

SAAS Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held in SAAS Boardroom,
G Spur, Saughton House, Edinburgh,
08 March 2017 at 10:30am

In attendance

Kathy Patterson	Chair, Non-Executive Board Member, SAAS
Miriam Craven	Director of Policy and Engagement, SAAS
Paul Lowe	Chief Executive, SAAS
Roddy Macdonald	Deputy Director of Higher Education and Science Division
Janet Matthews	Non-Executive Board Member, SAAS
Edward McGrachan	Non-Executive Board Member, SAAS
Aileen McKechnie	Director of Advanced Learning and Science, SG
Janet McVea	Team Leader, Health and Social Care, SG
Janet Unsworth	Non-Executive Board Member, SAAS
Heather Campbell	SAAS (Items 10 and 11 only)
Yasmin Ali	Secretariat, SAAS

Apologies

Fiona McQueen	Chief Nursing Officer, Health and Social Care, SG
Derek Smeall	Non-Executive Board Member, SAAS
Philip Whyte	Policy and Influencing Officer, NUS

1. Welcome, apologies and acceptance of previous minutes and matters arising from previous minutes – AC(16-17)09

1.1 Kathy Patterson welcomed attendees to the meeting and a note of apologies was recorded.

1.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 07 December 2016 were approved and, with the exception of those listed below, it was agreed that the action points could be closed (see annex A).

- Action point 8 – The Committee was advised that, over the next 6-8 weeks, HR, Learning and Development would be working with the Corporate Office on the internal launch of the strategy, vision and SAAS values with the final Investors in People (IIP) assessment expected to take place at the end of May. The Committee would be kept abreast of the developments.
- Action point 10 – The Committee was advised that, although the final SAAS Independent Review position paper had been circulated to members in February 2017, there had been subsequent amendments made to reflect feedback provided. **Action: The draft Independent Review position paper to be circulated to the Committee for information following amendments.**

Action: Secretariat to issue meeting papers the Wednesday or Thursday of the week prior to the Advisory Committee meeting taking place.

2. Declaration of conflicts of interest

2.1 No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Student Funding Delivery update

3.1 Miriam Craven delivered a presentation to the Committee which outlined the benefits of delivering the SFD project, which included:

- Improved customer experience
- Reputational benefits and improved customer perception
- Improved business operational efficiency
- Increased business resilience
- Increased responsiveness to change
- Supported and secure IT platform
- Improved management of information

3.2 The Committee was advised that the Student Funding Delivery (SFD) project had progressed at pace and was on track, satisfying all of the phase one delivery milestones, which would include the launch of the following:

- The launch of the new SAAS account;
- Delivery of the Care Experienced Student Bursary;
- Moving postgraduate applications online;
- Associated launch activities (including operational implementation and student/stakeholder engagement and communication).

3.3 The Committee was advised that the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science had been kept abreast of progress and the benefits the new SAAS account was expected to deliver.

3.4 The Committee was shown a video which outlined the changes made to the SAAS account.

3.4 The Committee was advised that the project was on track to deliver soft launch the 03 April, with the full publicised session launch on 10 April.

3.5 The Committee noted their appreciation for the excellent work that had gone into the SFD project.

4. Scottish Government Corporate update

4.1 The Board was provided with an update on the work currently underway in the Advanced Learning and Science Directorate and the following was highlighted.

- **Developing the Young Workforce** – the second annual progress report of the DYW was published in December 2016. This demonstrated the programme was still on track with the ambitions originally set and good progress had been made; in the first two years of the programme, there had been a decrease of 18% [in youth unemployment] in Scotland from the baseline position in 2014.

