

Scottish Wider Access Programme East

Annual Report & Financial Accounts year ending 31st July 2024



Current & former Access to Medical Studies students at a Q & A session, Edinburgh College, 2024

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

Charity Number: - SCO26180

Members: -

Borders College	Heriot Watt University
Dundee & Angus College	Queen Margaret University
Edinburgh College	University of St Andrews
Fife College	Abertay University
North East Scotland College	University of Dundee
Newbattle Abbey College	University of Edinburgh
West Lothian College	University of Aberdeen
Forth Valley College	University of the Highlands & Islands
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)	University of Stirling
	Edinburgh Napier University

Robert Gordon University is a partner

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SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWAP East is a charity set up by Scottish universities and colleges whose aim is to advance the education of adults in Scotland wishing to return to education, by means of access programmes specifically tailored to enable them to progress onto higher education. It was set up in 1988; its main aim remains the same today.

SWAP is a national widening access programme, mainly funded by the Scottish Funding Council, with students enrolling on SWAP programmes throughout the country. SWAP aims to give opportunities to adult returners from wherever they are living in Scotland. The introduction of 2 online programmes in 2022 has helped engage with students in more remote areas of Scotland and/or where attending a campus is not practical for them. A further 2 new online programmes, in different subject areas, in 2024 has given further opportunities for these adult returners. SWAP is recognised nationally as an extremely important access route for adults with few formal qualifications to access higher education. Since 1998 more than 40,000 students have used this route to move onto, and succeed at HN and degree level.

SWAP East works closely with SWAP West at a national level and continues to actively engage with its college and university partners, educational and other sector bodies and many adult learning organisations.

SWAP activity is measured by widening access performance indicators. Outcome agreements are set out and SWAP reports annually to the Scottish Funding Council. In 23/24, the SWAP East & West partnerships continued to be successful in achieving a range of their outcome targets, including 82% of students who are first in family to go onto higher education & 82% of students with no previous qualifications above SCQF Level 5. Targets were met for SIMD 20 (38% of enrolled students) and also for numbers engaged with disabilities and from ethnic minorities.

23/24 saw a reduction in the number of enrolled students for the second year in a row. This most likely reflects the challenges that the more disadvantaged in society are continuing to face with the rise in the cost of living and with the long-term effects of COVID. However, access programme retention rates improved slightly from last year, as did retention for 1st year at university. Of those who completed the programme, progression to higher education remained very high, with 84% moving onto university and a further 11 % going on to HN study at college. From the remaining 5% some plan to apply to university next year, others found work. The ratio of UCAS application to offer remains very high which evidences the potential & value that our university partners see in SWAP students.

The annual report also details evidence of student success and positive student experience.

SWAP's strategic planning defines the programme's aims and objectives and focuses on 4 key themes; Partnerships, Accessibility, Student Success and Social Justice. Each theme has clearly articulated aims and actions to be achieved and outcomes which will evidence the programme's impact and which align with the outcome targets set by the Scottish Funding Council.

Details of SWAP's activities and achievements in 23/24, including the charity's accounts, are contained within the report. The trustees present their charity's annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2024. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the accounts.

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REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Structure, Governance and Management

SWAP East is a registered charity and is governed by a consortium (named the Executive Group), made up from member colleges and universities and whose function is laid out in its constitution. Membership of the group is open to all FE and HE institutions in the east of Scotland and each is entitled to vote at the AGM. Current members of the group are listed on Page 2. During the year some staff members representing their institutions have changed. Institutions must ensure representatives are sent to meetings and feedback information to their institutions. Membership is agreed at the AGM by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote. Each partner member has one vote. Membership of the group is fluid and the group has the power to invite other bodies engaged in the provision and promotion of further and higher education in the east of Scotland. Other organisations with an interest in adult returners may also be invited to participate in the group's activities.

SWAP East holds a general meeting annually, normally within 20 weeks of the end of the financial year (July 31st). The AGM is quorate when at least one third of the institutions are present. This must include at least 2 colleges and 2 universities. The Director of SWAP East and other SWAP East staff attend the AGM and other Executive group meetings. The AGM elects a chair and a vice-chair from the executive group for a term of two years and thereafter renewable every two years by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote. Ordinarily the Chair and Vice Chair will represent the university and college sectors with the Chair occupied in alternate terms by a representative from these two sectors. The current chair is from the University of Edinburgh and the current vice chair is from North East Scotland College. Both were appointed for their 1st term in these roles by the members at the AGM in December 2022. Both will remain in post in their current roles until December 2024, when they will have the possibility of being re-elected for a further 2 year term.

The executive group may delegate its functions to academic advisory groups or other task groups whose remit is determined by the AGM. Curriculum review groups/forums may meet annually within the SWAP East partner consortium. Meetings are held with both college and university partners involved in different subject areas. Discussions take place mostly around curricula, progression routes, the university application process, access programme frameworks and the widening access to higher education agenda.

SWAP West and SWAP East exist as separate registered charities but report jointly to the Scottish Funding Council and report jointly on their outcome agreements. They collaborate closely and meetings held with the Directors, Chairs and Vice Chairs of both consortia take place at a national level. The main focus of this work centres on SWAP's strategic development and funding applications.

