



SWAP East

Student Handbook

For year 2020/21

Welcome to SWAP East!

You have embarked on a journey that will give you the opportunity to enter higher education (HE), whether that be on a university degree course or an HN at college. Since the Scottish Wider Access Programme was established in 1988, thousands of people throughout Scotland have been able to progress into HE. Now it's your chance!

We hope this year brings you success and we look forward to seeing you progress to HE in 2021!

The SWAP East Team:

Lesley Dunbar, Director

Nick Hutcheon, Coordinator

Anna Reynolds, Administrator

About SWAP East

SWAP East is a partnership of colleges and universities. We work together to design programmes specifically designed to give each access student the knowledge and skills required to be ready for degree level study. The SWAP East partnership is led by a small team based at the University of Edinburgh. We hope to meet you all soon, when we give a talk to your class about SWAP and how it can support you.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any queries. The SWAP East office is available to help you throughout the year. If you have any questions about any of the information in this booklet or need further advice at any point, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Because of COVID19 restrictions, we will be working remotely for the foreseeable future. However, you can email us at swap.east@ed.ac.uk with any queries or to request a callback. You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter.



From left to right: Lesley, Nick and Anna



- Programmes in arts, humanities and social sciences; languages; life sciences; physical sciences engineering; and nursing



- Programmes at every college in east-central and northern Scotland
- Students progressed to 16 different universities in 2020



- Over 700 students enrolled in 2019/20
- Approximately 80% of those who pass, progress to university, 15% to HN
- in 2019/20 94% of those who progressed to university completed their first year
- Many SWAP students have continued their studies to postgraduate level, including PhDs

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Key activity 1: SWAP registration

You have enrolled yourself at college, but now you need to register with SWAP East too. Please do that as soon as you can, ideally before the end of September.

Online registration is quick and easy via the [SWAP East website](#):

1. Click on *Current Students>Register Now*. This will bring up the online form.
2. Fill in your details. Some of the information fields are compulsory and you won't be allowed to submit the form until they are complete.
3. Once you have completed the form, press submit. The next screen will say that you have successfully completed the form. Once submitted, you cannot go back and make amendments so please make sure that you have filled in all the relevant boxes.

Shortly after submitting your form, you will receive a welcome email from SWAP East, confirming that you have registered.

If you have any problems, please get in touch with the SWAP East office.

Key Activity 2: Check out advice and support services at college

College student support staff and student associations are an important source of help for matters relating to funding. Most colleges offer some form of additional support for students with childcare commitments and they may also offer some limited assistance with travel costs. Colleges usually set

aside a small amount of hardship funding to help students who are experiencing serious financial difficulties. If you are concerned about your finances, ask for help.

For further information, see the [college funding document](#) on the SWAP East website.



Key Activity 3: Preparing for higher education

Look through the [Prep for HE](#) materials on the SWAP website. You will work through these, with support from your tutor, during the year. This is a compulsory element of your course, so be sure to complete it.

Key Activity 4: Use the progression route

search tool

From your access programme, you have the opportunity to apply for degree courses at different universities. To check out exactly what options are available and where, use the progression route search tool on the SWAP East website, which can be found [here](#). Guidance on how to use it is available [here](#).

When you look at the degree search, you will see the *Grades required* below each degree course title for each university. These always refer to SWAP profile grades and the next section explains how you obtain these. In some cases, you may also see some additional information that a university partner has added and which is also a requirement for progression.

Profile grades explained

At the end of the SWAP programme, your course tutors will award you three **SWAP profile grades**. These grades are an assessment of your performance throughout the year in all areas of the course.

Profile grades indicate your ability to succeed academically at degree level and are used by universities to make decisions on admissions. Entry to university will depend on you achieving specific SWAP profile grades. An explanation of the criteria used by your tutors to decide on student profile grades can be found [here](#). The criteria used differs depending on whether you are on a Nursing or Humanities programme or a Science or Engineering programme, so make sure you read the sections that are relevant to your programme. For all programmes, your work is assessed continuously throughout the year. Make sure you keep in touch with your tutor so that you know how your work is progressing.

Non-partner universities

The progression route finder only includes routes to SWAP East partner universities. You can apply to other universities; whether they consider your application or not will depend on the university and the subject. If you decide to apply outside Scotland or if the course does not appear in the progression route finder, please speak to SWAP East for advice before you apply.

Key Activity 5: Look at university websites and attend open days



In October, your tutor will already begin talking to you about your UCAS application. You should start researching your options as early as possible. You can get a lot of information about universities from their websites, but not as much as you will from a visit and the opportunity to talk to staff and other students. Because of the COVID pandemic, universities may be revising the format for their open days this year. Use the SWAP website to find dates and links to information about open days at universities throughout Scotland [here](#).

Key Activity 6: Filling in your UCAS application

If you are applying to university, you **MUST** apply through SWAP East within [UCAS](#).

When you apply, you will need to [register with UCAS](#) using the SWAP East buzzword.

