

Scottish Wider Access Programme

SWAP East Consortium



ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

Achievement and Performance

In 2014-15, 30 SWAP programmes were offered by colleges within the SWAP East partnership. Colleges introduced 2 new programmes - an Access to Physical Sciences at Edinburgh College and an Access to Celtic Studies at Newbattle Abbey College. The number of enrolments increased by 8%. The targeted number of 1400 for SWAP national, in line with the SFC agreement, was met. (SWAP East 476, SWAP West 973)

From the 476 SWAP East students, 341 passed the course (72%) This is a 2% increase from the previous year. The sector average pass rate for colleges is 68%. The Humanities pass rate has marginally decreased from last year's figure (70% to 68%). In the Nursing area the pass rate is the highest of the three access programmes (78%), although this is a decrease from the 91% who passed last year. However, the year before that, the pass rate for nursing was 75%, so perhaps last year's results were unusual. In the Sciences the pass rate increased by 5% and rose from 67% to 73%.

Of these successful completers, 93% progressed onto higher education (as compared with 91% last year, 88% the previous year and 86% the year before that). Of this 93%, 77% went to university and 16% went on to HN study. Because SWAP East is now a UCAS school, more accurate data is now available on students who gain a place at university. This year SWAP East has tracked the students who either withdrew or failed to get a place at university. SWAP is currently tracking students who successfully completed their access course but who did not meet the grades required to enter university. Of the 18 who were initially in that category, 10 have replied, most have gone back to College to start HN studies and are captured in the FE-HN data.

SWAP East monitors success using a broad range of widening participation indicators:

- **Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**
20% (18% last year) of intake came from the most deprived communities (SIMD level 1, 20% most deprived areas of Scotland) in Scotland of whom 71% successfully completed (60% last year). The target of MD20 enrolments that the Scottish Funding Council seeks is 24%.
With the inclusion of MD40 students, the %age of enrolment figure for SWAP East rises to 41% of total. 65% of students within MD40 successfully completed.
- **Students with no family history of higher education**
57%. Of these 57%, 69% passed the programme. From this 69%, 91% went on H.E.
- **No prior qualifications at SCQF level 6**
337 students (71% of total intake). Target is 80%. 68% of these successfully completed the course.
- **Gender**
The ratio of men to women rose slightly this year, from 28:72 male/female, to 33:67.
- **Disabilities**
The number of students with disclosed disabilities was 14%. This remains above the target set of 12%.

More detailed analysis of these figures can be found in the SWAP East report on student data for 2014-15 which has been distributed to partners.

SWAP East must continue to work with its partner colleges to increase the numbers of SWAP students, look to plug any geographical gaps as well as prioritise the students from MD20/40 postcodes with few formal qualifications. Early indications for 2015 /16 are that the numbers will remain the same as this year. However talks are underway with Edinburgh College to introduce a second Access to Life Science and with Fife College to introduce a Physical Sciences programme at their Glenrothes campus.

SWAP governance

The SWAP East Chair, Michael Bates, was appointed for a further 2 years. Dorothee Leslie was appointed as the new SWAP East Vice Chair at the same time. The constitution was amended to allow these appointments to be for 2 years' duration. The management group was re-named and resumed its previous name of Executive group. OSCR was consulted for both changes to the constitution. A SWAP national group was established, consisting of the SWAP East and West Directors, their 2 Chairs and their 2 vice chairs. 2 former SWAP students were invited on to the group and will remain on the group for the duration of their university study. 2 external members, with strong backgrounds in adult education, were also invited to be part of the group. Its remit is to oversee certain areas of work, common to both SWAP East and SWAP West such as reporting and accountability to the Scottish Funding Council, the organisation of a SWAP National conference and the creation of a SWAP strategy which would lead into operational strategies for the 2 regional partnerships. The group met in August for a strategy meeting and to develop thoughts on how to take SWAP forward in the next year, when the new round of funding begins. The SWAP East consortium remains a separate charity and is accountable separately from SWAP West under charity law. The regional executive group's remit will remain focussed on charity governance, quality programmes, progression routes, student engagement and partnership working.