- **Draft Budget** – was presented to the Scottish Parliament in December 2016 and introduced on 22 January 2017. It had already progressed through stages two and three and royal assent was expected by the end of March 2017. In regards to Further Education, college funding had increased - resource and capital – by £41.4 million (5.9% in real terms). The increase would maintain at least 116,000 Full-time Equivalent college places, a manifesto commitment. In regards to Higher Education (HE), for the sixth year in succession, £1 billion would be invested – protecting core teaching research grants, ensuring progress continued on widening access to university and protecting tuition fee capital funding for HE.
- **Apprenticeship Levy** – the SG had published a response to the UK Government's Levy in December 2016. The SG had consulted with employers in the run up to the draft budget and had announced a uniquely Scottish response to the levy which supports an extensive range of skills training and employability provisions, including an expansion of the Modern Apprenticeship Programme and the establishment of a £10 million pound Workforce Development Fund. The fund would see an investment in in-work learning which would be routed through colleges. The SG had been engaging with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Colleges Scotland in relation to what that would look like and how it would be delivered.
- **Enterprise and Skills Review** – Good work progressing with Phase 2 of the review, with close engagement of the four bodies involved alongside a significant number of stakeholders and experts. The nine project work streams identified in phase one had been progressing: governance, data and evaluation, regional partnerships, South of Scotland vehicle, international, enterprise and business support, innovation support, skills alignment and the learner journey. Phase 2 was expected to be concluded in May 2017.
- **Commission on Widening Access** – The Commissioner for Fair Access to Higher Education in Scotland, Professor Sir Peter Scott, had been appointed in December 2016. The SG expected to receive an update on the progress made against the recommendations in the original Commission on Widening Access report in late Spring 2017.
- **Scotland's Further and Higher Education Student Support Review** – was progressing well and had a dedicated website and Twitter account. Committee members were encouraged to engage with the social media account.
- **Scotland's Place in Europe** – the SG had published a paper in December 2016 outlining the SG's position and ambition, following the result of the EU Referendum. The Committee was advised that, in early February 2017, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) had published statistics which revealed that the number of applicants from students domiciled in the European Union (EU), outwith the UK, seeking entry to a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) in 2017-18 were down; 7% for England and 4% for Scotland. In comparison, the number of non-EU international domiciled students, applying to Scottish HEIs has increased by 4% compared to 2016-17. It was noted that, following the SG's announced commitment to fund new and continuing EU students studying a HE course in 2017-18, thought was being given to the 2018-19 intake.

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- **Learner Journey** – the SG had been engaging with stakeholders and conducting a range of research on the view of the learner to drive improvements to the learning system for 15-14 year olds. The Committee noted that the overarching aims were to seek to improve the system to ensure that learners [aged 15-24] are supported to make well informed choices, that learners have equal opportunities to access the right options for them and they can move through the system towards employment easily with no duplication of learning. The review was focussed on five key themes - careers guidance, access, provision, transitions and funding – and five work streams had been established. The SG had formally written to establish an external reference group to oversee the programme; and a number of stakeholders have been invited to participate in work stream activity. The Committee noted that the learner journey project would continue throughout the duration of the current Parliament and possibly beyond in terms of impact and implications.

Action: Secretariat to issue details of the Student Support Review dedicated website and Twitter account to Committee members.

5. Scottish Government Higher Education update - AC(17-18)11

5.1 A paper on the Higher Education update was tabled and the following was highlighted.

- **The Scottish Further and Higher Education Student Support Review** - independently chaired by Jayne-Anne Gadhia, CEO Virgin Money, had been progressing at pace and recent developments included the formation of four sub-groups to take forward specific areas of work:

- Product Design – chaired by Shona Struthers, Colleges Scotland
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Financial Literacy – chaired by Louise Macdonald, Young Scot
- Benefits and Support – chaired by Russell Gunson, IPPR
- Effective Administration and Delivery – chaired by John Kemp, SFC

SAAS was represented on three out of the four sub-groups and provided secretariat support for the fourth, in addition to Paul Lowe's membership on the Review Working Group and a Policy Official's membership on the Scottish Government's Project Group. The Committee noted that sub-groups were expected to deliver reports covering emerging findings to the chair by 28 April 2017, ahead of interim reporting in May.

