

SAAS Quarterly Review Meeting – Thursday 23rd November at 10.00am

Attending: Mark Batho (Chair)
Chris McCrone, ETLLD Finance
Graham Gunn, SAAS
Stephen Blyth, SAAS
Audrey Heatlie, SAAS
Carolyn Wilson, SAAS
Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: David Stephen, SAAS
Tracy Richardson, SAAS

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September were agreed.
- The minutes of the Agency's meeting with Universities Scotland to discuss attendance data had now been received and David would write to Mark to provide an update. **Action:** David

Quarterly Report

CSU

2. This had been a difficult quarter as the Agency had received a larger than normal surge of late applications which had created a backlog and delays in responding to applications had resulted in additional e-mails, phone calls etc. A third of CSU staff were new and required extra quality assurance checks on their work. As this caused backlogs at the busiest time of the year, Internal Audit had now agreed that the bulk of QA checks could take place at the end of the session. The new telephony system had also caused problems.
3. 129, 000 applications had now been received and 99.8% of those had been processed. It was agreed that the Agency's performance targets were set very high as LEAs were working to an 6 week target.
4. The Agency will pilot a new SMS text service next session which will allow us to contact students to try to encourage them to apply earlier in the year and use our online services.
5. The Agency had commissioned a consultancy study, using Logica CMG, to look at CSU processes and a report would be received shortly. Feedback so far had been encouraging and may produce some immediate improvements. It was agreed to send a copy of the report to Mark on receipt. **Action:** Linda
6. The Agency were reviewing targets for responding to e-mails (currently within 5 days of receipt) as many of the e-mails required complex replies and it was unfair to treat e-mails differently to other correspondence which had a 21 day response target.
7. It was agreed to provide Mark and Chris with a full breakdown of course bookings. **Action:** Audrey
8. GE – There seemed to be a greater awareness of GE and a high percentage of students had agreed to repay the GE. A reminder letter would be issued to EU students next week and a second reminder would be issued in January/February 2007. **Action:** Linda/ Stephen
9. Annex A - It was agreed it would be useful to compare performance measures against the same quarter of the previous year. Telephony statistics were still unavailable but it was hoped that this problem would be resolved by the new upgrade. **Action:** Linda

Finance

10. Running costs –Stephen agreed to clarify the budget with Chris as a transfer from the capital budget may be required to DRCs. It was noted that GE legal cost were shown under DRCs and debt recovery legal costs were shown under programme expenditure. **Action:** Stephen
11. Programme expenditure – Stephen agreed to provide a note of the number of students applying to SAAS for fees. Mark emphasised the importance of providing better estimates of student numbers earlier in the year to allow adjustments to be made to departmental budgets. It was agreed that it would be useful to hold a meeting (inviting SAAS/ Mark Batho/Chris McCrone/Robert Dickie/ Agency statistician) to discuss ways to pull this information together earlier in the year. **Action:** Stephen
12. Expenditure for Quigley was shown as £2.1m. SLC had provided this figure last year and an update would be required from SLC. **Action :** Stephen
13. DSA – An increase in DSA expenditure was expected as it had been agreed that SAAS would pay a higher assessment fee for this year only.
14. GE – The number of students choosing to repay GE in cash had increased each year and there may be a similar trend on repayment of loans. Stephen agreed to ask the Agency's statistician to look at this in more detail. **Action:** Stephen.

IS & Policy

15. As there were few policy changes for the next session the Team could focus on updating the website, standard change of session work and enhancing services to students. Automated on-line services were being investigated which would require less input from CSU. A focus group had been set up to review on-line services.
16. The Agency were also proposing to expand the use of shortened applications. The statistician had looked at random sampling to verify income details and had not highlighted any problems.
17. NHS dental bursary scheme –initial uptake of the bursary had been good. SAAS, NES and the Health Department had worked well together to set up the new scheme.
18. Monthly payments system – ETLLED Finance Team would need to open new account codes and Chris agreed to check this was being done. **Action :** Chris

Chief Executive's Office

19. The minister had now cleared the Agency's annual report, accounts and corporate plan for publication.
20. The Agency's recycling pilot scheme had been very successful and the amount of waste going to landfill had reduced to 13% over the last 6 months.

Personnel Report

21. The report was noted.

Any other Business

22. Logica Report on SAAS make payments – a meeting would be arranged shortly to discuss the report.

Date of Next Meeting

23. To be arranged.

Chief Executive's Office
23 November 2006