fewer issues. The nature of the content kept broadening the base and many tempting side issues kept appearing. In particular, the changing nature of the curriculum and the fact that it is apparently not matching the requirements of business and industry deserves thorough investigation in the near future. Overall, however, the author feels that the chosen methodology did indeed establish the validity of the researcher's approach to the collection and interpretation of the primary data.

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APPENDICES

CARDIFF
INSTITUTE
OF HIGHER
EDUCATION

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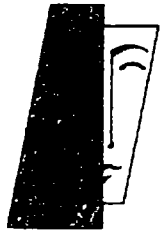
Our Ref: MH/BH

Your Ref:

Date :   June 28, 1994

Telephone:

The Course Director
Degree Course in

Dear Colleague

I would be very grateful if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire about Mature students on your degree course. I know we are constantly bombarded with such requests and they can be a nuisance, however, I am making a special plea for you to complete mine, as I feel the results of my research will be of real benefit to institutions that accept Adult Learners.

A while back I sent a questionnaire to the Admissions Tutor for the course and have not received a reply. I have now modified and simplified the form a little to speed up its completion.

My survey covers all UK institutions which run Hotel and Catering or Hospitality Management orientated courses. Most institutions have responded and I am anxious to obtain as high a reply rate as possible.

We are all aware of various initiatives including access courses encouraging Mature students in Higher Education in ever growing numbers. What is much less dear is their survival rate on degree courses in Hospitality Management and the extent of the ultimate uptake by the Hotel and Catering Industry of older graduates.

My M.Phil degree research concerns itself with an evaluation of the survival rate of Mature Learners on degree courses in Hospitality Management in the UK. At this stage of the work I am seeking to document the extent of the enrolment of mature students onto such courses and to examine the relationship between entry requirements, institutional support and completion of programmes.

I am a lecturer in Hotel and Catering Management at Cardiff Institute of Higher Education. Please feel free to contact me or ring me on (01222) 506425 or fax me on (01222) 506940. You will of course be most welcome to a copy of a summary of my findings .

Where two courses in Hospitality Management exist in the same institution, I have seat this questionnaire separately to both Admissions Tutors.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Martin Honey, BSc (Hons) MHCIMA

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY OF MATURE STUDENTS ON
DEGREE COURSES IN HOTEL AND CATERING MANAGEMENT

Please complete the following questions.

1.   What is the name of your Institution?

_____

2.   What is the exact title of the degree course to which this set of data refers?

_____

Please note: Questions 3 to 10 focus on the entry requirements for mature students.

3.   At what age does your institution consider a student to be mature?

_____ years

Please answer the next three questions concerning course entrance requirements by completing the matrix. Please tick to indicate YES or write appropriate answers in the matrix.

entry	Q4. Minimum entry qualifications for **any** candidate.	Q5. Minimum qualifications for MATURE candidates.
Number of A level points needed (where A=10, B=8, C=6, D=4 and E=2).		
Do you accept students with no formal qualifications.	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick
Do potential students need Maths 'O' level or GCSE equivalent	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick
English Language 'O' level or GCSE equivalent.	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick
Additional 'O' levels or equivalent passes.	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick
Successful completion of an Access course.	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick	YES ☐ NO ☐ Please tick
Recent experience of educational programme or other requirements (please specify).		

6. Is there an upper age limit for mature entry?

YES / NO (delete)

7. If Yes to question, what is this age?

_____ years

8. Do mature entrants need relevant industrial experience before starting the course?

YES / NO (delete)

9. If Yes to question, please specify level of experience and length of time.

_____

10. For Mature entrants is industrial experience accepted in lieu of formal qualifications.

YES / NO (delete)

Questions 11 to 21 are a set of questions referring to the institutional support system which may be provided for mature students.

11. Are crèche facilities provided on site for the children of students?

YES / NO (delete)

12. If yes to question 11, please indicate which of the following are available to students on this <u>degree course</u>.

Please tick	YES	NO
a. Crèche facilities provided during Term Time	☐	☐
b. Crèche facilities provided during Local School Holidays	☐	☐
c. Facilities provided on a Part Day Basis	☐	☐
d. Facilities provided on a Full Day Basis	☐	☐
If facilities are available, are they intended for:-		
e. Pre - School Children	☐	☐
f. Children 5 - 9	☐	☐
g. Children 10 - 14	☐	☐
h. Children 15+	☐	☐

Please tick	YES	NO
13. Does the Institution subsidise crèche provision?	☐	☐
14. Is there a charge to the student for the use of crèche facilities	☐	☐
15. If Yes to Question 14 please specify the charge	_____	

16. Have you modified the teaching programme to take account of the needs of mature students in any of the following ways.

