



STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY FOR SCOTLAND

Framework Document 2011

February 2011

Foreword by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning.

I have pleasure in providing this Foreword to the refreshed Framework Document for the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

SAAS has an important front-line service delivery role, assessing and paying student support to Scottish domiciled higher education students. In undertaking this role, and through its work with widening participation groups, SAAS contributes to our ambitions for a Smarter Scotland.

As Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, I am the Minister with direct responsibility for SAAS's business. Ministers decide on student support policy and SAAS implements the student support system on our behalf. Ministers are accountable to the Scottish Parliament for the operations and performance of SAAS. At the same time, the Chief Executive has direct access to Ministers and is answerable to us for the operation of the service.

This Framework Document sets out the vision and objectives of SAAS and outlines the relationships between Ministers, the Chief Executive of SAAS, the Director-General Learning & Justice and the Director-General Health & Social Care within Scottish Government. It describes SAAS's financial and wider accountabilities, and its approach to staffing and other organisational matters. In short, it sets out the broad basis on which SAAS will operate.

I wish the Chief Executive and the staff of the Agency every success in their work.

Michael Russell
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

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1. THE AGENCY

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 1.1 The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) was established as an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government in 1994. It is responsible for the administration of higher education student support for Scottish residents and EU students in Scotland.
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to set out a clear framework of accountability, within which Student Awards Agency for Scotland will discharge the responsibilities that Scottish Ministers delegated to it. It sets out:
- The key functions of SAAS;
 - A summary of its vision and goals and how they contribute to the Scottish Government's Purpose and National Outcomes;
 - The roles and responsibilities of the key figures involved including Scottish Ministers, the Chief Executive of SAAS, the Director-General Learning & Justice, the Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning and the Director-General Health & Social Care;
 - Accountabilities – to the public through Ministers and the Scottish Parliament, and detailed financial accountability mechanisms;
 - Management Arrangements – the Chief Executive's delegated authority and performance management arrangements;
 - Relationships with other bodies; and
 - How amendments to the Framework Documents will be made and agreed.

STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY FOR SCOTLAND

- 1.3 The Chief Executive of SAAS is accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and to Scottish Government's Permanent Secretary. The Permanent Secretary in his/her capacity as the Principal Accounting Officer for the Scottish Administration, designates the Chief Executive as the Accountable Officer for SAAS administrative costs and the Director-General Learning & Justice as the Accountable Officer with primary responsibility for Higher Education student support policy and expenditure.

- 1.4 SAAS works closely with the Scottish Government's Lifelong Learning Directorate whose Director acts as the Agency's link with the Cabinet Secretary and to whom, in the normal course of events, the responsibilities of Director General Education are delegated. The responsibilities of the Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning (ESLL) Directorate and SAAS are conjoined but different.
- 1.5 ESLL Directorate is responsible for providing advice to the Cabinet Secretary for the development of learner support policy, whereas SAAS is responsible for the implementation of current learner support arrangements made as a result of that policy. ESLL Directorate and SAAS will actively work together to forecast short and medium-term financial resource requirements for student support policy.
- 1.6 SAAS currently employs around 170 FTE staff who are Scottish Government employees and some temporary agency staff. SAAS staff are Scottish Government employees and members of the Home Civil Service. The organisation operates from the Gyle Business Park providing a location accessible to the public by public transport.

2. SERVICES DELIVERED

Current Services

- 2.1 The Student Awards Agency for Scotland was established to administer Higher Education Student Support for Scottish Residents and EU students studying in Scotland. Six broad types of support are currently provided:

Undergraduate Support

- 2.2 This is the main programme of student support and provides support for individuals wishing to study for a full-time higher education course leading to an HNC, HND or undergraduate degree. Students intending to follow the PGDE or PGDipCE are also funded through this mechanism.
- 2.3 SAAS establishes eligibility and assesses the package support available to each eligible applicant. SAAS pays tuition fees to relevant institution and bursaries to the student on a monthly basis. The Student Loans Company will pay, on SAAS's assessment and instruction, any student loans available to the applicant.

