

Scottish Wider Access Programme

SWAP East Consortium



ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13

Achievement and Performance

There were 28 programmes in Access to Humanities, Science and Nursing offered by Colleges in 2012-13 running in the SWAP East region. This was a number lower than in previous years but mostly due to College restructures and amalgamation of courses. The actual number of students has not dropped significantly, however.

Numbers had decreased only slightly (**3%**) to **544** despite loss of courses. The numbers were in line with the SFC agreement and, between the West and East, the national target of 1400 students was met and slightly exceeded.

Of the total number of students there was a **71%** (69% last year) successful completion rate. The Humanities completion rate was down on the previous year but it was high in 2011/12. It was pleasing to note that both Nursing and Science subject areas saw a rise in successful completions.

Overall progression to higher education rose to **88%** (85% last year). Progression to Universities dropped slightly to 70% (72% last year), but, with SWAP East's entry into UCAS, more precise finalised data is available.

SWAP East monitors success using a wide range of widening participation indicators.

- 1 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation - **23%** (22% last year) of intake came from the most deprived communities (SIMD level 5, 20% most deprived areas of Scotland) in Scotland of whom **68%** successfully completed. This successful completion is a great improvement on the previous year of 61% and is one of the targets Scottish Funding Council seek
- 2 **34%** of total enrolments came from MD40. The figure of completions within the same bracket is **37%**
- 3 First in the Family to enter Higher Education (excluding students' own children) who successfully completed - **206 (38%** of total intake)
- 4 No prior qualifications at SCQF level 6 who successfully completed – **246 (45%** of total intake)

SWAP Management Group

Following from the new structure agreed at the end of 2011-12, the Management Group came into existence. Named membership was fluid continuing on from the continued changes within the FE sector and time pressures of members. However, there was a continued support from institutions who ensured representatives were sent to meetings and fed back information to their institutions. The same structure will stay in place and be reviewed again at the end of 2013-14.

The Director expresses her thanks to the members of the Group and, particularly, to the Chair for their help and support over the year. Liz Lister, who kindly agreed to Chair the Board for the interim year will step down for the first meeting in October 2013. SWAP East partners express their grateful thanks for her help and continued support of SWAP.

SFC Funding

The Scottish Funding Council approved continued support of the national programme for the next 3 years until July 2016 at the same level of funding. The operational plan put forward by SWAP Directors was approved with little debate and only a few minor adjustments to the targets proposed by the Directors. This is a very good vote of confidence to SWAP indicating that the programme is successful in its outcomes and worthy of continued support. Three years funding means that there is time for plans and projects to be developed and carried through.

UCAS Centre

The first year of operation for students to apply to UCAS using SWAP East as their centre of application largely went well. There was only one class who did not use the code and a few other isolated incidents. Hopefully, however, now that the tutors see the benefits, there will be a total commitment in 2013-14.

As a UCAS centre, we are now able to start building up statistics of students' applications and offers of places to Universities and we shall be able to start comparing in future years. This year, however, it can be reported that 93% of students who applied to UCAS using the SWAP code got offered at least one place at a University. Those who did not get offered were largely going for either a specific over-subscribed course, did not use all their choices available or applying to non-progression Universities and courses.

There is no doubt that students benefitted. The SWAP office was able to monitor the offers made to students and intercede on their behalf to Universities if necessary. This proved very beneficial for students (and Colleges) and resulted in turning negative to positive outcomes for some students. There is also clear statistics of destinations for students since SWAP is now obtaining the information directly from UCAS statistics.

Recruitment to Programmes

Recruitment to Access programmes in Colleges was successful in that most Colleges reached their target but the ease with which they reached their target was largely reflected with geographical locations. Edinburgh College, not surprisingly, continued to see the largest number of applications to places ratio, well exceeding the number of places. Nursing everywhere continued to be hugely oversubscribed.

Tutors are seeing a large number of enquiries, but the applicant profile is changing. The strict application of entry criteria has had an impact on acceptances. Tutors are also seeing applicants presenting who they do not feel are ready to embark on an Access programme but need some lower level core skills experience before moving on to an Access course. Further, as the importance of performance indicators continues to dominate in Colleges, the intake is affected as tutors are perhaps less ready to give students a chance.

