

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER
FINANCE APPLICATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (FASIG)

A meeting of FASIG was held on Tuesday 16th September 2003 at 10.00 am in Committee Room A, Northcote House.

Present

- Brian Allnutt (Finance)
- Carrie Baker (External Relations)
- Alan Binge (Finance)
- Debbie Brett (Finance) – CHAIRMAN & SECRETARY
- David Carpenter-Clawson (IT Services)
- Adrian Davey (Finance)
- Paul Daysh (Chemistry)
- David Gaston (Domestic Services)
- Andrew George (Domestic Services)
- Sally Heggie (IT Services)
- Mike Huggins (Finance)
- Beverley Hughes (Library)
- Alison Husband (Sport & Health Sciences)
- Dick Leitch (Finance)
- Sally Phillips (Biology)
- Sam Phillips (Finance)
- Mike Phillips (SELL)
- Karen Pope (Engineering)
- Liz Saunders (Finance)
- Anne Shrubshall (Finance)
- Avril Smith (FLC/ SML)
- Karen Swanston (Psychology)
- Diana Tweedie (SoBE)
- Denise Watts (Physics)
- Stephen Woodcock (Finance)

Apologies

- Chris Austin (IT Services)
- Mike Barnett (Finance)
- Sally Bastyan (Education)
- Lucinda Bennett (Maths)
- Alison Brogolino (CSM)
- Helen Clarke (Psychology)
- Heather Crispin (SMS)
- Pat Curgenvin (Biological Sciences)
- Elaine Davies (SSHS)
- Janette Evans (SHiPPS)
- Alison Franklin (Chemistry)
- Angela Gardner (Learning Teaching Support Centre)
- Anne Gore (Geography & Archaeology)
- Kathy Halsey (Camborne School of Mines)
- Sarah Hamlin (Finance)
- Caroline Hampson (Finance)
- Jenny Hickman (SELL, Lifelong Learning)
- Maureen Hill (Geography & Archaeology)
- Nela Kapelan (Performance Arts)
- Jane Lawrence (Physics)
- Ges MacDonald (English)
- Cathy Maguire (PMS)
- Jane McCartney (Buildings and Estates)
- Stephen Murphy (SELL)
- Hilary Olek (Dept of Lifelong Learning)
- Roz Pardee (DLL/ SELL)
- Gloria Petherick (Finance)
- Barbara Powell (Law)
- Paul Sandy (IT Services)

Catherine Serjeant (Finance)
Gabi Simons (Drama & Music)
Ruth Stansfield (Business Relations)
Elizabeth Stewart (Modern Languages)
Marilyn Wills (CRR, SOGA)
Keith Zimmerman (SHiPSS)

03.00 Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone and presented apologies on behalf of Pat Curgenvin (FASIG Chair) who was absent due to sickness.

03.01 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes were approved and adopted.

There were no matters arising.

03.02 Update on Year End

Brian Allnutt thanked all present for their efforts to follow the (reduced) Year End timetable and explained that we are broadly on target to achieve the completion of key tasks within the timescale planned. The work remaining to be completed rests within Finance Division and is ongoing.

The process to carry forward the balances within the APTOS system to the new year would be run in late September/ early October, following testing. By early October the balances would have been brought forward into the designated “brought forward” accounts for each school. With respect to projects (including research projects) the aim is to carry balances forward on the specific account , which would enable users to see the full picture of project costs split per account. This should be beneficial eg for sponsor data, but may raise other issues so users should contact Finance if any significant problems arise as a result.

The Year End process has brought to our attention several areas, that were handled in a particular way for 2002/03, but which are appropriate for a process review in future. If any Schools or units have comments, observations, suggestions for improvement, or other feedback that they would like to give on the Year End process, the revised timetable, the guidelines issued, or any other Year-End-related topics then please contact Brian Allnutt with details. It should be noted, however, that the timeframe within which the process must be completed is not negotiable.

Finally, Finance Division would encourage all Schools and units to start now to prepare for 2003/04 Year End through ongoing account management; keeping as up to date as possible so backlogs of processing do not accumulate (eg staff recharges should be done quarterly not left to the end of the year); and raising queries on items as they arise (eg sales invoices). Finance Division was unable to do much of the normal “housekeeping” activities last year due to the system introduction but is keen to resume this role in 2003/04.