Nursing and Midwifery

- 2.4 This programme provides support for students undertaking courses in pre-registration nursing and midwifery; including those undertaking diploma or honours degree studies. SAAS administration of this programme is undertaken on the basis of a historic budget transfer with student support charged directly to Health budgets.

Health Bursaries

- 2.5 This programme includes a number of bursaries offered by the NHS to support students studying dentistry, medicine and courses leading to qualification in the Allied Health Professions. SAAS delivery of dentistry bursaries is provided on a repayment basis.

Postgraduate Support

- 2.6 The Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme (PSAS), provides tuition fee support for students undertaking 1 year full-time taught postgraduate programmes. Tuition fee support for part-time courses is under pilot. Funded places are limited and are allocated by programme to individual institutions and students must be nominated for funding by the relevant institution.

Disability Support Allowance, Supplementary Grants and Discretionary Grants.

- 2.7 Disability Support Allowance provides additional support for students who need specialist equipment or non-medical personal help to undertake their course. Needs assessments are conducted through the student's institution. Other supplementary grants include support for Loan Parents and Travel Expenses. Funds for discretionary grants are distributed to Higher Education Institutions to support the childcare needs of students and to assist those in financial hardship.

ILA 200 and ILA 500

- 2.8 SAAS and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) deliver ILA 200 and ILA 500 through a partnership in which SDS markets the programmes and SAAS provide the processing, assessment and payment functionality. ILA 500 provides support for part-time Higher Education study while ILA 200 provides support for part-time vocational study. Eligibility for both programmes is income-assessed. SAAS services to SDS are provided on a repayment basis. The ILA 500 programme will be delivered solely by SAAS from April 2011 as the "Part time Higher Education Fee Grant".

3. VISION AND STRATEGIC GOAL

3.1 Student Awards Agency for Scotland's vision is one of fair access to Higher Education, based on ability to learn.

3.2 It's key strategic goal is to provide an effective, timely, accessible and transparent student support system and, therefore, to ensure that access to the student finance system does not act a barrier to individuals flourishing within higher education.

3.3 **Smarter Scotland:** The Agency's main functions therefore contribute to the expansion of opportunities for Scots to succeed in lifelong learning ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements.

3.4 Of the Government's fifteen National Outcomes, those to which SAAS most directly contributes are:

- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

By instilling a culture of continuous improvement in the management of student support, ensuring that customer access and ease of use are fully considered in policy development.

- Addressing the significant inequalities in Scottish life.

By providing information through its web presence, documents, and visits to schools, colleges and universities to improve awareness of the distinctive Scottish approach to student support among those traditionally less likely to consider Higher Education.

- We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production;

By considering the environmental impacts of changes to our processes – moving to online applications – and in the management of our building.

3.5 SAAS also contributes to other National Outcomes where the lead role rests with our policy colleagues, schools, colleges and universities:

- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation;

By operating a accessible student support system, progression to higher education is an achievable aspiration.

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens;

While managing support for taught postgraduate study, SAAS works with institutions and Scottish Government to ensure that support is focused on study areas which reflect excellence and contribution to Scotland.

- 3.6 Improving SAAS's contribution to the achievement of these outcomes will be a key feature of the Agency's corporate and business plans.

4. ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

Role

4.1 SAAS's role is to administer such schemes of learner support as Scottish Government may put in place and assign to the Agency. It aims to do so in accordance with the principles of Best Value by:

- helping to achieve the Government's national outcomes;
- making continuous improvements in performance;
- achieving efficiency and economy; and
- fulfilling the requirements of the law (including laws governing freedom of information, data protection, employment and equal opportunities).

