

Unipol Student Homes

Finance Assistant (Cash Book)

Full time, fixed term for 3 years

The charity has a turnover of approx £10m and has complex financial administration related to its multi-faceted operations. The Finance Assistant (Cash Book) undertakes important and accurate routine financial work within a team environment. This includes dealing with both customers (including tenants and conference delegates) and suppliers. The Finance Assistant is a key member of Unipol's financial team and is expected to play a full role in interacting with other finance staff and staff in Bradford and Nottingham as well as Leeds.

You will require accuracy, flexibility and the ability to organise your own workload, under the guidance of the Finance Manager.

You must have a minimum of one year's previous work experience in a finance role together with good keyboard skills. Experience of working in a busy and demanding environment with strict deadlines would be an advantage. Good communication skills both written and oral are essential.

Experience of operating a computer records system and any working knowledge of Microsoft Office (especially Word and Excel) and financial software, would be an advantage and the ability to train in these systems is essential. Unipol currently uses Opera but is moving to Microsoft Navision in the summer of 2017.

Unipol, the University of Leeds and the other universities and organisations are multi-cultural communities, which value diversity. You are expected to treat all individuals fairly, with dignity and respect and contribute to creating a safe, supportive and welcoming environment for all.

You will be based in Leeds but will be required, from time to time, to undertake work in Bradford and Nottingham. Expenses will be met for travel associated with these visits (if appropriate). The post will require considerable flexibility in working hours and you will be required to work some anti-social hours, at certain times of the year, including certain weekends and bank holidays (as are all Unipol staff).

All those working in Unipol are employed jointly by the University of Leeds.

University Grade 4 (£18,777 - £21,585 p.a.) according to qualifications and relevant experience.

Informal enquiries may be made to Liz Hodgen tel +44 (0)113 205 3415, email jobs@unipol.org.uk.

Ref: CSUNI1026

Click here for further information about Unipol <http://www.unipol.org.uk/home>

Unipol Student Homes is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales NO 3401440. Registered Charity No. 1063492.

Job Description

Reports to: Finance Manager

Main duties and responsibilities

Cash Books

You will be responsible for:

- preparing and maintaining cashbooks in a timely manner within the Finance system;
- updating the contact manager system to record liaison with those who have been invoiced;
- maintaining records relating to all receipts and ensuring their correct allocation onto the financial records;
- preparing remittances where necessary to ensure the correct allocation of receipts;
- the petty cash system operated by Unipol; ensuring that petty cash is reconciled on a weekly basis and 'topping-up' the float as and when necessary and preparing the journal posting entries into the nominal ledger for the money spent in the petty cash system to ensure the accurate and timely monthly close down of the cashbook;
- producing bank reconciliations on each working day and as at the end of month;
- bringing to the attention of the Finance Manager any discrepancies in the reconciliation;
- bringing to the attention of the Finance Manager any irregularities that are identified within the cashbook or petty cash systems;
- keeping all loan accounts up to date and reconciled on a monthly basis;
- reporting to the relevant housing management staff when deposits have been received from tenants;
- reconciling deposit receipts to the housing management system under the supervision of the Senior Finance Officer;
- identifying unallocated income and process to the correct account with the correct reference;
- identifying and suggesting improvements for the maintenance of the cashbook and petty cash system to the Finance Manager.

Cashflow - Maintain and review the cash flow model, monitoring loan covenant compliance

You will assist the Director of Finance in:

- maintaining and updating the organisation's cash flow model and assumptions;
- updating and setting up new data feeds as required;

- reconciling forecast to actual cash flow on a monthly basis;
- investigating and reporting on variances;
- ensuring the cash flow forecast is accurate, identifying any issues and drawing these to the attention of Director of Finance in a timely manner;
- ensuring the cash flow model is able to fulfil financial banking covenant reporting requirements as applicable under the guidance of the Director of Finance.

Banking

You will be responsible for:

- producing bank statement information from the on-line banking system on a daily basis;
- ensuring that the records from the on-line banking system agree to the information provided on the hard copy bank statement;
- resolving queries with bank personnel to ensure that all items on bank statements can be properly allocated in Unipol's accounts;
- producing standing order mandate and direct debit mandate information to make payments to suppliers where applicable on a timely basis;
- obtaining relevant signatures on such documents in order that the bank can action them;
- ensuring that payments made by standing orders or direct debits are correctly entered into the cashbook and that the corresponding entries into the nominal ledger or purchase ledger are made;
- ensuring that credit/debit card payments are processed accurately and in a timely manner and correctly coded and backed up with the relevant receipts and signatures;
- ensuring that online payments are processed accurately and in a timely manner including declined card payments details so that these payments can be chased in a timely manner;
- preparing documentation and assisting in making banking arrangements as directed.

