Dear colleagues,

**SWAP tutor update 27th March**

I hope everyone is keeping well. Thank you all for your continuing levels of support and engagement. The partnership, will not get everything right during this crisis, so please don’t worry about getting in touch with your concerns. It is really useful for us to hear them and helps formulate our response.

Again, just to confirm these updates can also be shared directly with students. If I can encourage you to do that. I will though also post a note on the student network later on today. Anything you would like to share or add, then please do not hesitate to do that. I have been really impressed by the way everyone has come together, tutors and staff to get on with the job in hand.

Just an update on my current thoughts. It is a summary and by no means all we have been dealing with. I am always more than happy to go into detail or join any online groups you might have. Means I get out of my pyjamas in the morning.

**Completion of programme and progression**

We moved from last week’s position, giving everyone a bit of time to get their head round what was happening. To this week where we are moving to deliver materials online and by distance learning. Working out what we can feasibly do and how we can consider all of the challenging situations our students face.

Our first step is to gather evidence through our SWAP Form CV, looking at all of our student’s circumstances and then the challenges faced by our college staff in delivering programmes. The approach fits our guiding principle of considering all of our students. It is an approach that will allow us maximum flexibility as we plan and think our way through what will be needed.

I do appreciate that for students who are anxious about their futures and crave immediate clarity that our approach will not do that. I am always happy to talk to students to explain our approach and why it fits in with our broader social justice aims of widening access. I have been really appreciative though of students who have been in touch with concerns and who after a bit of discussion, understand why our approach is the one we take. I will always make time for that.

We still have a bit of work to do on working through the Form CV and I still have some to send out to groups. Please send in the information that you can. As I said it does not need to look pretty at this stage but allows us to build a picture. Much to my families delight my kitchen table is a visual plan of all our college partners and programmes. I think they would appreciate if I could complete that by next week.

I will then go into more detail on the next steps we intend to take as a partnership in next week’s update.

The main programme issue we handled this week was the nat 5 maths external qualification, which is the one academic element of our programme that is reliant on the SQA for an external exam. I will say a little about that.

**National 5 Maths external exam.**

Thank you to all of the teams who got back to me promptly on the issues they were facing and having to deal with. The priority was to assist those students requiring the national 5 maths external exam as part of their uni condition. It was really good to see most of our students doing really well in maths. Once the SQA clarify the evidence requirement we will raise with our University partners the particular challenges some students faced. We will do that on a case by case basis. I would intend to liaise with tutors direct on their particular students. It is worth re-assuring students that the external exam is only required for very specific university degrees. It is not required for the majority of swap progressions. It is though part of our approach that no matter how few students are affected by an issue, that we will always work for them.

It is also worthwhile advising students that SQA announcements on national exams do not affect their SWAP programme. SQA units are one part of our academic work on the programme. When we hear further from our college partners and SQA on the assessment of national units we will consider accordingly. In the meantime, if we can stress to students that we want them to focus on the learning elements of their SQA units where they can. That knowledge is important for their progression. We will of course advise them of assessment when we can, but at the moment our message is if you can, please keep learning.

**Issues facing students**

We are now developing a full picture through the form CV and hearing from students of the many and varied issues we will have to consider. If we can encourage students to disclose, especially our quieter students that will assist us taking an evidence-based approach.

At this stage, we appreciate fully the significant change from a well-supported college environment to being back at home in a lock down is massive. Our message again to students is to keep in touch with tutors, and to start making the changes a small step at time. Where it is overwhelming, we will take our time. I have asked John to keep a focus on these issues in his top tips.

Hats off to all our college tutors as well. I know how demanding this week has been re-assuring your students. I know you will not hear it much but **thank you**.

**Key workers**

It became clear early on in the week that a lot of the work our students do to help support their studies is now work that has become essential for our country. This is particularly pertinent for our access to nursing students. We have at least 1 class where all of the students are key workers. I put out a statement to our access to nursing group yesterday. That was to acknowledge their contribution, thank them for it and to appreciate that from a public health response their work may have to be their priority. We highlighted in the statement that they must keep in touch with their college and college tutors during this period. Especially what is likely to be the immediate crisis point. We have assured them their work will not in any way prejudice their opportunity to complete. We felt that was important to ensure they were not under any additional pressures. Thank you for our nursing university contacts in particular in coming back to us so quickly on the request. I know the pressures the universities nursing schools are under just now is immense.

If I can clarify for the avoidance of any doubt, the statement confirms students must keep in touch with their colleges. They are still first and fore most college students and we will still need them to complete their programmes. Apologies if that was not clear and I am happy to confirm that with any student or student group.

In addition, the relationship with a college tutor is so important. I heard yesterday of the demand of a student in terms of work that was far and away in excess of any fair work practices. If we can ask the students to keep in touch and we will continue that essential guidance and support role that they will need.

The statement also highlighted the role all our students can play. By getting on with their learning, if they can. That will give our colleges the time and resource to help our key workers complete and progress. All students are therefore contributing to that effort.

Statement can be found here, if you can highlight that to any key workers on your programme. <http://www.scottishwideraccess.org/coronavirus.php?section_id=1028>

We have also been asked by the SFC to provide evidence on students who are key workers and I hope that will provide additional resources for a group of students who are going to be so crucial to our countries public health response over the next 3 week period. Our thanks again to them on behalf of the partnership. We are incredibly proud of you.

**Prep for HE and STAY**

STAY is now almost ready to go online, and we will have that ready for students in May. In addition, we have had great support from all of our university partners on prep for he materials. We don’t want to overwhelm students or staff just now. We will roll that out after Easter. Our students though are going to be really well prepared.

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