Functions

4.2 SAAS is responsible for the implementation of current learner support arrangements made as a result of Scottish Government student support policy. Its main functions are:-

- to budget and account properly for the Agency's income and expenditure;
- to provide a timely, accurate and helpful service to all customers;
- to assess applicants' eligibility for support and calculate how much they are entitled to;
- to pay, promptly and accurately, sums due under schemes of learner support and to recover sums owed to the Government in respect of such schemes;
- to administer student loans in partnership with the Student Loans Company Limited (SLC) – including payment to the SLC of the Scottish share of loan funds and administration costs, in accordance with arrangements agreed with the Company, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and Northern Ireland's Department for Education (DENI);

- to administer (on behalf of Health Directorates) bursary schemes for student nurses and midwives, dentists, audiologists and biomedical scientists;
- to distribute Discretionary Funds to Scottish Further and Higher Educational Institutions and monitor their use;
- to maintain effective working relationships with partner organisations (SLC, BIS, WAG, DENI, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC));
- to administer Individual Learning Accounts Scotland (ILAS) in partnership with SDS;
- to maintain the Register of Educational Endowments in accordance with Section 104 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980;
- to communicate student support policy and operational handling issues to our wider customer base; and
- to provide operational advice to colleagues responsible for developing learner support policy including active engagement in the forecasting of future financial requirements.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Ministers

- 5.1 Scottish Ministers determine the policy and financial framework within which Student Awards Agency for Scotland works. Under the provisions of the Scotland Act 1998, they have overall responsibility for SAAS.

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

- 5.2 The Cabinet Secretary is responsible for:
- approving the Framework Document and any revisions to it;
 - approving annual business performance targets and measures as part of SAAS's Corporate Plan.
 - Laying appropriate Regulations governing schemes for which the Agency has been given responsibility;
 - Receiving SAAS's Annual Report and audited financial accounts from the Chief Executive prior to them being laid before the Scottish Parliament; and
 - monitoring the overall performance of SAAS, including through reviews with the Chief Executive as required.
- 5.3 The Cabinet Secretary's responsibilities will be discharged in the light of advice from the Director-General Learning & Justice and Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning.

Cabinet Secretary for Health

- 5.4 The Cabinet Secretary is responsible for:
- Laying appropriate Regulations governing schemes for which the Agency has been given delivery responsibility;
 - Ensuring that the support provided through specific health bursaries remains consistent with the overall approach to HE support.
- 5.5 The Cabinet Secretary's responsibilities will be discharged in light of advice from the Chief Executive of the National Health Service for Scotland and the Chief Nursing Officer as well as the Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning.

Role of Director-General Education

5.6 The Director-General Learning & Justice is the relevant Scottish Government Portfolio Accountable Officer. He/she is responsible for making adequate arrangements regarding:

- the development of effective, efficient and economical Learner Support policy as provided in advice to Ministers by ESLL Directorate;
- advising Ministers on the performance of SAAS, and the Chief Executive, in its responsibilities for the implementation of learner support policy;
- advising Ministers on SAAS's corporate and business planning, its performance against targets, and the budget for SAAS's administration costs;
- advising Ministers (and the SAAS Chief Executive) on policy with regard to relevant programme expenditure
- ensuring that policy has due regard for advice on operational delivery and customer feedback.
- appointing and carrying out the annual appraisal of the Chief Executive in accordance with current arrangements for members of the Senior Civil Service
- representing the interests of SAAS within the wider Scottish Government;
- ensuring that SAAS's plans contribute towards the Scottish Government's core purpose and national outcomes and that appropriate links are made to other policy areas within the portfolio;
- ensuring that the Chief Executive is briefed on those issues which may affect SAAS's operations;

5.7 The Director-General Learning & Justice has appointed the Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning as the lead official in the exercise of the responsibilities listed above. The Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning will not normally intervene in the day-to-day running of SAAS unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Role of Director, Lifelong Learning

5.8 The Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning will act as SAAS's main interface with Scottish Government policy and corporate teams. That is to say, in addition to the responsibilities that may be delegated at 5.6 above, he or she will

