by University of Northampton Student 2

Inspiring Journey—Adult Learner

My background

After doing my A levels I went off to college to become a teacher rather than going to university as it was my ambition at the time to teach cookery. However, this was the biggest mistake I think I ever made. I picked the college because it was the first one that accepted me. I am afraid it was not a place of learning. I left after two years. It was just too awful to continue. While in sixth form I worked for Unilever in the labs. After finishing college I applied to a medical lab and that is when I started my first course as an adult learner.

My training as a Medical Lab Assistant

First I qualified as an Associate of the institute med lab sciences. It consisted of one day a week at college and one evening in a specialist area (in my case, histology). The hospital was very supportive, giving me the opportunity to visit other hospitals in the area so I learned many different techniques and they gave me time to experiment with various processes and ideas. There was a lot of written work, which wasn't too difficult. Once I passed those exams, I followed this up with the Fellowship qualification (Equivalent to MSc) this was all evening classes, the hospital was very generous with time and I was able to try out lots of techniques. After getting married and having children I had a bit of a break from studying.

What led me to IT Teaching?

I gained the City and Guilds certificate in Education because I became a school science technician to have school holidays with the kids. When the school acquired computers, I became the IT tech too. I started teaching IT to adults attending evening classes - and the council paid for my City and Guilds teacher training course. I completed my Masters while working at the school. Finally, I did my PhD in the same area with a couple of false starts. The children were old enough to look after themselves – mostly – and I was able to spend a lot of time working on it during the school holidays. I would say it is important to be able to devote significant chunks of time to your studies. It turned out OK in the end and was, on reflection a good experience.

What advice would I give an adult returning to education?

For people who have not undertaken any learning for a while, go on to the 'Future Learn' website and have a go at a few of their courses. It would help them to get used to study again. Most of the courses have a free option. When studying you need to keep up with studying and not leave things to the last minute. Having home support is important and you really need to set it up at the beginning. You need lots of paper and files (who doesn't like new stationery) and start a plan as soon as you can. Make several backups of your work on different computers, on memory sticks e-mails etc… Always check your spelling and get someone else to check your spelling.