

## SAAS Quarterly Review Meeting – Thursday 5 March 2009

Attending: Andrew Scott, Director LL (Chair)  
 David Stephen, SAAS  
 Stephen Kerr, HELS  
 Chris McCrone, ELL, Finance  
 Graham Gunn, SAAS  
 Audrey Heatlie, SAAS  
 Audrey Shimmons, SAAS  
 Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: Maureen Shevas, SAAS

### Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2008 were agreed.

### Update since the last meeting

2. David updated the meeting on the following issues:-
  - Forecasting student numbers – Stephen Kerr had discussed with John Ireland. The Agency's move to increase on-line applications should provide better information for forecasting purposes. It was agreed that using previous years information on student numbers and factoring in any new policy changes should provide a good estimate. John Ireland would also be able to provide information on how economic changes might affect numbers. EU numbers were difficult to forecast. While portable support would resolve this, progress was currently slow. **Action:** Linda agreed to arrange a meeting to discuss this further with David/Stephen Kerr/John Ireland.
  - Finance – Audrey Shimmons had provided figures requested by Stephen Kerr.
  - ELL Committee – a letter had been sent to the ELL committee about means test changes which it was estimated had only affected a couple of hundred students.
  - Discretionary funding – The Cabinet Secretary would write to the committee shortly about Government funding to institutions for students requiring additional support.

### Quarterly Report

#### Customer Services Unit

3. It had been a good session. CSU had finished the bulk of the processing by the end of October and then caught up with outstanding correspondence. CSU were currently working on change of session and staff training. There was some discussion about statistics shown at Annex A. Targets would be changed shortly to include e-mails in the general 21 day target for correspondence.

4. SAAS Balanced Scorecard – The Agency's new balanced scorecard had been agreed by the Management Board and would capture performance for the agency as a whole. This approach incorporated a strategic map which linked SAAS's activities to the Government's strategic outcomes and a wide range of key performance indicators. It was hoped to update the Balanced Scorecard on a monthly basis and it would be used at future Board and Quarterly Review meetings. **Action:** Attendees agreed to feed back any comments to David.

#### Finance

5. Provisional outturn was very close to budget. **Action:** Audrey Shimmons agreed to make adjustments required for GE debtors using output from the debt recovery system to review the budget position by w/c 9 March.

6. DRC's would be underspent on depreciation due to the delay in introducing the new StEPs system.

7. Tuition fees – full time payments had been issued in January and would be adjusted at end year but this would not have a significant affect. Discretionary grants - The Finance Team were awaiting returns from institutions on discretionary grants and tuition fees returned due to student withdrawals but they would not know full budget position until the end of the financial year. DEL expenditure was on budget.

8. ILA budgets – It was agreed to rename part-time tuition fees as ILA 500 on budget prints in future. **Action:** The Finance Team will discuss ILA 2009/10 budget forecast with SDS and John Ireland. Laura Barjonas, Andrew Livingstone and Audrey Shimmons were meeting on Monday 9 March to discuss ILA expenditure.

#### Fraud

9. The fraud ring case was now with the procurator fiscal but it was not known whether or when it might go to court. It was noted that losses exceeding £250,000 should be brought to the attention of the Parliament through notes to the SG's resource accounts. Losses should be noted even if they may be reduced by subsequent recoveries.

#### Human Resources

10. Staff recruitment was well underway and it was hoped to start the next session in a better staffing position than last year.

11. Homeworking project – work was continuing.

#### Information Systems & Operational Policy

12. ILA500 – go live date for the new system was 28 April and the next payment run would be made using the interim system.

13. StEPs – the development team had been given a final target date to have a working system in test by no later than June 2009. Cases for 2009-10 would be processed on GRASS with parallel running on StEPS. The Agency had commissioned two independent reviews on the project (covering technical requirements and the skills sets and resources used in the project). Review reports were expected within the next two weeks.

14. Attendance data – there were problems with the data provided by SLC which were being explored. However, it might become necessary for SAAS to capture attendance data independently as SLC did not hold data on EU or fees only students.

15. It was noted that EDM scanning requirements would reduce further as the Agency moved closer to 100% online applications but there were now fewer staff in the EDM team and SAAS would continue to try to market scanning services to other organisations.

#### Gaelic Language Plan

16. The Agency had been approached about drawing up a Gaelic language plan. There was an expectation on the part of the Bord na Gaeligh that public sector organisations would provide forms, guides and complaints documents in Gaelic and be able to answer queries made in the language. **Action:** It was agreed to seek advice from solicitors in the first instance on the legal position and possibly also from the Funding Council who were already part "Gaelicised".

#### Any Other Business

17. No other business