03.03 Update on Reporting

Dick Leitch explained that the work on reporting from APTOS had been structured in three phases :

(1) The publication of EAS queries to users through access to the “General” folder has been completed. A document entitled “EAS Report Listings” can be found in the Training Course Handouts section on the APTOS Documents page of the APTOS

website. The “General” folder will appear after users connect to APTOS from within Excel and includes reports such as Transaction List; Actuals vs Budget; and Cost Centre Report. Each EAS query listed in the document is shown with details of the report parameters and which columns will be generated within Excel. There is also a procedure guide which offers help and techniques for processing and manipulating the data within Excel so that users get the most from the facility. Users need to request access to the individual EAS queries that they are interested in. We would encourage users to consider the timing of any reports that they pull compared to activity in Payroll team, Management Accounting etc so that the data can be interpreted in a meaningful way. If any users need help in using these reports then please contact the Helpdesk.

(2) Dick Leitch is conducting a review of all reporting requirements to establish whether My Eureka could be used. My Eureka is a more sophisticated reporting tool than EAS as it can extract and format data. It is hoped that the results will be extremely constructive, and, if this route is taken, then it is planned that reports from My Eureka could be distributed electronically each month.

(3) IT Admin Computing are reviewing the reporting needs of the University as a whole (Business Intelligence project). This should establish whether one single tool could be used across all Admin systems, and so make our management reporting more sophisticated and co-ordinated.

03.04

Detail Codes

Alan Binge advised the meeting that Finance Division staff had reviewed the balances across all Recharge and transfer detail codes. These are special, sometimes paired, codes that had been expected to come to “nil” but nearly all of them had significant balances at year end. It was not expected that staff outside of Finance Division would normally use these particular codes but clearly some codes had been used by School finance staff.

For reference the codes are all 01***,02***, 089**,09***, 04600 – 04810 in the income/allocations range and 31901,32901,35901,36901,79700,35902,31902,32902,35903, 36902 and 79710 in the expenditure range.

As part of the introduction of APTOS, it had been planned to reduce the number of detail codes used, but there are still approximately 1000 retained (showing how complex an organisation the University is). The detail codes have been grouped into broad areas, and APTOS lets us specify who has access to use which codes. For example, “allocations to schools” and “staff transfer” detail codes should only be used by specific Finance Division staff. As a result, access authority within APTOS will be reviewed, and amended where necessary to restrict access to the appropriate individuals. Alan asked that FASIG members make all School users aware of this intention. In the event that a School user needs a transaction within these detail codes to be processed, then they should submit a request to Finance Division staff who will process the transaction.

03.05

Inventory Records

Dick Leitch distributed sample information about the Asset Management module of APTOS which has yet to be implemented. The progress on this module has been temporarily halted due to Year End etc, although a good degree of initial work has already been done by Dick in conjunction with Engineering.

Schools will shortly be working on their existing inventory lists, whether they are currently held on paper, spreadsheets, Access databases or similar. Dick requested that Schools use the Access database that he has created, which can be found on the web. This shows the fields that are required by the Financial Handbook and the incoming APTOS Asset Management module and so will aid the development of the module in future. By ensuring the relevant data is held, in a consistent format across the University, it will be easier to report on the data and analyse it.

The information distributed shows lists of “Asset Category/Type” and “Asset Sub-Type” which can be used. In time, these will be validated so that Sub-Types can only be used with appropriate Categories/Types selected. If users believe that additional Categories need to be created then please contact Dick Leitch to discuss.

Under the APTOS module, each asset will be allocated an individual ID code by the system, which will enable assets to be more easily identified and managed, and eliminate duplication of recording (eg where an artwork is located in one building but owned by a separate unit). The ID code will follow a standard convention which will indicate where the asset is located (building/ room), and who “owns” it.

03.06

Any Other Business

(a) Paul Sandy advised that IT Services are investigating whether reports could be stored in Monarch, so that users can view them by accessing the Web rather than reports being circulated via email.

(b) It was reported that patches 24, 25, and 26 of APTOS 8 have been installed on the test system and would be on the live system on or around 25th September. These should iron out some of the “bugs” experienced with purchase orders

(c) Brian Allnutt advised that he had attended the APTOS Education Users Group meeting at LSE. Many of the enhancements now being developed have arisen due to University of Exeter’s requirements. We are using more of the system after one year than LSE is after five years of having the system.

(d) NEXT MEETING : The next FASIG meeting will take place in November. Details will be confirmed in due course and an agenda will be circulated to members via email.