

## **B1.2.**

### **Countering Social Disadvantage**

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The Department of Adult Continuing Education (DACE) at Swansea University, whose primary goal is to widen access to higher education, offers part-time courses in a variety of subjects in the community and on campus. By providing opportunities for personal growth and new skills development we endeavor to increase social, political and cultural awareness.

At DACE we believe that socio-economic progress can be achieved through extending access to Higher Education. We have significant experience of working creatively in terms of curriculum development and being innovative in shaping positive attitudes to learning within disadvantaged communities.

DACE develops and delivers educational programmes in nineteen out of the twenty-one Communities First areas in Wales i.e. areas identified by the Welsh Assembly Government as being the most socio-economically deprived in Wales. New community-based learning opportunities of the highest quality and appropriate to adult students are delivered with the intention of widening participation by formerly excluded and under-represented social groups in higher education.

Our flagship programme, the Part-time Degree scheme, which is in its 20<sup>th</sup> year and has produced 360 graduates since 1996, is aimed at under-represented social groups and those who have not had the opportunity to study at HE level. The scheme was originally University campus-based but is now offered in fifteen community-based venues throughout four Unitary Authorities in South West Wales.

Students study two courses a year for six years and choose subjects from the broad categories of Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences and Science-related subjects. The modules offered are agreed by a process of negotiation between the department, students, community partners and tutors. On-line modules and modules taught by video-conferencing are also offered in order to increase student choice but to also reach small isolated groups of students.

The success of the Part-time Degree and its pre-cursor programmes is due to the department's recognition of the importance of effective student support. It achieves a retention rate of 84% by providing students with an extensive range of support. By working closely with tutors and community partners we ensure that students' needs are met by providing help with childcare, funding, support for students with disabilities and delivery of educational guidance.

A wide range of study skills support is also offered to all students that includes a 'Preparation for Study' course prior to study, the STAR handbook (Study Tips to Achieve Results - a study skills manual), ongoing study skills help on campus and in community locations from a small team of dedicated study skills experts and access to the Student On-line Support (SOS) website. ([www.swan.ac.uk/dace/sos](http://www.swan.ac.uk/dace/sos))

Changing Lives Transforming Communities. This is our Departmental motto and this is what we do!