

# SWAP East eligibility and selection criteria: guidance for tutors

The SWAP East team are there to assist throughout the year. If you have questions about the information in this booklet or if you need advice or guidance at any point, please get in touch at **[Swap.East@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Swap.East@ed.ac.uk)** You might also find what you are looking for on our **[website](#)**.

## 1. SWAP eligibility

SWAP access courses are **primarily intended for adults aiming to enter higher education for the first time** and those returning to education after a significant gap. To meet the SWAP eligibility criteria, applicants must have been out of **full-time** education for at least three years, if they already have qualifications at, or equivalent to, SCQF Level 5; or at least five years, if they already have qualifications at, or equivalent to, SCQF Level 6 or above. Part-time study undertaken does not affect eligibility.

In certain circumstances, it may be possible to discount certain types of full-time study (e.g. ESOL courses) or consider recent full-time study (i.e. within the last three to five years) as **pre-access**. This would not affect an applicant's SWAP eligibility. However, in such cases, the applicant would need to have been out of full-time education for at least three or five years prior to entering the pre-access course. To be considered as pre-access, courses must not be higher than SCQF level 5, apart from ESOL, which can be at level 6.

All applicants should be interviewed before being accepted onto a SWAP programme. Interviews should be used to check that applicants meet the SWAP eligibility criteria and also to ensure that they understand the content covered in the programme they are applying to and the level of commitment required of them in order to be successful. Applicants should be informed about progression routes to university, profile grades, course-specific entry requirements, sources of funding and, if appropriate, alternatives to university (e.g. HN). At this stage, it is very important to **advise applicants that they must disclose all information relating to previous study at SCQF level 6 or above**.

Applicants can read about SWAP eligibility on the SWAP website, in the [Is SWAP for me?](#) section.

### **Eligibility information**

**Students who already hold a university degree are not SWAP eligible** and should be signposted to the SWAP office or the university they want to study at for further advice on alternative routes back into higher education.

**Students who have studied previously at university but did not complete their degree will be considered, depending on circumstances, but should seek confirmation of this from the SWAP office.** At this stage, SWAP may also consult the university the student wishes to attend in order to confirm that they would consider a student who had previous university experience as a SWAP applicant.

Students who have already successfully completed a SWAP access programme are not normally eligible again, unless there are exceptional circumstances. However, if a student had to withdraw from an access programme for non-academic reasons, they would be eligible to enrol a second time.

Students who do not have pre-settled or settled status or indefinite leave to remain would not normally be eligible. The main exception to this is asylum seekers, who are eligible (however, please note that they would not be entitled to have their college tuition fees paid, as the access programme is full-time study). Please contact the SWAP office if you need further guidance on individual applications.

Students who are not ordinarily resident in Scotland are not normally eligible. This term is legally defined as habitual and normal

residence in one place. Coming to live in Scotland mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education does not count as being ordinarily resident.

If you are unsure about any applicant's eligibility, please get in touch with the SWAP office.

## 2. SWAP selection criteria

1. SWAP entrants should be able to demonstrate a strong desire and commitment to their education and personal development. They should show evidence that they have the necessary relevant skills and experience to enable them to complete the SWAP access programme. Evidence of this could include relevant experience or skills obtained through employment, internships, voluntary work or leisure time activities.
2. Priority should be given to applicants who have not previously studied beyond SCQF Level 5. However, consideration should also be given to the length of time applicants have spent out of formal education and the relevance of previous studies to their chosen subject area. Part-time study does not need to be taken into account when determining eligibility.
3. Particular consideration should be given to the following under-represented groups:
  - applicants from SIMD 20 areas – these are the **20% most deprived areas in Scotland** (as determined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation);
  - applicants from **ethnic minorities**;
  - applicants with a declared **disability**;
  - applicants with **no family background of university study**;
  - applicants who are care experienced (i.e. have/had caring responsibilities growing up or have been in care themselves).

4. There are a few SWAP programmes that include non-SWAP students (who can progress to HN through this route). This is completely fine; however, places on SWAP programmes should not be allocated to non-SWAP applicants at the expense of others who are SWAP eligible. Priority should be given to applicants who meet the SWAP eligibility criteria.
5. There are no upper or lower age limits for SWAP eligibility. Applicants of any age can be accepted, provided they meet the SWAP eligibility criteria and demonstrate they will be able to cope with the demands of the programme. Note that applicants who are aged 60 and above and wish to continue on to university after the SWAP programme are not entitled to a student loan from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) but are entitled to tuition fees.

### **3. Exceptional circumstances**

All SWAP applicants are expected to meet the SWAP eligibility criteria, as set out above. These are the criteria agreed with the partner universities and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). However, there is potentially some scope for flexibility in the three/five year ruling in individual cases where exceptional circumstances apply, for example:

- applicants whose previous secondary education has been seriously disrupted by illness or injury;
- applicants who have been in care or who have had a caring role growing up;
- applicants with a previously undiagnosed disability which has seriously disrupted their education;
- applicants whose secondary education was seriously disrupted by bullying;
- applicants who have asylum-seeker or refugee status.

- applicants who were home schooled and have not achieved qualifications above level 4.

All applications involving exceptional circumstances should be considered on an individual case-by-case basis and discussed with the SWAP East Director. If there are any questions or concerns about the eligibility of an applicant, or indeed in relation to anything in the above guidance, please communicate with SWAP East.

#### **4. Additional information relevant to specific access programmes**

##### Nursing

Applicants who wish to progress to a nursing degree should be made aware that they must have been ordinarily resident in Scotland for three years before their degree course begins in order to ensure they will be eligible for funding, as set out in The Nursing and Midwifery Student Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007. Applicants should also be made aware that the Access to Nursing programmes do not formally provide progression to degree courses in midwifery.

##### Primary education

Applicants who wish to progress to degree courses in primary education should be made aware that, in their university application, they will be required to show experience of working with children of primary school age, preferably within a classroom environment. Applicants will also be expected to show a good understanding of current issues relating to primary education and to demonstrate a strong personal commitment to learning and personal development.

##### Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine

Applicants who wish to progress to these degrees should be able to demonstrate, before they begin the programme, that they already have some relevant work/volunteering experience. They should also be able to show a good understanding of the role of the healthcare practitioner in the field that they want to move on to i.e. a doctor, dentist, or veterinarian and also be able to evidence that they have the skills required to perform that role. Applicants who are not able to demonstrate this may not be considered as strong a candidate for a place on the access programme. They should also have excellent communication skills and be able to demonstrate fully their desire for these studies. SWAP will liaise closely with the course tutor at interview stage for the Access to Medical Studies and will telephone interview all candidates to ensure readiness for the programme, particularly focussing on relevant work experience and preparedness for the University Clinical Aptitude test that all applicants for Medicine and Dentistry are required to sit.

#### Allied health professions

Applicants who wish to progress to these degrees should be able to demonstrate, before they begin the programme, that they already have some relevant work/volunteering experience. They should also be able to show a good understanding of the role of the practitioner in the field that they want to move on to and also be able to evidence that they have the skills required to perform that role. The Physiotherapy and Paramedic Science/Practice degrees are extremely competitive. Applicants who are not able to demonstrate the relevant skills/knowledge of that vocation may not be considered as strong a candidate for a place on the access programme. They should also have excellent communication skills and be able to demonstrate fully their desire for these studies. There is useful information in the [careers section of the NHS website](#) which the applicants may find useful.