

Scottish Wider Access Programme East

Annual Report & Financial Accounts year ending 31st July 2023



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 has helped engage with students in more remote areas of Scotland and/or where attending a campus is not practical for them. 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 throughout Scotland.

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 22/23, the partnership continued to be successful in achieving a range of its outcome targets, including 82% of students who are first in family to go onto higher education & 83% of students with no previous qualifications above SCQF Level 5. Targets were also met for numbers engaged with disabilities and from ethnic minorities. The SIMD 20 target was also met, with 36% of students coming from a SIMD 10 or 20 postcode.

Access programme recruitment fell this year by 15%. Student retention was also lower than before the COVID pandemic. These drops may reflect the challenges that the more disadvantaged in society are facing with the rise in the cost of living and with the long-term effects of COVID. This drop in retention was also reflected in our 1st year students' experience at university. However, for those who complete, progression to higher education remains very high, with 83% of those who passed the programme moving onto university and a further 13% going on to HN study at college. 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 22/23, 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 2023. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the accounts.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Structure, Governance and Management

SWAP East is governed by a consortium (named the Executive Group), made up from member colleges and universities. 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 a few 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. However, the two organisations 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.

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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 22/23, 769 students enrolled on SWAP access programmes. For the 1st time since 2013, there was a reduction in student numbers from the previous year. The biggest reduction was in Humanities, but nursing enrolments also fell. Science numbers stayed the same. The downturn in recruitment meant that in some cases, class sizes were an issue and where 2 classes of the same access programme may have run previously, only one ran this year. Figures however, remain higher than pre-COVID.

Table 1 Student enrolments from 13/14 – 22/23

Student Enrolments	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Humanities	248	256	265	243	244	275	249	262	250	157
Nursing	105	101	135	165	170	208	318	496	513	478
Science & Engineering	86	119	103	124	134	121	114	144	137	134
Total	439	476	503	532	548	604	681	902	900	769

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Programme development

Since 2018, and the beginning of the north of Scotland development project, SWAP has aimed to address the geographic barriers to learning for adult returners. The project enabled SWAP to increase the numbers of students attending SWAP programmes in colleges in the north east & north-west and they have steadily increased each year since then. This year, they made up 29% of SWAP East's student cohort. During the same period, the number of students moving on to a northern university (Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University and the University of the Highlands & Islands) increased - from 18 in 2018 to 137 in 2023. Some of these students also came from other colleges, made possible by these new progression routes now being available to SWAP students at other colleges as well.

SWAP East continues to work with its partner colleges to address gaps there might be for adult returners wanting to access higher education.

SWAP East successfully collaborated with UHI Perth College to develop an [online Access to Health & Life Science](#) programme, to address accessibility for adults living in remote areas or where a student's circumstances meant that campus based learning was not possible. The programme ran for the first time this year and has successfully recruited for a 2nd year. SWAP also worked with NESCol, NHS Grampian and RGU to set up a new Access to Allied Health professions programme giving SWAP students' routes into RGU's degrees in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy & Midwifery for the first time. A main drive for this programme was to give opportunities to adult returners living and working in the Grampian area and who are vested in remaining in the area on completion of their degree.

Edinburgh College continues to offer the largest number of SWAP programmes in the east of Scotland. This year however, has seen North East Scotland College move up into 2nd place, helped by the new Allied Health Profession programme and their Medical & Life Sciences, with the 3rd & 4th largest contingent of SWAP students coming from Fife and Dundee & Angus.

The new programmes that have been developed and recruited for 23/24 are:

Shetland College - Access to Nursing

Forth Valley College - Access to Nursing

SWAP has also established a route into Medicine at Dundee University for the 1st time. As a result of this new pathway, SWAP has worked with Dundee & Angus College to offer, in 24/25, a new Access to Medical Studies programme which will give opportunities to adults living in the Grampian, Tayside and Angus areas. These students will also have routes into Medicine at Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

Forth Valley is now a member of the SWAP East consortium.

