



Financial Services Newsletter



Issue 12

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Finance News

Welcome to our Lockdown 2 edition of the Financial Services Newsletter. The 'strange times' have now become the 'norm' as we continue to work from home. It has been a while since our last newsletter and, although it might seem as though we are in limbo, you can see that we are as busy as ever at work.

CSE Award

Following our most recent assessment in June, Financial Services has been, once again, awarded the Customer Service Excellence standard. Whilst having the assessment in the midst of a global pandemic was far from ideal, the assessor made particular reference to the efforts made by Financial Services staff to carry on helping our customers remotely during the pandemic. Well done everyone! The assessor highlighted 20 areas of 'Compliance Plus' where Financial Services is showing examples of exemplary practice within the sector.

As the last year has shown, no one knows what is around the corner, but in these uncertain times, our commitment to helping our customers under difficult circumstances continues.

Toni Gray's Retirement

After many years of work in the Student Finance Office, the team has sadly said goodbye to Toni Gray, a valued member of the team who chose to retire in July. The office will be a very different place without her and the team will certainly notice her absence!

We wish her all the best for her retirement and hope that she is enjoying her long walks and days on the allotment with her husband Trevor.

How Financial Services is keeping positive during the pandemic

2020 has been a year that has forced us to challenge our own creativity in order to keep ourselves and our families busy during lockdown. With various restrictions in place, we have asked some of you what you have done to keep busy despite not being able to venture far and to do things we would normally do.

Here are some of the responses we got back:

"I'd never really listened to podcasts prior to lockdown, but this is something I've started doing every day, usually while I'm out in the fields walking my cockapoo, Lenny. I've also downloaded an app on my phone to track how many miles I'm walking, as well as paying attention to my daily steps, and setting myself targets to try and beat the previous day. I've also enjoyed making the time to read every day, with all the bad news going on in the world at the moment, you can't beat losing yourself in a good book for an hour or so."

"I watched all 9 series of Scrubs which equates to 182 episodes and over 60 hours of watching within the first 6 weeks of lockdown. Now I have taken to walking anywhere and everywhere!"

"I started going for runs, when I never did that before. I can now run 4 miles"

"Instead of the gym, I have been doing daily workouts which helps me start my day feeling positive"

"I made a standing desk from offcuts of strip wood, MDF and timber board... Finally got my garage watertight by relaying some concrete in front of the garage door and put a new threshold down. Just got the masonry paint on last weekend. A bit of decorating in the hallway and landing. Oh! And I replaced four radiators."

"We have spent lots of time in the great outdoors and took in the wildlife that we don't usually notice."





"Mainly I've been walking. I've tried to go walking at the times I would normally be travelling to and from work, so a couple of hours a day. Managed to lose a stone and a half (21lbs) ish... Depending on curries and fish and chips!"

"I've put myself forward for Covid vaccine testing and have a medical screening next week to take part in trials so that could be interesting if it comes off – fingers crossed it'll help us all to get back to some sort of normality."

"I did make my way through all the Harry Potter books in the space of 4 weeks."

We are sure that many of you will have done other things; feel free to let us know! ☺

Data Returns Updates

We are now just emerging from our own special lockdown known as the HESA Student Return. The forthcoming report from our auditors explains our focus, "Across the sector...from August to October every year, most will do nothing but work on the Return..." but we also do four ILR returns in this period too. It's a good job that we get help from the rest of the office. Data from the HESA Student Return feeds into national statistics, higher education performance indicators and the population for NSS and Graduate Outcomes surveys. It also feeds in to the HESSES return to OfS, prepared by the Planning Team, and as this is an exceptional year, some of the year-on-year forecasting will need careful consideration. Handing over to Planning in November allows us time for reflection and analysis and, now that Data Futures has been delayed a little longer, we will be consulting on improvements to the systems and procedures to make the next return a little less painful.

The National Student Survey (NSS) is an annual survey of most undergraduates in their expected final year. Students are asked for their views on their course and their university. Survey scores are used in the calculation of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and university league tables, and are publicly available on the Discover Uni website. The NSS will be carried out between January and April 2021 as planned. We are currently working on the preparation of the NSS 2021 student sample and working with marketing to plan and prepare advertising to encourage students to take part.