- ensure that the Chief Executive has full managerial authority for the Agency and, in consultation with the Scottish Government's Director-General Finance, the maximum financial freedom allowed by the rules of the Scottish Public Finance and Procurement Policy Manuals.
- Agree with the Chief Executive a framework for strategic performance management;
- Advise Ministers on their response to strategic performance information;
- Ensure that the Agency has the delegations and authorities necessary for effective delivery and continuous improvement; and
- Ensure that SAAS receives those services that it has been agreed should be supplied from within Scottish Government.
- Ensure that there are effective relationships between the Chief Executive and SAAS Board members who advise the Chief Executive on the performance of the agency's functions;

Role of the Director – General Health

5.9 The Director-General Health & Social Care/Chief Executive of the NHS in Scotland is the Accountable Officer for the Scottish Government budget which funds Nursing, Midwifery and other NHS bursary schemes administered by SAAS. The Director-General Health & Social Care and such other NHS officials as he or she may designate will advise Ministers and SAAS Chief Executive on all policy and financial matters relating to these schemes.

Role of the Chief Executive, SAAS

5.10 The SAAS Chief Executive is answerable to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning for the outcomes delivered by the Agency and for planning its future development. Responsibility for operational decisions, within the discretion provided by the regulations governing student support, are delegated to the Chief Executive by the Director-General Education.

5.11 The Chief Executive's principal duties are: -

Leadership duties

- to supply leadership and direction to SAAS;
- to make efficient, effective and economical operational arrangements for the implementation of the Scottish Government's current learner support policy;
- to deliver student support services according to service standards agreed with the Cabinet Secretary and expected by the public;
- to provide formal advice on the operational aspects of learner support to inform policy development;
- to ensure that the Agency's activities remain customer focussed and that effective partnership working with Higher Education Institutions and other public bodies contributes to outcome focused delivery;

Financial duties

- to be responsible for SAAS's overall financial performance, efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of student support;
- to install and maintain appropriate systems of financial control, corporate governance, fraud and risk management;
- to be the Accountable Officer for SAAS operating budgets;
- to provide regular and comprehensive information about the agency's financial and operational performance to Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning Directorate; enabling effective financial and risk management within the Education portfolio.

- to approve and manage the financial and operational relationship between Scottish Government and the Student Loans Company
- to ensure arrangements are in place to secure Best Value;

Managerial duties

- to prepare and publish SAAS's Annual Reports, Accounts and Corporate Plans subject to the approval of the Cabinet Secretary;
- to act as the final adjudicator in the Agency's formal complaints procedure, in so doing taking into account the views of the Management Board (see section 7);
- to prepare and agree with Cabinet Secretary indicators and targets consistent with the effective implementation of the Government's learner support policies.
- to take responsibility for those human resource management responsibilities delegated to SAAS, including recruitment, motivation and development of staff, maintenance of good employee relations and provision of a human resource management and training environment designed to attract and retain staff;
- to act in accordance with the ethical standards of the Civil Service Code; and
- to keep the provisions of this document under review and advise the Cabinet Secretary of any desirable changes.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

- 6.1 The Cabinet Secretary will be accountable for SAAS to the Scottish Parliament.
- 6.2 The Cabinet Secretary will encourage MSPs and MPs to communicate directly with the Chief Executive on operational matters within his or her or her authority. The Chief Executive will provide the Cabinet Secretary with any information necessary to answer Parliamentary Questions or deal with any other parliamentary business about matters for which SAAS is responsible.

Accountable Officer Arrangements

- 6.3 The Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Government is the Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration. The Permanent Secretary designates the Agency's Chief Executive as its Accountable Officer.
- 6.4 The Chief Executive is responsible for the preparation and signature of the Agency's annual accounts. The Chief Executive will also provide such information as is necessary for the preparation of the consolidated accounts for the Scottish Government, which are signed by the Permanent Secretary (including all necessary Certificates of Assurance). The Chief Executive will also report to the Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning during the year, on a basis agreed between them, on all expenditure and income administered by SAAS.
- 6.5 As Agency Accountable Officer, the Chief Executive is personally answerable to the Scottish Parliament for the proper, efficient and effective use of all resources provided for the administration of the Agency and learner support (including Budget provision funding). The Chief Executive is also responsible for ensuring compliance with relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Government and for putting into effect any recommendations of the Auditor General or the Scottish Parliament accepted by Ministers or the Scottish Parliament.
- 6.6 The Chief Executive's accountability is subject to the responsibilities of the Scottish Government's Permanent Secretary as the Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration and the responsibilities of the Director-General Learning & Justice and Director-General Health & Social Care as described in this Framework Document.