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Results

Table 2: SWAP programmes, student numbers, results & progressions

Colleges	SWAP East Access Programmes running in 22/23					Number of students	Number of completers	Numbers progressing to H.E.
	Nursing & Social Care	Allied Health	Science & Eng	Social Sciences	Number of classes at each college			
Borders	9				1	9	9	9
Dundee & Angus	58		7	16	5	81	56	53
Edinburgh	112		43	48	11	203	136	137
Fife	80		16	9	6	105	83	79
Inverness	32				1	32	19	17
Moray	24				1	24	19	17
Newbattle Abbey				19	1	19	16	15
North East Scotland	100	26	11	19	7	156	108	108
North Highland	7				2	7	3	3
Perth	23		19	17	1	59	37	34
West Highland	<5				1	<5	<5	<5
West Lothian	45		12	16	5	73	51	49
Total number of students	491	26	108	144	42	769	*538	**522

*10 of the students who passed but did not progress, are applying or re-applying to UCAS for 2024 entry

**Progression to H.E. figures include 15 who did not pass the whole programme, but who passed alternative online modules or passed a summer school and gained entry to university that way.

Table 2 gives you further breakdown of student enrolments, as well as figures for completion and progression to university. It shows that in 22/23, 538 (70%) SWAP East students successfully completed their access programme. This is a slight increase from last year, but remains below the pass rate from years prior to COVID. 38% of the students who withdrew left before Christmas. As was the case last year, almost half cited health or personal/family circumstances as the cause of their withdrawal.

Progression onto higher education

Table 2 shows that 538 students successfully completed their access programme. 522 progressed on to higher education (461 to university and 61 to HN programmes at college). This means that 68% of students who enrolled on an access programme have moved on to H.E. It also shows that 97% of the students who completed the programme were given a place on a higher education course. This is an exceptional achievement on the part of our course tutors and students and also demonstrates that universities are recognising the potential of students coming from access programmes as students prepared for H.E. From the remaining 3%, most plan to apply (or re-apply) to university next year, some are returning to college study (at F.E. level) & some have got a job.

