



# **SAAS Band A Review Benchmarking Outcome Paper**

26 November 2020

## SAAS Band A Review: Benchmark Paper

<b>Project Name</b>	Band A Review
<b>Project Lead(s)</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Project Task</b>	A Band Benchmarking
<b>Job Benchmark Advisers</b>	[REDACTED] – People and performance Consultant (HR) [REDACTED] – PCS Trade Union Representative
<b>Date</b>	26/11/2020
<b>Status</b>	Final

### 1. Approach Taken

- 1.1. It was agreed that, in addition to SAAS HR benchmarking the band A roles, a Trade Union Representative from PCS, independent to SAAS, would also benchmark the roles.
- 1.2. [REDACTED] People and Performance (HR), and [REDACTED] PCS, benchmarked all 22 band A roles.
- 1.3. HR and PCS assessed all 22 posts against the SG 'Pay and Grading Review Benchmark Guidance' including the following factors: knowledge and skills, contacts and communication, problem solving, decision making, autonomy and impact.
- 1.4. HR and PCS reviewed and benchmarked the roles separately in batches of 3 and met to discuss and compare findings after each batch. Both HR and PCS produced written notes for each role benchmarked against the guidance. HR and PCS sent any points of clarification required to the appropriate area heads.
- 1.5. HR and PCS had a further meeting to finalise thoughts. The majority of roles were relatively straightforward to benchmark with a minority of roles additionally benchmarked by a third party from PCS and SG HR, also independent to SAAS, to ensure maximum clarification.
- 1.6. HR and PCS drafted this paper before meeting to finalise.

### 2. Scope of Benchmark Review

- 2.1 SAAS have approximately 130 band A staff (almost 50 per cent of the workforce) across 22 roles.

2.2 HR and PCS benchmarked each role based on the job descriptions provided in February 2020. This therefore isn't taking into consideration any jobs that may have since significantly changed or evolved. Each area head was asked at the most recent A band review meeting to inform HR or PCS if this was the case.

2.3 HR and PCS have benchmarked each role and made recommendations on the information provided. Should SAAS wish to upskill further posts, this would be a separate restructuring process.

### 3. Band A Benchmark Recommendations

#### 3.1 Complaints and Appeals Officer A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27313831/details>

No. of Positions	4
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>B1</b>

##### Comments

- A large part of this role (up to 90 per cent) is to “investigate and draft investigation plans including making decisions/recommendations and correlating responses to first and second stage complaints/appeals” as well as “investigate and draft responses to MSP/MP enquiries and to OR and MR MACCS”. This is in line with B1 level; particularly in terms of decision making, autonomy and impact.
- This role reviews and analyses information such as the student record, the supporting evidence (including any additional evidence submitted alongside appeals) and previous correspondence and advice from policy, other teams in SAAS and the Student Loan Company. This then involves drafting a response based on their investigation (solely carried out by this role) and making a recommendation/decision. Although the draft starts from a template, the written response requires a lot of free text as way of justification and goes well beyond updating a form.
- In terms of autonomy, the first stage of a complaint is handled by this role with no supervision and the second stage is reviewed but usually supported by the team manager (TRS B2). The first stage of an appeal is reviewed but usually supported by the team manager with the senior manager (B3 or C1) only involved for the second stage of an appeal. Even at this point, the overall decision making process by the senior manager is heavily steered by the investigation and the recommendations made by this role.
- This investigation carried out by this role is more complex than the A3 role and the post holder is providing advice and justifying a course of action to a senior member of staff. This is similar to the benchmark guidance for B1 level of providing direct support to others in Band B or to a member of staff in Band C by undertaking

necessary research and investigative work and suggesting a course of action or making recommendations.

- Processing/routine activities only occupy 10 per cent of this role including typing up minutes of meetings and processing applications.