SWAP East is hosted by the University of Edinburgh who kindly give us access to office, meeting & event space, who manage our HR and Finance processes and who host our databases and give us IT security and guidance. SWAP is extremely grateful for their ongoing support.

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Objectives and activities

The principal purpose of SWAP East is to promote the advancement of adults into education, with a focus on adults from widening access backgrounds, by means of access programmes specifically tailored to enable them to progress on to higher education. In furtherance of this aim SWAP East may/shall:

- Work as a partnership of colleges and universities to promote the education of adults and to work alongside other organisations committed to adult education.
- Provide accessibility of educational opportunities for adults to move into higher education by means of coherent effective pathways and quality programmes.
- Promote the success of SWAP students and develop their talents to help SWAP’s work in widening access to education.
- Highlight social justice and work with wider initiatives to promote equality and diversity within further and higher education.

SWAP East works with partner colleges and universities to design and support access programmes, market programmes, broker and maintain progression agreements and recruit students. It also works with community and other agencies in the education sector to raise awareness of these programmes for adult returners.

SWAP’s strategic aims and development work are focused on 4 main themes: Partnership, Accessibility, Student Success and Social Justice.

Achievements and Performance

Student enrolment

In 23/24, 737 students enrolled on SWAP access programmes. For the 2nd year in a row there has been a reduction in student numbers, as shown in Table 1. This table shows the numbers broken down into the 3 main subject areas, with the Allied Health Professions Programme showing within Science. The reduction was in Nursing, with numbers falling for the 2nd year running. Science & Humanities numbers stayed almost the same. Enrolments, however, remain higher than pre-COVID.

Table 1 Student enrolments from 14/15 – 23/24

Student Enrolments	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Humanities	256	265	243	244	275	249	262	250	157	166
Nursing	101	135	165	170	208	318	496	513	478	438
Science (& AHP)	119	103	124	134	121	114	144	137	134	133
Total	476	503	532	548	604	681	902	900	769	737

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Table 2 shows the number of students from each college enrolled on SWAP East programmes; subject area breakdown & who completed.

Table 2

Colleges	Nursing	Science	Social Sciences	Total Number of Enrolled Students	Students who completed
Borders	16			16	13
Dundee & Angus	44	8	23	75	54
Edinburgh	113	45	44	202	149
Fife	85	22	17	124	89
Forth Valley	13			13	11
Inverness	21			21	14
Moray	15			15	10
Newbattle Abbey			20	20	14
North East Scotland	51	27	17	95	70
North Highland	8			8	7
Perth	16	22	23	61	40
Other	5			5	4
West Lothian	51	9	22	82	54
Total number of students	438	133	166	737	529

Table 2's figures show that 72% of enrolled students completed their SWAP access programme in 23/24. This is a rise of 2% from last year, which in itself was a rise from the previous year. It is hopeful that next year we will continue this rise back to pre-COVID retention levels.

Programme development

SWAP East continues to work with its partner colleges to address gaps there might be for adult returners wanting to access higher education. In 23/24, SWAP East successfully collaborated with the newly merged UHI college – North, West & Hebrides, to develop 2 online programmes - Access to Nursing & Access to Allied Health Professions to further address accessibility for adults living in remote areas or where a student's circumstances meant that campus based learning was not possible. Despite a fairly late start to recruitment, both programmes have begun. The other 2 online programmes, Access to Humanities and Access to Health & Life Sciences continue to attract large numbers. The majority of students on these programmes are not from the local area and would have difficulty accessing the programme of their choice if it was only offered on campus. University partners continue to offer new progression routes from these new programmes, giving these remote learners a number of choices on where to move on to within higher education. SWAP continues to explore options of running a remote Access to Physical Sciences and talks will continue with UHI Perth on its feasibility.

In addition, Forth Valley College ran a new Access to Nursing programme at their Stirling campus which resulted in an increase in the number of Nursing places taken up at Stirling University. Forth Valley have also recruited for a 2nd programme to run at their Falkirk campus in 24/25. Shetland College were successful for the first time in recruiting a small number of SWAP Access to Nursing students.

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SWAP established a route into Medicine at Dundee University in 2023, to run alongside their progression route for Dentistry. Dundee & Angus College now offer an Access to Medical Studies with the aim of giving adult returners, local to the Tayside, Angus and Grampian areas, a potential pathway into these 2 degrees.

Progression to Higher Education

SWAP East access programmes are pathways to higher education courses. The majority of students who successfully complete the programme move on to university.

In the 2024 UCAS cycle, 85% of applicants gained a place at university; the remaining 15% either withdrew (most often because they had withdrawn from their access programme), had not been given an offer or had failed to meet their conditions of offer. A few of this 15% are students who had only made 1 choice, had decided to apply next year instead or had gone back to college to enrol on an HNC instead. 98% of SWAP East applicants who made their conditions of offer got their first choice.

Table 3 details the 23/24 SWAP East student cohort's progression, broken down at college level.