Initial reports for 2013-14 seem to show a continued healthy number of recruits with Science in particular having a large number of enquiries and being over-subscribed.

Dissemination of good practice

Tutors met once in the year in June to discuss the year past and the coming year.

The Academic Advisory Groups did not meet as proposed because the College mergers meant the staff was not in place and curriculum issues had not been finalised. A review of academic programmes is to be done in 2013-14 in accordance with agreement with SFC and Academic Advisory Groups will have an input at that stage.

Database

The main development work being carried out this year was the design of a new national SWAP database, the development of which was being led by SWAP East. This would see the development of on-line registration for students, automatic upload of UCAS data, and interface between Colleges and Universities for results and tracking purposes, a web based progression route search facility. It was planned to go live for new students to start registering at the end of August, with a roll out until October of the other parts. A review will be made next year, but the shape of it is very encouraging.

Web Page

The password protected page for tutors and students that was introduced this year was a success for those who used it (both students and tutors) but work has to be done by the SWAP staff to encourage use, especially by the tutors, who continue to want the resource but feel it easier to phone direct to the office.

Flyer

The distribution of the Flyers was done in January to a total of 370 communities, libraries, citizens' advice bureaux job centres and other relevant organisations throughout the Borders, Lothians, Perthshire, Tayside and Forth Valley regions. They elicited a good response with many bodies requesting more. Due to cost there had been no mailing for a couple of years but the response to the mailshots has indicated that at least a limited mailing should be done every year to the main bodies (eg libraries). A re-run of the leaflets was done due to the popularity of groups requesting more copies.

Provided accessible guidance

The office continued to provide one-to-one guidance to about 800 enquirers through the office telephone and e-mail hot lines, many on a repeated basis. This was a rise on last year. About 700 were 'quality' enquirers. The others, whilst not directly SWAP eligible, were given guidance to the best of ability.

The loss of the Freephone number did not seem to affect the number of calls in any way and no comments were received from anybody about this loss of service.

Study Skills Days

Delivered study skills days with our University partners for over 114 SWAP East students in the South East area in Humanities and Science.

In line with plans agreed the previous year, Study Skills Days were provided in Fife and Tayside as a pilot. The numbers attending the Humanities and Nursing Days were quite small (47 in total) but the Day was appreciated by those who attended. The Science Study Skills had to be cancelled due to the small numbers able to attend. And, upon reflection, it was agreed that the small overall numbers of Science students in the region dictated that it was not viable to have 2 study skills event for science students.

Study Skills days are still considered to be hugely successful and beneficial to students. Not only students but also College tutors find it well worth the day out of College. Attendance from some Colleges remained patchy but the Director and SWAP Co-ordinator continue to promote the importance of these at every opportunity.

Thanks go, once again, to the partner HE institutions and the staff who unstintingly provide their time and services to ensure this very important part of preparation for SWAP Access students.

Progression Routes

There were several positive additions and changes to the routes this year. Aberdeen University had approved progression for Angus College students and sympathetically looked at all SWAP students. Several Universities reviewed their entry conditions favourably and other Universities increased the number of offers made to students. All these are very positive moves forward for the Access students.

Staffing

The staffing remains at a total of 2.2 FTE. This translates into three members of staff. The Director is full-time and the Co-ordinator and Administrator are both on a 0.6 contract.

The Co-ordinator who had only been in post for a few months left due to an advantageous opportunity with her other part-time job. Fortunately for SWAP East it recruited a very able replacement who had been in the FE and community learning for many years. She very quickly came up to speed with duties and the ethos of SWAP. She has forged strong links with the tutors and has supported the Director well in taking the organisation forward.

In July 2013 the Director announced she was moving on to another post. She is not leaving until the end of October so the 2013-14 year's plans will be well in place before she leaves. The Management Board agreed that an Interim Director be appointed so that a more measured discussion could be had as to the future of SWAP functions across SWAP.

Kate Davidson
Director
October 2013