

SWAP Operational Plan 2009/2010 Narrative Summary

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Background

SWAP's Operational Plan for the academic year 2009/10 has been constructed through a combination of processes. A needs analysis was undertaken amongst groups of stakeholders from both the social work and social policy disciplines from which three main priority themes emerged:

- practice learning
- curriculum design
- making use of technology

Other themes also emerged from the needs analysis, including assessment, pedagogic research, engaging with employers, student recruitment, inclusive practice and supporting new educators.

In addition, as a Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy, SWAP is expected to address the Academy's current three priority themes

- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
- Engaging students
- Quality and standards

Specific priorities of each of the four funding councils of the UK were also identified. These include engaging employers, ESD and technology-enhanced learning.

In this way, each of these identified priorities has been discussed with the SWAP Team and the SWAP Steering Group to begin to identify appropriate ongoing or new activities relevant to these themes. We believe that the resulting Operational Plan is a feasible and budgeted set of activities that address the priorities of our constituency.

Summary of key activities

Policy

SWAP will continue its various roles within the policy arena. This includes membership of a number of relevant bodies such as General Social Care Council Education Stakeholders group, Joint University Council -Social Work Education Committee and Joint University Council -Social Policy Committee, Social Policy Association, Children's Workforce Development Council and the Social Work Taskforce Key Partners Group. SWAP will also continue to liaise and collaborate on relevant policy consultations and briefings for the benefit of the community, for example consultations on the College of Social Work.

In addition, we plan to contract an academic specialist in social work education policy to deepen our capacity to keep the social work subject community updated and engaged in the rapidly moving policy developments in social work education in England.

We also plan to commission some data-gathering research into the admission policies and practices of HEIs of social work students.

This is a key area of activity for SWAP and can take up large amounts of time at short notice. It will be an ongoing challenge to respond in a timely and well-informed manner.

Practice Learning

SWAP plans to initiate further conversations with Skills for Care, particularly in relation to the newly launched LeaRNS database for practice placements, with the hope that some research may be commissioned into its use within HEIs.

SWAP also plans to support a workshop looking at work-based learning within the discipline of social policy.

Further dissemination of findings from the Integrated Children's Services-HE project will also be undertaken.

Curriculum Design and Development

There is an expectation that recommendations from the Social Work Taskforce will have implications for social work curriculum design and development. SWAP has built capacity into its Operation Plan to enable a series of workshops and related guides to be delivered in response to these recommendations.

Further support for curriculum design and development will be in the areas of:

- **Inclusion:** in addition to updating resources on the website and a case study collection around the 14 – 19 Diploma, we also plan to develop a guide on 'reasonable adjustments' that can inform SWAP's provision in all our activities
- **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):** this is a new focus for SWAP, so a mapping exercise is planned to share intelligence on good practice examples in this area.
- **Interprofessional education (IPE):** It is hoped that an IPE special interest group might be established to support those involved in IPE within social work education
- **Mental Health in Higher Education Project (mhhe):** SWAP will continue to support mhhe activities and work with the team to embed its outputs and networks into other relevant organisations as mhhe itself begins to wind down.

Technology-enhanced learning

We will be participating in an Academy-wide project supporting departmental teams on a discipline-focused learning technology enhancement project.

In addition, we plan to commission a project exploring the use of technology in the SWAP disciplines. The exact focus of this is yet to be decided but it is hoped that it may be delivered in collaboration with relevant Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs).

With the current review of the use of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) within social work education, we plan to produce guidance to support any forthcoming new requirements.

Assessment

We plan to combine our ongoing support for external examiners with an event looking at assessment strategies. In addition, we plan to run an event looking at assessment of e-portfolios and a funded project (focus yet to be decided) on assessment in practice settings.

Supporting Departments

As well as continuing to develop our network of individual and departmental contacts, we plan this year to raise awareness of SWAP amongst Deans and Heads of Schools by running a targeted event, the actual focus yet to be confirmed.

Supporting the devolved nations

In order to more fully address the unique concerns of the devolved nations, we plan to appoint consultants for Wales and Scotland this year.

Other nation-specific activities include:

- A funded project in Northern Ireland looking at social work academics' sense of identity
- Support for a devolution and divergence in health and social care conference in Wales
- Ongoing liaison with the four care councils
- Evidence-gathering in relation to ways in which social policy engages with the voluntary sector in Scotland

Quality enhancement

In addition to our ongoing support of the external examiners network, capacity has been built in to undertake further work on supporting quality and standards, the focus of which is yet to be decided.

Students

We will continue to run the annual student essay competition, as well as continuing to develop connections with the British Association of Social Work student conference. We hope this may lead to further opportunities to collaborate. We also plan to continue our support of the social policy post graduates who teach network.

Impact and evaluation

Following the successful, though small scale, needs analysis conducted this year, we plan to conduct a larger scale needs analysis and impact study within our community. We also plan to appoint an external evaluator, in the role of 'critical friend' to help us evaluate and develop our effectiveness and impact.

UK Joint Social Work Education Conference and the UK Social Work Research Conference

The combined conference will continue to be a major focus for SWAP in 2009/10

Collaborations

We plan to continue the ongoing collaborations with the Subject Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics(C-SAP) in relation to Criminology. Most particularly in the coming year, we plan to explore opportunities to collaborate with relevant CETLs with a view to supporting their dissemination activities and other ongoing outputs.

Internal Activity

Work will continue on developing the website, the database, event management, reporting, planning, budgeting, team and steering group meetings and other internal processes.

There is also a need to engage in Academy-wide consultations, briefings and meetings, sometimes with very short timescales. It takes significant amounts of time to do this effectively.

A copy of the full operational plan (in an excel spreadsheet) is available on request.