The partners represented within the consortium increased this year by 1, when UHI signed a partnership agreement with SWAP. The representative on the management group remains fluid, with staff changes, particularly in the FE sector, resulting in different attendees. There is continued support from institutions that ensure representatives are sent to meetings and feedback information to their institutions. UHI is represented at the Executive meetings by Perth College's representative. Discussions are currently underway with Aberdeen University on becoming a consortium partner in 2016.

2 curriculum review groups currently meet annually within the SWAP East partner consortium. Meetings were held with partners for Nursing (with Dundee University and Fife and Tayside colleges) and Education (with Colleges partners and Edinburgh University). Both of these meetings also discuss progression routes, UCAS and tracking. The next curriculum review group is planned for 2016.

The Director expresses her thanks to the members of the Group and, particularly, to the Chair for their continued help and support over the year.

SFC Funding

The Scottish Funding Council continues to support the national programme with the same level of funding guaranteed until July 2016. This length of funding has meant that there is time for plans and projects to be developed and carried through and gives SWAP assurances that there is continued support and interest from the Scottish government for programmes that support widening participation in education.

UCAS Centre

The third year of operation for students to apply to UCAS using SWAP East as their centre of application went well. 293 students applied to UCAS, with only a small number of students not applying using the SWAP East school.

As a UCAS centre, we are now in a better position to be able to start building up important, accurate statistical data on students' applications and offers of places to universities. This data is now being used as the basis for tracking progression of these students through university and will also be used for comparing data in future years. This year 91% of students who applied to UCAS using the SWAP code were offered at least one place at a university. Those who did not get offered were largely going for either a specific over-subscribed course, did not use all their choices available or applied to non-progression universities and courses.

There is no doubt that students benefitted from applying through SWAP. The SWAP office was able to monitor the offers made to students and intercede on their behalf to universities if necessary. This proved very beneficial for students (and colleges) and resulted in turning negative to positive outcomes for some students. There are also clear statistics of

destinations for students since SWAP is now obtaining the information directly from UCAS statistics on final placings.

Colleges and universities have also benefitted from this change. Universities are now receiving the SWAP students' results for ALL students who applied through UCAS from one point of contact – the SWAP office. Course tutors benefit because they receive from SWAP regular reports on their SWAP students' offers.

There is also no doubt that SWAP partners will benefit. The data that we are now compiling on student progression will be based on information on students who are offered unconditional places (previously, the data would have been compiled on information known to the Course Tutor in June, when UCAS offers were still conditional). SWAP is using this information to track the student through their HE journey and into employment.

Recruitment to Programmes

In August, most tutors were reporting waiting lists for classes. SWAP worked with colleges who still had places to signpost student enquiries accordingly. Unfortunately some classes, showing full earlier in the year, have not optimised their numbers as some students who were accepted did not take up their place in September. The current data suggests that 2015-16's figures will remain the same as for the 2014-15.

Dissemination of good practice

The SWAP course tutors forum met in June; an Education forum met in October and a Fife and Tayside Nursing forum met in December. Discussions centred on the UCAS application system, profile Grades, study skills days, Preparation for HE and SWAP East induction talks. SWAP staff and students have taken an active role at seminars and conferences throughout the year, helping to raise the profile of SWAP and the work that is done to widen participation.

Database

The new national SWAP database has now completed its third cycle of student registration. This database gives us on-line registration for students, automatic upload of UCAS data, an interface between colleges and universities for results and tracking purposes, as well as a web based progression route search facility. The progression database has proved extremely effective, with students being able to access progression route possibilities from the SWAP East website even before they apply to college, thereby making them aware, pre-access, of the recognised, agreed routes into their chosen university course. SWAP West has followed suit this year and created a similar progression service for their students.

