



# SWANSEA UNIVERSITY ACHIEVES BENEFITS BY DEGREES

Becoming one of the UK's top 20 academic institutions for teaching quality and being voted the UK's 'best student experience' doesn't happen by chance. It's the result of many factors: offering the right courses, delivering them in the best ways, and having the funding to attract and retain the highest calibre staff and students. SAS is helping Swansea in each of these areas.

## Business Issue

Monitor and report on academic performance and enable detailed analyses of students, to focus on quality, drive improvements and support accurate funding returns.

## Solution

Swansea has licensed the SAS® Academic Suite and SAS/ACCESS® for Oracle. SAS® Enterprise Guide® is a key technology used.

## Benefits

New and faster ways to deliver performance metrics enable an even stronger focus on quality; Swansea can continue raising standards and delivering on its commitment to students while returning accurate information products to the Funding Council.

## Platform

SAS technologies transform data, stored in Oracle and by connecting with the SITS:Vision front end, and provides powerful analytics and reporting. Results are delivered campus-wide via cascading style sheets on the intranet, using ODS (the Output Delivery System).

## Data Volume

Personal data and course records cover 91,000 students in total; data each year covers progression codes, modules taken (eight per year, 24 in a typical degree course), each module is named, marks recorded, and so on – resulting in Gigabytes of stored data.

With 12,000 students, Swansea University offers over 600 undergraduate and postgraduate courses: from Law and Languages to Engineering and Egyptology. It aims to deliver the highest quality teaching and provide an outstanding student experience; both aims are now supported by extensive use of SAS, for business analysis and reporting. SAS analyses student and performance data, providing new insights to academics and business managers. A key area is applications for funding.

The Administrative Computing Unit first used SAS to monitor performance across campus: providing performance indicators looking at degree classifications and variations at a structural level, reporting across all faculties and departments. The unit analyses past, current and future trends, and provides detailed insights for government returns, academic funding ratios and management information. SAS seamlessly connects to SITS:Vision, the student administration and information system from Tribal Group, while the data store is Oracle. Designed for universities and colleges, SITS:Vision is used by more than 60% of the UK's higher education sector.

"We can look at specific areas, say first year completion and module pass rates, examining year-by-year performance going back five years, then ask further questions," says Neil Lucas, Statistician, Administrative Computing Unit. This drives the focus on quality: as well as reporting back to faculties and departments, results feed into the Quality Office – the University has external audits by the Quality Assurance Agency. SAS

also helps address the equal opportunities and access agenda by analysing students and performance by minority group, disability, age and gender bias. Results are easily distributed and shared with staff via the University's intranet.

The unit decided to go further, to look at results by specific scheme of study for a cohort of students. This means taking a group and tracking them across, say, Single Honours Geography. "SAS reveals how many proceed through the course, if they drop out, repeat a year, final results, if one group appears disadvantaged, and so on. We can look at finer and finer levels of detail," says Lucas. Scheme co-ordinators use the results to understand and alleviate issues that arise, without having to collate or analyse data. "We gather all data and make sense of it. The University can assess the products it's providing and see how students are reacting to those products.

"Our use of SAS is all about monitoring quality and providing feedback on the whole pedagogic experience: is it good, is it fair, are students progressing?" 91% of Swansea's graduates currently find employment or are in further study within six months of graduating.

Another important activity is business planning: University schools have to provide business plans, including who they expect to recruit, where, and setting themselves targets. "We started using SAS to help them," continues Lucas. "If a new post is required, we help them develop a business case to justify

“SAS gives us information products people can believe in. It helps build confidence with stakeholders across the campus. I’m surprised more Universities don’t use SAS for funding returns, given it’s used by the HE Funding Council itself.”

**Neil Lucas**  
Swansea University

recruiting.” This includes linking through to Finance and interrogating the system, looking at how many full-time or full-time equivalents are in a department. “We can profile and predict how many applicants are expected for a course, how many will enrol, and how many will remain at the year-end. As we monitor the plans against reality we’ll be able to better inform strategic decision-making.”

Perhaps the most critical area supported by SAS is preparing Financial Funding Returns for the Higher Education Funding Council. Compiling accurate returns is a complex and vitally important task: these determine how much money the University gets to carry out its business. Lucas says this activity “represents millions of pounds, our biggest pot of money. In part, it means looking at all the modules students take and applying rules based on funding. The entire database has to be interrogated so we can accurately claim for credits. We have to get it right, and we’re using SAS to completely revamp our approach. It’s the ideal tool.

“I’m surprised more Universities don’t use SAS for funding returns, given it’s used by the Funding Council itself. SAS is the right tool for the job. An added advantage is that we can easily share data with the Funding Council.”

Lucas adds, “The key benefits of SAS are efficiency savings and the ability to give people information products they believe in. We get results onto the intranet fast: people want answers and they want them to be accurate. We need to be credible, especially since we’re working with academics. SAS helps us build confidence with all our stakeholders across the campus.”



THE  
POWER  
TO KNOW.

SAS UK WITTINGTON HOUSE HENLEY ROAD MEDMENHAM  
MARLOW BUCKS SL7 2EB +44 1628 486933 [WWW.SAS.COM/UK](http://WWW.SAS.COM/UK)

SAS and all other SAS Institute Inc. product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of SAS Institute Inc. in the USA and other countries. ® indicates USA registration. Other brand and product names are trademarks of their respective companies. Copyright © 2007, SAS Institute Inc. All rights reserved. 0622UK1006