Direct Debits

You will be responsible for:

- setting up direct debits from phone callers following a script agreed with the bank;
- ensuring correct collection dates are entered in line with agreed dates.

Sundry Debtors including National Code, Conferences & Training

You will take first line responsibility for:

- ensuring invoices are processed in a timely manner in relation to sundry debtors including National Code, Conference and Training to support the appropriate member of staff;
- providing customers with invoices when requested and producing credit notes when authorised by the appropriate member of staff to do so;
- following up any debtors in a timely manner to ensure payments are received in accordance with terms given;
- bringing persistent debtors to the attention of the Finance Manager;
- ensuring that the appropriate operational member of staff is aware of those who have not paid;
- charging and collection of membership of Friends of Unipol at the appropriate time of year and in a timely manner;
- informing the Assistant Chief Executive - Standards of those who have not paid their Friends membership by the 1st September every year for the staff member to decide whether they should cease to be members;
- assisting the Training and Events Officer to resolve routine payment queries from delegates or institutions and refer queries to the Assistant Chief Executive - Standards if these cannot be resolved at an early stage;
- assisting the Code of Standards Administrator raise and monitor receipt of fee and verification invoices raising additional surcharges where authorised to do so.

VAT

You will be responsible for:

- assisting the Finance Manager in the preparation of the VAT return;
- reviewing to ensure that the correct VAT code has been used on purchase ledger invoices bringing to the attention of the Finance Manager any inconsistencies and errors in relation to VAT charges.

Stock

You will be responsible for:

- assisting the Finance Manager by taking stock takes and accurately recording this and presenting it in a logical order;
- assigning a value to the stock by obtaining a correct current unit price;
- obtaining procurement reports from the Senior Housing Management Officer (Procurement) to correct stock value at the year end.

Staff Expenses

You will be responsible for:

- ensuring that expenses are administered accurately and in a timely manner;

- ensuring that claims over £20 are countersigned by a line manager to authorise payment and that the payment is made by direct bank transfer or cheque;
- expenses under £20 which can be paid in cash from the petty cash.

Former Tenant Arrears

You will be responsible for:

- supporting the Finance Assistant (Credit Control) in administering the former tenant arrears ledger and rent collection system.

Purchase Ledger

You will be responsible for:

- providing cover for the Finance Assistant (Purchase Ledger) as required including all aspects of maintaining the document management system and ensuring suppliers are paid in a timely manner.

The Finance Assistant (Cash Book) 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;
- entering new tenant contract details in a timely manner;
- entering details onto the financial software to ensure that tenants are correctly charged rent in accordance with the completed tenancy agreement passed from Housing Management;
- 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;
- producing all miscellaneous tenant invoices and chasing for payment;
- working from information provided by Housing Management Officers to ensure that deposits are returned to tenants in full or tenants are provided with a breakdown of any deductions made whether for rent arrears or damage to property, together with supporting documentation.

Web chat:

- engaging with student enquiries made on the web chat forum and answer their questions about all aspects of Unipol's services but particularly those relating to financial matters. Web chat can be referred to a colleague in

another section or to those with more advanced knowledge. Staff using webchat will record feedback on the chat they have been involved with, encouraging the caller to do the same.

Debt Chasing:

- chasing tenants regarding rent payments following the rent collection procedure;
- ensuring the debt collection system is followed for other debtors and in that way ensure payments are made;
- bringing to the attention of the Finance Manager where there are any problems debtors at an early stage;
- identifying and suggesting improvements on debt collection to the Finance Manager;
- submitting a sundry debtors report to the Finance Manager on a monthly basis and highlight any potential issues so that the Finance Manager can take appropriate action.

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;
- giving freepost information back to University;
- ensuring the franking machine is kept in working order and order stationery for it and ensure credit is maintained on the franking machine.

Computer Systems

- acquiring and maintaining an up to date working knowledge of Unipol's computer systems, in particular Opera 3, Microsoft Navision, 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).