- 6.7 The Chief Executive is liable to be summoned to appear before the Public Audit Committee of the Scottish Parliament on the discharge of the responsibilities allocated in this Framework Document. It will continue to be for the Cabinet Secretary to decide who should represent Ministers at other Parliament Committee hearings. In practice, where a Committee's interest is confined to the day to day operations of SAAS, Ministers will normally regard the Chief Executive (who will call on such specialist or technical support as he or she may require), as the person best placed to appear on their behalf.
- 6.8 The Chief Executive is responsible for providing formal advice on the operational delivery of higher education learner support policy, and will provide timely and relevant operational information to Lifelong Learning Directorate and other parts of Scottish Government for these purposes. Operational delivery advice will include administrative efficiency and capacity as well as proactive identification of issues arising from student and institutional engagement.

Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman

- 6.9 The Agency will maintain a customer complaints and appeals procedure which it will publicise on its website and in other appropriate media complaints; compliant with the statement of principles published by the Ombudsman. SAAS activities may be subject to investigation by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will deal directly with the Chief Executive on any case where a complaint is made.

7. RESOURCE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Strategy and Management

7.1 A Management Board will provide oversight of the operations of the Agency and give advice to the Chief Executive. The Board comprises:

- key Agency personnel as determined by the Chief Executive; and
- at least 4 independent non-executive members with senior level experience in FE or HE who will provide an independent perspective on and constructively challenge the way in which the Agency is run. Non-executive board members are appointed through fair and open competition and will be subject to annual performance review by the Chief Executive.
- The non-executive members of the Board shall also constitute the Agency's Audit Committee and will elect one of themselves to chair the committee.
- Non-executive members will have direct access to the Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning and to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning as may be required.

Financial Provision

7.2 The use of resources by SAAS is authorised by the Scottish Parliament in the Budget Act.

7.3 SAAS may, with the Cabinet Secretary's agreement, undertake additional services on a repayment basis.

Financial Delegations

7.4 The financial authorities set out in Annex B are delegated to the Chief Executive by Director-General Learning & Justice in consultation with Scottish Government's Director-General Finance. They are designed to provide flexibility to make the most efficient use of resources. The delegations may be reviewed at any time by the Director General Learning & Justice, Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning or the Chief Executive in consultation with each other and with Scottish Government's Director-General Finance.

- 7.5 The financial authorities delegated to the Chief Executive by Director-General Health & Social Care for the operation of NHS bursaries and other programmes will be specified within a Service Level Agreement document and reviewed on an annual basis.
- 7.6 The Chief Executive will be responsible for ensuring that relevant financial procedures are followed by the Agency and may sub-delegate authority in accordance with relevant guidance in the Scottish Public Finance Manual. The Agency will also put into effect any relevant recommendations of Scottish Parliamentary Committees or other parliamentary authority accepted by the Scottish Government.

Corporate and Business Planning

- 7.7 The Agency will maintain and publish a Corporate Plan. This plan will be reviewed and updated every year on a rolling three year basis and submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for approval. The Corporate Plan will determine the content of annual business plans drawn up by Head of Units in the Agency which in turn will determine the performance targets for teams and individual members of staff.
- 7.8 Exceptionally, if policy or circumstances change significantly in the course of a planning period Director-General Learning & Justice, Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning or the Chief Executive may propose revisions to the Plan. Revisions will be subject to approval by the Cabinet Secretary.

Audit Committee

- 7.9 The Management Board will establish and maintain an Audit Committee which will be constituted and operate in conformity with the terms of the Scottish Government's Audit Committee Handbook. The Chief Executive and the Head of the Agency's finance team will routinely attend the Committee as will representatives of Internal and External Audit. The Committee may, however, sit privately as and when it may so decide.

