Dear swap students,

**SWAP update 17th April**

I hope everyone is well. Just popping over our weekly update from SWAPWest. I also want to thank those of you who have been working really hard as key workers during the Easter period. We have heard from some of you about how challenging it is just now. Please keep engaging with us and talking to your college tutor, we are really proud of you.

Last week, I spoke about the approach SWAP was taking to handling the challenges of the crisis and I have again highlighted the 3 key messages at the end of the update. I will though talk a little bit more in this update on how we will ensure that we can take everyone’s circumstances into account.

If I can though repeat the message from last week’s briefing. **SWAP programmes are owned by our partnership colleges and universities. Decisions about the programmes are made by the partnership**. On returning to college, you will receive a lot of information about courses from the college, SQA and UCAS. Please remember that I will keep you up to date on what is happening with **SWAP through your SWAP tutor and the weekly updates**. If anyone has any concerns about what they are hearing, please get in touch.

**Returning back to study**

In working with you during your last term at college, we will always take into account your individual circumstances. We will be taking a partnership approach working with our universities and colleges to ensure you are more than ready for your progression. I know some of you will feel really uncertain just now, that is natural. Work with us as we do have time to ensure you will be able to complete your programme.

First steps, on the return is to reflect on how you are managing time. I know it is a bit of cliché but take time to work out how to combine your study effectively with your current circumstances. Doing so is an element of your engagement with the college and we take this into account on how you are developing as a learner. It is not quite the same as starting in August as you can reflect on how more effective your reflective and learning skills are. Part of your development on the programme has been prioritising tasks and thinking through what is important. We are always conscious of this in SWAP as it is one of the issues that we receive a lot of feedback on from previous students.

**Development of Balance**

Amy from the SWAP team, has been doing a lot of work on this in developing our prep for he materials. One of the changes for next year was to look at developing the time management skills when students first started. We have called this bit of work – **balance**. Amy has taken a slightly different approach using video, podcasts and reflections from students. We have brought this forward, so you can if you feel it is helpful, take advantage of the approach. The link is on the SWAP website here - <http://www.scottishwideraccess.org/balance.php?section_id=1025>.

For those that want to, please have a look at the approach and see if it can assist in your planning. The link to the reflective journal is one of your final exercises as you reflect on the taking stock part 3 exercise. Please give it a go, we will be interested in your feedback. Will help us develop this for next year’s students.

**Student profile**

Last week, I spoke about the 3 elements of the SWAP model, which makes us a different type of programme. Our 3 elements are our academic work, preparation for he and the student profile. I am going to go over our approach to the student profile, in a bit more detail in this week’s briefing.

**Thinking through your progression opportunities.**

When you return to your studies next week, we are going to ask you to discuss with your tutor your UCAS or HNC studies. UCAS have given everyone a bit more time to make a discussion. Please can I highlight that you should have a chat with your tutor, if you have not yet made up your mind. Do not allow the COVID – 19 crisis to change your decision. I know a lot of you are worried about your studies being to the same standard as when you were sitting in college. We will of course take that into account, which we do through the student profile. Your tutors know you well and will be able to give you honest feedback on what you can achieve at university or HNC. I think you will know them well enough by now, to know they will be honest with you. SWAP is a development programme and there is still time for you to develop the skills needed to ensure you make the profile grades required. Once you have made your firm and insurance decision, please let your tutor know. As a partnership, your firm place university will be working with us to ensure we give you every opportunity to meet the requirements to progress. As I have said in previous updates our university partners are all really supportive and appreciate the challenges you are facing. Our profile is the main way we work with our university partners. While the profile articulates the challenges you are facing, we are going to make some enhancements to give you re-assurance that we will be able to take everyone’s personal circumstances into account.

**Student Profile how it works** – our profile is an enhanced reference from College to where you are intending to study next year. It has always looked at how you have developed as a learner, not just looking at your academic study but how well you are developing learning attributes, such as independent learning, research, developing critical thinking, motivation and determination to succeed. We take a holistic approach to developing and articulating potential to succeed. It requires a lot of work in hearing from your tutors and trusting their professional experience. Interestingly for this year a lot of other qualifications, will now be using the same approach, that we have effectively used for 30 years.

**Student profile enhancements for this year**

When your tutors return from their Easter break, we will discuss how we will take into consideration all of your individual circumstances and how these can be highlighted to our university partners. This will include a section on the issues you are facing, such as caring and key worker responsibilities. As well as issues you faced prior to COVID – 19. There are no issues too big or too small that we will not consider. Let your tutor know, if you have not already been in touch.

We intend to highlight your engagement with the college so we can articulate how well you have engaged with your tutor. Even if that is to explain the challenges you face, and how you have tried to deal with these. That will include how you have faced challenges for example, childcare and being a key worker. Each of you will receive your own detailed individual student profile. Normally student profiles are completed in June. For this year, we intend to keep the timescales open to put together a student profile for you, which may include any work you participate in with SWAP our universities over the summer.

Your profile grades will therefore take these aspects into account, so no student is disadvantaged by COVID - 19. As always, we will take our time with the enhancements to the profile and allow flexibility in the evidence we gather and provide for your profile.

I hope that approach in a bit more detailed way shows you how we can take our key messages and adapt these to the SWAP model. We are more than happy to answer questions on this – but again I would highlight, keep talking to your tutor, they are there to support you. Keep learning, where you can.

I will take this approach over the next few updates to go into detail on the other elements of the SWAP programme. I do hope you find it useful. Please remember, our 3 key messages:

1. Priority at moment is **your health**. Following health advice, looking after yourself and your family. Johns top tips also look at your well being though this difficult time. Please be kind to yourself.
2. SWAPWest as a partnership will ensure if you work with us that you will **complete** and **progress**. Completion may look different than previous years, but we will have you fully prepared to progress to higher education.
3. SWAPWest will provide **maximum flexibility** on how students complete. Each student has different circumstances and we will take all of those circumstances into account. As time progresses, we will go over these issues and work through these. **We don’t intend to leave any student behind.**

As well as your health, we know that the economic impact of the virus has been severe on you and your household. The Scottish Government announced additional funds through student maintenance to colleges. Colleges will have information on this coming out when you return after the break. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with the college about this.

Please note my virtual “door” / phone is always open and if anyone needs to chat at any time, then please do not hesitate to get in touch. **Let’s work through this together.**

Kenny