

AIMS (Academic Institutions Management Services):

- ◆ a Higher Education management support service, based at the University of Liverpool
- ◆ created more than thirty years ago specifically to serve the higher education sector
- ◆ until recently, use of the service was restricted to its member universities. Those services are now available to non-member institutions, who can take advantage of the specialist skills and knowledge of the AIMS consultants
- ◆ non-member institutions can apply for membership or associate membership of AIMS, or commission individual assignments
- ◆ for more information about the services of AIMS or for details about membership or the commissioning of assignments, please contact:

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Manchester Metropolitan becomes Associate Member

We are delighted to announce that, following a very successful trial membership, Manchester Metropolitan University has become an Associate Member of AIMS. Two assignments were completed for MMU during the trial membership period: an examination of clerical and secretarial arrangements in the Estate Planning Services and a review of information systems support throughout the University.

Associate membership of AIMS provides 24 days of consultancy for an annual subscription of £10,000. Associate members receive all the services enjoyed by full members, which include the undertaking or facilitation of reviews; the provision of advice and guidance; free access to good practice guides published by AIMS; and free access to reports commissioned by other member institutions, subject to their approval.

Full membership of AIMS is now available for an annual subscription of £20,000, for which members will receive 55 days of consultancy. Full members and associate members may also purchase additional consultancy days at preferential daily rates of £360 and £425 respectively. The daily rate charged to non-member institutions is £600.

Trial Membership Option Continues

The option of trial membership continues to be available. There are two levels of trial membership: the higher level provides 40 days of consultancy for a subscription of £10,000; the lower level provides 20 days of consultancy for a subscription of £6,000.

Enquiries concerning membership of AIMS or the commissioning of one-off assignments should be addressed to Lionel Ross, the Director of AIMS.

Recent and Current Assignments

In recent months, AIMS has completed reviews on the following diverse range of topics:

- ◆ Academic Quality Control Arrangements
- ◆ Clerical and Secretarial Support in Estate Planning Services
- ◆ The Feasibility of a Central Student Finance Office
- ◆ The Application of the Royal Mail PPI System
- ◆ Student Registration
- ◆ A VFM Study of Nursery Arrangements
- ◆ Waste Management
- ◆ Administrative and Clerical Functions in a School of Engineering
- ◆ Stores Arrangements in a School of Biological Sciences
- ◆ Staff and Student Surveys: Defining a Methodology
- ◆ Information Systems Support
- ◆ Administrative, Clerical and Secretarial Support in a School for Business and Regional Development

Outlines of these assignments and all assignments completed in the past five years can be found on the AIMS website at <http://www.aims.ac.uk> - by clicking on 'Reports'.

Assignments that are currently in progress are as follows:

- ◆ The Management of Consultancy
- ◆ Stores Arrangements in an Estates Department
- ◆ Devolving Postage Budgets
- ◆ Outgoing External Mail Arrangements
- ◆ Administrative Arrangements in a School of Environment and Life Sciences

Outlines of the terms of reference relating to each of those assignments can also be viewed in the Reports section of the AIMS website.

Information Systems Support

The review of information systems support was a particularly interesting assignment.

The remit required AIMS to examine the existing central and faculty-based provision of information systems support, including: staffing levels and

managerial arrangements within the teams; the assignment of duties among the staff of the teams; and arrangements for workload and performance monitoring.

AIMS was also required to comment on existing arrangements, to assess the appropriateness of existing staffing levels and managerial arrangements and to recommend ways in which the efficiency and effectiveness of the services might be improved.

We identified a range of core services to be provided through central funding and examined benchmarks for service delivery. We also recommended the development of service level statements and measures to improve or simplify the organisation of services.

In addition, we developed a comprehensive staffing model to determine appropriate staffing levels. The model is particularly useful for ensuring that each faculty is afforded an equitable treatment.

Moreover, It can be adapted to calculate staffing levels either to provide required standards of support for each of the identified services, or to comply with restrictions on expenditure within pre-determined budgets.