

Welcome

As the new academic year begins I wanted to take this opportunity to say welcome back from any summer vacations you may have had and more importantly 'good luck' to you all for 2011/12 on behalf of the NASMA board. This year will be challenging for a number of reasons, changes to student funding aside. Our institutions are (thankfully) very full and many of us are already exhausted doing more with less!

That said, you can rest assured that the NASMA board will be working tirelessly to support you and ensure that your voices are heard and wherever possible your needs are met.

The new board met over the summer and spent a considerable amount of time looking at your priorities for us for the year ahead.

I am pleased to say we can already respond to some of these:-

You asked us to set up a NASMA office - we are delighted to say we will soon be moving to our new NASMA premises in Leeds and are in the process of recruiting a new administrator to work for us.

You asked for more resources - if you haven't looked on the new improved NASMA website yet please do, we know you will be pleasantly surprised. In addition, the new NASMA smartphone application will be launched soon which we think will be a great resource for your students.

You wanted to read about board activities - you will find Board minutes from the past four years on the members area of the website.

You wanted us to raise our organisational profile - NASMA is represented on all SFE stakeholder groups,

the Student Finance Stakeholder Group at BIS as well as similar groups in the devolved nations. We are also a key member of the new independent 2012 Student Finance Taskforce, with Martin Lewis from MSE, the NUS and UCAS.

We have also responded to recent government consultations and are currently drafting our response to the BIS white paper. However, it should be noted that it is not the sole responsibility of the Board to comment on these documents and your input is needed if we are to collate realistic views from the sector.

You asked us for more training – however, as many members just asked for 'more training' we are sometimes at a loss about what to deliver! Over the past six months, in addition to our Annual Profession Development Event attended by over 200 delegates, we have delivered 8 sessions on 2012 funding attended by up to 40 delegates at each event. We have also delivered 4 sessions of a new training course 'Introduction to Student Funding & Advice' which we feel is a fantastic induction or refresher course for new staff. Planning for training in 2011/12 continues.

As I begin my last academic year as the NASMA Chair I just wanted to thank you for all your support to date and remind you about how much NASMA needs your contributions, thoughts and input if we are to continue to grow.

Lynne Condell
NASMA Chairperson



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If you have any news that you would like to suggest for a future issue of NASMA News, please contact us:

E: office@nasma.org.uk

Using NASMA Effectively

So you have paid your membership fee - what now? None of us like to pay money and not receive something in return, and there is a lot to gain from the NASMA resources now available to you. But to get the best out of NASMA you also need to invest some time. However it will be worth it! NASMA has over 550 members across the four countries of the UK and collectively we are recognised as the leading authority on all matters relating to student funding and advice. Our members work in a variety of settings and have a varied level of experience and expertise, which most importantly they are willing to share with colleagues. So if you are a new member or an experienced member of the NASMA community we thought we would highlight how to use NASMA effectively to support you and your students.

1. Attend Regular regional meetings

Most regions meet 3-4 times a year. As the organisation is member-led the agenda and guest speakers are always relevant to members' needs. Meetings therefore not only give you a chance to update knowledge but vitally to give and receive support to/from colleagues on a more local level. This really helps where some local services may have very specific practices, or to help out your colleague who may be a lone worker in their institution. Most events also have a social aspect and a chance to get to know each other more informally. Use your regional coordinators to find out what is happening organisation-wide and to raise suggestions for new actions/developments. Regional meetings will also provide a focus for you to input to consultations relevant to the field, whether this is a change in legislation, or policies and practice in other organisations affecting students and FE/HE Funding.

2. Attend NASMA training sessions

Organised regionally and nationally at a reasonable rate. National briefing days are also held throughout the year. There are discounts on training event rates for NASMA members. NASMA is also working towards an accreditation scheme so that the training you have received will gain professional recognition. NASMA training will always be led by member demand and you can be assured that it will be fully tailored to the needs of your role, very important in these days where training budgets may be very limited and you will want to demonstrate you are getting real value for money to budget holders.

3. Attend NASMA Annual Professional Development Event

The NASMA Annual Professional Development Event provides an opportunity to network with other NASMA members as well as to attend high quality training sessions across a wide-range of relevant topics. As well as access to trainers who are leaders in their field, the chance to address national issues collectively, to hear what your elected Board is doing on your behalf and attend the event of the year in the Gala Dinner and disco is really not to be missed. NASMA continually strive to provide this event in a quality location and accommodation as your comfort can only enhance the learning experience.

4. Use the NASMA Mailbase and Archives

NASMA members benefit from access to the mailbase. The mailbase (a jiscmail forum) provides an opportunity to raise concerns and queries, and also provides a two-way feedback mechanism between NASMA members and the NASMA Board. As well as current posts members also have access to the archives so you can track discussions on a topic basis or see if your query has arisen before. NASMA has a mailbase user protocol so please respect the fact that we all work hard and think before posting. You can find the protocol on the website.

