pengreen

Research, Development and Training Base

Masters Degree

Early Childhood & Education

(Integrated Working with Families and Children)

Student Case Studies

We asked our previous Masters Degree students to share their experiences of studying at Pen Green.

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Student Case Study

Daniela Cavalli-Warby

Masters Degree in Early Childhood and Education (Integrated Working with Families and Children)

Why did you choose to study this course?

I completed my BA in Early Childhood Studies in 2013 as a mature student. A Senior Lecturer at my University recommended the MA as she was very impressed by Pen Green and admired its values and ethos and the importance given by the Leadership team, lecturers and staff to ensuring, enhancing and safeguarding the social, emotional and mental health and holistic wellbeing of its community of learners. My Lecturer had gotten to know me well, personally and academically, and was keen to encourage me to continue my studies, and in particular, felt that Pen Green was the best environment for me to do this.

In 2014, I applied and was granted a place but, due to family and financial reasons, I was unable to take up my place. Nonetheless, I promised myself that I would gift the Masters to myself one day in the future and nine years later I did. In the meantime, I visited Pen Green on many occasions, and undertook a variety of CPD and training courses to improve my pedagogy, knowledge and skills. On my first visit, I felt 'at home' right away, and despite my burgeoning and longstanding Imposter Syndrome, I found the courage, thoughtful and articulate words to explain my views amongst a group of predominately trained teachers on a video observation that we had been asked to discuss as part of the training session. The Pen Green lecturer leading the group that day helped me to find those words, despite my crushing insecurities. Thanks Fliss!

What were the most valuable skills you have learnt from the course?

I would describe the most valuable skills that I have learnt from my time on the course have the been the ability to be still and sit in the moments of uncertainty. Listening more acutely and observing more intently to the children, families and colleagues whom I encounter. I no longer race to provide pre-prepared, snap answers, opinions, judgments and solutions, whilst imposing my values which means that my relationships have improved. Equally, improved, warm, reciprocal relationships at work have meant that I am increasing my ability to be reflective, and more importantly, reflexive which is improving effectiveness in my role.

What was your favourite module and why?
My first module, which was a Child study, was extremely daunting at first but I followed the 'process' which took me from my own childhood and early learning through to the early parenting of my children, onto the start of my early years career and through to the present day.

I worked in a collaborative manner with the child and family connected to the study, which meant that a variety of transformational learning and developmental experiences happened for all of us as collaborators. This has had a positive impact on a day-to-day basis and we all acknowledge will continue to have meaning for us in the long term also. I would love to complete a Child Study with all the children and families that I work with!

What doors has this course opened up for you and what are your plans for the future?
I have always struggled with my self-esteem and self confidence but this is steadily improving as I complete each piece of work, and as I see the positive impact that this is having on my pedagogy and andragogy. I have been recently approached by the Headteacher of the school where I work in the Nursery, who has asked me to consider taking up Teacher Training with them which is an immense boost to my confidence. I have always had aspirations to work directly, and more intensely, with parents and families but have always felt that I lacked the credentials to apply for such roles. However, recently I have started to feel more courageous in applying for these roles and where once I might have set these ideas aside as "dreams" I now see this as an ambition.

What would you say to someone who is considering embarking on a degree or course with Pen Green?
Transformations happen at Pen Green!

Student Case Study

Kat Clark

Masters Degree in Early Childhood and Education
(Integrated Working with Families and Children)

Why did you choose to study this course?

Although I work at Pen Green, I wanted to study somewhere new. So, I spent a long time looking for a masters course. I wanted to find a course that had been written with mature students in mind, it was also important that it was manageable for me, full time working mum. One of the most important things for me was the ethos of the teaching approach. After much hunting I decided that the Pen Green masters was the only course that ticked all these boxes and would be the perfect fit for me.

What were the most valuable skills you have learnt from the course?

I learnt so much, but I think for me it was affirming knowledge and being able to deepen my skills as a researcher. This was something I had previous experience of but being able to conduct hands on research really enabled me to fine tune my skills and develop my own approach to research.

What was your favourite module and why?

While I really enjoyed the dissertation and having the freedom to explore my own interests, I think my favourite module was Development and Learning in the Early Years. I carried out a child study with my nephew. His parents and reception class teacher worked with me too. This meant we were able to build a holistic picture of him and his learning. I really loved getting to know new things about him and uncovering how he liked to learn. It felt liked such a celebration of him! His parents and I were delighted to have had an extract of this assignment published in one of the Pen Green books.

What doors has this course opened up for you and what are your plans for the future?

I recently had a journal article published, a paper that grew from my Working with Families assignment. The paper considered the support that adult learners need to re-engage in learning. I would like to continue this research and extend on findings from my dissertation. I am keen begin a PhD or fellowship, again I am considering what would be suitable for me, when is the right time to start and how I can balance working full time and having children.