7.10 The remit of the Audit Committee will include supporting the Chief Executive with regard to t

Internal Audit

- 7.15 The Chief Executive in consultation with Scottish Government Internal Audit Division will establish an internal audit service in line with Government Internal Audit Standards. Scottish Government Internal Audit Division will have right of access to SAAS, where required and after consultation with the Chief Executive, in order to give independent assurance to the Chief Executive and to the Director-General Learning & Justice in discharging their responsibilities.

External Audit

- 7.16 SAAS will be subject to external audit by the Auditor General for Scotland.

Annual Reports and Accounts

- 7.17 The Chief Executive will sign and present annually to the Cabinet Secretary an Annual Report and Accounts. The Annual Report will review SAAS's performance over the previous year and show whether targets and performance measures set by Ministers have been achieved. The accounts shall be prepared in accordance with a direction given by Ministers under 19(4) of the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. The Annual Report and audited Accounts will be laid before the Parliament and published before 31 December and in accordance with the timetable for the production of the Scottish Government consolidated accounts each year. The accounts must not be laid before they have been formally sent by the Auditor General to the Scottish Ministers and must not be published before they have been laid.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES

Status of Staff and Conditions of Service

- 8.1 The Chief Executive and SAAS's permanent staff are members of the Home Civil Service employed by Scottish Ministers on Scottish Government Main terms and conditions of service. The Chief Executive is a member of the Senior Civil Service (SCS). Staff below SCS level are employed on Scottish Government main terms and conditions. Employees are also covered by the Civil Service pension arrangements unless they opt otherwise.
- 8.2 The Chief Executive may consider it necessary for business reasons to review the terms and conditions of service of Agency staff in SAAS. Where proposals for change go beyond the Chief Executive's delegated authority, they will require the approval of the Scottish Government's Head of Human Resources. All such proposals will be subject to normal consultations, including consultations with staff and the Council of Scottish Government Unions.

Human Resource Management

- 8.3 The Chief Executive is responsible for determining the number and grades of staff in SAAS in Bands A to C.
- 8.4 The Agency aims to offer its staff career development opportunities and is committed to continuous learning. The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring equal opportunities within SAAS. The Chief Executive is also responsible for ensuring the adequacy of human resource management arrangements and the provision of advice on training and personal and career development. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) staff will be party to Scottish Government's arrangements for the specialism in relation to standards, allowances and career management.
- 8.5 All staff in Bands A to C can transfer between SAAS and other parts of Scottish Government as a consequence of career planning and promotion, subject to the agreement of the Chief Executive and Scottish Government's Head of Human Resources. This requires to be in accordance with the Scottish Government resourcing policy. Where staff are to transfer from other parts of the Scottish Government to SAAS, the Chief Executive (or designated representative) will be involved in their selection. The Chief Executive of SAAS will be appointed as a member of the Scottish Government's SCS complement.

- 8.6 The Chief Executive may recruit casual staff and external candidates directly to fill selected posts up to and including Band C or equivalent level in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Commissioners Recruitment Code and with due regard for the availability of staff elsewhere in the wider Scottish Government. The Chief Executive and the Scottish Government Head of Human Resources will consider sympathetically and positively requests from staff to pursue careers wholly or for an extended period within SAAS, in line with SAAS's need for developing specialised skills and experience.
- 8.7 The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Scottish Government's Head of Human Resources, will review at appropriate intervals the extent of SAAS's human resource delegations with a view to maximising the Agency's freedom to manage its staff.

Equality and Diversity

- 8.8 The Agency will adhere to the Scottish Government's equal opportunities policy to eliminate discrimination and unfair treatment on the grounds of irrelevant difference, including sex, marital/civil partnership status, age, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, working pattern, employment status, gender identity (transgender), caring responsibility, or trade union membership. The Agency will act as an equal opportunities employer and aim to produce an organisational culture that is welcoming and supportive of all staff.
- 8.9 The Agency will also support the Scottish Government's commitment to increasing the diversity of its staff, and to developing them, ignoring all irrelevant differences; to value their different perspectives and skills and make full use of these in its work

Pay and Performance Incentives

- 8.10 The staff of SAAS below Senior Civil Service level are subject to Scottish Government pay policies and practices. Any proposal by the Chief Executive to depart from these policies and practices must be discussed and agreed with the Scottish Government's Head of Human Resources.