5. Use the Members Area on the NASMA website

The Members Area on the website provides access to member-only training events, a variety of relevant and useful resources, and a contact database for reaching other NASMA members. The Members Area is continually being developed to host more relevant information for NASMA members. If you have a query, after checking the regulations and other reference documents, the Members Area on the website should be your first point of contact, followed by the mailbase archives. If you still cannot find the answer then post to the mailbase and colleagues can respond with an answer or signpost you in the right direction.

6. Use the Smartphone Application

Coming soon. This app will provide access to information for students and advisers about current and forthcoming student funding systems, as well as useful downloads and calendar reminders. There will be a Members Section, holding information about consultations, training events and development opportunities.

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7. Encourage your students to use the Student Area of the NASMA website

This area of the website has been developed over the summer and contains information for all stages of the student journey from pre-university to post-graduation, offering a handy and alternative source of expert advice for students when needed.

We hope that quick guide to the benefits of your NASMA really demonstrates the value of your membership. What you get from NASMA will depend on what you put in and hopefully you will be able to access most if not all of the services and resources. Enjoy your 2011/12 membership year and remember if there is anything else you think NASMA should be offering to its members then tell us. We need your views in looking at both training opportunities and priorities for your Board so please use the regional coordinators, mailbase or web to let us know what you think.

Financial Capability Projects

Putting Students 1st

New for 2011! In response to feedback following NSMW we have created a series of days where we will promote issues of relevance to students. We hope you will get involved.

On the first day of each month during the first term of the 2011-12 academic year we will organise and co-ordinate 'Putting Students 1st' to highlight the support available to students and the excellent work being undertaken by practitioners.

Friday 30th September (1st Oct)
Tuesday 1st November
Thursday 1st December

We have already had interest for provision of materials and support from the Financial Ombudsman Service, TV Licensing, Stop Loan Sharks and we are in discussion with a number of others.

More information will be posted on the NASMA website and mailbase very soon.

We hope you will find a way to get involved.

National Student Money Week 2012

Monday 12 - Friday 16 March 2011

Building on the huge success of the pilot NSMW that took place earlier this year, NSMW 2012 promises to be much bigger and better.

The Project Group met recently and discussed a wide range of developments both in terms of additional resources and example materials, but also ideas for wider promotion.

In responding to feedback from 2011, we are pleased to advise that for 2012 we will have:

- ◇ NSMW logo
- ◇ A more detailed NSMW website section
- ◇ Additional press release templates

We are also working to secure a number of other new elements.

We hope you will get involved.



NATIONAL STUDENT MONEY WEEK

www.nationalstudentmoneyweek.org.uk

brought to you by 

NASMA is moving!

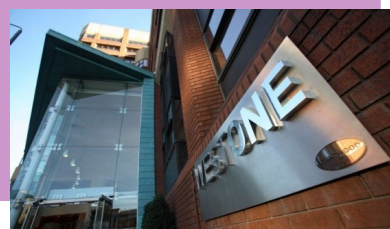
With effect from Monday 3rd October 2011 NASMA will be moving to new office premises in Leeds. We are very excited about this!

The office space we have secured will provide a base from which NASMA will operate, and will also allow for continued growth in our office processes.

We will be holding some meetings and training events at the new office, so you'll hopefully get the chance to visit us soon!

From the start of October our postal address will be:

NASMA Office
West One
114 Wellington Street
Leeds
LS1 1BA



APDE11 Review

In the early hours of 27th June as the sun was rising, illuminating the imposing liver birds on the banks of the river Mersey, the NASMA APDE11 was about to commence. Behind the scenes of a major NASMA event the Board work like the proverbial duck; whilst the bird looks relatively calm moving through the water the legs are paddling like mad!

The board had spent the afternoon of Sunday 26th getting all of the bags filled with various documents and ensuring the bags were personalised, with not only name badges which stated the sessions members had booked onto, but also, this year for the first time, an anonymous personalised evaluation sheet. For us work starts some time before the majority of the members arrive, and continues for some time after delegates leave.

The hotel made the mistake of giving me a mobile telephone which connected directly to the conference facilitator to ensure the event ran smoothly, needless to say the keypad was rather worn by Wednesday afternoon! I arranged to meet him at 6.30am on the 27th for a last minute run through after which I was confident that the hotel knew exactly what was required to ensure our event was a success.

That's not to say we didn't face any unforeseen challenges, some issues with meals at the Gala dinner and some gate crashers to our disco to name but a few. The hotel compensated those who waited too long for their meals with copious amounts of complimentary wine and I became a night club bouncer at about 11.30pm to eject the gate crashes from the disco. A career I'd not considered previously but one I found surprisingly rewarding!!

