

AIMING AHEAD

The Newsletter of Academic Institutions Management Services
Vol. 1 No. 5 November 1999

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:

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/>

New Membership Options for all HE Institutions

New membership of AIMS is now available to all HE institutions at the attractive subscription rate of £20,000 a year. For that level of subscription, institutions will receive 55 consultancy days a year, which equates to a rate of £360 a day. The initial period of membership will be two years.

The new subscription rate is applicable to all institutions, irrespective of their size. Annual subscriptions of existing members are related to the size of institutions, based on their full-time equivalent student numbers, and range from £21,000 to £42,000 a year.

The new membership rate therefore represents an excellent opportunity for institutions to take full advantage of the services of AIMS at the same equivalent daily rate enjoyed by existing members - but at a lower level of financial commitment.

Associate membership of AIMS is also now available at an even lower annual subscription of £10,000, for which institutions will receive 23 consultancy days - an equivalent rate of £425 a day. The initial period of membership will also be two years.

It is also still possible for non-member institutions to commission individual assignments at a minimum rate of £500 a day.

In addition to the financial benefits, membership of AIMS provides entry into a well-established, mutually supportive forum and network. It also includes free access to AIMS reports written for other member institutions, to a series of good practice guides on important issues related to the management and administration of academic institutions and to the availability of advice, guidance and support from the AIMS consultants on an *ad hoc* basis.

Priority-based Budgeting

In an age of relentless reduction in government funding, it has become increasingly essential for academic institutions to find ways of ensuring the most effective use of their resources.

In academic and administrative departments and in staff, student and building services, there is a range of demands competing for a share of limited budgets.

New demands, many externally imposed, compete with existing commitments. Difficult decisions have to be made based on the perceived, relative importance to the institution of the different activities.

The process of determining the relative importance of activities and deciding an appropriate assignment of resources among them is often referred to as priority-based budgeting.

It is important that the process covers both relative priorities among competing activities and the ranges of degree within each activity. For example, several possible levels of provision could be applied to a particular service

or activity that is afforded a high level of priority. Different levels of service or provision will significantly affect the level of expenditure involved.

Activity Value Analysis

Activity Value Analysis has been developed by AIMS to assist that decision-making process. Its application provides a structure and a methodology that greatly facilitates priority-based budgeting.

The methodology was developed and applied in a review of an administrative division of one of the member institutions of AIMS. It proved to be extremely effective and is now being applied to other administrative areas.

The approach combines the active involvement of relevant staff, including users of the service or activity under review, and external facilitation by AIMS. It also requires the full backing and commitment of senior officers of the institution.

The involvement of staff ensures that their views are sought and their experience acknowledged and utilised. It also fosters ownership of the review and commitment to the successful implementation of its recommendations.

As part of the methodology for Activity Value Analysis, AIMS has designed suitable documentation for the recording and analysis of identified activities.

The role of AIMS as facilitator of a review would include:

- presentations to staff about the approach and methodology of the review
- assistance to identify relevant activities
- interviews with senior staff and section leaders
- facilitation of meetings
- organisation, conduct and analysis of user surveys
- preparation and presentation of interim and final reports on the review.

An external, independent agency is able to challenge vested interest, provoke debate and enhance the perspective of the review. The involvement of AIMS as a facilitator therefore will ensure that the review will be undertaken objectively, and that progress will be effectively monitored and managed.

Next Issue:

Management of Academic Departments

Control and Monitoring of Maintenance Work