### 3.2 Complaints and Appeals Support Officer A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27313893/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>A4</b>

#### Comments

- The benchmark guidance states that a key A4 duty is to provide support directly to more senior posts by undertaking necessary research and investigative work and suggesting a course of action.
- A large part of this role (up to 95 per cent) is to “*investigate and draft investigation plans incl. recommendations and correlating responses to first stage complaints/appeals*”. A big part of this involves the transfer of information.
- This role deals with the first stage of complaints and appeals only but the investigation steps described for the above A4 role apply, albeit perhaps not as complex) to this role. This involves reviewing the student record, supporting evidence (including any additional evidence submitted alongside appeals) and previous correspondence and advice from policy, other teams in SAAS and the Student Loan Company. This role involves drafting a response based on their investigation and make a recommendation. The written response therefore requires a lot of free text as way of justification. The difference between the investigation required in this role and the above present A4 role is likely to be complexity and level of direct supervision.
- In terms of autonomy, there is an element of independent working such as the drafting and responding for the first stage of a complaint appears to be handled initially by this role but also supported by the A4. There is therefore a potential small impact in this not being done properly. The first stage of an appeal is reviewed but usually supported by the team manager.
- Processing/routine activities only occupy 5 per cent of this role including typing up minutes of meetings and processing applications.

### 3.3 Counter Fraud Analysis Officer A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27516870/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>B1</b>

#### Comments

- Processing/routine activities do not seem to form a major part of this role and when they do, they are linked to interpretation and analysis.
- 55 per cent of the role involves “*engaging in continuous improvement by identifying and suggesting improvement ideas for all standard reports and Counter Fraud databases*” and the role description includes “*responsibility for maintenance and technical support for upkeep of the case management system, and fraud analysis database*”. This sits at B1 level. In addition, the role has responsibilities for “*conducting pro-active analysis*” and the main working level for interpretation which is in line with the benchmarking guidance for B1.
- 10 per cent of the role involves “*developing IT based solutions to facilitate efficient and accurate processing of large data sets for analysis*” which is work at an innovative level which would not be seen at a lower grade. The role, in general, requires a high amount of analysis and investigative and innovative work which clearly moves this role out of the band A structure.
- Interaction with staff at a higher band is beyond the A3/A4 transfer of information and requires recommendations to courses of action out with guidance and procedures. From the benchmarking guide for B1, posts “will provide information and advice, explore options and provide suggested course of action” which forms a large part of the duties of this role.
- The post is line with B1 level for problem solving, decision making, autonomy and impact stated in the grading guidance.

### 3.4 Counter Fraud Officer A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27516838/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>A3</b>

### Comments

- The largest part of this role (80%) appears to be well within the A3 band, involving processing requests in line with guidance and established procedure. This is routine work and does not require analysis or investigation, with any queries being passed to more senior officers.
- The 20% Fraud Investigation part of the role is a mixture of routine work *such as “monitoring of Counter Fraud Team Inbox, ensuring emails are correctly categorised to individuals following pre-determined guidance and highlighting any issues to the Fraud Investigations Manager”* and more advanced work involving elements of investigation and analysis. If this was a larger part of the role this would possibly push the post into a higher band but as it is should provide an opportunity for post holder to develop competencies which will be useful for the future.

### **3.5 Finance Officer A4**

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27516917/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

### Comments

- Large part of this role is processing invoices, checking information, making one off payments and finance processes.
- Other elements may add up to a higher grade. Relatively high level of expertise and representing first line in case working area outside processing role.
- Post holder liaises with numerous internal and external organisations to identify solutions. They liaise with IT, with Treasury and Banking, with Student Loans Company and with HEIs on all manner of issues from technical fixes, where an in-depth knowledge of the payment process and systems is required, to problem solving issues on behalf of institutions.
- The resolution element is unscripted as to process – suggests innovative work.
- The role does much of the technical follow-up required in obtaining solutions to payment issues. The ‘fixer’ if you like.

