

AIMING AHEAD

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AIMS (Academic Institutions Management Services):

a Higher Education management support service, based at the University of Liverpool

created more than thirty years ago to serve the higher education sector

until recently, use of the service was restricted to its six 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 of AIMS, become contracted clients or commission individual assignments

for more information about the services of AIMS or for details about membership, contracted client status or the commissioning of assignments, please contact:

Mr Lionel Ross (Director) AIMS, The University, Liverpool L69 3BX

telephone: 0151-794 3132

fax: 0151-794 3133

email: jlross@liv.ac.uk

website: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/AIMS/>

Timetabling by Computer and Electronic Filing Systems

The increasing complexity of degree programmes and the inexorable proliferation of information are two current problems that cry out for automated solutions. In both areas, a substantial range of computerised systems is available, which offers the benefit of choice but also presents the daunting prospect of having to evaluate the options and determine which system best serves the needs of individual institutions. AIMS has developed considerable knowledge and experience of both computerised timetabling and electronic document management systems.

Member institutions of AIMS have already benefited from that expertise. Why not take advantage of it yourself and seek our assistance to guide you through the respective minefields?

Timetabling by Computer

Together with space charging and space planning and re-allocation, central computerised timetabling has been identified by the National Audit Office as one of three main methods of improving space utilisation from its present typical level of 20%.

A full central timetabling and scheduling system can read student, course and staff records directly and produce a full university timetable within a few minutes. It can take into account all the issues that timetabling staff normally consider and check automatically for clashes, using an iterative process to minimise or eliminate them. By doing this uniformly across all courses, rooms, students and staff, the system ensures that each module is taught in the most suitable room, space utilisation is maximised and travelling between lectures is minimised.

Management reports can be produced on the use of rooms, course structures and teaching loads.

Timetabling by Computer (continued)

The optimum use of space achieved through a central computerised timetabling system is likely to enable an institution to reduce plans for future expansion or create room for new courses. One university has avoided spending £2 million on a new teaching block as a result of using a central timetabling system.

For timetabling staff, the benefits include the automation of a difficult and tedious task and less time spent on the scheduling process, thus releasing more time to solve problems with clashes and to explore alternative solutions. Some institutions have reported staff reductions of 50%.

Academic staff will spend less time on administration and will be better able to schedule their research time, having earlier and more accurate information about their teaching commitments.

Students can be offered increased choice of modules and clash-free, reliable timetables.

Central computerised timetabling is still used by only a minority of universities. However, in many institutions, with the increasing complexity of modularisation and inter-faculty courses, timetabling has virtually become an impossible task without the use of a central computerised system.

Let AIMS be your guide in your quest for the right solution.

Electronic Filing Systems

Information is the life-blood of all organisations. Unfortunately, much of it is held on paper and stored in filing cabinets, which creates the following problems:

- limited access owing to its inconvenient location
- access restricted to one person at a time
- multiple files/copies to enable multiple access
- cumbersome cross-reference facilities
- limited search capabilities
- risk of outdated information
- time-consuming retrieval
- misfiled/missing information
- increasing demand for space.

Electronic filing systems provide the following benefits:

- better availability of information (ie no misfiling/file removal)
- swift, multiple and remote access
- up-to-date information
- enhanced cross-referencing and search facilities
- reduced amount of time spent by staff on seeking and retrieving information
- improved quality of service to customers
- release of valuable office space required for the storage of paper files.

AIMS has helped member institutions to identify the most appropriate systems for their particular requirements: comparing the relative merits of

document image processing (DIP) and electronic document management (EDM) systems and evaluating the wide range of products and services available.

We provide objective, independent advice and guidance, based on relevant knowledge and experience.

HEFCE Fund for the Development of Good Management Practice

Funding is being made available by HEFCE for the development of good management practice in the Higher Education sector (report 99/28). Bids are likely to be invited in October 1999.

AIMS can play a valuable role on behalf of HE institutions in any projects arising from that initiative, including:

- helping to determine appropriate areas for review or development
- coordination of benchmarking exercises
- fact finding, analysis and presentation of information
- facilitation of in-house reviews
- advice and guidance on the conduct of reviews and collaborative initiatives.

Next Issue:

Activity Value Analysis

Priority-based Budgeting