Table 3

Colleges	Students who completed programme	Students who progressed to university
Borders	13	10
Dundee & Angus	54	40
Edinburgh	149	136
Fife	89	53
Forth Valley	11	10
Inverness	14	12
Moray	10	6
Newbattle Abbey	14	13
North East Scotland	70	66
North Highland	7	7
Perth	40	36
Other	<5	<5
West Lothian	54	51
Total number of students	529	444

Table 3 shows that in 23/24, 84% of students who successfully completed the programme gained a place at university. Over and above this, a further 11% moved on to HNC study (60% of these students were at Fife College). This means that overall, 95% of students who completed moved on into higher education after their SWAP programme. Of the remaining 5%, some were planning to apply for 2025 entry, some went into employment and a few went back to college for further learning at FE level.

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Graph 1 below gives the breakdown of SWAP East students' progressions to universities in 2024 and contrasts these figures with the previous 5 years. The orange column, which is 2024 entry, shows that numbers are lower at most HEIs (as you would expect with lower enrolment numbers) but the ratio of completion of programme to a place at university remains very high.

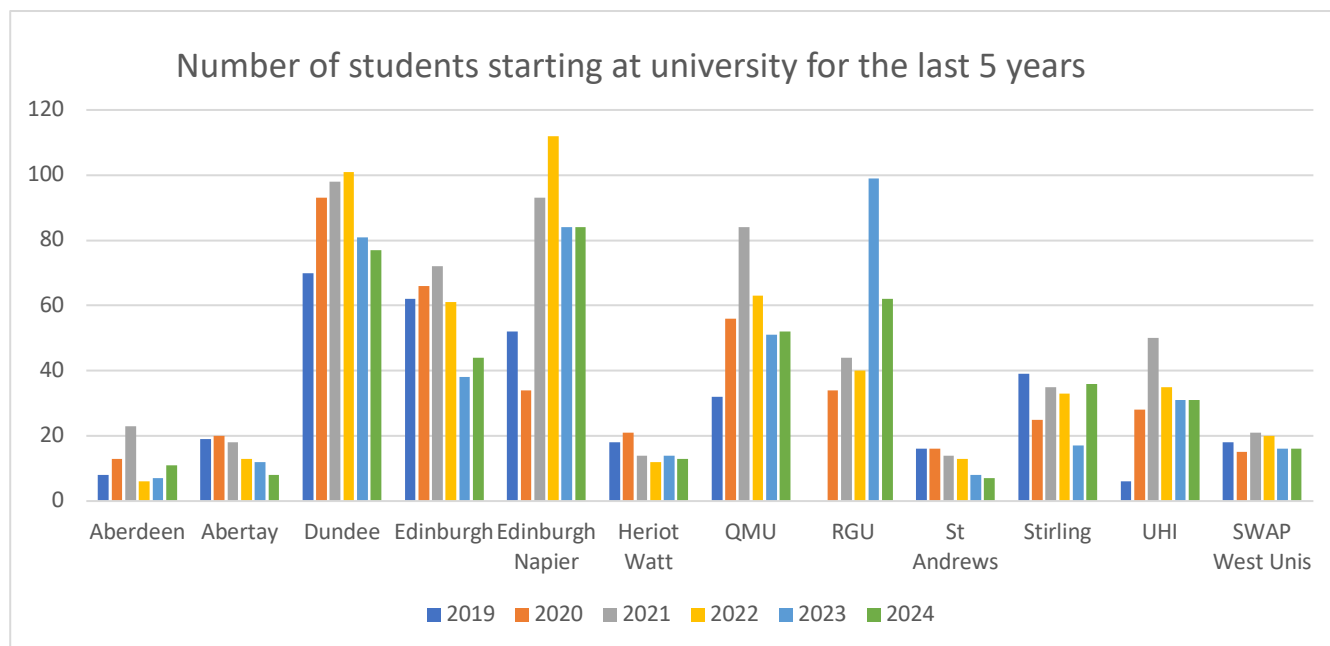


Table 4 below shows the areas of study to which students progressed in 2024.

General subject area	Matriculated 1st year students
Medicine/Veterinary Medicine	11
Adult/Mental Health Nursing	225
Children/Learning Disability	26
Allied Health Professions	57
Science & Maths	25
Languages	7
Social Sciences/Law/Social Work/Finance	80
Primary Education	13
Total number of students who started at university in 2024	444

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Widening Access indicators

The Scottish Funding Council funds SWAP to support the achievement of its key outcomes. These align to the following SFC strategic objectives:

- To invest in education that is accessible to learners from all backgrounds, gives them a high-quality learning experience, supports them to succeed in their studies, and equips them to flourish in employment, further study and fulfilling lives
- To ensure colleges, universities and specialist institutions form part of a successful, world-leading, coherent and sustainable system of education that responds effectively to the future needs of learners and the skills needs of the economy and society, enhances our rich cultural life, and strengthens Scotland's international connections

It thereby also supports the following Scottish Government strategic priorities:

- To provide the best student experience, seamlessly connected for learners of all ages and backgrounds
- To provide high quality learning in a system where institutions work in partnership and demonstrate the highest standards of governance and financial accountability.

It also contributes to the following Scottish Government National Performance Framework Outcomes:

- Communities – We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- Education – We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- Human Rights – We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- Poverty – We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.

Reporting to our funders

SWAP uses a range of widening participation indicators to evidence that the programme is achieving its aims as set out in our constitution and in our agreed outcomes with our main funders, the SFC. SWAP East and SWAP West report together to the SFC. The outcomes, therefore, are at a national level and the detail below shows the outcomes achieved as a result of SWAP enrolments and programme delivery throughout Scotland, both from east and west college partners.

