

Unipol Student Homes
Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure (maternity leave cover)
January 2020

General Information

Unipol is a housing Charity established in 1973 by the University and the then Polytechnic in Leeds in co-operation with their Student Unions. In 1997, Unipol became an incorporated Charitable Company with a Board structure.

Unipol provides assistance in finding and supplying housing for students in Nottingham, Leeds and is the main private sector service supplier for the University of Bradford and Bradford College, Leeds Beckett University, the University of Leeds, Nottingham Trent University, The Northern College of Contemporary Dance, Leeds City College, Leeds Arts University and Leeds College of Music.

Unipol fulfils four distinct but connected roles:

- it has its own Housing Section which develops, takes into ownership and manages refurbished properties and lets them directly to students. Unipol is currently responsible for housing around 3,000 students (including over 210 student families) located in Leeds, 270 students in Nottingham and 59 students in Bradford

- it runs three Housing Hubs providing a forum in which owners (including Unipol) can advertise their properties. Although owners are asked to pay a fee for Unipol's services the Housing Hubs are partially funded by the institutions listed above. Unipol's websites, which centralises all private sector vacancies, are a major source of information and advice for students and receives around 100 million hits a year

- Unipol runs a number of successful voluntary accreditation schemes for owners letting to students that covers 79% of student housing need in Leeds, 65% in Nottingham and 99% in Bradford. The Codes are designed to maintain and improve property and management standards. In Leeds Unipol runs the Leeds Rental Standard for the City Council and in Nottingham Unipol, together with DASH (Decent and Safe Homes) runs the Nottingham Standard.

Unipol has a stake in two Government Approved Codes of Practice dealing with larger student developments in the United Kingdom. Unipol currently accredits an estimated 340,000 student bed spaces.

- through its training arm "Unipol Training" Unipol is the main national trainer in the niche market of student accommodation, running a full annual programme. The training arm also undertakes some bespoke in house training and a number of briefings for different constituencies. Unipol has in-house training facilities in both Nottingham and Leeds.

Unipol is currently following a *Forward Look* designed to maintain and upgrade its services to meet the increasing needs of its student clientele and increase its own accommodation services. A copy of this can be found at <http://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/corporate-documents-policies/forward-look-2015-2018>. A new *Forward Look* will be formulated for the beginning of 2019 and will cover 2019-2022

Unipol is organised into six operational areas:

i) the Senior Management Team consists of the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive, the Director of Finance, the Assistant Chief Executive - Housing, the Assistant Chief Executive - Hub Services, the Assistant Chief Executive - Standards and the Assistant Chief Executive - Communications and IT.

The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive are supported by an Office Administrator and Homestay Coordinator.

ii) The Finance Team is headed by the Director of Finance and consists of a Finance Manager, three Senior Finance Officers (one part time), two Finance Officers, two Finance Assistants and one part-time Finance Clerk, supplemented by consultants for project work from time to time. **This post is part of this team**

iii) Housing Services and the Housing Hub is an integrated service and the staff teams operate operationally together. Certain Housing Hub operations are overseen by the Assistant Chief Executive - Hub Services and they are assisted by a number of Housing Hub Assistants and a Housing Hub Advisor.

The Housing team is overseen by the Assistant Chief Executive - Housing and consists of the Housing Manager - Logistics and Compliance, the Housing Manager - Operations and the Development Manager (who is directly answerable to the Chief Executive). In Leeds and Bradford day to day housing management is carried out by two housing management teams, each with a *Team Leader* who have an assistant to assist them in administrative matters supported by a number of other housing management staff.

Within the two housing teams there are two Senior Housing Management Officers, 3 Housing Management Officers, a Maintenance Assistant and the teams are supplemented by Residents' Assistants (currently 20) and a number of part time Housing Assistants over the summer (normally seven who are overseen by one of the Team Leaders) and throughout the year (currently three).

