Dear colleagues,

**SWAP tutor update 3rd May**

I hope everyone is keeping well. I have attached the student update that we posted on Friday on the network. Useful if you can circulate to students to keep them up to date. I changed the update around this week due to the slightly different questions from students. I wanted the update to address these questions and hopefully pre-empt others. Thought it might be useful in this email to talk through my sense of the categories of students now getting in touch. How we might deal with their challenges. We will address prep for he in a bit more detail with the students at the end of the week.

**SWAP academic framework**

I know you are all working through the SQA guidelines and decision trees. Not an easy piece of work. Just to re-assure that I am happy to talk through any proposed changes. Also, useful if you can advise me of the changes so we can confirm for progressions. I have advised university partners of the process that you are undertaking, and they would also be happy to assist, if required. For students, I have re-assured them that this will take time.

In the student update we have advised that we have 64 access programmes, none of which are the same. Approved changes in one programme will not be the same in other programmes. Colleges work to different timetable schedules during the year and have different units. Might be useful highlighting that to students to avoid them becoming anxious about something they don’t have to become anxious about.

We have also highlighted to some students this week, the distinction between students receiving an SQA certificate for a unit and their student profile. We have now made the appropriate changes to the framework and student profile and posted these online for students.

**Communication with students**

We now seem to be settling down into a pattern of different types of students. I am sure someone will phone after I have completed this with something new, but this is my most recent thinking:

1. **Students who are on target and are engaging with college with their learning.**

These students for most classes are the majority. We will expect them to progress. They are contacting the office worried that their standards are slipping. We have stressed to them that we are not expecting their work to be at the same level as if they were physically at college. If they continue with their learning during a pandemic, then we would expect them to progress. They will be offered additional support from the universities they have been offered a conditional firm for. Be good for these students to move to CF as soon as possible as we can start to write to them to let them know about the support available.

1. **Student on target, is engaging but is struggling in one subject area. Or may struggle with profile grades**

These students are the ones we would normally get through in the 3rd term. They benefit from the supportive college environment. With determination they get there. The SQA decision trees do not really help them. For these students I would recommend intervening early. Find out if the subject area they are struggling with is mandatory for their progression to University. I am happy to see if we can look to change their UCAS degree choices if that is more appropriate. Quicker we can highlight and intervene with these students, more likely we can still provide progression. We can also look at discussing with universities, how some of their support work can assist with progression. This will depend very much on individual circumstances but sooner we can engage, sooner we can try and find a solution.

1. **Student on target, but due to caring and key worker commitments is struggling to find time**

We have a large number of students who are key workers, living in households with key workers, have substantial caring commitments and are still managing to study and learn. We expect them to fall into category 1 in terms of students, and they deserve a heap of praise. However, we will ensure that for those where COVID 19 has caused disadvantage that they be given support to continue to progress.

These students are the ones we will work with as long as we can, to try and assist their progression. The profile now provides us with the opportunity to record all of their issues. In terms of evidence it will come down to individual circumstances and we can talk through that. Our recommendation is that they need to continue to engage with you as a tutor. Think carefully and reflect on what they can achieve. The time management skills work is there for that purpose. If the learning cannot be completed in college then we will start discussions with university partners.

There will be scope for support for these students during the summer if required.

1. **Students who are struggling and cannot continue**

I am conscious that some students will just have to many obstacles. Continuing their learning is not helpful for them. If you can re-assure students that they can return to SWAP. No issues with criteria for doing that and we will support any future UCAS applications. If a student decides to now do HNC rather than degree, we will also support and provide relevant guidance for their time on HNC.

They should not be allowed to feel defeated by this decision but that they have reflected on their position and positively decided to return next year.

1. **Students who stopped working as they thought SQA guidelines meant they no longer had to do any learning**

For these students, I am happy to give them time to come back to the fold. We are still seeing confusion caused by SQA announcements. Especially relating to higher exams. If you need me to contact them to advise them of reasons why they need to keep learning, then I am happy to do that.

**Partnership work with universities**

If I can stress that it would be good for students to now move to Firm in their UCAS choices. We are going to arrange for universities to write to them to let them know about additional activities they have for prepared to enhance their learning.

University of Glasgow have offered SWAPWest, the chance for all of our GU students to participate in their summer school this year. The summer school will have up to 15 subjects available online. Summer school will not be compulsory but clearly will be a fantastic opportunity. It will give students an enhanced experience of online learning. I have held this offer back a bit as I didn’t want to overwhelm students, but my sense is that I would like this offer to go out to them next week.

GCU have also come to us with a set of materials and resources for students based around critical thinking, and study skill options. I would like to use these resources in a similar way to support progression for GCU firm students. My sense is that we make these resources available in June for students. But be good to let GCU students know they will be there.

If you can have a think about timing of making these announcements and get back to me, that will be useful.

**Preparation for Higher Education**

Just a reminder that if you need assistance with speaking to students, then please get in touch. I think we are now starting to focus on those who will need additional support, or we will need to think of imaginative options. More than happy to do that.

Kenny