Every year a report is sent to the SFC detailing SWAP's activity and achievements of the agreed outcomes in the previous academic year. The most recent report was sent in October 2024 with information pertaining to SWAP activity in 23/24.

Agreed outcomes

1) SWAP aims to provide accessible education opportunities for adults with no or few qualifications who want to progress to higher education. SWAP does this by delivering the provision of consistent, quality approved access programmes, delivered by college partners across a broad curriculum area, with progression routes to all university partners. The funding ensures the delivery of programmes and allows the partnership to consider challenges facing adult student returners. The requirements are for college partners in delivering programmes and universities in providing progression routes. SWAP facilitates a partnership approach based on student need. The partnership can consider how best to adapt programme requirements to meet the needs of students and partners, for example, in responding to Covid and

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economic challenges. The partnership is committed to considering innovative approaches to delivery, supporting online, part time, fast track and pre-access provision.

2) The partnership highlights the adult student experience and voice in considering educational developments. SWAP programmes support tackling poverty in Scotland, especially for single parents, young parents, disabled and adults with qualifications below SCQF level 6. The SWAP partnership maintains and develops resilient and trusted programmes which ensure successful student outcomes in difficult financial times.

3) The SWAP partnership provides transparent results and reports, to support SFC and Scottish government fair access targets. Our reports ensure programmes are meeting the need of students living in SIMD 20 and relevant WP measures for example - lack of qualifications, first in family, gender, disability and BME. Analysis of the implementation of access programmes and the student experience for those progressing to degree study.

4) SWAP continues to contribute fully to the Framework for Fair Access and work of SCAPP.

Widening Participation outcomes:

Accessible educational opportunities for adults who wish to move into higher education are available through the provision of consistent, quality approved access programmes, which are delivered by college partners across a wide curriculum area specifically for returning adults with no or few qualifications.

Number of Programmes Target 105

Actual = 110

Enrolment Target 1900 students

Actual = 1800; completers = 1270 (71% retention)

SIMD 20 students Target 35%, Completers 35%

Actual = 38%; completers = 36%

No previous qualifications above SCQF Level 5. Target 80%

Actual = 82%; completers = 79%.

No parental experience of higher education Target 55% of intake

Actual = 82%; completers = 77%.

Gender division – to increase proportion of males accessing higher education.

Target 25% males

Actual = 20% This target is now unrealistic, given the rise in Access to Nursing programmes in recent years. If Nursing enrolments are removed, the Actual figure rises to **30% males**

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Disability Target 15%

Actual = 30%; completers 25%.

BME Target 8%

Actual = 14%

We also report to the Funding Council on student experience, transition to university & retention after 1st year to inform and evidence the success of the programme.

Table 6 below shows the WP outcomes detailed for only SWAP East

WIDENING PARTICIPATION OUTCOMES	Enrolments	Completers	% of enrolments	% of completers
Recruitment & progression of SIMD 20 students	176	115	24%	22%
No qualifications at SCQF Level 6 from school	576	401	78%	76%
No parental experience of university	605	429	82%	81%
Students who disclosed a disability	236	151	32%	29%
Gender				
Female	599		81%	
Male	134		18%	
Other	4		1%	

Progression routes from access programmes to degree courses at university

Universities recognise the value of SWAP access programmes as an entry route for adult returners. Each year, the numbers of degree opportunities on the SWAP progression database increase, as university partners offer new progression routes and new programmes are offered by college partners. These agreements on progression to their university are based on agreed programme frameworks and profile grade entry requirements. There are now nearly 1,000 formal routes into degree courses at SWAP's partner HEIs in the north and east of Scotland. SWAP West HEIs also give consideration to applications from SWAP East students for the majority of their degree courses. Each year, one or two of our students gain a place at an English university and this year the new Scottish Chiropractic College gave 3 places to SWAP students from Access to Life Sciences' programmes.

Every year SWAP tracks students who progress to university and reports the findings to the Executive Board and to the Funding Council. The SWAP East data for 2021 entry to university showed retention dip for the first time in 5 years to below 90% which most likely reflected the difficulties students are facing with the cost of living crisis. It was encouraging to see that the retention data for 2022 entry go back up to 91%, but this is still below pre-pandemic levels.

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Dissemination of information and good practice

In 23/24 the majority of our start of term information talks to students went back to being on campus, but we continued the use of pre-recording information to send out to students so that the session on campus could be more interactive, with students getting more time to ask questions or have any concerns addressed. It also meant that any student unable to make it into college that day would still have the information. If the programme was being taught on more than 1 campus, or if the programme was solely online, we continued to offer IAG sessions online. These talks covered enrolling with SWAP, the UCAS process, searching for university choices, the preparation for higher education materials and where to find this guidance on the SWAP website. Over and above that, time was also spent explaining about SWAP, how the programme works, the profile grading system, what funding's available to support them whilst in H.E. and the progression route opportunities that are available to them for accessing higher education.

Preparation for Higher Education



SWAP co-ordinates with our university partners to deliver study skills days. These sessions are an important part of the access students' preparation for higher education. They give the student the opportunity to learn more about the transition from college to university and the skills that will be needed to study successfully at university. Topics such as referencing, note-taking, essay writing, critical thinking are all part of the students' Prep for HE throughout the year on their programme, but these sessions help to reinforce their importance and are delivered by our university partners.

