The Mature Student Experience: Expectations and Reality!

Adapted from: Dr Denis Staunton, Former Director of Access, University College Cork

“Education is a lifelong journey whose destination expands as you travel”

Difference between University & School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>University</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher responsible for your learning</td>
<td>You are responsible for your own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisurely pace</td>
<td>Fast pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducing facts</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study subjects</td>
<td>Study disciplines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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‘Anticipation’ Phase

- Fluctuating Feelings
- Excited, Thrilled, Dream Come True
- Nervous, Anxious, Will I be able for it?
- Excitement, Thrill, Excited
- Tired, exhausted, shattered
- Lectures are really interesting, stimulating, looking forward to course
- Meeting interesting ‘like minded’ people
- Glad I made decision, now have a real purpose, and goal in life. (My friends are envious!)

‘Feelings of Impostership’ Phase

- Newness, excitement is over.
- Pressure of timetable, private study and assignments to be completed.
- Doubts, questions, insecurities surface. "I’ll be found out".
- Why did I decide to put myself through this? I’m fooling myself.
- Everyone else is "smarter", "brighter" and "more intelligent" than I.
- Nobody told me how "tough" it really is.
- Don’t know who I am anymore.
- What will keep me going is my original motivation, my ambition and my belief that "I know I can do it".

September/October

November/December

January/February

March/April
‘Challenge and Growth’ Phase

- Handing in first written assignment.
- Fear of “being judged”.
- What are the rules of the academic game?
- Coping with two “greedy institutions” – college and family.
- Losing touch with friends, too busy, no time, our ‘interests’ are no longer the same.
- My fellow students are the only ones who understand.
- Hope – return of ‘essay’ / ‘lab test’ / exam results.
- I’ve cracked this!!

‘Integration’ Phase

- Things are looking up.
- Managing my time better.
- Subjects are making more sense to me.
- Support of ‘college friends’ is great – sharing library books, lecture notes, cover for one another etc.
- Becoming much more ‘strategic’ in how I study, work and socialise.
- Beginning to ‘enjoy it’

Reference


Available from Amazon and in bookshop on campus.