

## **SAAS Quarterly Review Meeting – Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at 2.00pm**

Attending: Mark Batho (Chair)  
Chris McCrone, ETLLED Finance  
David Stephen, SAAS  
Graham Gunn, SAAS  
Stephen Blyth, SAAS  
Tracy Richardson, SAAS  
Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: Audrey Heatlie, SAAS

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

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> March were agreed with an amendment to the figure shown on Page 3 (now to read “£1.98m in 2005/06”).

### **Matters Arising**

2. The following actions had been taken since the last meeting:-

- Confirmation of attendance – At SAAS behest this issue had been discussed at Universities Scotland’s Secretaries’ committee. They had agreed to SAAS having a meeting with Registrars to pursue this further but had expressed the view that there should be a distinction between what universities had to do to prove entitlement to tuition fee payments and the individual relationship between students and SAAS for all other types of student support.
- Budget Review Report –SAAS had had a reasonably favourable mention and would not be affected by any of the report’s conclusions.
- Loans – ASD were examining potential reasons for the drop in loan uptake over the last few years and working on improved forecasting methodology. A meeting was due to be held on Thursday in Glasgow to discuss these issues further.

### **Quarterly Report**

#### CSU

3. This was traditionally a quiet quarter for processing which gave CSU a chance to clear the decks and train staff for the next session. In the period April – May, 25,800 applications had so far been received of which 94% had been processed.

4. Applications were slower coming in than in previous years but over 30% had been made on-line. It was hoped that this would rise to near 40% later in the session. The increase in on-line applications would result in savings for customers (no printing or postage required) and SAAS (no data entry or scanning necessary).

5. It was noted that evaluation of on-line service was continuous. Students were asked to complete an on-line questionnaire after completing their application forms.

6. ILAs – There were currently around 36,000 open accounts.

#### Finance

7. Capital expenditure was approximately on budget. Annex C had been revised to show VAT to be paid for SLC (£1.5m). £12m underspend was mostly due to loans (£8m), fees and charges. It was noted that payments made to SLC would be discussed at the next quadrilateral meeting to be held at SAAS on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

8. Stephen Blyth was currently finalising the Agency’s annual accounts for Audit Scotland to audit in June.

9. Stephen was currently working on estimates for revised student numbers with Andrew Murray, the Agency's statistician. Mark asked about the timetable for ASD work and budget estimates, as it would be useful to have this information by September.

10. GE – The Finance Team were contacting institutions to check if 3<sup>rd</sup> year students had graduated and also to check if students who had failed exams had now resat them and passed (i.e. making them liable for GE). If students were in 4<sup>th</sup> year the Agency would take debt recovery action

#### Personnel

11. It was noted that most staff movement was within Band A but the Agency now had a reserve list to back fill A band posts (successful applicants' names are kept on a reserve list for 1 year). A4 vacancies (specialist caseworker posts) would be advertised in the SE shortly as well as cross band promotions (SAAS Personnel Team would arrange an in-house assessment centre for these posts).

12. A member of staff had recently been awarded an Imperial Service Medal which would be presented in June. Tracy Richardson was working with the Disability Rights Commission and SE on drafting guidance for disability equality duty for senior managers which will link into an overarching scheme for equality (including race, age and disability).

#### IS & Policy

13. Online shortened web applications – development work had been carried out successfully in-house. This was the first time that system development had been undertaken in this way and there was potential to achieve savings from doing similar work in-house in future.

14. Payloans – A project board meeting would be held on Monday, chaired by Mark. SLC had confirmed that they could not supply costs – indicative or otherwise – until 30<sup>th</sup> June.

15. Events – An A3 member of the Agency's policy team had been asked to speak at a British Council event in Sweden. Feedback on the presentation she had given had been very positive. The number of open days, recruitment fairs etc that SAAS were being asked to attend was increasing year on year.

16. Portability working group – The group had been in existence for a year or more but did not appear to have made much progress. A meeting was due to be held in the Hague in June where it was hoped to finalise terms of reference for the group and agree future action.

17. This had been a very busy time of year for IS teams preparing for the session ahead. The Agency now handled much of its printing in-house and would shortly begin making payments to students directly through BACS.

18. Efficient government/shared services - a number of reasons had been given by other agencies for not taking up SAAS offers to supply bureau scanning services etc. Savings made on the likes of printing and postage did not accrue to the Agency. Mark Batho said he would ask Stephen Kerr to contact David Stephen to discuss this further.

#### Chief Executive's Office

19. The Agency had achieved a SHAW silver award and was now working towards gold.

20. The H&S team were working on environmental issues (notably re-cycling and energy consumption) although monetary savings made so far were not substantial.

21. Ewhan Barschtschik would be presenting SAAS as a "LEAN" case study at ASC's annual conference. Stephen Garland had also asked David to do something similar at an event being organised by the Permanent Secretary round about September.

#### **Personnel Report**

22. It was noted that the SAAS HR team was fully qualified to supply a professional service within the Agency and would try to use SE HR for pay and pensions purposes only.

**Date of Next Meeting**

23. To be arranged.

Chief Executive's Office  
31 May 2006