Buzzword = swapeast2021

The SWAP East centre number is **S75367T**

Your college will have a different buzzword and centre number but you **MUST USE** the SWAP East details in order for universities to see you are a SWAP East applicant and make you a SWAP offer. Also, it ensures SWAP East can support your application.

UCAS guidance

We have produced detailed guidance on applying through UCAS as a SWAP student, which can be downloaded [here](#). Please use this to help you complete the application correctly. It also contains useful information on completing the all-important personal statement. Click [here](#) for the UCAS Apply home page

Getting into university

Doing a SWAP access programme **does not guarantee** you a place at university. To give yourself the best possible chance you need to make sure that you:

1. Complete all units of the SWAP programme. This includes any preparation for higher education or college personal development units. You should also aim to attend a SWAP study skills day. For more information on these events, see page 10.
2. Provide a strong, well-written and relevant personal statement in your UCAS application, which gets across how committed you are to your chosen subject area and highlights the relevant skills and experience you have. Your Prep for HE work will help you with this.

3. Be involved in relevant volunteering/work shadowing/work experience.
For some degree choices this is extremely important and should be evidenced in your personal statement.
4. Prove you are committed. For example, attend classes, be punctual, complete assignments on time, do your assignments well, contribute to class discussions, organise your time effectively. Your tutor will take account of this when writing your UCAS reference.
5. Last but not least, do your best to obtain the SWAP profile grades required for the degree programme you want to do.

Alternatives to university

You might not want to go to university or maybe you just don't want to go straight away. If that is the case, speak to your tutor or college guidance staff for advice about your options. If you are considering an HNC/D, talk to your guidance tutors and aim to apply as early as you can.

Key Activity 7: Looking ahead - planning your funding for next year

When you go to university, or if you progress onto an HN course, your studies will be funded by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). They provide tuition fee funding, loans and bursaries. Many universities also have their own bursaries and scholarships too. For more information on funding available to you, go to [University funding](#) guidance page on the SWAP East website. You can apply for SAAS funding as early as April and as soon as you have at least one offer from a university.

Getting your results

At the end of the academic year, if you have passed, you will be awarded three profile grades and you will be informed of these grades by your course tutors. SWAP will also receive your profile grade results and a college transcript of the units you have undertaken during the year. In late June, SWAP compiles these results and if you have applied to university, we will send them on to the universities you have chosen as your 1st and 2nd choices. At that point, the universities will amend your offers accordingly (unless an SQA

exam result is also required) and you will see the changes on UCAS Track. **NB You do not need to send your results to the universities you have applied to – we do that for you** (the only exception is the National 5 Maths exams results. You must send a copy of your SQA certificate to admissions as soon as possible after you receive your results in August).

Key Activity 8: Study skills events

As an important part of your preparation for university, SWAP arranges study skills events for all our students. These events are hosted by the universities and are run for the three subject areas of Humanities (including teaching), Nursing and Science. They are a valuable opportunity for you to find out what it's really like to



study at university and the skills you'll need, such as referencing, note-taking in lectures, essay writing, practical lab and clinical skills (for Science and Nursing). It's also a chance to speak to university staff and meet SWAP students who are now at university and who can talk to you about what you need to know about moving from college to university. Feedback from students tells us that they feel more confident and more enthusiastic about the prospect of going to university.

Click [here](#) to find out more about [SWAP Study Skills](#) Events will run throughout the year. Dates, once set, will be published on the Study Skills page. Provided you have registered with us, you will be invited by email to attend.

“Extremely helpful and a great insight into university life, as well as a better understanding of the skills needed to succeed academically” (Humanities student, Study Skills 2018).

“Today has answered a lot of questions – I’m glad I came along” (Nursing student, Study Skills 2018).

Key activity 9: Mentoring

As a SWAP student, you can use our mentoring scheme. If you do, you will be matched with a mentor, a SWAP student who is now studying at university. For you, this is an excellent opportunity to meet someone who has been there and done it and who can give you encouragement, guidance and support through your access programme. More information can be found [here](#).

In addition, you can also use the [SWAP East Peer Support Group](#) on Facebook. This is a forum for SWAP East students at college and university to communicate with each other, ask and answer questions, share experiences and organise activities. This is a great way to interact with the wider SWAP East community.



And lastly, although this will be a challenging year for you, try and enjoy this amazing learning journey that you are beginning. We asked some SWAP students now at university what their advice to new students would be. Here's what they said:

“The SWAP programme has been life changing for me. When I began the course my confidence was at an all-time low. I will not lie it has been challenging, but it is rising to those challenges that has rebuilt my confidence. The challenges are also manageable. Even with parental responsibilities. If you are looking for a way into university as a mature student there is no better path to take.”

“Prepare yourself for the work load, there is a lot coming your way. When facing wobbles and challenges, approach your lecturers because they will really help you. Create a group chat with the class, because you will all be relying on each other for help and support.”

“Just keep going - it will be tough at times but worth it - everyone will have a meltdown at some point, it's normal!”

Please get in touch with the SWAP office if you have any questions at any stage of your access year. We will do everything we can to help you reach your goal.

Good luck with your studies!