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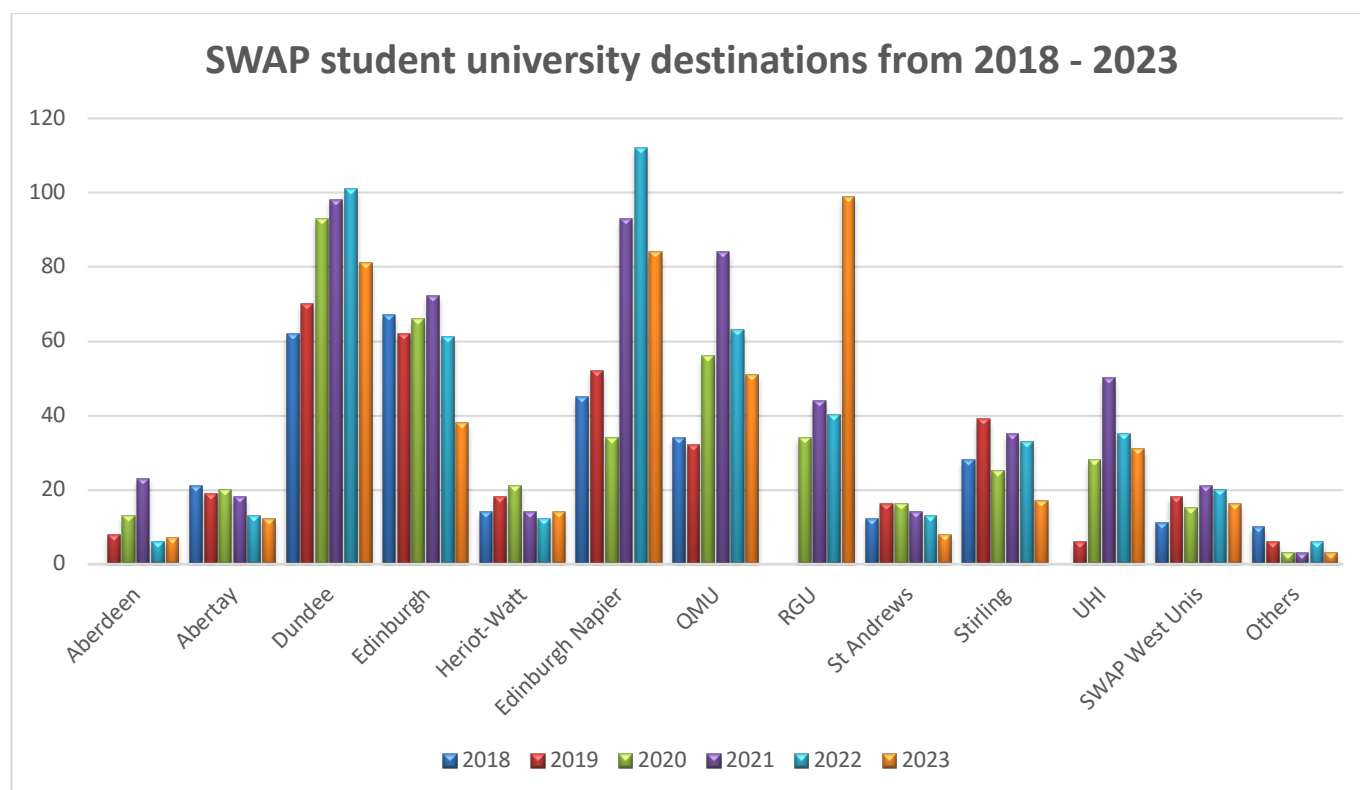
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536 applications were sent to UCAS. At the end of the cycle, 6 had withdrawn, 89 were unplaced and 441 (82% of applicants) gained an unconditional place. Of those who were placed, 98% got their 1st choice. Less students applied than had done the previous year (as was expected because of the drop in enrolments) but the percentage of applications to final places remained the same.

For the first time, students from the new NESCOL AHP programme were able to apply successfully for Midwifery, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy at RGU. Napier and Dundee Universities both opened pathways into their Child Nursing degree. 17 students gained places into the highly competitive Paramedic degrees at QMU, RGU and Stirling.

The number of students applying to primary education degrees fell. 16 students applied; 10 got offers; 4 gained a place. This is in stark contrast to the previous year, when 40 applied; 34 got offers; 18 got a final place.

Graph 1 below gives the breakdown of SWAP East students' progressions to universities in 2023 and contrasts these figures with the previous 5 years.



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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.

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 the SFC. SWAP East and SWAP West report together to their main funders, the Scottish Funding Council, on outcomes that have been agreed with them. 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.

Agreed 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

Enrolment Stretch target of 2,300. Target pre-pandemic was 2,000.

Actual = 1946; completers = 1395 (72% nationally)

MD20 students Target is 35%, Completers 35%

Actual = 36%; completers = 34%

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No previous qualifications above SCQF Level 5. Target is 80%

Actual = 83%; completers = 81%.

No parental experience of higher education Target is 55% of intake

Actual = 82%; completers = 77%.

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

Target is 25% males

Actual = 18% This target is now unrealistic, given the rise in Access to Nursing programmes in recent years. If Nursing enrolments are removed, this figure is **33% males**

Disability Target is 15%

Actual = 26%; completers 23%.

BME Target is 8%

Actual = 10%

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.

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. This year, some of our students were also accepted into English universities.

Every year SWAP tracks students who progress to university and reports the findings to the Executive Board and to the Funding Council. 2021 entry to university saw retention dip for the first time in 5 years to below 90% which may reflect the difficulties students are facing with the cost of living crisis.