Website

The website continues to act as a vital communication tool for students (current and prospective), tutors, partners and stakeholder organisations to find the information that they are looking for. SWAP East and West will invest some finances in 15/16 to significantly improve the look of the website and the way that we give information to the users. The number of hits to the SWAP website has risen dramatically in the last 2 years. In 2012, there were 25,879 hits; in 2013 there were 38,915 and for the first 10 months of 2014, 47,000. Some of this increase will be due to our current students using it for enrolling for looking at progression routes when making their UCAS choices. Current students also use the website to access information on events such as open days and SWAP study skills days. They also use it to access guidance and support materials for preparation for HE.

Marketing

SWAP East continue to market the programmes to a wide variety of organisations directly and indirectly connected with adult education and widening access. Flyers were distributed to community projects, libraries, citizens' advice bureaux, job centres and other relevant organisations throughout the Borders, Lothians, Fife, Perthshire, Dundee & Angus and Forth Valley regions. SWAP liaised with our partner colleges to request that the course description accurately reflected that it was a SWAP course, what this meant and to ensure there was links to the SWAP east website.

Provided accessible guidance

The office continued to provide one-to-one guidance to about 1300 enquirers through the office telephone and web e-mail, many on a repeated basis. A significant amount of enquiries are from non-eligible students, but time is still spent guidance is still given on other possible routes that can be taken back into education. . Many of our current students also get in touch for guidance and support – often as a result of the induction/UCAS talk that we give to all access students at the start of the year. The main areas of support centre around university applications, results, offers, funding.

Study Skills Days

SWAP East delivered 4 study skills days with our university partners in November/December 2014. The written feedback from students who attended was very good.

This year, Heriot Watt University hosted the Science Study Skills day, 46 students attended, 106 students attended the Humanities day, hosted this year by Edinburgh University. In Dundee, 25 students attended the Humanities day at Dundee University and 33 attended the Nursing day at Abertay University. The numbers attending the Humanities and Nursing Days in Dundee were quite small but the day was considered extremely worthwhile by those who attended. In total 48% of SWAP students who enrolled attended the Study Skills day. SWAP continues to encourage course tutors to emphasise the importance of these days as part of their preparation for higher education.

In general, the feedback from the 2015 Study Skills days was excellent and the vast majority of the students who attended feedback that they had benefitted from most, if not all, of the day's sessions. The programme was varied with most partner institutions participating at some stage in at least one of the days.

The Study Skills days are considered to be hugely successful and beneficial to students and an extremely important part of the Preparation for HE. Not only students but also college tutors find it well worth the day out of college. Attendance from some colleges remained patchy but the Director and SWAP Co-ordinator continue to promote the importance of these at every opportunity.

Thanks go, once again, to the partner HE institutions and the staff who unstintingly provide their time and services to ensure this very important part of preparation for SWAP Access students.

Progression Routes

The offers made to SWAP students from the partners within the consortium remained generally steady with last year's figures (in terms of percentages). There has been a rise in the number of students successful in gaining places in the West of Scotland (25 in 2015 as opposed to 5 in 2014). The main difference is that more students met their conditional offers. 10 English universities, such as Manchester, Leeds, Bradford and Newcastle gave offers to SWAP students. Several of the universities within the partnership increased the number of progression route opportunities for SWAP students. UHI's progression routes have been added this year. Aberdeen have also given assurances of giving offers to SWAP students based on profile grades and consultation is underway to formalise the routes in time to inform this year's students when deciding on their UCAS choices. All these are positive outcomes for SWAP.

Staffing

The staffing remains at a total of 2.2 FTE. This translates into three members of staff. The Director is full-time and the Co-ordinator and Administrator are both on a 0.6 contract. All posts are in place for the duration of the current funding period, until July 2016.

Lesley Dunbar
Director
December 2015