1 Advertisement

Post Title: Accounts Receivable Adviser
Department: Finance Division
Hours: Full Time. Requests for flexible working options will be considered (subject to business need).
Contract: Fixed Term until 30 September 2020
Reference: 2038
Salary: starting at £21,814 and rising to £25,217. It is normal to appoint at the first point of the salary scale.
Closing date: 05 September 2019. Applications must be received by midnight of the closing date.
Expected interview date: w/c 16 September 2019
Expected start date: ASAP

The University is seeking to appoint an Accounts Receivable Adviser to join the Accounts Receivable team within the Financial Operations Department.

The successful applicant will have previous experience of debt collection from a range of business customers via telephone and email, and will be able to demonstrate the ability to communicate professionally and interpret financial information. The applicant will possess strong communication and decision making skills, being able to organise and prioritise their work in an environment where working with competing demands and deadlines is crucial. The applicant will be motivated and pro-active with good organisational skills and possess a high level of numeracy and literacy with experience in Agresso Business World or a similar high volume finance processing system.

The University of Sussex is a dynamic, innovative, top 50 university. With a campus based in the South Downs National Park but just a few minutes from the city of Brighton and Hove, it provides an excellent working environment in a remarkable setting, combined with all that the city has to offer.

Creative thinking, intellectual challenge and collaborative working are fundamental to a Sussex education and that is reflected in our workplace too. This is an exciting chance to join a team working at the centre of the University, with a genuine opportunity for career progression.

For full details and how to apply see our vacancies page

The University of Sussex values the diversity of its staff and students and we welcome applicants from all backgrounds.
2. **The Finance Division**

The Finance Division is led by the Director of Finance and comprises some 80 staff who provide high quality finance and procurement functions co-located with other professional services and senior management at Sussex House on the University campus at Falmer.

The Division’s vision is to be recognised by our stakeholders as a reliable high quality provider of financial services enabling the success of the University.

The division provides advice and information on all financial matters to all schools and professional services at the University of Sussex. The University’s annual budget is £260m so the division plays a key role in managing budgets, forecasting and reporting as well as supporting the development of the University’s existing capital and service portfolio. These portfolios include a complex and challenging range of strategically and financially significant projects to support the delivery of the University’s ambitious strategy, Sussex 2025. This includes state of the art facilities for teaching and research, investment in IT systems to ensure delivery of a world class customer experience for our students and other innovative and sector leading projects.

The division is continually renewing itself and its ambitions to provide consistently high quality services to the University, equipping staff across the University with excellent financial literacy, capability, competence and confidence and supporting the achievement of value for money through improved processes and support, better access to suitable suppliers and improved commercial terms.

The Division has a strong commitment towards staff training and development including professional qualification study enabling all staff to fulfil their potential.

3. **Job Description for the post of Accounts Receivable Advisor**

**Department:** Finance

**Section:** Financial Operations – Accounts Receivable

**Location:** Sussex House

**Grade:** 4

**Responsible to:** Accounts Receivable Supervisor

**Purpose of the post:**

The purpose of the role is to provide an efficient and effective debt collection service by managing a portfolio of debtor accounts which comprise of student, ex-student, sponsor, commercial, staff and BSMS debtors. The role involves reducing debt in accordance with department targets and key performance indicators and improving the University’s cash flow. Liaising with internal and external contacts in order to resolve queries, disputes and recover funds. Working within a team, providing assistance to team members and working collaboratively with the wider Financial Operations team.
Key Responsibilities:

- Providing an efficient & effective debt collection service
- Liaison with internal departments in order to manage student debt collection
- Liaison with external organisations
- Reporting, Analysis & Systems
- Processes & Procedures
- Providing support to the Financial Operations Team

Providing an efficient & effective debt collection service

- Responsibility for the debt recovery on a portfolio of accounts, (students, ex-students, sponsors, commercial, staff, BSMS) using collection processes via telephone, letter and email in order to recover funds due to the University. Planning, prioritising and organising workload to ensure that Key Performance Indicators and targets are achieved. Determining the most appropriate course of action required and the level of severity when payment is not received.

- Targeted reduction of outstanding debts in accordance with University policies, procedures and key performance indicators.

- Conducting regular review meetings with commercial customers in order to discuss methods of billing, resolve invoicing queries and establish working relationships that will result in the payment of invoices on time and to terms.

- Systematic production of system generated debt letters in order to ensure that debtors are aware of outstanding liability and that all queries, complaints and reasons for non-payment are resolved. Working within the team to ensure that tasks are subject to a rota, work is allocated appropriately and letters are issued to the timetable.

- Creation of bespoke letters in order to explain the University’s position on a case to a debtor, resolving disputes and recovering overdue income.

- Make decisions on the appropriate course of action when dealing with debtors. In the case of student and ex-student debtors, taking into account the sensitive nature of some student situations, considering the University’s duty of care, possible outcomes, likelihood of success and potentially adverse impact on the University’s reputation if an inappropriate course of action is taken.

- Conduct discussions with students in financial difficulty in order to assess their ability to pay debts. Meeting students (and their parents, guardians, sponsors) in order to resolve debt issues, referring them to the appropriate area such as the Student Life Centre if support is required.

- Managing challenging situations where international students need assistance in understanding the payment process and English will not be their first language.

- Responsibility for resolution of queries received via telephone, e-mail and in person within defined timescales in order to minimise payment delay.

- Determine those situations where sponsors have not paid fees on behalf of students and notifying students of the impact of this. Transferring unpaid invoices from sponsor liability to student liability, confirming action with senior team members and ensuring that
the appropriate notification to both sponsor and student is completed within agreed timelines.