All that said, after a year in the planning and many sleepless nights the event was a resounding success much to my relief! The board worked tirelessly to ensure the event ran smoothly for members and trainers alike and we had invaluable help from Jack Condell who's IT skills are now legendary. I think everybody involved with the planning and running of the event can be justifiably delighted with how it all went.

In total 95 completed evaluation forms were received at the end of the event and it was clear that delegates valued the amount of training and the variety of topics available across the three days. Feedback was very positive, with the vast majority of respondents very

grateful for the work of the Board in putting together an excellent annual training, development and networking opportunity.

From the evaluations that were submitted 80% of delegates agreed that APDE11 was relevant to their needs and 86% found the event interesting.

When asked how crucial it was to attend to stay on top of all changes within student support 76% answered it was important and it is the only place to get the necessary training for the job.

Of course we will take on board comments and suggestions you have made to continue to improve and develop this event and we do appreciate the many positive comments:

- ◇ Highly professional without losing the informality of networking – brilliant balance achieved
- ◇ Excellent as always. Information timely, booking process was easy & all handled professionally
- ◇ Actual time to devote to learning where your attention does not need to be somewhere else
- ◇ Timely and relevant information sessions and a chance to hear what's happening at other HEIs in a time of such great change
- ◇ The plenary session with Dr Cater was excellent & an opportunity to see the bigger picture, which is missing from the focused workshops. Thank you
- ◇ Thanks for all the hard work. PS. I loved the after dinner speeches

Planning has now started for APDE12 and David Quinn the new Training Officer is currently looking at venues for next year. If you have any specific training requirements please feed them back to David as this is an event tailored to meet the needs of NASMA members therefore we need your input to make the 2012 event another resounding success.

I look forward to seeing many of you at next year's event.

Jan Barnes
Training Officer (2010-11)



Board Profiles

Caroline Ingram - Scotland Regional Co-ordinator

I'm a student adviser at the University of Strathclyde Students' Union. We provide advice and support on a wide range of welfare issues, so it's a bit of a Jack-of-all-trades position.

I've been a student adviser for three and a half years, so I'm still a relative newbie to the Higher Education sector. Before that I worked as a benefit tribunal representative in Edinburgh.



With the Scottish education and funding systems being markedly different to the rest of the UK, it's important for us to have as loud a voice in NASMA as possible. Our members in Scotland have a unique insight into the working of the system up here, and we also then have access to the knowledge and experience of UK colleagues for when we need to assist students who've come here from the other home nations. A perfect symbiotic relationship!

David Quinn - Training Officer



As well as being NASMA's training officer I'm the welfare adviser at Durham Students' Union, working in a very small team to deliver a full range of money, benefits, housing and academic advice to around 15,000 students across two campuses. I'm also responsible for delivering IAG to students at Durham University, including preparing our Livers Out Guide and other leaflets and website information, and welfare officers at collegiate level.

I've been working in the legal advice field since I graduated from Durham University in 2004, with experience in criminal law, benefits and money advice as well as social services law, and I've been working in the HE sector for three years. I also sit on the steering committee for the North East Discussion Forum, part of MALG, and hold membership of the IMA.

I'm lucky in that I have a very understanding manager but, like all NASMA's board, my job as Training Officer is in addition to my day job (and my weekend job running around after a hyperactive toddler). I don't always know the answer but I know who to ask. I wouldn't dream of saying I'm an expert in anything but most of my experience is in benefits and debt advice. I'm really excited to be on the board (as I should be given the way I was voted into my position) as it's an opportunity to give my time and knowledge back to the people who've helped me so much in the last three years - the NASMA membership.

I think it is important to remember that I, along with the other Board members, represent the entire NASMA membership. I'm always available at the end of an email if you want to give me your thoughts and suggestions on what we can do differently or - better still - on what we do brilliantly already.

I can't wait to get started.

Jane Whitehead - Midlands Regional Co-ordinator

I am currently Head of Student Funding at Coventry University. I have a team of 7 staff shortly to reduce to 5.5. The team deal with ALF, SLC support, university bursaries and scholarships, Welfare Loans and miscellaneous small funds. We are also playing a bigger part in the recovery of Tuition Fees by helping students who have problems with the SLC.

The teams are arranged on an alphabetical basis so that everyone experiences work in every area. Our overall budget for 2010/11 was £5 million. (£0.425m for ALF and £4.675m for bursaries and scholarships). We handled over 6,000 bursary applications across 5 schemes using a Full Information contract with HEBSS. We administered around 1,500 scholarship applications and renewals across 7 different schemes.

We work closely in conjunction with our Registry, Finance and Students' Union teams to give the best customer service we can and have instilled an approach of continuous improvement in our work.

I came to the HE field quite late after 35 years in the Civil Service but had a lot of transferable skills.