Staff Relations

9. SUPPORT SERVICES

General

- 9.1 The Agency is responsible for corporate planning, financial and human resource management (as described in sections 4, 5 and 6), accommodation and the development and maintenance of its computerised processing system. The Agency is also responsible for arranging its stationery supplies and costs associated with printing and public relations.
- 9.2 The Agency will continue to utilise, on a non-recharge basis, support services from Scottish Government for:
- media and communications,
 - security,
 - internal audit and accountancy services, central accounting and banking, and procurement advice,
 - library services,
 - accommodation and
 - corporate responsibility advice.
- 9.3 The Agency will continue to utilise ICT support from Scottish Government on a per user charge basis.
- 9.4 The Agency will participate in Scottish Government framework and shared service contracts whenever possible in order to achieve value for money.

Support Services Budgets

- 9.5 Subject only to the requirement not to exceed total budget, the Chief Executive may switch provision among services and obtain them from whichever supplier offers best value for money. The Chief Executive will from time to time review the provision of support services with appropriate parts of the Scottish Government. The criteria to be applied in this process will give proper consideration to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency and the Scottish Government as a whole. Budgets for any new support services will reflect their full economic costs.

Legal

- 9.6 As an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government, SAAS will continue to receive legal services through the Scottish Government Legal Directorate (SGLD). Those services may be provided direct by SGLD or by an external supplier under SGLD's arrangements for outsourcing legal work. The provision of such services would be managed and monitored by SGLD Business Group.

10. REVIEW

Amendment and Review

- 10.1 This Framework Document will be updated at least every three yearly intervals but should be the subject of an annual review discussion between the Chief Executive and the Director Employability, Skills & Lifelong Learning to highlight any areas of concern. Changes to the document on an ad hoc basis may also be proposed in the light of experience or changed circumstances.
- 10.2 The Chief Executive will consult all appropriate parts of the Scottish Government on any proposed changes to this document prior to putting them to the Cabinet Secretary for approval. Where the proposed changes relate to staff terms and conditions of service they will also be the subject of consultations under the arrangements established in section 8 of this document.

Publication

- 10.3 Copies of this document, and of any subsequent amended versions, will be placed in the Scottish Parliament's Information Centre (SPICe).

Enquiries

- 10.4 All enquiries about this document should be addressed in the first instance to:

The Chief Executive
The Student Awards Agency for Scotland
Gyleview House,
3 Redheughs Rigg
EDINBURGH,
EH12 9HH

Telephone number 0131-244-5867

ANNEX A

STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY FOR SCOTLAND

Key Performance Measures

SAAS's primary customers are eligible students and their families. Good performance for those customers will mean an accurate and timely assessment of the application for support – so that students have their award letters in advance of matriculation at their institution. The performance of SAAS, is however, also impacted by when students submit their applications. The following target therefore balances processing performance with encouragement to students to submit applications early.

- All applications received by 30 June to be processed in time for courses starting after start of new academic session (earliest date 1 August).

SAAS must also provide clear expectations of the time-frame in which enquiries will be answered.

- All travel claims to be paid within 21 days.
- All email or written enquiries to be resolved within 21 days.
- All formal complaints and appeals to receive a response with 14 days.

Management Performance Measures

SAAS will regularly monitor processing and quality standards within the organisation.

Processing

- 75% of applications to be processed within 14 days.
- 90% of applications to be processed within 21 days.
- Average unit cost per application to be less than £40.

Complaints

- Less than 1 in 1000 applications to generate a formal complaint to SAAS.
- Less than 10 formal complaints to be upheld by Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman during the plan period.
- 100% of Ministerial Correspondence to be delivered within target.