- **Postgraduate Funding** – It was noted that the postgraduate review had concluded and, on the 19 December 2016, the Scottish Government had announced that, from academic year 2017-18, eligible Scottish domiciled postgraduate students would have access to a loan of up to £10,000 – comprising of £5,500 for tuition fees and £4,500 for living-costs – for any taught postgraduate course at any Scottish HEI up to, and including, full Masters level. The Committee noted that, following the changes to the postgraduate funding package, the volume of potential resulting applications was not known. However, following the movement from paper postgraduate applications to online applications, the SAAS Operations Team had been reconfigured and restructured to provide flexibility to respond to an increase in

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demand and volume. The Committee noted the need to review the reality of the impact in volume and demand in the coming years to consider how the delivery is supported – whether that be internal efficiencies in SAAS or additional budget to support it.

- **The Commissioner for Fair Access** - Professor Sir Peter Scott was appointed at the end of 2016 and took up post in January 2017. In the first months of appointment, whilst in Scotland, the Commissioner had been engaging with stakeholders and had been seeking to identify a number of key topics on which to focus his work for the coming 12 months. The Commissioner's remit was to improve the evidence base, act as an advocate for fair access and produce an annual report to Ministers. The Scottish Government plans to publish a formal report on progress against the Commission on Widening Access' recommendations in Spring 2017.

6. Health and Social Care Directorate update – AC(17-18)12

6.1 A paper containing the Health and Social Care Directorate update was tabled for information and the following was highlighted.

- The overall focus continues to be Nursing and Midwifery education, both in terms of enabling access and ensuring that the provision continues to be fit for purpose, whilst taking account of developments in the rest of the UK.
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council were reviewing the standards for pre-registration nursing and midwifery education.
- Fiona McQueen, Chief Nursing Officer, intended to commission a specific piece of work on how to develop and support access to nursing education and careers. Although it had not been officially announced, it was likely that Paul Martin, Deputy Principal, University of the West of Scotland, would undertake and lead this work. It was noted that it would be important for SAAS to be involved in this work from an early stage.
- In January 2017, the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, announced an increase in the financial support for nursing and midwifery students with dependants to help parents and carers into the workforce, as a result of the nursing and midwifery student support review. The announcement also included an increase in the Scottish Government-funded university places for those starting nursing and midwifery training; to increase by 4.7% in 2017-18, bringing the total intake to 3,360 places – the fifth successive annual increase. In tandem, the First Minister confirmed the commitment to retaining the non-income assessed, non-repayable, Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (NMSB), which remains unchanged, in contrast to policy developments in England. It was noted that an increase to the number of student places would have an impact on SAAS' administrative arrangements and workload and discussions would be required around the budget and resourcing required to service and offset the increase to the volume.
- It was noted that, although a number of nursing and midwifery policy changes were announced after the pre-existing deadlines, SAAS was able to effectively balance supporting and realising minister ambition against safeguarding the systems that deliver support due to the successful management of the SFD project. As the project delivered milestones earlier

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than originally anticipated, SAAS was able to take robust decisions to assign Business Analytical and IT resources to consider solutions which would avoid the use of manual interventions - the original mitigation due to the timing of the changes. This resulted in solutions which will be less manually and labour intensive, meeting the needs of customers, whilst also realising ministerial ambitions.

- Clarity was sought regarding the future administration of the replacement for the Dental Undergraduate Bursary and the Nursing and Midwifery Discretionary Funds, given the Health and Social Care Directorate's ambition to introduce changes to both in 2017-18. It was noted that, due to the level of information known and the interaction that had taken place regarding both policies, including the time in which this was now being escalated, achievability would be adversely impacted. However, it was suggested that a meeting between the Health Directorate and SAAS was advisable to flesh out the requirements and options.

Action: Health and Social Care Directorate to meet with SAAS to discuss the future administration of the new Dental Undergraduate Bursary and the administration of the Nursing and Midwifery Discretionary Funds.