Located within the housing management team but directly answerable to the Deputy Chief Executive is the Tenancy Support and Wellbeing Coordinator and the Delivery and Development Officer.

iv) The Nottingham the housing service is overseen by a Nottingham Housing Team Leader, with a Senior Housing Management Officer supported by a Housing Management Officer and a Residents' Assistant. A Nottingham Services Officer operates the Housing Hub function, supported by a Housing Hub Assistant. The Nottingham housing management service will expand from its current 286 bed

spaces to 616 in the summer of 2020 with the addition of Unipol's first large leased complex.

v) The Standards Team is headed by the Assistant Chief Executive - Standards who oversees all accreditation and tribunal systems which is coordinated by the Unipol Codes Administrator and a National Codes Administrator together with the Complaints and Code Investigator. Marketing, both in respect of brand and lettings, falls within this team and is undertaken by the Digital Marketing Coordinator and the Marketing Coordinator. The team also has the Conferences, Events and Design Officer who operates Unipol's conference operation.

vi) The organisation has a technical services arm that is led by the Assistant Chief Executive - Communications and IT who oversees an IT Manager, an Applications Developer and an ICT Officer to ensure that the organisation maintains high quality IT and web services.

About this post

Unipol currently has growing turnover which is currently just over £11m and will rise to almost £14m by 2021 and has complex financial administration related to its multi-faceted operations. ***This is a relatively new post and represents an additional resource within the finance team as the previous work of one Senior Finance Officer has recently been reconfigured and refocussed.***

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure is a key member of staff, maintaining and administering Unipol's financial and other records in close co-operation with the Finance Manager, Senior Finance Officer - Income, Senior Finance Officer (Balance Sheet) and other finance staff. Independence in the arrangement of work under a minimum of supervisory control and the exercise of personal initiative is essential.

This post reports to the Finance Manager and has a number of important first line responsibilities:

- managing the reporting of expenditure in all areas of the charity liaising closely with budget holders
- preparing monthly management accounts for all expenditure to agreed timescales with detailed variance analysis
- assisting in the preparation of all expense budgets liaising closely with all budget holders
- maintaining financial control in respect of all payments made whilst acting as one of the main cheque signatories.

Essential requirements are previous work experience in a finance role together with working knowledge of Excel spreadsheets and an understanding of the Worldpay, Futurepay and MOTO systems. Experience of change management within finance systems would be an advantage.

Desirable requirements are a working knowledge of Microsoft Navision together with supervisory skills.

Candidates with, or working towards a UK recognised Professional Accounting qualification would have a distinct advantage.

This is a part-time post (0.5 fte or 17.5 hours a week) and carries a University Grade 6 salary £27,511-£32,817 (pro rata) according to qualifications and relevant experience. This post is maternity leave cover for a period of 14 months. All those working in Unipol are jointly employed by Unipol Student Homes and the University of Leeds.

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure is required to work a limited number of planned anti-social hours, at certain times of the year. All those working in Unipol are jointly employed by Unipol Student Homes and the University of Leeds. Unipol currently uses Microsoft Navision.

Specific Duties of the Post Include:

Month End

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure has first line responsibility for completing the month end process for all expenditure accounts within the P&L and Balance Sheet according to the month end timetable.

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure also:

- ensures that management accounts are reconciled monthly and undertakes an initial review in conjunction with the Senior Finance Officer (Balance Sheet), Finance Assistant (Purchase Ledger) and Finance Manager to ensure accuracy and consistency
- works with relevant budget holders to develop then format and maintain relevant monthly management reports in a user friendly format
- ensures reports are reviewed by the appropriate budget holder and also ensures that any anomalies (including over and under-spends) are fully understood and analysed and that such variances are notified to the appropriate budget holder and appropriate action is agreed and recorded
- prepares a monthly report for the Director of Finance highlighting significant variances and events.

Budget and Forecast Preparation

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure:

- meets with budget holders to help generate accurate expenditure budgets
- develops, maintains and updates the budget model in excel and accompanying notes
- uploads the Board-approved budget and ensures that the budgets within the nominal ledger are kept up to date with any revisions.

