

Student Access to Services (SAS) - Staff Survey

Purpose: to find out about the impact of SAS on staff in Learning Services and the Finance Office

We ran the second survey online between 14 July 2005 and 11 August 2005 using SurveyMonkey software. We ran the first survey in December/January 2004/5.

Who replied?

77 staff completed all or part of the survey. This was almost double the response rate in the first survey and is around 28% of staff in Learning Services and the Finance Office. Here is the breakdown by area, with figures for the 1st survey in brackets:

- Academic Registry - 12 (4)
- Finance Office – 7 (8)
- General Academic and Professional Studies – 15 (3)
- Learning Resources – 15 (8)
- Learner Support – 26 (14)
- Other - ISU – 1; Careers -1 (part of Learner Support) (No change)

What they said

Has SAS made a difference to your work?

Yes – 43 (56%) (55% in 1st survey)

No – 34 (42%) (43% in 1st survey)

Changes to people's work

Only staff who said SAS had made a difference to work were asked the next three questions

1) How much has SAS affected your work?

31 of the 43 who said SAS had affected their work commented further. 17 said it had affected their work 'somewhat', 7 'quite a lot' and 3 'considerably'. Four said it had affected their work very little.

2) List up to three aspects of your work which have changed

22 respondents gave 42 answers. The three main areas were:

- Web pages (12) - improved/great/better/easier to use
- Thinking about the way we do things/student access (10) – doing things more thoroughly, help with the planning process for any student activity, service delivery, handling feedback
- Plain English and more thinking about how we communicate with students in general (7)

This comment sums up the themes: “Discussions with staff on SAS has meant genuine progress towards co-operation and ‘joined up thinking’ between different service areas.”

Other aspects were:

- Demands on time – from the project (5)
- More questions (2) – and fewer questions (1)!
- Impact of the base (1)
- Some of our services are no longer ours (1)

3) Eight respondents provided further information on how things had changed including:

Negative things

One person thought there were a lot of uncertainties – location, changes to tasks, discussions on various aspects, meetings to attend etc, new staff appointed to new roles to familiarise ourselves with. Another felt things were more segmented now. “Staff are not as willing to assist students outwith their remit, even if it's as simple as making a photocopy or a phone call. Also, staff don't really know what is going on in other offices... As a result the student incurs more run around than is desired”. [Comment from project manager – this highlights the need to refer students to the base as the initial starting point for enquiries]

Positives

Three people commented on a more unified student-focus in service delivery

- SAS has helped us to have a more joined up student centred approach. It has been very valuable in making us look at services from the point of view of the student (after all they are our customers!) Some things we can achieve, some need a further shove from management”
- SAS web pages make it much easier for students and staff to find out information about all services to students. We have made real progress in working together.”
- We now have a much better, clearer and accessible way of knowing what students require, what they think of our services and how to direct students to answers which we may not know.”

The future...

We asked all respondents three other questions

1) How can you, as an individual, make sure that SAS principles become embedded in your work? You can list up to three ways.

31 responses from 13 people including:

- Find out what they are (3)
- Always try to put myself in the shoes of various students/represent customers at team meetings
- Include them in planning/development of policies/work plans (3)
- Be flexible with my timetable. Students do not always work on ‘block schedules’.
- Use plain English/clear language (3)
- Already very student focused (2)

2) List up to three ways you think your service area could make sure the SAS principles become embedded

27 responses from 13 people including

- Student focus in team meetings/service delivery (7)
- Management involvement - include in team brief; “management has to demonstrate them in a consistent and inspirational way” (4)
- Benchmark our activities against SAS principles
- Clear documentation (4)
- More cross team working (2)
- Understand them (2)

Any other comments? includes

“The SAS programme has highlighted many things which have helped Learning Services come together with a goal of providing a great service to students. Although some of the principles seem like common sense it is good to have everyone focussing on the same thing to provide consistency across the services.”

I have been consistently impressed by the hard work, perseverance and effectiveness of the manager of the programme, Jane Ross. She has been very effective in working with other staff to achieve a remarkable amount in a short time.

SAS project leader has done really well in improving student web pages in terms of structure and content. Also direct access to the pages is a benefit rather than use the contents approach to the Portal