

SAAS Quarterly Review Meeting – Thursday 22 May 2008

Attending: Mark Batho (Chair)
Stephen Kerr, HELS
David Stephen, SAAS
Audrey Heatlie, SAAS
Audrey Shimmons, SAAS
Maureen Shevas, SAAS
Michael Jackson, SAAS
Nicola Millar, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: Chris McCrone, ETLLD, Finance
Graham Gunn, SAAS

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the last meeting held on 28 February 2008 were agreed.

Update since the last meeting

2. David updated the meeting on the following:-
 - Online applications – Cabinet Secretary had agreed to the proposal that SAAS should stop issuing bulk paper application forms to institutions from next year onwards. SAAS would continue to issue paper copies to students and institutions on request and to provide downloadable forms on the SAAS website.
 - ILA project – Logica were due to issue a report shortly on the cost benefit analysis of future ILA delivery options.
 - Skills Development Scotland (SDS) – David had met with Donald Henderson, interim Chief Executive of SDS, and Damien Yates, LearnDirect Scotland, to discuss SDS/SAAS future relationships on matters such as ILA and the provision of information, advice and guidance on Higher Education.
 - Quality Scotland Award – David had not heard back from Andrew Cubie on SAAS withdrawing from the Quality Scotland Scheme. Martin Lowe was due to meet with Andrew and would advise David of the outcome of this meeting.

Quarterly Report

Customer Services Unit

3. During the last quarter it had taken an average of 3 days to process an application rather than the usual 2. This had been due staff vacancies which were now being filled. Processing for the new session had started with 18,000 applications having been processed to dates (1,000 less than this time last year). The number of applications was likely to increase in the coming weeks with the deadline of the 30th June for 2007 approaching. CSU would again be carrying out a Short Messaging Service exercise to encourage students to apply early.
4. Telephony statistics –it was accepted that it would take time for a series to build up that would allow comparisons to be made.

5. ILA Processing – There were now 107,000 open accounts in ILA. These were mainly for the ILA200 scheme. SAAS were preparing for ILA500 which was now due to be introduced as from June 30th. Since awareness of the new scheme appeared to be low and applications had to be routed via institutions, a slow start was expected.
6. Graduate Endowment – Complaints were still being received although numbers had begun to tail off.

Finance

7. Audrey Shimmons gave an update on Programme and Running Costs out-turns for 2007/08 and talked through the figures for the 2008/09 Programme forecast. Forecast was very close to published budget for 2008/09 and close monitoring would be required.
8. There was scope for reviewing the way in which the Agency's finances were managed and reported. David and Audrey Shimmons would produce a paper which could form the basis for discussions with Mark and senior finance colleagues later in the year. (**Action:** David/Audrey S)
9. The Fraud Team were liaising closely with the Immigration Service on a number of new cases. Immigration services staff had asked to meet the SAAS Management Team to discuss issues of mutual interest.
10. Economists had not produced updated figures on projected student numbers for this year. However their 'upper forecasts' had been close to the actual number of applications supported. Mark undertook to discuss up rating the forecasting model with John Ireland. (**Action:** Mark Batho)

Personnel

11. Recruitment - CSU had recruited 13 new staff but still had vacancies which would be covered by Pertemps staff. Carrying vacancies 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 recent Promotion Boards. There had also been some level transfers to the Private Office. There could be more staff movement in future months due to the main SG B1 Board which will be held during the summer.
12. Agencies had been consulted on forthcoming pay negotiations – a welcome initiative on the part of the new head of HR.

Information Systems & Operational Policy

13. StEPS – Some StEPS functionality was currently being tested. ILA500 and Debt Recovery functionality would be available later in the session. We would no longer require the Colsys system once debt recovery cases have been moved over to StEPS - this would enable the team to manage all cases properly on one system. The ILA500 technical design was nearly complete and coding would start next week.
14. Policy – some workshops had been held with HEIs and the number was continuing to rise.

15. Testing – Two members of Accountant-in-Bankruptcy's (AIB) staff were due to visit SAAS next week to get an overview of the Test Team and software testing.

Chief Executive's Office

16. The Agency were applying for ISO 14001 Environmental Management accreditation later in the summer.

Date of the Next Meeting

17. A date would be arranged for August/September.

SAAS
Chief Executive's Office
22 May 2008