

## **SAAS MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING MONDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2008**

Present: David Stephen, Chief Executive  
Martin Lowe, NEBM  
Eileen Marshall, NEBM  
Bruce Nelson, NEBM  
Graham Gunn, SAAS  
Audrey Shimmons, SAAS  
Maureen Shevas, SAAS  
Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: Margaret Munckton, NEBM  
Audrey Heatlie, SAAS

### **Minutes of the previous meeting**

1. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008 were agreed.

### **Matters Arising**

2. David updated the Board on the following:-
  - Online applications – Cabinet Secretary had agreed to the proposal that SAAS should stop issuing bulk application forms to institutions from next year onwards.
  - Skills Development Scotland – David had met with Donald Henderson, interim Chief Executive, and Damien Yates, LearnDirect, to discuss SDS/SAAS future relationships on matters such as ILAS and the provision of information, advice and guidance and on HE.
  - ILAS project – a further report from Logica was expected shortly.
  - ILA 500 – the new scheme was due to start by the end of June but some details had still to be resolved. Marketing by SDS was due to be phased in May but current feedback from institutions showed a low level of awareness of the new scheme and how it would operate.
  - SAAS Framework document – SG Finance had advised the Agency to put the revised document on hold until work going on in the centre to look at accountability and relationships between agencies and Ministers had been completed.
  - Quality Scotland Award – David had agreed with Andrew Cubie that Quality Scotland would re-mark our application with a view to it going forward for the next awards competition. However, this had not been done by the chosen assessor and the quality of advice he had given had been disappointing.
  - Home working – The project had been put on hold until September/October but would be re-activated then. It was agreed that home working held potential benefits for SAAS in a number of respects.

## **Quarterly Report**

3. A Unit Heads awayday had been arranged to discuss the balanced scorecard approach to performance management. Building on that, it was intended to revise the format of Quarterly Reports so that reports and KPIs would be themed rather than compartmentalised by Unit as at present. In turn, this would feed into a review of the Agency's annual report.

4. KPIs – The Agency intended to move to targets that would vary according to the time of year. It was agreed that this would be more realistic given the high degree of seasonality in SAAS business activity.

### Customer Services Unit

5. A dip in performance in the quarter Jan-March 2008 had to some extent been due to staff vacancies in CSU. However the average processing time for 2007/08 had improved to 7.18 days compared to 10.67 for 2006/07. It was agreed that it was important to analyse the reasons for and measure completion of casework and correspondence falling outwith target timescales. Correspondence, and e-mail, would in future be merged under one target.

6. ILAS – There were now 107,000 open accounts.

7. GE – The Agency continued to receive letters asking for refunds and could explain only that the new legislation was not retrospective.

8. Telephony – performance reflected available resource which did not match demand. Efficiencies expected from StEPS might allow the Agency to redeploy some staff on call management.

### Finance

9. The Finance Team were currently finalising DRCs - £5.7m was the provisional out-turn figure. Programme expenditure had increased by £1.5m from £508.6m in the report which was within budget and fairly close to forecast figures.

10. HNC/HND student numbers had been asked for at the last meeting. There were 300 more HNC students than last year and 200 more HND students. However there had also been more withdrawals and final numbers were similar to those of last year. EU student numbers had increased from 7,400 last year to 8,700 this year. It was noted that very few Scottish students studied abroad full time. Numbers might rise if current efforts to pilot the "portability" of student support were successful.

11. The Fraud Team had informed the Immigration Service of a possible fraud case and the IS had taken action quickly and arrested the student. Immigration services staff had visited the Agency to raise fraud awareness and had asked to meet the Management Team to discuss a number of related issues.

12. Debt Recovery – A debt recovery module was being built into StEPS which should help increase efficiency. David was also intending to increase the size of the recovery team

### Personnel

13. A conduct case and a poor performance case were being progressed as quickly as possible.

14. Recruitment - CSU had recruited 13 new staff but still had vacancies which would be covered by Pertemps staff. However this would allow the Agency some flexibility if priorities were to change. Two vacant Finance posts would be filled shortly. Four A3's in CSU had been promoted internally to A4 at promotion boards.

15. There had been a noticeable downturn in Pertemps staff and the time taken to recruit them. However, this was symptomatic of the difficulties that all employment agencies in the Edinburgh area were facing.

16. E-HR – phase 2 was now live and staff could now update annual and sick leave on the new system although the system continued to have teething problems and was not particularly user friendly.

### Information Systems and Operational Policy

17. It was noted that ILA 500 and Debt Recovery were being developed within Steps. The system would be available later this year and so allow staff to become wholly familiar with it before next session.

18. Overall expenditure on Steps system would still be close to budget. The delay in implementation would have little impact on costs since a planned data migration exercise would allow us to end GRASS support earlier.

### Policy

19. The Policy Team had been running workshops for institutions to advise them about changes to means-testing and online services as well as visiting colleges and universities on open days etc.

20. The Agency had received some correspondence on means test changes and would monitor whether the number of students claiming to be independent rose during 2008.

21. DSA – Institutions were having difficulties finding personnel trained to carry out assessments. Although the number was increasing it was not doing so quickly enough. It was also noted that funding for assessments (previously ring fenced) was now included in mainstream funding for institutions.

22. A member of the Policy Team had produced a new A5 Guidance booklet which matched/exceeded the quality of previous versions produced by external contractors.

**Action:** Linda to send copies to NEBMs.

### Chief Executive's Office

23. Healthy Working Lives – The Team were currently rewriting the Bronze and Silver SHAW documentation for the new HWL's criteria and hoped to go for a Gold award by December 2008.

### **Committee Meetings**

24. Minutes of the Health and Safety committee meeting held on 14 February 2008 were noted.

### **Complaints Report**

25. The Board noted the Report.

### **Any Other Business**

26. NEBMs Appointments - Universities Scotland had nominated two candidates and interviews would be held on 21 May and 5 June.

27. SAAS Audit Committee - The Agency had received new advice on Corporate Governance from SG Finance to the effect that the Audit Committee should henceforward be made up of non-executive board members only. **Action:** David to discuss with NEBMs individually.

Chief Executive's Office  
13 May 2008