Because our students are studying throughout the north and east of Scotland (including some from the Hebridean and Northern Isles) we now offer an online event for our Nursing and Humanities students through MS Teams. The sessions are recorded so that students who cannot come online on the day can still benefit from the information given. For the Science event, we continue to offer this on campus (to allow the students to experience a 1st year lab session), and we record it for those who cannot attend. To facilitate the online Science students, SWAP arranges the day to coincide with their practical week on campus at UHI Perth.

The main barriers to students not attending these events are a constant:- distance to travel, reluctance to miss classes; the event clashes with an assessment; students working or looking after children. By sending out a recording after the day, SWAP mitigates these barriers. Q & A sessions are held for Science, Humanities, Nursing and Medical Studies. Former SWAP students are invited along to talk about their experiences moving on and being at university. This is an important part of their Prep for HE with the aim of not only giving



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out important information on the transition experience but also to give current access students the confidence and self-belief that this is something that they can do as well.

Working with partners

MS Teams is used for meetings with college and university staff to review curriculum and programme development and to give induction sessions to new tutors. SWAP East takes part in various review college/university meetings throughout the year. These meetings were carried out to consult and share information as well as to review curriculum progressions, UCAS systems and results.

SWAP is in very regular contact with partner colleges and universities. Discussions are usually about programme development, eligibility of students to be SWAP, progression opportunities, admissions & partnership working and is usually specific to each individual institution. SWAP regularly disseminates information & guidance to tutors, either directly by email or through the tutor's section of the website. SWAP currently works with over 50 college tutors and curriculum managers as well as university admissions and Widening Participation staff, college UCAS advisers & guidance tutors. SWAP also works with Skills Development Scotland Advisers, mainly on eligibility matters, and regularly sends them updates on SWAP programmes. In May and June SWAP carried out student surveys with access and university SWAP students to gain feedback on the student experience, the results of which are given to university & college partners for discussion at June's Executive group meeting.

SWAP also meets and sends reports regularly to the SFC. SWAP is part of the Fife and Tayside Nursing forum and meetings continue to be held remotely with the University of Dundee, Perth, Fife & D & A colleges, to discuss access programme curricula, progressions and admissions processes. The SWAP East AGM and Executive group met remotely in December 2023 while in June 2024, a meeting was held at the University of Edinburgh, with partners given the option of joining remotely, through Teams.

Provision of accessible guidance

The SWAP East office provides one-to-one guidance to approximately 3,500 student enquiries. Throughout the year. The enquiries (through email, MS Teams and phone calls) come from:- prospective students who are unsure of their best route back into education & their eligibility; current students who are looking for advice and guidance on their UCAS and, more generally, for their preparation to H.E.; and former SWAP students who are at university. SWAP also provides information and guidance to course tutors, other college staff and other organisations' education advisers throughout the year. SWAP staff worked remotely between 2020 and 2023 with twice weekly staff meetings online. In the past year, this has moved to a hybrid model with use of office space at the University of Edinburgh.

Communication is maintained with students, tutors and college and university partners and other sector bodies through campus visits, email and a variety of media platforms. Throughout the year SWAP sends out links from their Preparation to Higher Education bank of materials to support SWAP students as they prepare to transition to university or HNC study. The final module, on preparing for the start of

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university is sent out in August. Students were again encouraged this year to connect with their university before term started. SWAP continues to use X, as a vehicle to promote activity, to advertise programmes, to give information and links to our SWAP partners' events and to share the success of our SWAP students on their learning journey.

Marketing

Due to budgeting constraints, there has again been no monies available for marketing this year.

The Student Voice

Surveys were carried out in June, with both access and 1st year university SWAP students, to evaluate their learning experience. Findings are reported back to the SWAP East Executive Group and detail also given to individual university partners for information. Some of the key findings are detailed below.

The access students' survey showed that, in terms of their learning experience, 99% reported that they would recommend a SWAP programme to others. In terms of barriers to study, 41% reported balancing part-time employment with studies as being very challenging. Lack of money was the 2nd biggest challenge (34%) Both indicate that students may be having to work longer hours to meet the rise in living costs. These personal and financial concerns were more prominent than academic ones. 19% highlighted getting used to new IT systems was a challenge.

There was favourable feedback on the support given to them by SWAP during the year, in the form of organised activities such as Study Skills Days, induction visits, Q & A sessions with former students and SWAP staff as well as information and guidance throughout the year in helping them prepare for higher education. Several questions were aimed at finding out if the SWAP Prep for HE materials had been used and if they were useful. 54% reported that they had used them, with others using their own college's materials.

SWAP engages with access students to ensure they are aware of the self-study materials available to them on the website as well as the information and guidance on UCAS, funding, university services etc. As in previous years, the majority of students found SWAP's UCAS information & guidance useful and many engage with the Facebook Peer Support Group.

“I had a great experience with SWAP! I decided to have a complete career change and this course has enabled me to do so. I'll forever be grateful for giving me the opportunity to gain qualifications to apply to university!”