Please tick	YES	NO
a. Additional Study Skills	☐	☐
b. Special Tutorials	☐	☐
c. Special consideration for work placement	☐	☐
d. Scheduling of timetables	☐	☐
e. Other (please specify)	☐	☐

17. If study skills are provided for Mature students

Please tick	YES	NO
a. Are they provided as part of a programme of stay skills?	☐	☐
b. On a one-off basis.	☐	☐
c. Is participation voluntary?	☐	☐
d. Is participation compulsory? (question redundant)	☐	☐
e. Who provides the study skills?	_____	
f. What subjects are covered by study skills?	_____	
g. In which years of the course are study skills delivered?	_____	
h. How many hours per week are devoted to study skills?	_____	

18. If <u>on-going tutorials</u> are provided for <u>Mature</u> students

Please tick   YES   NO

   a.   Are they provided as part of the overall programme
        of studies   ❑   ❑

   b.   On a one-off basis?   ❑   ❑

   c.   Is participation voluntary?   ❑   ❑

   d.   Is participation compulsory?   (question redundant) ❑————————❑

   e.   Who provides the tutorials? _____

   f.   In what subject areas? _____

   g.   In which year/s of the course are tutorials provided? _____

   h.   How many hours per week are devoted to tutorials? _____

19. Are mature students able to draw upon Access loans and funding through the
    Institution

Please tick   YES   NO

                                                                ❑   ❑

20. Is there a mature student support group at the Institution? ❑   ❑

21. If yes to question 20 who runs it?

Please tick   YES   NO

Student Union   ❑   ❑
Teaching Staff   ❑   ❑

Student themselves   ❑   ❑

Other (please specify) _____

Questions 22 to 27 attempt to quantify numbers of mature students on the course.

22.   As at 1 April 1994 _____ What was
the total number of students of all ages enrolled on each year of this degree
course.

Please enter number in box.

Please enter   □   □   □   □
               Year 1   Year 2   Year 3   Year 4

23.   As at 1 April 1994 _____ How
many MATURE students are enrolled on each year of the course.

Please enter   □   □   □   □
               Year 1   Year 2   Year 3   Year 4

24.   As at 1 April 1994 _____ How
many students in total have left the course since the start of this academic
year.

Please enter   □   □   □   □
               Year 1   Year 2   Year 3   Year 4

25.   As at 1 April 1994 _____ How many
MATURE students have left the course since the start of the academic year.

Please enter   □   □   □   □
               Year 1   Year 2   Year 3   Year 4

26   As at 1 April 1994 _____ How many
MATURE students starting year 1 of the degree had completed an Access
Course?

                                                    Number   □

27. Question 27 attempts to profile briefly the MATURE students registered in YEAR ONE only of the course.

PROFILE OF MATURE STUDENTS IN YEAR 1 OF COURSE.

At the start of the academic year.

(a)   How many mature students were male?   ❑
                                                No

(b)   How many mature students were female?   ❑
                                                No

(c)   How many mature students were of White UK?
        Irish or other European Ethnic Origin   ❑
                                                No

(d)   How many mature students were of any other
        ethnic origin.   ❑
                        No

28.   What reasons, if any, are given by MATURE students who drop out of the course?

_____

_____

_____

_____

29.   How many MATURE students graduated in 1993?

                                Number   ❑

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return it to Martin Honey in the freepost envelope provided.

Mr Martin Honey
Faculty of Tourism, Hospitality and Food
Cardiff Institute of Higher Education
Colchester Avenue
CARDIFF
CF3 7XR

A summary of the results of this questionnaire will be written up if you would like to receive a copy, please complete the following section.

Name of person completing questionnaire _____

Designation _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Telephone Number _____

This study will be developed in subsequent rounds of data collection. If you would be willing to participate in the future stages please indicate below.

I would / would not (please delete) be willing to participate in future stages of this study.

Name _____

APPENDIX 2

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR USE WITH COURSE DIRECTORS

Introductory Section to set the scene (maybe 10 minutes)

- Background to study

- Progress to date

- Aims and Objectives for this stage

- Preliminary findings - Stage 1

- Where stage fits into the overall research project

Section 1

Discussion to elicit tutor's perceptions of mature student drop out rate, survivability of older learners.

