

SOCIETY OF COLLEGE NATIONAL & UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Working Group on Performance Improvement

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 May 2009

Present: Toby Bainton, Pat Barclay, Claire Creaser, Ann Davies, Philip Payne, Rupert Wood (Secretary), Jean Yeoh

1. Chair of the meeting

It was agreed that Philip would chair the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies had been received from Angela Conyers and Susan Copeland.

3. Membership of the Working Group

Ann Davies (Open University) was welcomed to her first meeting. Pat had agreed to attend the meeting. Jean said that because she was retiring soon she would be resigning from the Working Group.

Toby reported that a new call for expressions of interest in the Chair of the Working Group (currently vacant) was being taken forward.

The two other vacancies (vice Tracey Stanley and Jean Yeoh) would also be the subject of a new call for expressions of interest. It was agreed that two specific and current priorities for the Group should be mentioned in the call: the development of the Performance Portal; and the need for a member to develop the SCONUL Satisfaction Survey.

Action: TB / RW

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2008 were accepted as a correct record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

5.1. Toby had circulated the [Briefing Paper](#) analysing some of the principal costs incurred by libraries in higher education in their role in support of teaching. Largely based on evidence from the *Annual library statistics*, the paper had developed from SCONUL's contribution in June 2008 to an investigation for HEFCE into the long-term cost of providing an appropriate quality UK higher education student experience. The Working Group had contributed to this investigation.

5.2. Rupert reported the views of the SCONUL Working Group on Quality Assurance on last year's consultation with SCONUL members on the National Student Survey, which had been organised by the WGPI. The results of the consultation had been reported in *SCONUL Focus no. 45*. On the issue of whether a position about the wording of the library / learning resources question should be adopted by SCONUL (to change, expand or re-position the question) the WGPI had thought at its last meeting that it seemed unlikely a sufficiently strong case could be agreed and made for such a change to be

recommended. However, the WGQA had made some suggestions for further action on this issue. The WGQA thought that the present wording regrettably encourages students to think in quantitative rather than qualitative terms when responding. It was agreed that Rupert would contact the Chair of the WGQA to discuss the matter of developing a joint approach from the two Working Groups to this issue.

Action: RW

5.3. Rupert will ask Angela for current information about the Publisher Deals Project.

Action: RW

6. SCONUL Statistics

6a. SCONUL Statistics Group

Philip reported that the Group had met on 21 May 2009. It considered the statistics return for 2008/09. Some minor changes to wording and notes are being proposed to provide greater clarification for some questions. A supplementary question relating to Library stores will be introduced in the space section; and more guidance would also be given on calculating averages for the opening hours section. The new questions on space in the 2007/08 return had given rise to several queries from respondents and as a result additional guidance notes would be incorporated in the 2008/09 questionnaire. The Group also considered the progress on the project being undertaken on e-measures.

6b. The 2007/08 Return

Claire reported on progress. There had been an excellent 86% response which in fact covered about 95% of the HE student body. Responses had been received from all RLUK institutions. Claire would be circulating a draft version to members of the Working Group soon and asked that all should send comments and corrections.

Action: CC / ALL

The final versions of the main statistical tables should be available by 9 June 2009.

The changes made to the Statistics on the Web recently were thought to be very worthwhile. Claire said she would investigate whether the listing order of institutions in both the Statistics on the Web drop-down list and the Annual Statistics themselves needed revision.

Action: CC

Claire reported that she'd been invited to deliver a training session on the use of the statistics database at a member institution; and also that further day workshops on the Return, principally aimed at those filling it in, would be organised during the next year.

6c. e-measures

More substantive changes relating to e-measures were being planned for the 2009/10 return, although it was not thought that this would result in a lot of extra work for those filling it in.

The SCONUL Executive Board had supported the proposal from the Working Group that the e-measures questions in the annual statistics should be reviewed and had funded a small project to take this forward. This work was progressing well. Angela had submitted an [interim report](#) to the Working Group. Pat highlighted that comparisons had been made with the statistics of ARL (Association of Research Libraries, US) and CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians). The most major change proposed was probably that figures for full text serial titles in aggregator databases should be included as well as the figures for titles in publishers' serial collections. It was emphasised that the proposals would need to be piloted and well publicised. There would be

consultation on the proposed new measures via a group of electronic resource librarians in London, the Lis-SCONUL-Stats list, and of directors. Ann commented that a well-developed proposal for changes might also encourage publishers to supply new data.

The next steps were to test the proposals with the small focus group of electronic resources librarians. Proposals will then be brought to the next meeting of the Working Group.

Action: CC / AC

7. The Performance Portal

Rupert tabled some notes on the development of the Portal. The Working Group thought there was a risk that current vacancies in its membership might hinder the pace of development, and that momentum needed to be maintained.

It was agreed that the two most important matters to follow up were: the uploading of the commissioned content on Value; and the establishment of a sub-group of the WGPI to plan and oversee development. Rupert will try to take these matters forward.

Action: RW

It was noted that the SCONUL website is about to be re-designed and the Performance Portal will need to be effectively incorporated.

It was agreed that an easier access route for SCONUL members to the SCONUL Statistics was needed via the Performance Portal.

8. The Action Plan

The Plan was reviewed. It was noted that:

8.1. The SCONUL Executive Board had approved the Working Group's bid for funds to match ARL's contribution to support the development of the UK LibQUAL+ consortium. Information about [LibQUAL+ 2009](#) is on the website.

8.2. Stephen Town had agreed to continue leadership of the SCONUL LibQUAL+ consortium and to continue to develop the relationship built up with ARL and other international bodies on performance and other matters relating to the Group's work.

8.3. Rupert will investigate the results of the survey on assessment and performance measurement sent to SCONUL members at the beginning of September 2008.

Action: RW

8.4. A proposal for a relevant research project on evidence based management was likely to be prepared soon at Loughborough University.

9. Any other business

The Working Group thanked Jean for her contribution to its work and wished her a very happy retirement.

10. Dates of future meetings

Possible dates for the next meeting are: 16 September, 23 September, 24 September, subject to the availability of a new Chair for the Working Group.