Dissemination of information and good practice

In the last year, most of our participation in meetings/conferences and seminars continues to be carried out remotely. When the pandemic hit, in 2020, it was more challenging to strengthen contact and develop relationships with other sector bodies. However, in terms of student engagement, SWAP was

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able to adapt processes and work practices in order to continue to give support, guidance and information to prospective, current and former students. In 2022 we looked to see what positives there had been in some of the remote work that we had done and we embedded them in our practice for 22/23. For the SWAP information session at the start of the year, we continued to send out a pre-recorded information video to ensure that all students had the opportunity to watch it, and that was followed up with a classroom based Q & A session. Exceptions to this were if the programme was being taught in more than 1 campus, or if the programme was solely online. In these cases, SWAP continued to offer the Q & A session remotely. The Nursing & Humanities Study skills sessions with university partners continued to take place virtually, using MS Teams. This was felt to be the fairest way of making this event available to all students, since our students live in many different areas of the north and east of Scotland as well as the central belt. The Science study skills day did take place on campus, so that a university lab session could be offered as part of the day. MS Teams was also used for meetings with college and university staff to review curriculum and programme development and to give induction sessions to new tutors. SWAP East also took part in and/or co-ordinated 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 part of the Fife and Tayside Nursing forum and meetings continued to be held remotely, in December 2022 and June 2023 with the University of Dundee, Perth College, Fife College and Dundee & Angus College, to discuss access programme curricula, progressions and any updates on admissions processes. The SWAP East AGM and Executive group met remotely in December 2022 while in June 2023, a meeting was held at the University of Edinburgh, with partners given the option of joining remotely, through Teams.

The SWAP East partners/trustees meet twice a year at Executive Group level, one of these meetings being the charity's AGM. At these meetings, the SWAP East Director reports on SWAP's activities during the year, including any development work undertaken to further widen access. At these meetings, the SWAP student experience & actions relating to meeting both Scottish Funding Council and SWAP's Strategic Plan outcomes, are reported on and discussed. At the AGM the annual report and end of year accounts are discussed and ultimately approved before being sent off to OSCR.

SWAP sits on the UCAS Advisors Advisory group, which meets regularly throughout the year.

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, which is password protected. SWAP currently works with over 40 tutors as well as 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. A report was given to university partners that

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highlighted possible areas for development. This was reported to partners for discussion at June's Executive group meeting. SWAP also meets and sends reports regularly to the SFC.

Provision of accessible guidance

In 2022/23, the SWAP East office provided one-to-one guidance to approximately 3,500 student enquiries. The enquiries (through email, MS Teams and phone calls) come from:- prospective students who are unsure of their best route back into education; 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 and other college staff throughout the year. SWAP staff have worked remotely since March 2020. Communication has been maintained with students, tutors and college and university partners and other sector bodies through email and a variety of media platforms. Transition guidance was also sent out in August/September to students moving on to university. Catch-Up Chemistry on-line materials were given to Science students going to the University of Edinburgh to help with transition to Level 8 teaching in 1st year. Edinburgh University's WP team worked with their School of Engineering to offer pre-start & term-time Maths support to SWAP Engineering students. Heriot Watt also supported our Engineering students through their [Maths Gym project](#). Other universities offered pre-start events specifically for W.P. students.

SWAP co-ordinated with the REACH team at the University of Edinburgh to offer information materials and recorded guidance sessions to SWAP Access to Medical Studies students to help prepare them for the UCAT (Universities Clinical Aptitude Test), the interview process and the transition to 1st year. SWAP also organised a Q & A session with 1st year university SWAP medical students to help prepare the access students further and allow them to hear from their peers about their experiences from moving from the access programme into a medical degree. SWAP also liaised with the University of Edinburgh to arrange an information session & campus tour at Easter Bush for the Vet Medicine applicants. This is the first year that SWAP students have this pathway (both East & West) into Veterinary Medicine at the University of Edinburgh and we are delighted that the first SWAP East student started this year at Edinburgh.

SWAP also emailed to all students in July the final transition Prep for HE module to further aid their preparation for university. Students were again encouraged this year to connect with their university before term started.