### 3.6 Recoveries Specialist A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27517126/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

#### Comments

- This job contains a sizeable element of processing and routine work. However there is also an element where the Recoveries Specialist is expected to be the first line of referral for complex cases, which takes this role into A4 band work.
- There is investigative work expected of the post holder, including managing overpayments which fall outside current guidance and contributing views and feedback to senior managers and direct line management. It would not be expected that the post holder is under a large amount of day-to-day supervision.
- The value of the debt is not important in determining band level.
- This role contributes to decisions made at a higher level with information and advice but does not require innovative work. The elements of investigative work and analysis don't appear lift this past the A4 level as the main part of this role would be routine processing within guidelines.
- 15 per cent of the role makes decisions on court action within guidelines and liaises with solicitors to review the case history to determine if the correct in-house process has been followed, identifying where further action is required (further contact, address trace). Also takes into considerations any factors that may mean court action is not appropriate, for instance, type of debt, debtor's personal circumstances. Some level of autonomy - although an established process is in place, circumstances vary from case to case.

### 3.7 Recoveries Officer A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27517014/details>

No. of Positions	3
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A3</u></b>

#### Comments

- Mainly routine information processing and sending out of letters, with complex cases escalated to the higher band.
- Reviews case history to determine if correct procedure has been followed. Low level of autonomy.

- This role requires a degree of investigative work within given procedures but most of the activities still fall within the A3 band. Where investigation's required it's carried out within templates and liaison with stakeholders is also based in information gathering only.
- This post again appears to be upper A3 with some investigative work required which would help the post holder if they were looking towards gaining a promotion in the future.

### 3.8 Quality and Performance Caseworker A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27460087/details>

No. of Positions	3
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

#### Comments

- 30 per cent of the role involves “*performing quality checks on cases for schemes across operations*”. This is in line with the A4 benchmark guidance which states that an A4 duty may involve allocation of tasks and checking of work.
- 15 per cent of the role is to reorganise and reformat guidance to make it easier to understand and clear for users. Although there is an element of creating drafts, this requires sign off by a more senior grade. Appears to be relatively straightforward and within the A4 structure with a degree of judgement and interpretative ability to be exercised within guidelines and established practice.
- 10 per cent of the role involves reviewing reports for errors where a case has been handled but the guidance not adhered to. This role gathers and reports the error and escalates to a more senior role to take it further.
- 35 per cent of this role “*handles cases and queries escalated from all areas of Operations relating to operational policy or processes*” such as checking errors in guidance or reviewing complex cases. This duty also involves “*providing managers up to B3 level with key information and recommendations for a decision*” which comes under the A4 level responsibility of providing support directly to more senior posts by undertaking necessary research and straightforward investigative work and suggesting a course of action. Actual decision making and problem solving is relatively limited.
- However, in the above duty, there is sometimes no precedent and judgement and interpretation is therefore required and applied alongside experience that is expected within this role. This post therefore appears to be upper A4 which would help the post holder if they were looking towards gaining a promotion in the future.

### 3.9 Contact Centre CCR Enquiry Officer A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27277167/details>

No. of Positions	7
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>A3</b>

#### Comments

- Large majority of the role handles straightforward queries in line with guidance. There is an escalation point for more specific or complex queries.
- 30 per cent of this role manages and maintains 3 contact centre request inboxes dealing with more specific or complex telephone enquiries in accordance with regulations and instructions which might reach up to A4 albeit only a small part of the role. This role however tends to involve reviewing this query but escalating to a B1 manager if it is deemed complex.
- Limited autonomy, decision making or impact.

### 3.10 Contact Centre Enquiry Officer A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27277074/details>

No. of Positions	23
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>A3</b>

#### Comments

- Large majority of the role handles straightforward queries in line with guidance. There is an escalation point for more specific or complex queries to CCR.
- All tasks are performed in accordance with established procedures and work is regularly checked by line manager or specialised/dedicated team.
- Limited autonomy, decision making or impact.

### 3.11 Contact Centre Social Media Enquiry Officer A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27277220/details>

No. of Positions	8
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>A3</b>

### Comments

- Large majority of the role handles straightforward queries in line with guidance. There is an escalation point for more specific or complex queries to CCR.
- 30 per cent of the role handles straightforward queries in line with guidance via social media. Escalation point for more specific or complex queries go to Social Media Manager.
- Limited autonomy, decision making or impact.