Purchase Ledger

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure:

- has first line responsibility for the smooth running of the purchase ledger and document management system and supports the Finance Assistant (Purchase Ledger), the Finance Assistant (Cashbook), the Finance Clerk and the broader team in respect of purchase ledger operations. Other responsibilities include:

- ensuring invoices are processed and coded on a consistent basis to avoid a build-up of uncoded invoices and liaises with other teams to ensure invoices are approved, processed and paid in a timely manner
- is the main authority for coding within finance and support the team with coding queries and will undertake necessary training for other members of staff in respect of descriptions and coding (including VAT codes)
- acts as quality control in respect of coding and descriptions, regularly reviewing and feeding back to members of staff to ensure consistent, reliable, user friendly management information
- will help authorise purchase invoices (together with the Finance Manager and Director of Finance)
- reviewing the weekly purchase ledger run to ensure invoices are paid on time and take into account all transactions including credit notes
- reviews and will suggest improvements to the document management system and process
- liaise with the housing team and contractors to develop repairs reporting and incorporate StarRez repair descriptions into contractor invoices and from there into the document management system and ultimately the finance system.

Banking

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure is:

- a cheque signatory on behalf of Unipol
- a primary signatory for all cheques under £3,000 (or any subsequent limit determined from time to time by the Board) drawn upon Unipol or any subsidiary company if so required
- a Unipol internal controlling signatory on cheques presented for Board members signature.

In preparing payments the Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure takes full responsibility for the payment being made in a proper and accountable manner.

Financial Accounting

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure has responsibility for undertaking the following tasks (as have all members of the finance team):

Rent Collection and Tenancy matters

- administering the rent collection system, ensuring that payment documentation including direct debits are completed correctly and that rent payments are made regularly, as directed by the property agreement
- undertaking any amendments required to be made on direct debits or payment plans
- checking contract details in StarRez ready for import onto the financial software to ensure that tenants are correctly charged rent
- answering queries from tenants regarding rent payments and following the rent collection procedure

- filing financial and supporting documentation so as to ensure ease of access to information.

Year End Audit and Ad Hoc Reporting

- providing reports and information for year-end audit purposes assisting auditors in their enquiries
- providing reports and information to the Director of Finance to support Committee and Board papers as requested.

Financial Accounting

- posting entries onto Unipol's financial computer software including: rent charges, rent receipts, other invoices and receipts and any credit notes
- processing payments and entering all payments onto the relevant account
- assisting in the administration of deposits levied from tenants preparing refunds and end of tenancy payments to tenants as directed;
- posting authorised month end journals.

Computer Systems

- acquiring and/or maintaining an up to date working knowledge of Unipol's computer systems, in particular Microsoft Dynamics Navision, StarRez, Real Asset Management, Therefore, Flexicapture and Microsoft Office packages currently in use (in house training is provided)
- acquiring and maintaining an up to date working knowledge of Unipol's payment systems (in housing training is provided).

Mail

- opening and distributing mail
- ensuring mail is ready for postal services to collect at the end of day
- ensuring internal mail to University is delivered and distributed as necessary
- ensuring the franking machine is kept in working order and order stationery for it and ensure credit is maintained on the franking machine.

General Duties

The Senior Finance Officer - Expenditure will undertake such general duties within Unipol as from time to time may be required and shall accept periodic revisions of this job specification where transferable skills are utilised.

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Person Specification

Essential

- Previous work experience in a finance role
- Sound working knowledge of Excel, including the ability to interpret and manipulate financial information within spreadsheets
- Experience of budget and forecast preparation
- Experience of purchase ledger operations
- Experience of analysing information and producing meaningful reports, conclusions and recommendations
- Experience of maintaining financial records and preparing month end information
- Excellent attention to detail including the ability to maintain accuracy whilst working under pressure
- Working knowledge of financial software
- Ability to work in a team and independently
- Able to use own initiative
- Ability to plan and manage own workload, and work to tight deadlines with minimum supervision.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including the ability to present and explain financial information to non-finance colleagues

Desirable

- Experience of supervising and supporting staff to achieve objectives
- A working knowledge of Microsoft Dynamics Navision, Therefore and Flexicapture would be an advantage
- Part qualified or studying for CIMA or ACCA
- Experience of working in property management would be an advantage
- Experience of working with young people would be an advantage
- Experience of collecting debts
- An understanding of the Worldpay, Futurepay and MOTO payment systems.

Unipol and University Values

All staff are expected to operate in line with Unipol's and the University of Leeds' values and standards. More information about these values is available at <https://www.unipol.org.uk/about> and <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/comms/strategy/>

Additional Information

The University and Unipol offers generous terms and conditions of employment, a wide range of benefits, services, facilities and family friendly policies. Full details are available on the Human Resources web pages accessible at www.leeds.ac.uk/hr