

## Study diary

When to complete: September to June.

Recommended time for completion: 30 minutes per entry.

Date completed:

### Introduction

The SWAP East study diary is personal to you. Its purpose is to encourage self-reflection, by providing you with an opportunity to stand back from the day to day challenges of your access programme and think about how things are going. Reflecting on what we have done well and what we might be able to improve upon is an important and natural part of the learning process. You should use the diary to record observations, concerns, achievements, aims and anything else of significance that happens throughout your access year. You should use the diary in the way you find most useful. It may also help you identify issues outside college which might be affecting your ability to learn. Suggested times for diary entries are provided, but you should update it whenever is most useful for you.

### Tips

The diary is only useful if you use it fairly regularly throughout the year. Find somewhere you can think in peace and quiet to complete your entries. Even if you are sceptical about using the diary, do try giving it a go; you might find it works really well for you. If nothing else, it will help you keep a record of what you achieve on the access programme and chart your academic and personal development over the months of the programme.

### The diary

If you are able to reflect on how you learn and become aware of how you learn best, your time at college (and later at university) will be more productive. We recommend that you spend some time filling in this study diary throughout your access year. It will help you identify the aspects of studying you are happy with and those you may need to work on or need help with. As well as helping your studies, the diary will also give you a useful reference that you can use to chart your progress from new to accomplished student.

	Diary entry	When to do
1	First impressions	End of week 1
2	Reflection	End of week 3
3	Reflection	October break
4	Writing: self-assessment	September-November
5	Stock check: rating your progress	End of November
6	Reflection	November-December
7	Stock check: rating your progress	January
8	Reflection	March-April
9	Writing: self-assessment	May
10	Stock check: rating your progress	June
11	Reflection	June

### 1. First impressions (end of week one)

What are your first impressions of college? Tick as many options as you like.

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent      | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good           | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OK             | <input type="checkbox"/> Boring       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bad            | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terrible       | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nerve-wracking | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressful      | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |

1. Describe your ideal study conditions (e.g. where, time of day, materials, equipment, music/TV on or off).

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2. Describe how the reality you have experienced differs from the ideal conditions you described above.

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3. What could you do to improve your study conditions and make them as good as they can be?

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4. What do you see as the main challenges to being successful in your studies (e.g. confidence, academic issues, childcare, money)?

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5. Have you had any particular problems with studying in the past (e.g. certain subjects, teaching styles, being easily distracted, pressures, your attitude to learning, special learning needs)?

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6. What strategies could you put in place now to overcome those difficulties?

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## 2. Reflection (end of week three)

How would you describe your first few weeks?

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent     | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good          | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OK            | <input type="checkbox"/> Boring       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bad           | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terrible      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nerve-racking | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressful     | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |

1. What have you enjoyed during your first few weeks?

2. Note down the first thing that comes to mind when you think about your return to full-time education.

3. Are you having any difficulties with your return to full-time education? Think about the challenges you identified in diary entry one.

4. What might you do to overcome those difficulties? Who might be able to help you?

5. In terms of your studies, what is your main priority for the next few weeks?

### 3. Reflection (October break)

How would you summarise the past few weeks? (Tick as many options as you like).

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent      | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good           | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OK             | <input type="checkbox"/> Boring       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bad            | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terrible       | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nerve-wracking | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressful      | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |

1. How do you feel now compared to how you felt at the start of the programme?

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2. What achievements have you made and how do you feel about them?

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3. Can you identify any aspects of your studies and college life you feel you need some help with?  
Who could help you?

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4. Write about how are you finding the following aspects of college life:

Classmates/other students

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Tutors

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Subjects

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Learning resources

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Managing your finances

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College/home life balance

5. What aspects of the programme so far have you enjoyed most? Why?

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6. What aspects of the programme so far have you enjoyed least? Why?

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7. Are you happy with your study conditions and workspace? Are there any improvements you could make? Do you prefer to study at home, at college or somewhere else?

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8. What would you like to devote study time to in the weeks remaining before the winter break?

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Exercise (first term): self-assessment of written assignment

It may help your learning to think about the process of producing an assignment. If you keep notes as you go along you will be able to look back and see what you're pleased with and what you might be able to improve on. The ability to self-assess your work will ultimately improve your performance in future assignments.

So, for your next assignment, think about how you approach the stages listed below:

- a) Figuring out what the question is asking you to do (i.e. deconstructing the question)**
  - a. How much time did you spend on this?
  - b. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?
- b) Researching (i.e. reading and learning more about the subject)**
  - a. How much time did you spend on this?
  - b. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?
- c) Planning (i.e. making an outline or plan of action)**
  - a. How much time did you spend on this?
  - b. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?
- d) Writing**
  - a. How much time did you spend on this?
  - b. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?

What was the total amount of time you spent on the assignment?

Once you have written the assignment, consider the following:

Do you think you managed your time effectively? Was it a rush at the end or did you have it ready well before the deadline?

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Write down one or two things that you are happy with.

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Write down one or two things that you are not so happy with.



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What skills do you feel you need to improve or learn for the next assignment?

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What will you do differently next time?

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Is there anything you would like to ask your tutor's advice about?

N.B. If you do have any concerns, ask your tutor to go over them with you and record any feedback or advice here.

