

Minutes of FASIG 4th April 2011

1. Minutes of previous meeting

2. Matters arising

Reporting – Alan reminded the meeting about the availability of new EAS2 reports, Client Side Reporting (CSR) which is a useful distribution report and Mid Cube, which operates much like a pivot table and is a useful monitoring/analysing reporting tool.

Reporting Workshops – Anne asked if those who attended these workshops found them useful and said that she is quite happy to run more or to offer more tailored sessions depending on what was required. Please e-mail Anne with what you are looking for.

B Plan health checks - a Finance Systems Development Group has now been formed, chaired by Anne, which meets every 6 weeks to discuss and keep updated on all Aptos issues, training, processes and procedures

e-procurement - Sally Phillips came in April 2010 to tell us about e-procurement. Alan asked for a show of hands as to users, which was about 1/3 of the meeting, but many did not think it worked as well as expected. Alan asked for feedback from e-procurement users - if you could e-mail Frances f.anson@ex.ac.uk with any issues or problems you have. Alan emphasised that without vital user feedback we can not get things corrected and ask for improvements. A member of the e-procurement team will be invited to our next meeting and if armed with user feedback can tailor their presentation to hopefully resolving some problem areas.

In tend – Tenders for items over £25k must be made public (EU requirement) and In tend is a powerful electronic tool which serves the the full tender process and works well. There is a facility to use it for items under £25k to identify best value for money and provide three quotes. This will be a culture change and electronic tendering is well worth pursuing although Biosciences wanted to buy equipment via In tend but are still waiting for training from e-procurement.

Action: Alan Binge to follow up

VAT - changes all seem to have gone smoothly now that we have had lots of practise at making changes, with most being fairly automatic.

Deputy Chair – Alan will be making a short list of all applicants shortly!

3. Update from Aptos User Group

Current developments

Reporting – workshops took place in December, reporting now steady state, but again if you need a reporting workshop please contact Anne A.E.Shrubshall@ex.ac.uk .

E-mailing remittance advices – initially for staff expenses and now also suppliers. Now sending out about 500 a week and increasing as we get more e-mail addresses. Multiple savings here, time; paper; postage; energy etc. which all further sustainability targets.

E-invoicing – this is following on from e –procurement where an electronic order is flipped into an invoice. Some development work has been required and there may be a link with the EDM project, so no definitive implementation date is set yet.

Electronic Data Management – the idea being to scan in an invoice and add details to create an electronic document that can be retrieved by Aptos. Currently there are suppliers available for both the scanning and software. Corporate Services and CEMPS are piloting the project but again no implementation dates as yet.

Purchase card module - B Plan initially put in lots of development work here, we need to review the module again and come to a decision. A show of hands indicated that most members using purchasing cards were using the excel spreadsheet for submission. Denise Watts mentioned that cutting and pasting codes saved a lot of time and prevented errors. Members were generally split on completing spreadsheets as they went along and others when the statements came in. The module would cater for both methods but currently there are technical issues loading the data. It was noted that using purchasing cards does not

create a commitment on the system. This is one advantage of the Aptos module if used to record transactions as you go. More testing needs to be carried out.

Multi-currency – Unfortunately this development is not high priority at the moment. Anne mentioned that LSE were coming to see us soon and she would ask them how they use Aptos in this respect. (*Post meeting note – LSE use a number of currencies with no particular issues*)

Internal trading – ongoing.

Cognos has taken priority of most of Finance Services resources at the moment but hopefully once this is sorted resources can be redirected back to the above projects.

Future developments

Patch 21 – implemented in December – we aim to have the highest level of patch available at any time.

Patch 22 – final testing to do but the aim is to get it on as soon as possible.

Version 10-01 - to be loaded on to the test system. Keen to get V10 which has screen customisation possibilities. Aptos have previously tended to focus on functionality but V10 is looking at the system more from a user point of view by streamlining some of the screens; over 50 standard CSR reports are available and a future aim is to set up a user subscription which would e-mail reports automatically; manage expenses in a better way; be able to do improved budgeting and forecasting on the system etc.

Version 10.02 - B Plan have lot of ideas but at the moment are not sure which ones they will be progressing, but it is clear that they are focusing more on the end user and working through all the current modules to improve them.

Finance System Development Group – comprises Academic and Finance Services staff including Alex Walsh, James Bingham and Tanya Hitchin and meets every 6 weeks. This helps to foster closer links with Capita and B Plan on system improvement and by agreeing to test with us we may get the releases faster. If Aptos support desk is not able to solve a problem then we can go to Capita, this also keeps Aptos up to date with user requirements.

Please be aware that all projects need approval and need to be prioritised, which is the reason some aren't moving forward quite as fast as we would like.

4. New coding structure – discussion

Anne said that codes were longer and unfortunately those who bear the pain do not see the improvement, changing the coding structure has made. Year end reporting was so much easier due to the segments of the code. ACT 1 has helped TRAC reporting and ACT 1 and 2, the HESA returns. Reporting from the system has been vastly improved in all areas but particularly in Research.

Anne asked members if they were starting to remember some of the codes but most still used spreadsheets or lists to look them up. It was agreed that any change of code is fundamental and it will take time.

Members did say it was difficult to remember which segment was which and many agreed that they were still working out how best to use the code segments. Alan said that he uses ACT 2 codes to drive his budgets and then does not budget down to each heading.

Importantly though - miscoding does undermine what we can get out of the system so great care is required to get it right.

Anne agreed that scholarships/bursaries remains a difficult area which she will be reviewing again shortly.

5. Topics for next meeting

It was agreed to have another meeting in the summer term apart from the usual year end meeting. Members of the E-procurement team would be invited and anyone interested specifically on this subject could then come along and ask questions. Other topics Purchase to Pay and In-Tend.

6. AOB

Gill Pearn, Accounts Payable – mentioned payment dates bearing in mind forthcoming bank holidays/ Easter/royal wedding/ spring holiday and she will be sending out a message shortly.

Action: Gill Pearn

Next Meeting will be on:

Tuesday 31st May 2011

Streatham Campus – Queens LT2
Tremough Campus – DM Seminar F

Where there will be a presentation by members of the e-procurement team.