SWAP continued to develop the website to enhance its use as an information tool. The *Current Students'* section <http://www.scottishwideraccess.org/east-current-students> is continuously reviewed and revised to ensure that the most up to date advice and guidance is available. Most of the information now links to the Preparation for H.E. There is detailed information about university open days, UCAS application guidelines, progression to H.E. opportunities, study skills events and materials, current programmes, funding (whilst at college and university) and opportunities to have contacts with our former SWAP students who act as Peer Support Volunteers.

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In 21/22 SWAP completed the new, interactive Preparation for HE materials for access students onto our website. In 22/23, SWAP asked for feedback from tutors and students. Any feedback given was used to inform changes made for this year.

In September 2022, SWAP staff held a mixture of classroom based or virtual sessions with all access students at college. 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.

In collaboration with its partner universities, SWAP also organised study skills days in Science & Engineering, Humanities & Social Sciences and Nursing. 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. The students also get the opportunity to talk to SWAP students already at university who can share their experiences with them. It also gives students an opportunity to speak to university staff.

SWAP continues to facilitate a peer support Facebook page for current and former SWAP students as a vehicle for sharing information about access programmes and university experiences. There are currently over 900 members, with the majority of them being former SWAP students now at university. Through this medium, lots of helpful information, guidance and advice is given by these students to current (or in some cases, prospective) access students.

Database & website developments.

SWAP's database, which was created in 2013 to improve recording of student data and reporting, and to allow SWAP students to register online, now holds a significant amount of student data, including information on their progression if they move on to higher education. This has proved an extremely valuable tool for processing student data, reporting to partners and for compiling statistical information that can be used to evidence student success. Data on students' progress through university is also held for reporting purposes. Data sharing agreements are in place with all our SWAP East partners allowing us to share, record and evidence student achievement.

The SWAP website is now hosted by the University of Edinburgh and we are currently working with the university to facilitate SWAP when web development is needed. The website is an essential tool as a student resource but is also used by university partners, stakeholders and other agencies who advise adults on returning to learning. The adaptation of the SWAP website to allow easier browsing from mobile phones has made it more readily available to students and easier to use as an information tool from a mobile device.

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SWAP continues to use X, formerly known as Twitter, 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 been no monies available for marketing this year.

Evaluation of SWAP students' experience in education

Surveys were carried out in June, with both access and 1st year university SWAP students, to evaluate their learning experience. Findings were 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, 91% reported that their SWAP programme had matched their expectations. And 96% said they had enjoyed it.

This year, as expected, fewer students reported challenges with IT and remote learning. Apart from the 2 UHI Perth online programmes, most of the student learning was back on campus.

This year a larger number of students reported lack of money and balancing part-time employment with studies as being very challenging – with the latter suggesting that students may be having to work longer hours to meet the rise in living costs.

The survey asked for 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. Our study skills events, where sessions on these important HE skills are delivered by our university partners, were less well attended this year. SWAP will work with course tutors and students to raise awareness that these events are an important element of their Preparation for HE. We had some feedback from students who did not attend the Science study skills. The main reasons given were distance to travel, didn't want to miss classes; the event clashed with an assessment; not in college that day and was working.

SWAP will continue to engage with access students to ensure they are aware of the self-study materials 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. More students had engaged with the Facebook Peer Support Group and SWAP has increased the pool of SWAP Peer support Volunteers available to get involved with giving support & guidance to access students.

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SWAP is a national programme, with a significant number of students attending programmes outside the central belt, and/or enrolled on online programmes and we must consider the best ways of improving engagement and consider which activities are accessible to the most number of students if carried out virtually. Virtual sessions will allow students to attend more easily from more rural colleges or those who are enrolled on our on-line programmes.

As usual, many students commented on the outstanding support that they had received from tutors and support staff during the year and how well prepared they felt for moving on to higher education.

The 1st year student survey focused on the students' university experience and comparisons with the previous year carried out as part of the report. There were fewer issues with having access to a PC/laptop this year, but still over a fifth reported internet issues or challenges with learning new systems or media platforms. There was generally a decrease from the previous year in university engagement with the students prior to welcome week and also less engagement from our students with pre-start welcome week activities. The reasons given were that many of the respondents were still working full-time to save money for term-time & many were parents with family ties, but several comments suggested that they perhaps did not recognise the value of attending these events.