7. SAAS update – AC(17-18)13

7.1 A paper was tabled for information and the following was highlighted.

7.2 The Committee was advised that the main activities in SAAS had been around the launch of the new academic session and, although the focus had been on the Student Funding Delivery project, a number of business as usual activities had taken place, particularly in relation to resourcing and planning for the new session. An internal SAAS plan had been devised which had been shared with the SAAS Board and would be shared with staff across the Agency.

7.3 The Committee was informed that the Fair Work Directorate and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) were currently reviewing the future of the ILA scheme and discussions had taken place with SAAS regarding the decommissioning and re-launch of said scheme. Consideration was being given to what a future product would look like, how it would be delivered and what the budget implications would be. The Committee was advised that SAAS' involvement would end towards the end of 2017 and SDS would take on responsibility for administering the whole scheme. Detailed discussions had been taking place and the impacts were being considered (i.e. impact for training providers and registration for training). The Committee would be kept informed and provided with an update when further detailed information was available.

7.4 The Committee was advised that work on the Agency's strategy and corporate plan was underway and a fuller update would be provided as part of agenda item 10.

7.5 The Committee was informed that the 2017 People Survey had resulted in an increase in high level scores across most categories and an action plan had been developed to further the progress made. Externally facilitated staff focus groups were being run in the week which followed the Advisory Committee meeting.

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8. SAAS Finance report – AC(17-18)14

- 8.1 A paper was tabled for information and the following was highlighted.
- 8.2 The Committee was advised that, in relation to revenue, SAAS was running to budget and had been managing this very closely, reviewing demands and re-profiling spend regularly, as required.
- 8.3 The Committee was informed that, in regards to the capital provision, because of changes to the timescale of when the Student Funding Delivery project was delivered, SAAS was able to return some capital spend to the Scottish Government, whilst being able to deliver the technological work required.
- 8.4 The SAAS Chief Executive noted his gratitude to the Scottish Government Advanced Learning and Science Directorate for their support and collaborative working in relation to the wider Spending Review and, in particular, the agreed baseline which now reflects the historic expenditure of SAAS.
- 8.5 The Committee was advised that SAAS would require additional funding to support the growth of activity for Nursing and Midwifery students and this would need to be agreed with Scottish Government Health Directorate colleagues. This followed the Health Directorate's planned student intake numbers for 2017-18, the commitment to retain the Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary and provision of additional support to students.
- 8.6 The Committee was advised that, in regards to the SAAS' programme budget, there had been a projected underspend of £3 million.

9. Fraud CIFAS Report – AC(17-18)15

- 9.1 A paper was tabled for information and the following was highlighted.
- 9.2 It was noted that SAAS had developed a Fraud capability and a direction of travel had been set out in the Fraud strategy. However the focus was now on how to shift the balance towards preventative action, both in terms of future design of SAAS systems and capabilities, and the access of information and intelligence in the wider fraud landscape to help to intercept fraudulent claims.
- 9.3 The Committee was informed that the SAAS Fraud Team had recently undertaken additional training to support its investigatory capacity and skillset to counter fraud.
- 9.4 The Committee was advised that CIFAS is an industry body which operates across the UK and holds a large database of known fraud cases in the UK. SAAS was in the process of becoming a member of CIFAS which would result in data matching to further help SAAS prevent fraud.

10. SAAS Strategic, Corporate and Business Plans

- 10.1 Heather Campbell, SAAS, delivered a presentation to the Committee on the SAAS Strategy and Corporate Plan in relation to progress which had been made.
- 10.2 The Committee was advised that the strategic plan was close to launch and, at that time, was with printers for final design work and print. The Corporate Plan

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was near completion and detailed analysis had been undertaken in regards to resource deployment, interdependencies and risk.

10.3 The Committee was informed that the priorities for the Corporate Plan had emerged over a number of months from a series of conversations with stakeholders (internal and external) and the workshop conducted on 02 November 2016 was a catalyst for evolving, prioritising and shaping these for 2017-18. Consideration had initially been given to what could be achieved as part of the cycle of activities which are part of the 'day job', which could be accommodated without additional resourcing, and what then needs to be incorporated into a portfolio management approach, with project and change management support, and requires additional resource to enable it to happen. This has allowed for a timeline to be devised setting out the objectives and, it was noted, some of the work will be an on-going iterative process across the next 2-3 years.