General Duties

- answering telephone enquiries from tenants or suppliers and undertake the collation of publications and journals and undertake photocopying when required.

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.

Any other duties as may reasonably be required, consistent with the grade of the post.

University Values

All staff are expected to operate in line with the university's values and standards, which work as an integral part of our strategy and set out the principles of how we work together. More information about the university's strategy and values is available at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/comms/strategy/>.

Person Specification

Essential

- Previous work experience in a finance role
- Excellent IT skills, proficient in MS Office Applications and the ability to undertake training to maintain an up to date knowledge commensurate with fully understanding financial systems software to exploit their potential.
- Excellent numeracy skills
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Excellent organisational skills
- Ability to work to tight deadlines
- Ability to work accurately and methodically
- Ability to work in a team and independently
- Enthusiastic, flexible and conscientious approach to work
- Experience of working with finance systems e.g. Opera 3
- Ability to convey information accurately
- Experience of working in a customer service environment

Desirable

- Experience of working with cash book
- Experience of working in property management
- Experience of working with young people
- Experience of collecting debts
- Experience in preparing VAT returns

Additional information

Working at Leeds

Find out more about the benefits of working at the University and what it is like to live and work in the Leeds area on our [Working at Leeds](#) information page.

Candidates with disabilities

Information for candidates with disabilities, impairments or health conditions, including requesting alternative formats, can be found on our [Accessibility](#) information page or by getting in touch with us at disclosure@leeds.ac.uk.

Criminal record information

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

A criminal record check is not required for this position. However, all applicants will be required to declare if they have any 'unspent' criminal offences, including those pending.

More about Unipol

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 College of Art and Leeds College of Music.

Unipol fulfils four distinct but connected roles:

- 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. Unipol also supports the University of Exeter in running their accreditation scheme.

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 271,000 student bed spaces (expected to rise to 300,000 over the course of 2017).

- it runs three Housing Hubs providing a forum in which owners 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

- 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 310 student families) located in Leeds, 270 students in Nottingham and 59 students in Bradford

- 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> on Unipol's website.

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 - Hub Services, the Assistant Chief Executive - Housing, the Assistant Chief Executive - Standards and Projects and the Assistant Chief Executive - IT and Communications.

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

ii) the Finance Team is headed by the Director of Finance and consists of a Finance Manager, a Senior Finance Officer and three full time and one part time Financial Assistants supplemented by consultants for project work from time to time.

This post is part of this team.

iii) the Housing Services team is currently in a state of transition and the organisation is mid-way through merging the housing services team with the Housing Hub teams in Leeds and Bradford.

The Housing Services team is overseen by the Assistant Chief Executive - Housing Services and consists of the Housing Manager, the Housing Services Coordinator,

the Development Manager and a Maintenance Coordinator with overarching operational and management functions.

In Leeds and Bradford day to day housing management is carried out by two housing management teams under Two Housing Team Leaders with two Senior Housing Management Officers and three Housing Management Officers. The Assistant Housing Management Officer is part of one of the housing management teams. The team is supplemented by Residents' Assistants (currently 17) and a number of part time Housing Assistants (varying from two in term time to seven over the summer). The Housing Assistants are overseen by the Senior Housing Management Officer (Procurement) and the Residents' Assistants are overseen by the relevant Housing Management Officers.

The Housing Hub operations are overseen by the Assistant Chief Executive - Hub Services and she is assisted by the Hub Marketing Officer and a number of Housing Hub Assistants (currently six).

Located within the housing management team but directly answerable to the Deputy Chief Executive is the Tenancy Support Officer.

iv) the Nottingham Service is led by the Nottingham Services Manager and consists of a Senior Housing Management Officer and one other Housing Management Officer and a number of part time Residential Assistants (currently three).

v) the organisation has a technical services arm that is led by the Assistant Chief Executive - IT and Communications who oversees an IT Manager, two ICT Officers, an Applications Developer and two part time support staff to ensure that the organisation maintains high quality IT and web services.

vi) The Student Interface and Standards Team is headed by the Assistant Chief Executive - Standards and Projects who oversees all accreditation and tribunal systems which is coordinated by a Unipol Codes Administrator and a National Codes Administrator together with a Code Complaints Investigator. The conferences and training operation (with the Training and Events Officer) digital media with the Digital and Social Marketing Coordinator) all work within this area.