### **3.12 EDM Officer A3**

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27023268/details>

No. of Positions	3
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A3</u></b>

### Comments

- The majority of this role is sorting mail that is received into batches, scanning, printing, data input and carrying out the daily mail run. Clear general A3 level duties.
- A largely manual role with no autonomous decision making or analysis.

### **3.13 Operational Processing Teams Caseworker A3**

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27277267/details>

No. of Positions	50
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A3</u></b>

### Comments

- Up to 60 per cent of the role is *“to process (including the manual calculation of applications for part time students) in line with departmental processes and guidelines”* and *“updating student records accordingly”*. The SG grading guidance states that processing information and updating records is A3 level work. No manual calculations required.
- This role involves processing within a prescribed environment under the supervision of a line manager and following guidelines and procedures. Any difficult or complex work is escalated by the post holder and autonomy is limited to suggesting minor changes to how procedures are carried out.
- Up to 30 per cent of the role is handling straightforward enquiries. There is an escalation point for complex queries.

### 3.14 Nursing And Allied Health Professions Caseworker A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27277267/details>

No. of Positions	2
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>A3</b>

#### Comments

- *Up to 60 per cent of the role is “to process (including the manual calculation of applications for part time students) in line with departmental processes and guidelines” and “updating student records accordingly”.* The SG grading guidance states that processing information and updating records is A3 level work. No manual calculations required.
- This role involves processing within a prescribed environment under the supervision of a line manager and following guidelines and procedures. Any difficult or complex work is escalated by the post holder and autonomy is limited to suggesting minor changes to how procedures are carried out.
- Up to 30 per cent of the role is handling straightforward enquiries. There is an escalation point for complex queries.

### 3.15 Part time fee grant Caseworker A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27277267/details>

No. of Positions	6
Benchmarking Outcome	<b>A3</b>

#### Comments

- *Up to 60 per cent of the role is “to process (including the manual calculation of applications for part time students) in line with departmental processes and guidelines” and “updating student records accordingly”.* The SG grading guidance states that processing information and updating records is A3 level work.
- Manual calculations are involved for every application in this role in order to work out a student’s income frequency. This is a straightforward calculation applied under clear instructions.
- This role involves processing within a prescribed environment under the supervision of a line manager and following guidelines and procedures. Any difficult or complex work is escalated by the post holder and autonomy is limited to suggesting minor changes to how procedures are carried out.

- Up to 30 per cent of the role is handling straightforward enquiries. There is an escalation point for complex queries.

### 3.16 Postgraduate, rest of UK and EU Caseworker A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27277267/details>

No. of Positions	5
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A3</u></b>

#### Comments

- *Up to 60 per cent of the role is “to process (including the manual calculation of applications for part time students) in line with departmental processes and guidelines” and “updating student records accordingly”*. The SG grading guidance states that processing information and updating records is A3 level work. No manual calculations required.
- The role involves processing within a prescribed environment under the supervision of a line manager and following guidelines and procedures. Any difficult or complex work is escalated by the post holder and autonomy is limited to suggesting minor changes to how procedures are carried out.
- Up to 30 per cent of the role is handling straightforward enquiries. There is an escalation point for complex queries.

### 3.17 Nursing And Allied Health Professions Specialised Caseworker A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27218280/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

#### Comments

- This role has as a large processing aspect and this processing also involves being first line of escalation for complex queries, involving a level of interpretation.
- This work involves independent and non-directly checked elements such as responding to ad-hoc queries and advising colleagues on aspects of interpreting guidance but these are not the main part of the role.
- There are aspects of analysis including assessing the performance of A3 team members and providing feedback. These are roughly at a first line supervisory level and involve supporting the B1 line manager.

- Due to the level of process and procedure based work this is very clearly an A4 position and not a B1 role. This job does not involve innovative work or decision making past a level where errors can be quickly corrected without wider issues to the organisation.