10.4 The Committee was advised that a number of activities which were underway were expected to be completed in the transition into the next financial year, including: the publication of the SAAS strategy, the clarification of what the portfolio of work looks like, the completion of the SFD project and start of the evaluation of said project phase one, and further work on SAAS' KPI's. It was expected that the SAAS Board would approve the Corporate Plan on 15 April and the work would then shift to managing the plan on an annual cycle.

10.5 The Committee noted that this was an important piece of work which was making good progress.

Action: Secretariat to circulate an electronic copy of the presentation Heather Campbell delivered to Committee members.

Action: Once finalised, the Corporate Plan to be issued to Committee members.

11. SAAS Key Performance Indicators and Balanced Scorecard – AC(17-18)16

11.1 A paper was tabled for information and the following was highlighted.

11.2 The Committee was advised that, based on the aspirations and goals of the SAAS Corporate plan, what is currently measured is subject to change. However, the management information systems and data collection require development to allow for qualitative and quantitative measurements. It was noted that the SAAS strategy sets out high level aspirations around measuring customer/ stakeholder satisfaction, and staff engagement and satisfaction. However, at the present time, SAAS does not have the measurement systems in place to provide all of this information, hence the need to develop measurement methods. The Committee was informed that, based on this information, the new KPI's would not be introduced until 2018-19 as one of the objectives for 2017-18 is to develop the SAAS Management Information systems to enable collection of required information. However, whilst doing so, the current KPI's were being streamlined and revised.

11.3 The Committee was informed that a number of improvements had been made in the quarter, including: significant progress in regards to the processing of undergraduate applications (from the quarter of the previous year to the quarter of

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this year, this increased from 66% to 90%) and the processing of NMSB applications (increasing from 67% to 85%) and reducing debt write offs.

11.4 It was noted that sickness absence had been brought down by 3.3 days against the equivalent quarter last year, and this had been higher in the quarter before. The Committee was advised that there was a multi-strand strategy which included the recent completion of a comprehensive training for all managers within SAAS on the attendance management policy and all staff were undergoing mandatory attendance management training. The Committee was advised that, upon reviewing the reasons for sickness absence, often the reason given is due to factors outside of work – for example, mental health and stress which are not work related. In response to this, and to support staff, the Committee was advised that SAAS had run a number of personal resilience sessions and was in the process of introducing a network of Mental Health first aiders within the agency.

12. Any other Business

12.1 The date of the next Advisory Committee meeting was confirmed as **07 June 2017**.

Yasmin Ali
Secretary

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Annex A – Action Tracker

No	Date raised	Action Point	Action Officer	Due Date	Status
15/16 C/F	Mar-16	Chief Executive to investigate the possibility of getting temporary staff back in who had been with the Agency previously, thus coming with a level of experience and knowledge.	Paul Lowe	-	Closed – This was explored as part of the workforce planning recruitment cycle this year.
15/16 C/F	Mar-16	Chief Executive and Janet Mathews to discuss further the range of alternative resourcing options available.			
15/16 c/f	Mar-16	Kathy Patterson and Roz McCracken to review the current Strategic Board and Management Board Terms of Reference and produce a new draft for consideration at the April Management Board.	Roz McCracken	Apr-16	Closed – Terms of Reference were presented to the Board at the meeting held on 7 September 2016 and, subject to minor amendments, were approved.
1	Sept-16	Secretariat to amend the Advisory Committee Terms of Reference to reflect appointment of Director of Advanced Learning and Science, Roddy MacDonald.	Yasmin Ali	Sept-16	Closed – Amended to reflect new appointment.
2	Sept-16	Secretariat to amend the Advisory Committee Terms of Reference to stipulate that a purpose of the AC is to provide challenge and support SAAS. The final version to be shared with The SAAS Board and Advisory Committee members.	Yasmin Ali	Oct-16	Closed – Final versions circulated to Board members 06/10/2016.
3	Sept-16	Secretariat to circulate an electronic copy of the	Yasmin Ali	Sept-	Closed – Circulated to

