

Concern over closure of university adult learning classes



Following concerns from constituents, I have written to University of Dundee Principal Professor Sir Pete Downes expressing dismay at the closure of the School of Humanities' educational and creative adult education classes as of April 2017.

Residents are concerned that the replacement which is a suite of credit-bearing modules will be more costly and deviates away from the principles of the adult education classes that have been so successful over the years.

These adult learning courses have run for many years and have been really successful. Many, but not all of the students, are at or beyond retirement age and many are already well-qualified, so replacing the courses with award bearing courses sadly will end a long tradition of offering general interest courses to members of the public.

At present there are 13 courses on offer at Dundee University, with over 200 registered enrolments. It seems such a shame to end the courses and I have asked the university for a re-think.

Professor Downes has now advised me :

We are replacing the current 'Courses for Adults' programme with a new suite of modules for students of all ages, which will give an introduction to studying at higher education level and will be credit bearing.

This aligns with our commitment to widening access to higher education. Modules will be available at the start of the next academic year in English, History, Creative Writing and Philosophy. There will be an option for students to opt-out of studying for credit.

These courses are replacing our previous provision, which was no longer sustainable and did not align with the priorities of the

School of the Humanities and of the University.

The University's contributions to the local community are very important to me and to many of our staff and students. The breadth of these depends on building sustainable models of delivery wherever possible. I expect adult education will remain an important part of our work with the local community but we need to consider adult education in a broader context and across a wider range of subjects and disciplines. The approach being taken by the School of Humanities to ensure sustainable provision of Continuing Education is as follows:

- The School of Humanities initiative to change its continuing education offering to a suite of four 10 credit bearing modules will widen access to higher education and be in line with the Universities commitment to public engagement and outreach.
- This offering will extend the opportunity to reach people who may wish to engage with HE later in their lives, or who wish to study whilst having other commitments which prohibits them from a full time programme.
- A matriculated student undertaking study for credit may be able to apply for help with course fees from the following:
 - o Individual Learning Account (ILA)
 - o Part-time Fee Grant

There are wider implications for the University as a whole and for our commitments to, and responsibility for, public engagement.

Much work is currently being done to prepare the University's strategic plan for the period from 2017 to 2022 and I have asked our Vice Principal (Learning & Teaching) to review Continuing Education and its part in our widening access and public engagement work as part of the refreshed University strategy, which will be in place from the start of the next academic year.

I hope that the Vice Principal (Learning & Teaching) when reviewing Continuing Education will bear in mind that many constituents and the Dundee University Courses for Adults Association committee do not want the present provision to end.