### 3.18 Postgraduate rest of UK and EU Specialised Caseworker A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27023315/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

#### Comments

- This role has as a large processing aspect and this processing also involves being first line of escalation for complex queries, involving a level of interpretation.
- This work involves independent and non-directly checked elements such as responding to ad-hoc queries and advising colleagues on aspects of interpreting guidance, but these are not the main part of the role.
- There are aspects of analysis including assessing the performance of A3 team members and providing feedback. These are roughly at a first line supervisory level and involve supporting the B1 line manager.
- Due to the level of process and procedure based work this is very clearly an A4 position not a B1 role. This job does not involve innovative work or decision making past a level where errors can be quickly corrected without wider issues to the organisation.

### 3.19 DSA Specialised Caseworker A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27022366/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

#### Comments

- This seems to be a first line role in line with A4 benchmarking where the post holder deals with more complex cases referred by A3s. From the A4 definition in the pay and grading guidance: posts will undertake the analysis of data and will deal with well-defined tasks, sorting problems by interpretation and/or application of sometimes complex rules or guidance and precedence. Analysis and interpretation of material will be required and the use of experience may be a significant factor in solving problems.

- The balance of work is tilted more towards this type of work than the manual processing and exchange of basic information performed by A3 caseworkers but it is not innovative work. The post holder is deciding within the boundaries of previously laid down guidance and procedure with an element of interpretation.
- Impact is limited (as with the A3 caseworkers) to errors which can be easily amended and contact with staff in higher bands does not involve more than transfer of information.
- A small part of the duties involve deputising for an absent team manager but this is purely in relation to day to day running of the team and is a basic level of involvement in people management.

### 3.20 DSA Caseworker A3

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27022342/details>

No. of Positions	6
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A3</u></b>

#### Comments

- The main duties involve manually processing information and requesting and evaluating the information within the boundaries of guidance. These sit at A3 level.
- The role does not involve autonomous decision making or innovation. Any cases which present a higher level of difficulty would be referred to the team's A4.
- This role works closely with management supervision and oversight and within established guidance and procedures. They are not involved in analysis or interpretation of complex cases or of performance and do not have a supervisory or managerial function.

### 3.21 People and Performance Administrator (HR) A4

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27355417/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

### Comments

- This role is clearly within the A4 band.
- The role fulfils the A4 criterion of providing support directly to more senior posts by undertaking necessary research and investigative work and suggesting a course of action but neither of them require innovative work or decision making beyond support to a senior manager.
- This role has a sizeable element of process driven tasks at a lower level. It wouldn't be expected that post holder performs all their tasks under the direct supervision of their line manager and both roles do involve analysis and interpretation, but the tasks described don't reach the criteria for a higher grade.

### **3.22 People and Performance Administrator (LD) A4**

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A27340255/details>

No. of Positions	1
Benchmarking Outcome	<b><u>A4</u></b>

### Comments

- This role is clearly within the A4 band.
- The role fulfils the A4 criterion provide support directly to more senior posts by undertaking necessary research and investigative work and suggesting a course of action but neither of them require innovative work or decision making beyond support to a senior manager.
- The slight exception to that is where the role involves "creating materials". This involves using information provided from more senior grades rather than the post holder determining this information. This also does not appear to be more than a minor aspect of the role.
- This role has a sizeable element of process driven tasks at a lower level. It wouldn't be expected that post holder performs all their tasks under the direct supervision of their line manager and both roles do involve analysis and interpretation, but the tasks described don't reach the criteria for a higher grade.

## 4. Conclusion

4.1 HR and PCS benchmarked 22 band A roles and recommend the following 3 posts are regraded to a higher level:

- Complaints and Appeals Officer A4 to B1
- Complaints and Appeals Support Officer A3 to A4
- Counter Fraud Analysis Officer A4 to B1

4.2 HR and PCS recommend the remaining 19 band A roles are sitting at the correct level; albeit some of the roles contain elements of reaching up.

4.3 HR and PCS benchmarked each role based on the job descriptions provided in February 2020. This therefore isn't taking into consideration any jobs that may have since changed or evolved.

4.4 HR and PCS have benchmarked each role and made recommendations on the information provided. Should SAAS wish to upskill further posts, this would be a separate restructuring process.