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		presentation Heather Campbell delivered and a copy of the hand-out provided on the day.		16	members 13/09/2016.
4	Sept-16	To provide an update on the evaluation framework for the 2016-17 PR campaign at the next Advisory Committee meeting scheduled to take place December 2016.	Julie Sinclair	Dec-16	Closed – Update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting held on 07 December 2016.
5	Sept-16	To provide an update on the Student Funding Delivery project at the next Advisory Committee meeting scheduled to take place December 2016.	Miriam Craven	Dec-16	Closed – Update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting held on 07 December 2016.
6	Sept-16	To provide an update on Business Planning at the next Advisory Committee meeting scheduled to take place December 2016.	Heather Campbell	Dec-16	Closed – Update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting held on - 07 December 2016.
7	Dec-16	Secretariat to provide Committee members with a copy of the finalised version of the Terms of Reference (SAAS Board and Advisory Committee).	Yasmin Ali	Dec-16	Closed - Circulated to members 07/12/2016
8	Dec-16	To provide an update on the progress made towards the Investors in People Award accreditation at the next Advisory Committee meeting scheduled to take place on 08 March 2017.	Sandra Bell	Mar-17	Closed – Update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting held on 08 March 2017.
9	Dec-16	To provide an update on the SFD project, including a demo of the new online application product, at the next Advisory Committee meeting scheduled to take place on 08 March 2017.	Miriam Craven	Mar-17	Closed – Update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting held on 08 March 2017.
10	Dec-16	The final version of the Independent Review position paper to be presented to the Advisory Committee.	Heather Campbell	Dec-16	Closed – Circulated to members on 07/12/2016.

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11	Dec-16	Secretariat to circulate an electronic copy of the Strategic Planning presentation Heather Campbell delivered at the Advisory Committee meeting on 7 December 2016.	Yasmin Ali	Dec-16	Closed - Circulated to members 07/12/2016
12	Dec-16	To provide an update on the review of KPI's at the next Advisory Committee meeting scheduled to take place on 8 March 2017.	Heather Campbell	Mar-17	Closed – Update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting held on 08 March 2017.
13	Dec-16	Draft Corporate plan to be presented to the Advisory Committee.	Heather Campbell	Jan-17	Closed – Update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting held on 08 March 2017.
14	Mar-17	The draft Independent Review position paper update was circulated to Committee members in February 2017 and subsequent amendments have been made; the paper will be circulated to the Committee for information following amendments.	Heather Campbell	Jun-17	Closed – Paper issued to Committee members on 08 May 2017.
15	Mar-17	Secretariat to issue meeting papers the Wednesday or Thursday of the week prior to the Advisory Committee meeting taking place.	Yasmin Ali	Jun-17	Closed – Papers will adhere to this timetable.
16	Mar-17	Secretariat to issue details of the Student Support Review dedicated website and Twitter account to Committee members.	Yasmin Ali	Apr-17	Closed – Details issued to Committee members.
16	Mar-17	Health and Social Care Directorate to meet with SAAS to discuss the future administration of the new Dental Undergraduate Bursary and the administration of the Nursing and Midwifery Discretionary Funds.	Paul Lowe	Mar-17	Closed – Discussions concluded that SAAS will administer the legacy and NHS Education Scotland will make separate arrangements for the replacement for the Dental Bursary.
17	Mar-17	Secretariat to circulate an electronic copy of the	Yasmin Ali	Apr-17	Closed – Presentation issued

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		presentation Heather Campbell delivered to Committee members.			to Committee members.
18	Mar-17	Once finalised, the Corporate Plan to be issued to Committee members.	Heather Campbell	Apr-17	