

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER
FINANCE APPLICATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (FASIG)

A meeting of FASIG was held on Monday 31st March 2003 at 10.30 am in the Committee Room A, Northcote House.

Present

- Brian Allnutt (Finance)
- Alan Binge (Finance)
- Debbie Brett (Finance) - SECRETARY
- David Carpenter-Clawson (IT Services)
- Pat Curgenvin (Biological Sciences) - CHAIRMAN
- David Gaston (Domestic Services)
- Jenny Hickman (SELL, Lifelong Learning)
- Alison Husband (Sport & Health Sciences)
- Jane McCartney (Buildings and Estates)
- Mike Phillips (SELL)
- Karen Pope (Engineering)
- Liz Saunders (Finance)
- Karen Swanston (Psychology)
- Denise Watts (Physics)
- Stephen Woodcock (Finance)

Apologies

- Chris Austin (IT Services)
- Carrie Baker (External Relations)
- Mike Barnett (Finance)
- Sally Bastyan (Education)
- Lucinda Bennett (Maths)
- Helen Clarke (Psychology)
- Annet Coles (DLL)
- Heather Crispin (SMS)
- Adrian Davey (Finance)
- Elaine Davies (SSHS)
- Paul Daysh (Chemistry)
- Janette Evans (SHiPPS)
- Alison Franklin (Chemistry)
- Angela Gardner (Learning Teaching Support Centre)
- Andrew George (Domestic Services)
- Anne Gore (Geography & Archaeology)
- Kathy Halsey (Camborne School of Mines)
- Sarah Hamlin (Finance)
- Caroline Hampson (Finance)
- Sally Heggie (IT Services)
- Maureen Hill (Geography & Archaeology)
- Mike Huggins (Finance)
- Beverley Hughes (Library)
- Nela Kapelan (Music)
- Jane Lawrence (Physics)
- Dick Leitch (Finance)
- Ges MacDonald (English)
- Cathy Maguire (PMS)
- Gloria Massey (Finance)
- Stephen Murphy (SELL)
- Hilary Olek (Dept of Lifelong Learning)
- Roz Pardee (DLL/ SELL)
- Sally Phillips (Biology)
- Barbara Powell (Law)
- Paul Sandy (IT Services)
- Catherine Serjeant (Finance)
- Gabi Simons (Drama & Music)
- Ruth Stansfield (Business Relations)
- Elizabeth Stewart (Modern Languages)
- Diana Tweedie (SoBE)

Alex Walsh (IT Services)
Marilyn Wills (CRR, SOGA)
Keith Zimmerman (SHiPSS)

02.00 Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone.

02.01 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes were approved and adopted.

Matters arising :

(a) Item 02.01 (b) : Voting papers for the enhancements will be issued shortly. To date there have been no requests to the Chairman for the information and forms to be posted on the web

(b) Item 02.02 : A new training schedule is being issued covering the period from 28th April to late July 2003. The “Question and Answer” sessions have been cancelled through lack of user support, but some individual sessions have been run which have proved very worthwhile.

(c) Item 02.03 : Key Users would be asked to contribute details of the questions users ask them frequently, so that these can be incorporated in the FAQ section on the website.

(d) Item 02.04 : There have been no further meetings of the FASIG Reporting Sub-Group to date. The Finance Division Systems Reporting Group met and details will be supplied to FASIG in due course. Adrian Davey has conducted several presentations on the subject of the new reports, which have been well-received. The recent Key User meeting reported that users may need to restrict the length of the narrative entered on purchase orders/ invoices to 45 characters to allow supplier and customer information to come through on reports. The Group agreed that it would be very difficult for users to limit the description to this number of characters. It was agreed that Brian Allnutt would consider whether an automatic solution to this problem could be found, perhaps using some Consultancy time.

The meeting also advised that some data coming through on the reports is irrelevant to the budget-holder (eg internal document descriptions from the print unit; cash receipt numbers and bank statement references from the Income Section). Some work is needed to resolve these aspects eg the Print Unit could show an invoice number or order number in the narrative field for internal direct charging, but Finance and Domestic Services need to consider the fields used in APTOS ; what is best practice; and if there are any other implications resulting from changes to the way the fields are used.

It was also agreed that the reports need to show the previous year's outturn.

(e) Item 02.05 : Preparation for the Asset Management module pilot is underway. In view of other priority commitments, consideration is being given to a delay in the intended launch date. Further advices will follow in due course.

02.02 APTOS Helpline

Some users are contacting Finance Division staff for assistance with queries rather than routing them via the Helpline. Occasionally, this is necessary if the user is mid-input, but users should follow the following route for the majority of queries :

- check for the guidance and advice on the web
- if the issue is still unresolved, then users should contact the Helpline.

This ensures that common issues are resolved consistently and training and development time can be focussed on those areas where it is most needed.

The meeting discussed the potential for a Messageboard facility on the web, which might make the problem-solving faster, more interactive and may also encourage self-help. Issues arising from this include : the danger of inappropriate solutions being innocently given by non-specialists; how to monitor the output to ensure best practice was being followed and promoted; and consistency.

02.03

Future of FASIG

The meeting discussed the falling attendance of FASIG meetings; the low volume of visitors to the website (suggesting non-attendees are not reading the FASIG meeting minutes) ; the variety of other groups/ meetings that users and key staff attend whose content crosses over into FASIG territory; the perception that FASIG is solely concerned with the APTOS system, whereas the remit relates to financial systems as a whole.

The group agreed that attendees of FASIG meetings found them very helpful and useful in practical ways. As a forum for the discussion and progression of all financial IT systems, FASIG can discuss issues arising from the SAM system; and any new payroll and personnel systems etc.

To make the meetings as productive as possible, it was agreed that in addition to “normal” agenda items, the meetings would include specific presentations on relevant topics. For example, the next meeting of FASIG would include a presentation from Brian Allnutt on the subject of year end closedown procedures and changes being introduced to achieve an earlier closedown. Future topics for discussion would include : internal recharging; and the use of income and expenditure codes.

Other suggestions :

- using APTOS “signals” to remind users of FASIG minutes; the APTOS webpages; and critical topics.
- Holding the FASIG meetings over a buffet lunch.
- Targeting regular absentees from key areas for specific reminders about meetings.
- The Chairman could contact Heads of Schools and School Administrators to explain the group’s disappointment at the lack of representation; query whether we have the right person on the mailing list ; query if there are any other reasons for non-attendance (eg misunderstandings over the nature of the topics covered); issue the Terms of Reference.

02.04

Any Other Business

(a) NEXT MEETING : The details of the next FASIG meeting are to be confirmed shortly. An agenda will be circulated to members via email in due course.