**Exercise (end of first term): stop check**

On a scale of 1-10 (in which 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest), how do you feel about the following aspects of your studies?

- Your confidence in general.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
- Your confidence in your ability to learn.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

- How you feel you are doing on your access programme.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

### Boosting your confidence

It is completely normal that you will have ups and downs as a student. Nearly everybody has doubts from time-to-time, especially when making major life changes. If you feel a bit shaky every now and then, understand that those feelings will probably pass with time. Take some time to think back to last summer and the very beginning of your college course. Recognise your achievements and remind yourself that you're here as a student not as an expert. This means that you are expected to study, learn and practice your skills. You are not expected to know everything and be perfect at it already.

If there is something in particular that is worrying you, have an honest talk with your tutor about how things are going. Remember that there is support available in your college for virtually every category of problem that may arise, from financial difficulties to academic challenges or even family issues. Don't suffer in silence if things are getting to you; speak to your tutor and get it sorted.

## 4. Reflection (start of second term)

How would you summarise your time on the access programme so far? Tick as many boxes as you like.

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent     | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good          | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OK            | <input type="checkbox"/> Boring       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bad           | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terrible      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nerve-racking | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressful     | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |

1. Having completed your first term, you may now be better able to identify your strengths and weaknesses. What do you think these are?

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2. Have you identified any areas of study that you would like to research in more depth (e.g. specific degree courses or HN courses and related career paths)?

3. Have you visited any universities? If you have, what did you think?

4. Have your plans or ambitions changed since you began the access programme? If they have, in what way?

5. During the October break, were you able to reflect on your performance on the programme so far and your long- and short-term objectives? If you were able to do that, what are your thoughts?

6. What are your objectives for the coming term?

7. How are you finding the following aspects of college life now?

Fellow students:

Tutors:

Subjects you are studying:

Learning resources:

Managing your finances:

Balancing your home life with your student life:

**Exercise (middle of second term): stop check**

On a scale of 1-10 (in which 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest), how do you feel about the following aspects of your studies?

- Your confidence in general.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

- Your confidence in your ability to learn.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

- How you feel you are doing on your access programme.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

**5. Reflection (spring break)**

How would you summarise your time on the access programme so far? Tick as many boxes as you like.

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent      | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good           | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OK             | <input type="checkbox"/> Boring       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bad            | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terrible       | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nerve-wracking | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressful      | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |

1. Think back to last August/September. Has your approach to studying changed since then? If it has, in what way?

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2. Is there anything specific that you know will help produce an effective study session (e.g. time of day, music, particular seat in the library)?

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3. Is there any aspect of your life that you feel is preventing you from studying effectively?

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4. Can you think of any changes that you could make (or that other people might need to make) in order to ensure you have effective study time?

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5. Have you submitted a UCAS application? If you have, how did you find the application process?

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6. How do you feel about the outcome of your UCAS application?

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7. How do you think studying at university will compare to studying at college?

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8. Have you attended a SWAP study skills event? What else can you do to prepare yourself for university level study?

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9. What are your main objectives for the remainder of your access programme?

### Exercise (summer term): self-assessment of written assignment

You may find it useful to repeat the self-assessment exercise for your next written assignment. Doing that will let you see what you have learned since you did your first assignments and help you identify areas you still need to improve.

So, before you start working on your next assignment, think about how you approached the following stages of the last one:

- e)** Figuring out what the question is asking you to do (i.e. deconstructing the question)
  - a. How much time did you spend on this?
  - b. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?
- f)** Researching (i.e. reading and learning more about the subject)
  - c. How much time did you spend on this?
  - d. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?
- g)** Planning (i.e. making an outline or plan of action)
  - e. How much time did you spend on this?
  - f. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?
- h)** Writing

- g. How much time did you spend on this?
- h. In terms of priority, was this the first, second, third or fourth?

What was the total amount of time you spent on the assignment?

Once you have written the assignment, consider the following:

Do you think you managed your time effectively? Was it a rush at the end or did you have it ready well before the deadline?

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Write down one or two things that you are happy with.

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Write down one or two things that you are not so happy with.

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What skills do you feel you need to improve or learn for the next assignment?

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What will you do differently next time?

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Is there anything you would like to ask your tutor's advice about?

Any other comments?

### Exercise (end of summer term): stop check

On a scale of 1-10 (in which 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest), how do you feel about the following aspects of your studies?

- Your confidence in general.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
- Your confidence in your ability to learn.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
- How you feel you are doing on your access programme.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
- How prepared you feel to start studying in higher education.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

### 6. Reflection (end of summer term)

How would you summarise your time on the access programme so far? Tick as many boxes as you like.

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent      | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good           | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OK             | <input type="checkbox"/> Boring       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bad            | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terrible       | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nerve-wracking | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressful      | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |

1. What have you most enjoyed about your access programme?

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2. What have you found most challenging about the access programme?

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3. In general, has the way you approach an assignment or the way you learn changed?

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4. Which of your study skills has improved most over the past year?

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5. Have you identified any areas still in need of improvement?

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6. Do you feel ready to commit yourself to further study at college or university?

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7. When it comes starting your next course at college or university, what do you think will be your main challenges?

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8. What do you consider to be your greatest achievement since you started the access programme?

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