Financial Performance

- 100% of invoices to be paid within 10 days
- 30% of Opening Debt to be recovered during the year

To support this approach, SAAS is developing a balanced scorecard approach which ensures a focus on all aspects of the business: Customer/Stakeholder relationships, Internal Systems and Processes, Delivering Value for Money, and Organisational management.

ANNEX B

Financial and Purchasing Delegations

Within agreed overall budgetary provision, and subject to the Scottish Public Finance Manual and Scottish Procurement Policy Handbook, SAAS has delegated authority as set out below.

The Chief Executive, as SAAS Accountable Officer, has the following delegations in relation to:-

SAAS Administrative Costs:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1.) Commit expenditure, authorise payments; | Unlimited within the Agency's agreed overall budget provision. |
| (2.) Accept receipts; | Unlimited but receipts in excess of those authorised by Budget Act must be surrendered to the Scottish Consolidated Fund. |
| (3.) Let contracts; | Unlimited but in accordance with EU legal requirements and the Scottish Procurement Directorate's Policy Manual |
| (4.) Commission external consultants; | For individual contracts let by competitive procedures, up to a limit of £10,000 excluding VAT. (Contracts worth from £10,000 to £50,000 will have to be approved by Director General Education. Contracts above £50,000 require approval by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth). |
| (5.) Authorise losses, special payments and gifts; | a) Unlimited, apart from the categories listed below which are subject to a limit of £3,000:
- losses arising from failure to make adequate charges for services/ use of property;
- claims waived or abandoned;
- special or ex-gratia payments
b) Gifts subject to a limit of £1,000. |
| (6.) Authorise Capital Expenditure; | Unlimited within the Agency's agreed overall budget provision. |

(7.) Authorise Capital Expenditure on Information Technology.

Unlimited within the Agency's agreed overall budget provision for capital expenditure.

Business cases will be prepared for all projects and cleared with the Agency's Information Systems Steering Committee on which ISIS and ELL Finance are represented.

The SAAS Chief Executive, has delegated authority from Director-General Learning & Justice within the limits set out below in relation to:

Student support costs

In respect of student allowances, student tuition fees, health bursaries and receipts from overpayments:-

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1.) Commit expenditure and authorise payments | Unlimited, apart from the items below, within the Agency's agreed overall budget provision. |
| (2.) Accept receipts; | Unlimited but receipts in excess of those authorised by Budget Act must be surrendered to the Scottish Consolidated Fund. |
| (3.) Authorise write-offs and make special or ex gratia payments; | Up to a limit of £10,000 for write-off of an overpayment of an award or bursary and up to a limit of £1,000 for special or ex gratia payments. |
| (4.) Incur contingent liabilities. | Unlimited subject to ELL Finance being consulted about any proposals to incur contingent liabilities outside the normal course of business. |

ELL Finance should be consulted about any cases irrespective of the amount of money concerned, which are novel or involve important questions of principle.

Debt Sale Subsidy Payments

In respect of the debt sale subsidy payments, the Chief Executive of SAAS has authority within the limit set out, to:-

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1.) Authorise the Scottish contribution towards debt sale subsidy payments | Unlimited within the Agency's agreed overall budget provision. |
|---|--|

Student Loans and Discretionary Funds.

In respect of student loans and Discretionary Funds and receipts from student loans, the Chief Executive of SAAS has authority, within the limits set out, to:-

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| (1.) Authorise payments; | Unlimited within the Agency's agreed overall budget provision. |
| (2.) Accept receipts | Unlimited but receipts in excess of those authorised by Budget Act must be surrendered to the Scottish Consolidated Fund. |

Student Loans Company Ltd running costs.

In respect of the Student Loans Company Ltd running costs, the Chief Executive of SAAS has authority within the limit set out, to:-

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1.) Authorise the Scottish contribution towards SLC running costs. | Unlimited within the Agency's agreed overall budget provision. |
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The Chief Executive may sub-delegate authority to staff within the Agency but will remain accountable for decisions taken and transactions carried out under such arrangements.