



The University of East London's New Beginnings initiative aims to tackle one of the key challenges facing English higher education: the collapse in enrolment among mature students.

It is a short course that recruits mature learners without formal qualifications from a range of cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, aiming to build confidence in their ability to study and help them to develop independent and proactive study skills, with a view to enrolling on a UEL degree programme.

The course was relaunched in 2016 with a dedicated teaching and administration team, resulting in a significant increase in recruitment, retention and attainment of students.

In total, 302 applicants were accepted for the 2016-17 academic year, and two-thirds passed, becoming eligible to access UEL undergraduate courses in 2017-18.

Internal evaluation suggests that students who complete New Beginnings go on to enjoy further academic success: 72 per cent achieved a first-class or 2:1 degree.

Students who do not immediately enter a degree course are advised on their options for further learning, and many subsequently meet UEL's entry requirements.

The judges said that New Beginnings stood out "because of its demonstrable track record of success".

"It addresses many of the barriers to access experienced by mature students and has been sustained over many years. Although programmes of this nature exist in many institutions, what sets New Beginnings apart is the evidence of impact on enrolment in university courses and subsequent success," the panel said.