Students were asked how confident they felt before they started university. Responses showed that a significant number (about one third) felt unconfident or quite unconfident but that confidence levels had improved by the time they reached the end of their first term and by the end of the year, 88% felt that they had coped quite well or very well academically. 80% had also felt quite well or very well prepared for their 1st set of exams. The majority felt that the SWAP and the college had prepared them well but several commented that they would have liked more guidance on referencing and academic writing during their access year. In general, students also felt that the university had supported them well and the data showed an increase from last year in the number of students who had been helped by both academic and pastoral services during their 1st year.

This year saw a big increase in the number of students citing finances as being a significant worry and it will remain to be seen as to whether the figures for next year's tracking of SWAP's 1st year students show a bigger number of withdrawals or students taking temporary breaks or deferring for a year before going to university because of the effects of the cost of living increases. More students than previous years also cited part-time work as impacting on study, and might suggest that students are having to work longer hours in order to make ends meet.

A large number of SWAP students are parents; many of them are single parents. This cohort's responses reflected a mixture of similar factors to previous years but more than before spoke of the difficulties of coping with family responsibilities as a full-time student and less about being a positive role model for their children. This year more students reported difficulties in paying for childcare than has been mentioned in previous years and again reflects the cost of living rises that everyone is experiencing.

Programme development work

The North of Scotland development project finished in 19/20 and these programmes in the north east and north-west are now embedded in SWAP's core work. However SWAP is continuing to look at ways where better access can be given to adults with few or no qualifications, living in more remote areas in Scotland, who are looking to find ways to access higher education. With

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

this aim, and to increase flexibility in the delivery of learning, UHI Perth are now running 2 online access programmes, in Humanities and in Health & Life Sciences. To improve flexibility for students unable to give up full-time work, SWAP also worked with Moray college to develop a full-time 2 year access to Nursing programme with a significant element of work placement. SWAP has also engaged with Forth Valley College and an access to nursing programme has been developed this year and will run in 23/24, with routes into the University of Stirling's Nursing and Paramedic Science degrees. SWAP has also been in talks with Dundee University and next year, there will be a pathway to this degree from the SWAP Access to Medical Studies programme.

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.

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.

SWAP held on-line Q & A sessions throughout the year with a panel made up of SWAP students now at university. Sessions took place for Science & Engineering, Humanities, & Medical Studies students, as well as sessions for students going to UHI, Robert Gordon and Dundee to study Nursing.

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 2021 entrants to university show that 88% of SWAP East students returned to study in Year 2. This is lower than the previous 5 years and indicates that some may be struggling more than before with the rise in the cost of living. 21% of the SWAP East students who gained a place at university in 2020 were SIMD 20 students. However only 18% remained at the end of 1st year which suggests that these students still face disadvantage after they've moved on to university.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Last year, one of our Highland SWAP students was named [Student of the year](#), by UHI North, West and Hebrides College, In addition to this, SWAP East has its first Veterinary Medicine student at Edinburgh University, after the progression route was established in 2021 between the Royal (Dick) Vet school and SWAP East. SWAP East's first student to gain a place at Aberdeen University in 2021 in Medicine was this year given the [Outstanding Professionalism Award](#) by the university's Medical School.

SWAP students continue to give their time to SWAP and to write their stories for our [Student Success](#) page. This continues to 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 22/23 came to an end on 31st July 2022. SWAP applied and was successful in being awarded further funding for 2023/24.

Income for the charity in 22/23 was £132,000 (21/22 £132,000) and at the year-end net funds of £33,727 (21/22: £34,892) will be carried forward into the next financial year.

Core funding of £138,000 is in place for 23/24. In December 2023, SWAP will apply to the Scottish Funding Council for funding for 24/25.

