Dear swap students,

**SWAP update 10th April**

I hope everyone is well. Just popping over our weekly update from SWAPWest. I am hoping that you are taking the chance to get a bit of a break over the Easter holidays. I am going to maintain these updates weekly just to ensure you know the work that is going on behind the scenes to ensure your completion of the SWAP programme. I will though keep this one brief as I do want you to have a good holiday break. **The SWAP office will again be open as normal next week. Very happy to hear from students during this time if you have any concerns.**

I know a lot of you last week, were very anxious about some of the statements coming from SQA and were trying to understand what it meant for your class. That is quite natural. I hope when I spoke to you on the phone it helped clear up what can be a complex picture. I am therefore going to spend a bit more time in this briefing, going over the way we are working in SWAP. **If I can stress that SWAP programmes are owned by our partnership colleges and universities. Decisions about the programmes are made by the partnership**. These decisions will be communicated by me as Director, through your class tutors and in the weekly updates.

I will be communicating at least once a week through the student network and more often if required. I am more than happy to discuss any issue, with a student direct or a class rep on behalf of their class. **Decisions on what happens with your SWAP programme will not come from SQA in a tweet or any other organisation.** Unfortunately, one of our students received wrong guidance from a UCAS representative this week as well. Hopefully we corrected that quickly. I think that just underlines the importance of keeping in touch with SWAP. Your college tutor is our main contact for you, and we are fortunate to be able to have these professionals working with us. Please keep in touch with them, they are there to support and guide you.

I have repeated our 3 key messages here as they explain the approach we are taking as a partnership to help guide all of our students through the challenges. Our view is that there will be a number of aspects that we need to consider and tackle. We will do that in an inclusive way, ensuring that we can be fair to all of our students. By the very nature of the work, it will take time to work through. We are a small enough programme to provide that individual touch and we intend to continue that approach.

**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.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/extra-hardship-payments-for-students/>

Our SWAP programme has been developed over 30 years, working with adults returning to education. You will re-call away back in September and October when the SWAP team came to visit your class, our visit talked about the 3 elements of the programme – academic, prep for he and your student profile.

Over the next few weeks, I will structure the student network update into these 3 elements of the programme. The updates will include:

1. Information on how our college partners are working with SQA on the delivery of the national units in your programmes.
2. How our University and College partners are working together to ensure you are well prepared for progression
3. How the SWAP programme will work with our universities and HNC in colleges to ensure your progression

The information for that will come from SWAP, be distributed to your college tutors and also be updated weekly.

**Wellbeing**

John has added more top tips. Our main message is please kind to yourself over the Easter period. Focus on what you can control. John has added some escape thoughts. Use what you can. John has also been talking to colleagues who are going to work in the Louisa Jordan hospital this weekend. They need us to do our bit by following the health guidelines. I also know we have a number of students who are key workers and will be operating on the front line over this weekend. Our thanks go out to you.

<http://www.scottishwideraccess.org/john-s-online-tips.php?section_id=1031>

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