On the Course Data side of things, we are now emerging from one of our busiest periods of the year. Updating our course information held on the Student Loan Company website is a painstakingly slow process as each course has to be updated individually in time for students to start applying. We then have to marry-up this information with the data held in ASIS so that loan payments can be processed upon the students enrolling. There are also some summer validation panels that usually result in a deluge of new course set-up requests arriving just as our work on the HESA return gets underway. This inevitably means that it is also our busiest time of the year for student and school queries. There is light at the end of the tunnel though, things do tend to ease up in the run up to Christmas, looking forward to the meal at Eric's...

...oh...

Staff Updates

We would also like to congratulate two members of staff who have recently found success within their roles. In June, Francis McAvoy was appointed to the new role of Student Records System Manager. Francis will be responsible for the day-to-day management of all the ASIS team and the development of ASIS. While in October, Joe Byrne was permanently appointed into the role of Head of Procurement. We wish both every success in their new positions.

New Starters

Financial Services has recruited two new starters within the ASIS team. Carolyn Newton is working with us on a part-time, temporary basis in 1st line support and the new ASIS developer is Hallam Storey, who joins us from Tribal. Welcome to Financial Services, we wish both the best of luck and look forward to meeting up in person soon. Just a thought, the ASIS team is a relatively new team within the department in comparison to the Financial and Management Accounting team who, collectively, have over 175 years of working in Finance. What a thought!

Financial Systems Support update

The Financial Systems team has been hard at work looking at processes and how best to make them work whilst we work from home. The biggest change however has occurred within the support function as since lockdown the systems team with the help of the Top desk software have moved its request for support function from telephone to email requests. This has meant that the team has managed to not only continue to provide support but have actually managed to increase its performance in answering queries. The time to reply has reduced and a much more efficient process than phone calls has been found.

We are hoping to send a financial systems update communication out to users to replace the system seminar that we have from time to time. This will inform users in detail of what we have been doing and what is planned for the future. We will circulate this as soon as it is ready.

Trading with the EU from 1st January 2021

Have you seen the adverts on TV? Do you buy goods from the EU? Then get ready.

The UK will leave the EU's Single Market and Customs Union and the UK will operate a full, external border with the EU. What does this mean for the University? From the 1st January, controls will be in place on the movement of goods between Great Britain and the EU, so if you are buying goods from the EU you may have to pay import duty and VAT at the port of entry and you will have to make a customs declaration.

In order to complete the declaration you will need the an Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number, a commodity code, the value of the goods and consider if there are any duty/VAT saving measures available.

EORI Numbers

The EORI number for UHHEC is GB 516 3101 90 000

The EORI number for UHEL is GB 516 3101 90 001

The EORI number for 3MBIC is GB 516 3101 90 002

Commodity Code

HMRC's link <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-tariffs-from-1-january-2021> will provide the commodity code and the import duty that may be applied to your goods.

Value of the goods

The value is the sum of the cost of goods + insurance + freight charges to bring it to the GB port of entry.

VAT

This is calculated on the total value of the goods and any duty that is due. The rate of VAT can be 20%, 5%, zero-rated or exempt depending upon the nature of the imported goods.

A good time to collect this information is at the procurement/purchase ordering stage as all this information will be required by the carrier, clearance agent or freight forwarder if appointed by you or your supplier. **All applicable import duty and VAT must be paid at the time of import by the department purchasing the goods.**

Further information regarding reliefs is available from Joe Byrne or Maureen Chambers and a more detailed reference manual will be available in the near future.

Please note there are different rules when importing goods from Northern Ireland.

TIP OF THE DAY Buy local ☺

Final Thoughts

A mathematician wanders back home at 3am (obviously many moons ago) and proceeds to get an earful from her husband. 'You're late!' he yells 'You said you'd be home by 11.45!' 'Actually,' the mathematician replies coolly 'I said I would be home by a quarter of 12'.

Keep safe and keep well!