- Retention and collation of accurate, valid documentation in relation to and in pursuance of overdue invoices.
- Conducting initial assessments of debtors to determine their ability to pay debts as a basis for any repayment plan.
- Arranging and administering repayment plans, seeking approval where appropriate, monitoring receipt and reviewing the suitability of plans regularly.
- Confirming written arrangements for the payment of debts.
- Recommending cases that should be forwarded to Collection Agents or Tracing Agents in order to recover monies due, preparation of case paperwork.
- Assessing and recommending cases to be submitted for legal action or write off, ensuring that documentation is provided to support the case.
- Processing refund requests.

**Liaison with internal departments in order to manage student debt**

- Liaising with Student Accounts, Student Life Centre and Student Records and Systems in order to schedule student debt collection activity that will impact on these areas, such as action to block access or to withdraw students on grounds of debt. Action to prevent students graduating on grounds of debt. Action to withdraw international students resulting in the withdrawal of a Visa and permission to remain in the UK.
- Referral of Students who require pastoral care and support in order to remedy situations that will have impacted their ability to make payment to the University such as health issues.
- Regular contact with University departments such as Housing and Library in order to resolve queries and disputes around student bills.
- Attend graduation ceremonies on a rotational basis in order to manage any student debt related queries which may arise.

**Liaison with External Organisations**

- Effective liaison with University Collection Agents to instruct them to trace absconded debtors in the UK and overseas or to instruct them to recover debts or commence legal action. Agree courses of action, resolve queries, determine likelihood of recovery, provide relevant paperwork should legal action be instigated and represent the University in court.
- Set up and administer BSMS student rent agreements, collecting payments in accordance with payment plans. Contacting BSMS students in the event of default and liaising with the Housing Department in the event that a Notice to Quit is necessary.
Meeting with student sponsors in order to resolve billing issues that may be impacting the payment of a significant number of students’ fees. Dealing with sponsors where English will not be a first language and it will be necessary to communicate clearly.

**Reporting, Analysis & Systems**

- Analyse a portfolio of accounts and identify those accounts that require bespoke activities such as high profile cases. Small balance debts that will require a specific approach. Accounts with aged credit balances that may be indicative of a process issue.

- Analyse Income and Expenditure reports and cash flow information for debtors in order to determine the appropriateness of any repayment proposal. Ensure that information provided by debtors is supported and that repayment proposals are realistic.

- To assist in the development of system processes, including systems testing, as required by the Supervisor.

- Maintenance of system information and related records, working with attention to detail and accuracy in order to maintain information which is covered under the Data Protection Act.

- Maintaining a computer based diary notes system to record all communications in order that accurate records of all activity are maintained.

**Processes & Procedures**

- Ensure that payments are accurately allocated in accordance with defined timescales and procedures and that transactions and adjustments are made to accounts accurately.

- Provide input into projects and key tasks, working collaboratively in order to review processes and procedures, providing feedback to the Accounts Receivable Supervisor.

**Providing support to the Financial Operations Team.**

- Provide training support to new starters ensuring that they are aware of policies and procedures and that feedback on progress is provided to the team senior or Supervisor.

- At peak times provide counter support to the Student Accounts team in order to serve students visiting with queries, explain payments processes, set up payment plans and take payments.

- To carry out other duties as requested by the Accounts Receivable Supervisor.

- This job description sets out current duties of the post that may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or the level of responsibility entailed.
4. Person Specification

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<tr>
<th>Skills/Abilities</th>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to operate within a cohesive team, providing effective, timely and frequent communication and interaction to help ensure deadlines and targets are achieved</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent oral and written communication skills. An ability to deal with people in face to face situations calmly, courteously and professionally</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Strong self - organisational skills, a pro-active approach, with an ability to prioritise and organise competing demands and achieve personal deadlines while maintaining accuracy</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>An ability to prioritise competing demands in a high volume environment, working accurately to deadlines and targets</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Able to work with a degree of personal initiative and to work without the need for constant supervision</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>An ability to evaluate situations and make appropriate commercial decisions</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>An ability to interpret and work with financial information, data and systems</td>
<td>X</td>
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Knowledge

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<tr>
<td>Demonstrable current knowledge of the Higher Education sector and student support regulations</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>A broad understanding of the principles of credit control, consumer and commercial debt collection, debt litigation processes and relevant processes for the collection of debt</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the operation of Agresso Finance System or similar multi user financial computer systems</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>A working understanding of relevant external regulations, i.e. Data Protection Act, Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) and regulatory / advisory bodies such as Office of Fair Trading</td>
<td>X</td>
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Qualifications

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<th>Essential</th>
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<tr>
<td>Able to demonstrate a high level of numeracy and literacy gained, either through the attainment of recognised qualifications, or relevant experience</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chartered Institute of Credit Management CIQM Diploma or equivalent level of knowledge gained through experience</td>
<td>X</td>
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### Personal Attributes

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<td>Approachable, tactful, and able to effectively deal with all level of enquiries both from within and outside of the team with professionalism</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Pro-active, self-motivated and results orientated self-starter capable of meeting agreed priorities efficiently</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Able to sustain a high volume of work and to handle pressure in a high volume environment. A self-starter with commitment and enthusiasm for the education sector</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible, reliable, honest and committed to maintaining confidentiality</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Comfortable working with high volumes of work and attendant pressures</td>
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### Experience

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<td>Proven experience of working accurately and effectively in a computer based environment using standard p.c. based software as well as bespoke products</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Experience of working within a Credit Control department, contacting customers in relation to unpaid debt and dealing with customers with differing requirements and issues</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Experience of consistently delivering a high quality personal service in a customer focussed environment</td>
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<td>Experience and involvement in the maintenance of effective systems and controls</td>
<td>X</td>
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