Staffing

Throughout 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. These 3 posts are permanent. 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

Both recruitment and retention rates have fallen markedly this year and students have faced significant challenges with cost of living crisis and ongoing issues related to COVID. The biggest factors in students leaving the programme early this year have been health and personal/domestic circumstances. Finances were also cited as a reason for withdrawal with some students leaving to get a job.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Statement of Members' Responsibilities

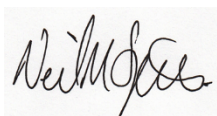
The charity trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance 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: 1st December 2023

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 2023 which are set out on pages 21 to 27.

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

December 2023

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st July 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.07.23 Total funds £	31.07.22 Total funds £
Income and endowments from:					
<i>Charitable activities:</i>					
Grants	2	132,000	-	132,000	132,000
Total income		132,000	-	132,000	132,000
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	3,4	132,262	-	132,262	131,653
Other	6	840	-	840	840
Total expenditure		133,102	-	133,102	132,493
Net Income/ (expenditure) and net movement in funds for the year		(1,102)	-	(1,102)	(493)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		34,829	-	34,829	35,322
Total funds carried forward		33,727	-	33,727	34,829

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

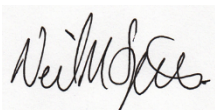
BALANCE SHEET

Balance Sheet as at 31st July 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Prior Year 2022
Current assets		£	£	£	£
Funds held by Edinburgh University	9	34,567	-	34,567	35,669
Debtors - Prepayments		-	-	-	-
Total Current Assets		34,567	-	34,567	35,669
Liabilities					
Creditors falling due within one year – accruals		840	-	840	840
Net Current assets		33,727	-	33,727	34,829
Net Assets		33,727	-	33,727	34,829
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted income funds	11	33,727	-	33,727	34,829
Restricted income funds	10	-	-	-	-
		33,727	-	33,727	34,829

The notes at pages 23 to 27 form part of these accounts.

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



NEIL SPEIRS
(CHAIR)



LESLEY DUNBAR
(DIRECTOR)

1st December 2023

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 currently no restricted funds.

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 2023:

Grants	31.07.23	31.07.22
	£	£
Scottish Funding Council (unrestricted)	132,000	132,000
	<u>132,000</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 2023, £108,000 (2022: £108,000) of the £240,000 (2022: £240,000) received from the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education was transferred to SWAP-West, which is accountable for its utilisation. The remaining £132,000 is unrestricted grant income used by SWAP East (2022: £132,000) to run the charity and deliver projects.

Note 3 – Charitable Activities Costs

	31.07.23	31.07.22
	£	£
Staff Costs – Recurring		
Project Costs	131,225	126,295
	1,037	5,358
	<u>132,262</u>	<u>132,493</u>

SWAP East has completed this year with a planned overspend of £1,102. There was an underspend of £493 in 2022. These overspends were mainly funded by the underspend of £1,372 in 2021.

SCOTTISH WIDER ACCESS PROGRAMME (SWAP East)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

Note 4 – Staff Costs and Numbers

Staff costs were as follows

	31.07.23	31.07.22
	£	£
Salaries	104,188	99,489
Social Security Costs	11,334	10,882
Employer’s Contribution to Defined Contribution Pension Schemes	15,703	15,924
	131,225	126,295

The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of a head count, was three (2022 - 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 £69,958 (2022: £67,184).

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:

	31.07.23	31.07.22
	£	£
USS – contributions paid	11,302	12,622
EUSBS – contributions paid	4,401	3,302
	15,703	15,924

Note 6 – Other Costs

The other costs relate to governance as follows:

	31.07.23	31.07.22
	£	£
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 2023 and 31 July 2022.

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 (2023: £34,567; 2022: £35,669) 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 2023 or 31 July 2022.

Note 11 – Reserves Policy

Reserves of £33,727 (2022: £34,829) are held in trust by the University of Edinburgh. None of these funds were restricted funds in 2023 or 2022. The unrestricted reserves are held in accordance with SWAP EAST's policy of holding three months operating costs as reserves.