

## SAAS MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING THURSDAY 19th NOVEMBER 2009

Present: Tracey Slaven  
 Bruce Nelson, NEBM  
 Allan Forsyth, NEBM  
 Dugald Mackie, NEBM  
 Graham Gunn  
 Audrey Heatlie  
 Audrey Shimmons  
 Maureen Shevas  
 Linda Pender (Secretary)

### Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 September were agreed apart from a small amendment at paragraph 9 which should be “60% increase” rather than “6%”.

### Matters Arising

NEBM Recruitment – A recommendation had been passed to the Cabinet Secretary and we are waiting on a response before making a formal appointment.

### Actions required from last meeting

Homeworking - Tracey had reviewed the business case for homeworking. Due to issues with StEPs and workflow it was likely that implementing homeworking at this time would increase the risk to the organisation. Our staff and TUS had been informed and we had a positive response. The project was highly dependently on IT but this issue would be looked at again in future.

Balanced Scorecard – This item was on agenda for this meeting.

### Quarterly Report

2. The report included a new section on CE overview. The profile of applications received was concerning, both in terms of volumes received and the pattern of receipt. The main issue to address was to ensure students had funding for the start of their course.

3. To enable this change we need to inform students of changes to timings through better communication and use of incentives (we would hold a prize draw to encourage applications by closing date) and by changing closing dates for the different type of applications. Bruce said that the use of incentive in the national student survey had increased volumes surprisingly. We need to make clear that if students apply by the closing date then their application will be dealt with. Applications not received by that date may not get money for the start of their course. **Action:** Graham - SAAS will increase communication to inform students/schools/parents of the new closing dates and the impact of missing the these dates.

4. Relationship with HELs were very import with the number of changes to funding this year. HELs now recognise that they must inform us of any possible changes and they also need to listen to our views on service provision.

### Customer Services Unit

5. This had been a difficult quarter to the end of September and through to October. Processing had been completed by the end of October but CSU were still dealing with outstanding correspondence.

6. The increased number of phone calls had been difficult to manage. The increase was due to a knock on effect from the SLC situation and Scottish students worried about any impact on them. SAAS would need to clarify the relationship with SLC for students.

7. Another difficulty this session was parental income as students were completing forms on-line but have not completed the section for parental income details. This was another issue to communicate to students and parents and had resulted in an increase in the number of complaints we received. The Agency were considering on-line access for parents to complete income details on-line.

8. ILA – There had been a steady stream of increased volumes. Unfortunately the peak co-incided with the peak processing period for student funding.

9. GE – A recent court case had ruled in a student's favour. Another case was currently with our solicitors for advice.

10. Bruce suggested we could liaise with institutions who may be able to provide estimated student numbers for next year. They may also be able to help with communications to continuing students.

11. The Agency also need to address demand and supply of resource (staff turnover and the time lag in recruitment due to the seasonal pattern of our work means less experienced workers were dealing with peak demand). If the Agency can't change the profile peak for applications we would need to increase staff numbers and also plan the use of per temps at the start of year and define their use and functions.

### Finance

12. The DEL budget allocation would be overspent by £5 - £6 million this year due to the high number of additional students (approx 7,500 mostly HNC/HND students) .

13. The recent fee status exercise had showed a high number of students had not started their courses or had withdrawn early.

### Human Resources

14. Current recruitment – 2 debt recovery post would be appointed shortly and caseworkers and enquiry officer posts were about to be advertised.

### IS & Operational Policy

15. Attendance data/fee reports – Ewhan would lead a project to look at attendance data as data received from SLC was still incorrect. The team would meet with representatives from colleges and HEIs to discuss possible action.

16. Bruce said that Edinburgh University would apply new attend management processes to all students (there was a new UK requirement to do this for all international students). A number of other institutions would also do this which would make it easier to identify students not in attendance. Allan said that colleges bursaries were very tight this year so the SFC may also want to look at attendance data. It was noted SAAS were exploring sharing data with SFC to confirm attendance.

17. Dugald said there was a new CE in post at HESA and it may be worth student records with them. **Action:** Graham would contact HESA.

18. StEPs – A project chart was circulated for information. A new type of award for independent students bursary had been included in the project plan and this work would be carried out in-house.

19. Contingency plan – The Independent Student Bursary Scheme was not available on GRASS as it could cost approx £100,000 to make this change on the system. It was still an option to run GRASS next session but we would require a manual work around for any new policy changes including the ISB.

### Policy

20. ILA – The scheme had been changed which had increased numbers and types of people who could apply. We would review the SLA with SDS as a result of these changes as changing the scope of the scheme requires more resources and additional communication.

### Chief Executive Office

21. The number of complaints received recently had been higher than normal and we would inform the Management Board of any trends at the next meeting.

22. E-mails – It was agreed there was a need to manage the expectations of our customers. The automated response issued in receipt of message include on target date for responses. The high number of e-mails received included multiple e-mails from the same students.

### Balanced Scorecard

23. It was agreed that there was some duplication of work in the production of the Quarterly Review and Balanced Scorecard and we would try to integrate these documents for the next meeting. The Board agreed the Quarterly Review includes too much detail. **Action:** It was agreed to provide a covering note along with the Balanced Scorecard (which would include finance, fraud and updates on strategic issues such as StEPs).

24. The BS strategy map had been amended to include the national outcome to tackle significant inequalities in Scottish Society.

25. **Action:** The Agency's Corporate Plan has to be updated and the Management Board agreed to attend a workshop session on Corporate Planning early in the New Year.

26. There was still some work to do on the Balanced Scorecard looking at on standards to be met and KPIs and to try to reduce the significant data lags.

27. KPI 9 – It was agreed to aim to provide funding for all students who apply 21 day before start of course (no guarantee, if apply late). Bruce raised a concern over how long it takes to deal with students applications in the 25% not dealt with within 21 days.

28. KPI 21 – It was agreed to tighten the target to less than 20% vacancies as we need to ensure this does not become a business risk.

### Minutes of Committee meetings

The Management Board noted the minutes of the following meetings:-

- Health & Safety & Environment Committee meeting on 27 August
- Audit Committee meeting on 23 June
- ISS Committee meeting 25 June.

### Risk Register

The Risk Register now covered the 10 key areas of risk to the Agency. The following issues were discussed:-

Risk 1 – MI systems were in place however the limitations of MI provided was due to GRASS. It was hoped to reduce the level of risk with StEPs.

Risk 2 – It was agreed to add risk to reputational damage from media reports and the increase in penalties used by the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Risk 4 – The level of risk should decrease with automated processes in the move to StEPs.

Risk 6 – It was a agreed working with others was an important area for the Agency.

Risk 9 – Tracey said any other ideas on ways to deal with this risk from Management Board members would be helpful.

Risk 10 – There was still some work to do on identification of measures to deal with this risk.

**Action:** Tracey said she would be grateful for any suggestions or views from the Management Board. It was agreed to track each risk on the cover sheet matrix. It was agreed that the Balance Scorecard and risk register would help the Board focus on the most important issues for SAAS.

### Complaints Report

29. The Agency received 25 complaints this quarter and no trends were reported.

30. CSU/ BSU were looking at a new phone service to make calls cheaper, particularly for students using mobile phones. It was agreed that we should warn students of delays on our phone lines.

Any Other Business

31. No other business was noted.

Date of next meeting

32. It was agreed to fix dates for meetings for 2010 and onwards for a rolling 6 month period. The Corporate Planning event would be held after the next Management Board meeting. In future, if possible, the Audit Committee meeting would be held at 10am and the Board meeting would start at 11am.

Chief Executive's Office  
24 November 2009