“The SWAP course can be quite intense and overwhelming at times, but I cannot stress enough how crucial it has been for my personal growth. I have gained a lot of knowledge over the past year and I now feel completely confident in my ability to progress onto university. I highly recommend this course to anyone who is considering it. My biggest advice would be to put in your best effort and you will undoubtedly achieve fantastic results.”

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A 1st year student survey is also carried out to document whether or not SWAP programmes have prepared the student well enough for higher education. Along with the data that we gather on 1st year retention, we can evidence that SWAP programmes, as an access pathway to HE, are a significant pathway for adult returners into university with retention rates on a par with mainstream full-time undergraduates on degree programmes for the first time.

It focuses on many aspects of the students' 1st year university experience. This year's survey showed that less students are having all their lectures on campus (33%) , whilst 67% had a mixture of online and campus based lectures. It also showed that fewer students had all their tutorials on campus; the majority of students surveyed had a mixture of online and campus tutorials.

SWAP was keen to know how well prepared they had been by the university of their choice prior to starting term. 85% reported that they had received advice on how to prepare for university, while 78% reported that they had received information on student support services and funding available. However, only 55% stated that they had received information on their timetable. Advance notice of this is crucial for students who are parents (often single parents) and need to make arrangements for childcare.

We also ask the students how confident they felt prior to starting and then how confident they felt after the end of the 1st term. Data shows that confidence levels did improve (before the start 19% felt extremely unconfident). To address this, SWAP encourages students to engage as much as possible with events before and during welcome week. However SWAP students can struggle with attending such events because of childcare and also because they are working as much as possible to save money for living costs during term-time. However, it was good to see that this year, there was a significant increase (66% compared with the previous year of 31%) in the number of students who reported attending these pre-start weeks.

Students were also asked to report on how prepared they felt for the 1st set of exams. 81% felt quite well, well or very well prepared.

By the end of the year, 84% felt that academically they had coped well or quite well. 90% of the respondents felt that SWAP and their college had prepared them well. Referencing remained by far the study skill they found most challenging. Students also felt that the university had supported them well generally, with nearly half stating that they found the academic skills and student services the most useful. 31% commented on the value of peer support learning.

Last year's survey showed a big increase in the number of students citing finances as being a significant worry and it remained the biggest struggle for this year's 1st year students as well. The numbers citing challenges of balancing family life with studies remained at 58%. Nearly half the students struggled with having to work part-time and fit in studies. 36% said that they had struggled with some aspect of the academic work (a decrease from last year). As with the previous year, 6% responded that they had not struggled with any aspect of university life and that it had all been good so far.

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Students were asked to pass on any advice they'd like to give to students starting university and this was added to the final transitions module given to access students. The student voice is a powerful information tool and SWAP harnesses it to help give guidance & support to current students. Here are some of the comments from 1st year students:

“Always ask for help if you are struggling. There are numerous options to explore if you are getting overwhelmed with work. Lecturers want you to succeed and will do everything in their power to get you there. Don't struggle on quietly.”

“SWAP does get you ready especially academically in particular writing essays.”

“Stay on top of the work from day one, no last minute.”

“Manage your time as best as you can and believe in yourself. Remember to look after yourself.”

“Study the way that suits you best, if you like paper pads and handwritten notes then do that - even if you're the only one in the lecture halls doing that instead of typing on a laptop!”

“Use all the tools that the university offers and work hard to achieve your goals.”

“Try and do as much when you're in campus because the time you reach home u will have 100 more things to do and by the time the kids are off to bed u feel so exhausted. Don't wait till the last minute or week to do your assignment; try and put a plan to it before starting out (1 month earlier).”

“Don't be afraid to speak up and ask for help. Everyone I've been in contact with has been so helpful but you have to ask! Find out the services that are there to help with your studies.”

Additional activities

Peer Support activity

During the year SWAP engaged with SWAP university students to offer peer support to those at college. SWAP currently has just under 50 PSVs (Peer Support Volunteers). PSVs get involved in a number of ways:

- with our Q&A sessions that we hold for access students throughout the year.
- in giving 1:1 support & advice
- mentoring
- going back to college to speak to this year's students.



SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Over 1000 SWAP students at various stages of their studies are members of the SWAP East Peer Support Group on Facebook. This is a forum that SWAP set up to allow students to post questions about the programme, or any aspect of the transition to university.

Student Success

SWAP East tracks students' progression into and through university and uses this data to inform and report to partners and other sector organisations on the students' learning journey and to evidence that SWAP programmes are a successful route for entry into higher education. Progression data is reported to the members of the SWAP East Executive group and to the Scottish Funding Council. This year's tracking of 2022 entrants to university show that 91% of SWAP East students returned to study in Year 2. This is a 3% increase from 2021's entrants (who entered university during the pandemic) but is still lower than pre-pandemic retention levels (2019's retention was 95%). When broken down to subject area level, Science students' retention was an impressive 97% whereas the Humanities & Social Sciences' students (including Education, Law, Social Work) was lower (89%). When broken down to widening access flags, SWAP's retention rates for SIMD 20 & Care Experienced students are slightly below the 91% average. SWAP also tracks students through and beyond graduation. The last survey was carried out on 2018 SWAP entrants and showed that 73% of students completed a degree. Of these, 85 were 3-year Nursing degree students, with 17 achieving a Merit or Distinction from Dundee University. From those completing an Honours degree, 23% gained a 1st Class Award, 48% a 2:1 and 27% a 2:2 .

