



Swansea University

The Foundation Certificate in Humanities Programme

The Department of Adult Continuing Education (DACE) at Swansea University provides new learning experiences for adult students and aims to widen participation to higher education. As part of its provision the Department offers the new Foundation Certificate in Humanities programme which is a two year part-time scheme aimed at people who are ready to take their first steps into Higher Education.

Students attend classes in a variety of subjects under the broad Humanities umbrella in a local community venue for one day a week over 2 years. It is an opportunity for adult students to gain a qualification in a supportive and encouraging environment where in addition to the academic subjects, study skills and employability are embedded within the curriculum. This ensures that the students build up the necessary confidence in addition to the academic skills which will allow them to progress with their studies at HE level.

The programme is offered in four Communities First areas (areas of extreme socio-economic disadvantage) in south west Wales thus honouring the Department's long-standing commitment to providing adults with new learning opportunities at the point of need. The programme is set up in such a way as to ensure that funding is available for eligible students.

After completing this programme students can progress to a wide range of higher education opportunities, including the part-time humanities degree which is offered by DACE on the Swansea University campus and at 15 communities across south west Wales.

The scheme is innovative in that:

- It is the only 'off-campus' programme of its kind in the Welsh HE sector.
- It forms an integral part of the 'progression climbing frame' inherent in the overall DACE widening access programme and thus offers a clear progression route to a community based part-time degree programme.
- The course embeds research skills, study skills and employability within the curriculum which results in widening access to Higher Education from areas of multiple deprivation.

The development of the programme itself has also been innovative. Recruitment onto the BA Humanities part-time degree programme, a scheme that has been running for 21 years, showed that many people with interest in the programme were not ready for HE study with the result that people would either not start the course or not be retained.

A short preparation programme, 'the Prepare for the BA Humanities' was set up with the intention of adequately preparing students for the BA. Although this ten week course was successful it was felt that there were still students in the community who needed a longer lead-in time to prepare them for HE studies.

Extensive community engagement took place which led to a pilot programme and eventually the setting up the four Foundation Programmes in the four Unitary Authorities of south west Wales.

This has only been possible because of the long-standing relationships with partner community based organisations and the reputation and success of the Department delivering on its promises.

The development of the programme has been innovative due to the Department:

- Recognising the demand for this type of provision and acting on it.
 - Piloting the programme and making necessary changes.
 - Designating a member of staff to lead the development of the programme at each venue by working with community partners and prospective students in a bottom-up rather than a top-down fashion.
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