

# A Qualitative Study on Alumni–University Relations at SWPS University



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# Study at a Glance

- 24 **qualitative interviews** across five alumni groups in 2025.
- Purposive selection across **programmes** and specializations
- How alumni **assess the value of their studies**, what they need after graduation, and which forms of cooperation with the university they see as genuinely useful.
- **SWPS University**  
16 000+ students  
40 000+ alumni  
6 campuses  
12 Faculties  
35+ study programs





# Key thesis



## University capital - what alumni value most

- The reputation of the degree and its value to employers.
- Practice-oriented faculty and strong academic quality.
- Interdisciplinarity and the development of critical thinking.
- The practical usefulness of at least part of the curriculum.

## Relationship gap - where the relationship breaks

- After the thesis defense, there is often "radio silence."
- Post-graduation contact is frequently perceived as insufficient or absent.
- Emails and newsletters are seen as weakly personalized.
- Graduates lack support in entering the labour market and planning next steps.
- The university loses the chance to turn study satisfaction into long-term loyalty.

## University capital - what alumni value most

the trust foundation already exists; the university does not need to build it from scratch.

## Relationship gap - where the relationship breaks

the challenge is not more communication, but a better post-graduation relationship architecture.



# Where Does the Biggest Gap Appear?

- Studies: strong theory and strong faculty.
- Practice: too few workshops, placements, and case-based activities.
- After graduation, many are left alone with the question: what next?
- Job market: unclear pathways and weak launch support.
- After graduation: contact is often passive and not very useful.
- Most critical area: career readiness and support after graduation.
- Alumni report a shortage of professional tools, placements, and entry-to-work scenarios.

"It's like the end of a five-year relationship, where you don't even want to run into that person at the grocery store afterward. And that's kind of how I feel right now."

"On one hand, I am outside the university structure, but on the other, I wish I were still in it. I desperately want to stay connected with this university somehow."

"There is no Max without psychology" – "My parents have simply given up on me [in a lighthearted way]. There is no Max without psychology. My studies have transformed my life forever."



# What Do Alumni Expect from the University After Graduation?

## 1. Career

- Job, internship, and placement offers.
- A stronger role for the Career Office.
- Mentoring and clearer pathways into the market.

## 2. Knowledge

- Lectures and training for alumni.
- Updating profession-specific skills.
- Access to expert content after graduation.

## Interpretive conclusion

For alumni, the post-study relationship matters only when usefulness is combined with belonging.

## 3. Community

- Networking and an Alumni Club.
- Exchange across graduating cohorts.
- Hybrid meetings: online and in person.

## 4. Identity and recognition

- Showcasing alumni success stories.
- Benefits and access to university resources.
- A sense that the bond with the alma mater continues.



# Which Collaboration Formats Have the Greatest Potential?

## **Launch now**

- Lectures and webinars for alumni: high acceptance, hybrid-ready, and useful for knowledge updates.
- Guest talks by alumni for students: strong inspirational and practical value.
- Alumni Club and networking events: best match for the need for community

## **Pilot by field**

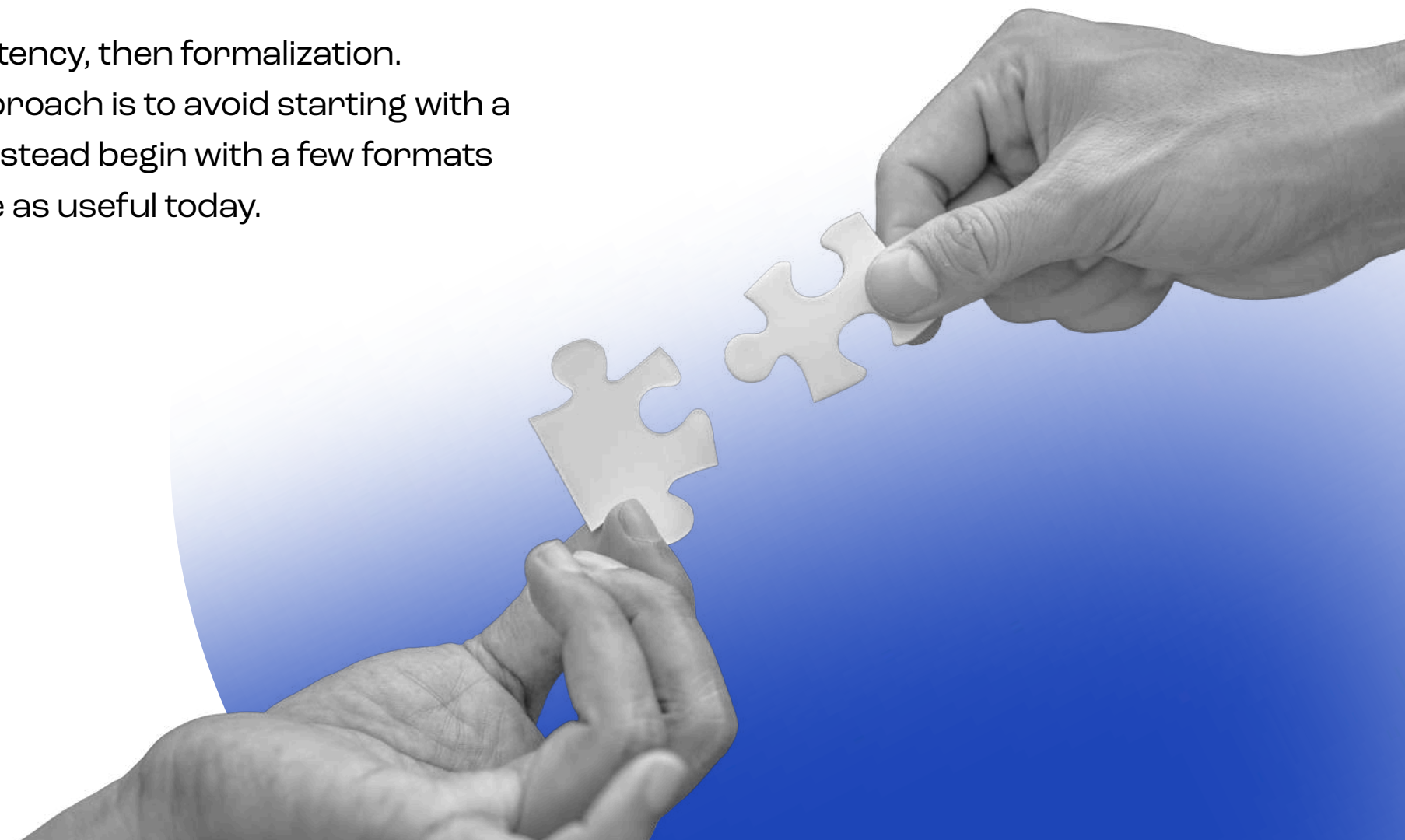
- Mentoring, light supervision, or peer groups, especially important in clinical psychology.

## **Pilot with rules**

- Semester projects and an Alumni Council: high value, but they require coordination and standards.

## **Shared design rule**

- Value first, then consistency, then formalization.
- The recommended approach is to avoid starting with a heavy structure and instead begin with a few formats that alumni already see as useful today.



# Conclusion

**Alumni do not expect contact after graduation. They expect partnership after graduation.**

- SWPS starts from a position of strength: brand, faculty, and alumni trust.
- The biggest gap concerns practical career readiness and continuity after graduation.
- The best strategy combines useful communication, career development, and alumni community.
- Key takeaway: the same mechanism appears in both reports - high satisfaction with studies plus low satisfaction with post-study contact leads to a loss of part of the university's brand potential.



# Thank you!

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