SWAP also collected some post graduate data on SWAP students who completed their degree in 2023. This relied on graduates responding to SWAP directly which makes the data set quite small. We had 27 responses (approximately 13% of students who completed that year). 14 were nurses; 13 of whom were working in a variety of roles within the NHS, while one had returned to university to undertake a Masters. Of the other 13, 8 had gone into employment while 5 had returned to university for post-graduate study.

SWAP sends out a Newsletter every Spring which is very much about the Student Voice, Click [here](#) to read the latest features.

SWAP students continue to give their time to SWAP and to write their stories for our [Student Success](#) page which we hope will inspire and encourage other students to take the step back into education and realise their dream of a different career.

Financial Position

Since 2011, SWAP East's core activity has been funded directly by the Scottish Funding Council. SWAP East & SWAP West receive their funding as one allocation and the funds are held by the University of Edinburgh. The tranche of funding covering 23/24 came to an end on 31st July 2023. SWAP applied and was successful in being awarded further funding for 2024/25.

Income for the charity in 23/24 was £138,000 (22/23 £132,000). To help with the rising staffing costs, a member of staff who left was not replaced for 3 months. This saving has been carried over to 24/25 to help offset further rising staffing costs against funding that has remained the same for many years. The breakdown on this is detailed in the Independent Examiner's accounts within pages 22 -28. Core funding of £137,000 is in place for 24/25. In January 2025, SWAP will apply to the Scottish Funding Council for funding for 25/26.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Staffing

During the year SWAP East employed 3 members of staff which amounted to 2.6 FTE. The Director and Co-ordinator are full-time; the Administrator is on a 0.6 contract. 2 posts are permanent; 1 is fixed term. SWAP was without administrative support for 3 months. This cost saving will help off-set rising staff costs for 24/25. The highest expense during the year was SWAP East staff, whose continued support and effort allowed the charity to pursue activities to further SWAP's aims and objectives.

Reserves Policy

Having taken into account our aims and objectives as a charity, our existing financial situation, proposed expenditure and potential future funding streams, it was agreed by the trustees that our reserves policy should be maintained at a minimum of 3 months of operating costs. This is in place.

Impact on Charity of cost of living rises

Recruitment rates have fallen markedly this year and students have faced significant challenges with the cost of living crisis and ongoing issues related to COVID. Whilst the retention rate rose from 68% the year before, to 72% this year for SWAP East, the rate remains below that of pre-COVID completion rates. 63% of the withdrawals this year occurred before the Christmas break, a significantly higher percentage than had left the previous year. The main reasons given were health, personal/domestic circumstances and financial difficulties, with some students leaving to get a job.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Statement of Members' Responsibilities

The charity trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)'.

The law applicable to charities in Scotland requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- a) select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- b) observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- c) make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- d) state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- e) prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume SWAP East will continue to operate.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.



NEIL SPEIRS
(CHAIR)



LESLEY DUNBAR
(DIRECTOR)

Signing Date: 13th December 2024

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of SWAP-East

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 July 2024 which are set out on pages 22 to 28.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10 (1) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44 (1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements -

- to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

have not been met or to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Gillian Caughey, CA
Fearless Financials Limited
674 Pollokshaws Road
Glasgow
G41 2QE

13 December 2024

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st July 2024

		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	31.07.24 Total funds	31.07.23 Total funds
	Notes	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:					
<i>Charitable activities:</i>					
Grants	2	138,000	-	138,000	132,000
Total income		<u>138,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>138,000</u>	<u>132,000</u>
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	3,4	131,385	-	131,385	132,262
Other	6	840	-	840	840
Total expenditure		<u>132,225</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>132,225</u>	<u>133,102</u>
Net Income/ (expenditure) and net movement in funds for the year		5,775	-	5,775	(1,102)

RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS

Total funds brought forward		33,727	-	33,727	34,829
Total funds carried forward		<u>39,502</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>39,727</u>	<u>33,727</u>

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

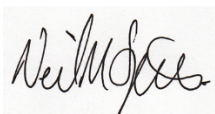
BALANCE SHEET

Balance Sheet as at 31st July 2024

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2024	Prior Year 2023
Current assets	Notes	£	£	£	£
Funds held by Edinburgh University	9	40,342	-	40,342	34,567
Debtors - Prepayments		-	-	-	-
Total Current Assets		40,342	-	40,342	34,567
Liabilities					
Creditors falling due within one year – accruals		840	-	840	840
Net Current assets		39,502	-	39,502	33,727
Net Assets		39,502	-	39,502	33,727
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted income funds	11	39,502	-	39,502	33,727
Restricted income funds	10	-	-	-	-
		39,502	-	39,502	33,727

The notes at pages 24 to 28 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on (signing date) and signed on their behalf by:



NEIL SPEIRS
(CHAIR)



LESLEY DUNBAR
(DIRECTOR)

13 December 2024

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

Note 1 – Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation and assessment of going concern

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard FRS102, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

SWAP East constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. It is an unincorporated charity registered in Scotland. See page 2 of this document for further details.

The Trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about SWAP-East's ability to continue as a going concern. The key assumption is that unrestricted funding will continue from Scottish Funding Council (confirmed for the next period). The most significant areas of adjustment and key assumptions that affect items in the accounts are to do with allocating costs to the restricted fund (see notes 3 and 6 for more information).

Funds structure

Unrestricted income funds comprise those funds which the trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the funding source. There is a single restricted fund, the Mentoring Project Fund, restricted to the delivery of a project helping former SWAP students to become mentors to current SWAP students in order to provide them with support and guidance as they move through the access programme and into higher education.

Income Recognition

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis when liability is incurred. Expenditure includes any VAT which cannot be recovered and is reported as part of the expenditure to which it relates.

Governance costs include those incurred in the governance of the charity and its assets and are primarily associated with constitutional and statutory requirements.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

Charitable activities include staff costs in running the charity and the costs of delivering projects.

Note 2 – Sources of Income

The following income was received in the year to 31 July 2024:

Grants	31.07.24	31.07.23
	£	£
Scottish Funding Council (unrestricted)	138,000	132,000
	<u>138,000</u>	<u>132,000</u>

Scottish Funding Council

Funding is received from the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education in order to enable SWAP to achieve its core goal of widening access to education for adults returning to education.

In the year to 31 July 2024 £102,000 of the £240,000 received from the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education was transferred to SWAP-West (2023:£108,000), which is accountable for its utilisation. The remaining £138,000 is unrestricted grant income used by SWAP East in both years to run the charity and deliver projects.

Note 3 – Charitable Activities Costs

	31.07.24	31.07.23
	£	£
Staff Costs – Recurring	130,180	131,225
Project Costs	2,045	1,037
	<u>132,225</u>	<u>132,262</u>

SWAP East has completed this year with a surplus of £5,775. There was an overspend of £1,102 in 2023 (which had been mainly funded by an underspend in 2021).

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

Note 4 – Staff Costs and Numbers

Staff costs were as follows

	31.07.24	31.07.23
	£	£
Salaries	102,580	104,188
Social Security Costs	11,191	11,334
Employer's Contribution to Defined Contribution Pension Schemes	16,409	15,703
	<u>130,180</u>	<u>131,225</u>

The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of a head count, was three (2023 - three).

No employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) of more than £60,000.

The total amount of employee remuneration and benefits (including employer pension costs) paid to its key management personnel was £70,394 (2023: £69,958).

Note 5 – Post-Employment Benefits

SWAP East's employees are treated as employees of the University of Edinburgh and as such participate in the University of Edinburgh Staff Benefits Scheme (EUSBS) and in The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). The University of Edinburgh operates a salary sacrifice for active staff members of these schemes.

USS is a multi-employer defined benefit scheme and it is not possible to identify SWAP East's (or the University of Edinburgh's) share of the assets and liabilities for this scheme. USS is accounted for as though it was a defined contribution schemes and as a result the costs charged to the Statement of Financial Activities as shown below reflect the contributions in year. A liability for the future contributions payable to USS that relate to a deficit recovery plan agreement is recognised by the University of Edinburgh and the resulting expense is included in its Annual Report and Accounts. There is no separate liability for SWAP East.

The EUSBS scheme is accounted for under Financial Reporting Standard (FRS 102, Section 28: Retirement benefits) and the funded pension costs charged to the Statement of Financial Activities as shown below reflect the service cost calculated under FRS 102. Further information on this pension scheme is provided in the University of Edinburgh's Annual Report and Accounts.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

Note 5 – Post-Employment Benefits (continued)

The total pension costs for SWAP East were as follows:

	31.07.24	31.07.23
	£	£
USS – contributions paid	15,786	11,302
EUSBS – contributions paid	302	4,401
NEST – contributions paid	322	-
	<u>16,108</u>	<u>15,703</u>

Note 6 – Other Costs

The other costs relate to governance as follows:

	31.07.24	31.07.23
	£	£
Independent Examination Fees	840	840

These costs have been apportioned between the restricted and unrestricted funds based on the level of income received by each fund in the period.

The Independent Examiner did not receive payment for any other services other than for the independent examination.

Note 7 – Trustees’ Remuneration and Benefits

There were no trustees’ remuneration, expenses or other benefits for the year ended 31 July 2024 and 31 July 2023.

Note 8 – Related Party Transactions

See Note 2 for information on monies transferred to SWAP West, a partner organisation.

SWAP East is hosted by the University of Edinburgh, one of its members. As part of this agreement, the university provides office space and management of finances to SWAP East. See Note 9 and Note 11 below.

Note 9 – Cash funds

SWAP East does not hold a bank account. The funds of SWAP-East (2024: £40,342; 2023: £34,567) are held in trust by the University of Edinburgh, our current host partner and the accounts are subject to scrutiny as part of the University’s annual external audit.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

Note 10 – Restricted Funds

Project grants received are restricted as their purpose is specified by the grant awarding body and any unspent monies may be required to be returned to them. There were no restricted funds in the year to 31 July 2024 or 31 July 2023.

Note 11 – Reserves Policy

Reserves of £39,502 (2023: £33,727) are held in trust by the University of Edinburgh. None of these funds were restricted funds in 2024 or 2023. The unrestricted reserves are held in accordance with SWAP EAST's policy of holding three months of operating costs as reserves.