10 minutes

Section 2

Elicit tutor's ideas on how the total mature student market could be segmented.

10 minutes

Section 3

Elicit what particular problems tutors feel mature students experience.

10 minutes

Section 4

Elicit if older student problems are perceived as significantly different from young learners.

10 minutes

Section 5

Tutor's thoughts on how institutions can over come student's problems.

10 minutes

Section 6

Discussion concerning mature student support systems, their relevance and importance.

10 minutes

Section 7

Elicit the important considerations surrounding the recruitment of mature students, entry qualifications.

10 minutes

Section 8

Discuss Access courses and Charter Marks.

5 minutes

APPENDIX 3

MATURE STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

G.F.S. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE

Please list the GOOD things about your educational experience at this Institution

Please list the BAD things about your educational experience at this Institution

Age: _____   Sex: Male/Female   No. of dependent children _____
              (please delete as appropriate)

APPENDIX 4

MATURE STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

G.F.S. GROUP RESPONSE

Please list the GOOD things about your educational experience at this Institution

Please list the BAD things about your educational experience at this Institution

No. of people in group: _____

APPENDIX 5

Please rate the followign activities on a nine point scale where:
9 = very important
1 = not at all important

How important are the following activities

	importance to enhancing your studies	importance to enhancing your own sense of well being	
Gaining access to teaching staff	☐	☐	1
Using the accommodation service	☐	☐	2
Using Faculty Learning Centres	☐	☐	3
Feeling physically comfortable in the classroom	☐	☐	4
Increasing my self confidence	☐	☐	5
Developing independent study skills	☐	☐	6
Getting assistance from technical and support staff	☐	☐	7
Understanding sequence and organisation of the course	☐	☐	8
Talking to staff freely and openly	☐	☐	9
Joining societies and groups	☐	☐	10
Getting relevant information on Faculty Learning Centres	☐	☐	11
Coping with disruptive building developments	☐	☐	12
Using student Services (eg Medical/Counselling/Careers etc)	☐	☐	13
Learning tolerance of other points of view	☐	☐	14
Being assessed at regular intervals	☐	☐	15
Using Information Technology facilities	☐	☐	16
Using the library at convenient times	☐	☐	17
Getting information on Information Technology facilities	☐	☐	18
Understanding the content of the lectures	☐	☐	19
Getting on well with lecturers	☐	☐	20
Getting relevant information in the library	☐	☐	21

Applying classroom learning to the workplace	❏	❏	22
Informally discussing course work with students	❏	❏	23
Ease of travelling to and from the University	❏	❏	24
Receiving course information in good time	❏	❏	25
Using support material (handouts etc) from lecturers	❏	❏	26
Interacting with others in tutorials and seminars	❏	❏	27
Using time productively	❏	❏	28
Developing a broader understanding of my subject	❏	❏	29
Using canteen facilities	❏	❏	30
Receiving well organised and structured tuition	❏	❏	31
Receiving guidance and supervision by staff	❏	❏	32
Using up-to-date equipment	❏	❏	33
Being stimulated by studying the subject	❏	❏	34
Socialising with other students	❏	❏	35
Receiving feed back on assessed work	❏	❏	36
Informally discussing work with staff	❏	❏	37
Buying acceptable (cost/range/quality) food in canteens	❏	❏	38
Being made aware of new concepts and ideas	❏	❏	39
Broadening my experience and outlook	❏	❏	40
Meeting work demands	❏	❏	41
Achieving balance - work/other demands	❏	❏	42
Paying my way/spending/budgeting	❏	❏	43
Having base to leave personal property	❏	❏	44
Using on-site créche facilities	❏	❏	45
Having access to a mature students support group	❏	❏	46
Taking out Institution Access funding/monies	❏	❏	47
Having special consideration for work placement	❏	❏	48
Flexible timetabling	❏	❏	49
Having special tutorials for mature students	❏	❏	50
Having lessons in study skills	❏	❏	51
Paying for child care or créche facilities	❏	❏	52

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

53   ☐   ☐   53

54   ☐   ☐   54

55   ☐   ☐   55

56   ☐   ☐   56

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION

Age: _____   Sex: Male/Female   No. of dependent children _____
               (please delete as appropriate)