What would you say to someone who is considering embarking on a degree or course with Pen Green?

Let go of whatever it is that's stopping you and crack on!

Student Case Study

Laura Sanders

Masters Degree in Early Childhood and Education
(Integrated Working with Families and Children)

Why did you choose to study this course?

I had always wanted to study further after I finished my EYTS back in 2014. I have been encouraged to undertake higher education as incentives from my local authority and so completed my FdA through to EYTS over a long period of part time learning. The decision to start my Masters was inspired by lockdown. I had time to look at study options and enjoyed the online information sessions to find out about the MA with pen green.

I am a summer born child and I have always struggled with learning. The ethos of pen greens learning though made me feel comfortable and excited to learn again. I had always wanted to study at pen green and it was accessible, encouraging and I was certain it was the right time.

What were the most valuable skills you have learnt from the course?

I have learnt a lot about myself through the methods of research and reflection. An MA wasn't necessarily new learning, yet reflecting on my experience and making connections between my journey in the childcare and education sector. I found the leadership module very inspiring and having guest speakers and inspirational tutors made the course most valuable.

What was your favourite module and why?

All models allowed flexibility to focus on research that was relative to your experience and interest. The leadership module helped me to understand more about myself as a leader but also how I can support others.

The case studies and action research projects were really interesting and supported the development needed to undertake the dissertation.

What doors has this course opened up for you and what are your plans for the future?

I feel very inspired to undertake further study and begin my PhD. I am currently lecturing in FE and HE and also am an owner of 2 early years settings. I am really proud that my own MA journey has inspired 8 other staff members to engage in higher education.

What would you say to someone who is considering embarking on a degree or course with Pen Green?

Trust the process. It had been life changing for me and not only do I leave Pen Green with an MA, I've made lifelong friends and memories!

Student Case Study

Kaisey Lambert

Masters Degree in Early Childhood and Education
(Integrated Working with Families and Children)

Why did you choose to study this course?
I chose this course as I have previously completed the FD and BA with Pen Green, I knew the environment was perfect for me and the tutors are very supportive. I have been supported in my social skills and have felt accepted for who I am, struggles and all! I knew I didn't want to continue learning anywhere else.

What were the most valuable skills you have learnt from the course?
Personally, my confidence has grown rapidly since starting at Pen Green, from the shy girl who didn't have anything to say in check in and check out, to the girl who now has so much to say!

Professionally, I feel so much more knowledgeable and confident within my role.

What was your favourite module and why?
My favourite module so far has been development and learning in the early years, as I love completing child studies, I always find out something new about a child who I thought I knew exceptionally well!

What doors has this course opened up for you and what are your plans for the future?
Still completing the course, at present I am happy in my role as manager of a day nursery. However i have considered a social services/child protection route in the future.

What would you say to someone who is considering embarking on a degree or course with Pen Green?
Go for it! On my first day many years ago I almost walked out of the induction, I left and called my manager to say I couldn't do it, as I felt so overwhelmed. She talked me into going back for my first day of the FD and I am so glad she did! The support has been outstanding, I feel that at Pen Green I can be me with no judgments from staff or other students with my struggles. I feel fully accepted and part of the 'family' at Pen Green, which is something that I have never felt in any other education setting… also, trust the process!

Student Case Study

Holly Bowman

Masters Degree in Early Childhood and Education
(Integrated Working with Families and Children)

Why did you choose to study this course?

I wanted to have an opportunity to develop my own learning in relation to working with families and children. I have been in education for 23 years and felt by doing my MA was a good opportunity for me to reflect on my experiences but also take time for myself to delve deeper into areas of practice that excite me. Ultimately too I wanted to continue to grow my knowledge and learning, and the expertise at Pen Green was a huge selling point for me.

What were the most valuable skills you have learnt from the course?

I love the collaboration of the MA. Learning from tutors and other students is helping me to become more confident in my own practice. It has been over 20 years since I last embarked on study, so I am learning to be a researcher again and to have space to think more deeply about educational practices. I have also learnt that everyone has different passions and expertise, but learning together is what makes the experience so rewarding.

What was your favourite module and why?

So far, I have enjoyed my first two modules. I particularly enjoyed my child study, where I was able to look at great depth into a child's learning and apply this to theory. Working with the child and family was powerful, and through new reading and research I also learnt new insights into how children learn which was exciting.

What doors has this course opened up for you and what are your plans for the future?

Although I am still studying, about to start year 2, the course is already impacting the way I think about families and children. Also, how I can support others through my work to build their understanding of how children learn and the importance of keeping families at the heart of what we do.

What would you say to someone who is considering embarking on a degree or course with Pen Green?

Just enroll. I had so much anxiety initially from things such as not being clever enough, not having studied for a long time, not having suitable knowledge. I learnt these fears were normal and shared by others. I have surprised myself at how well this year has gone, having overcome a lot (not all) of this self-doubt.

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