

Financial Services Newsletter



Issue 6



December 2018

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Dates for the Diary

- Finance Open Day 8th April 2019



Finance News

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our University colleagues. Here is our final joyous newsletter for 2018, which includes articles on our wise 'men' of Finance. We hope you enjoy the Christmas Holidays and wish everyone a successful 2019, and just remember after your Christmas spending spree, you can always find money.....in the dictionary!

Student Finance Office

It's been a busy few months for the Student Finance Office! In September, we enrolled all our new students and met more at the welcome weekend. October has been full of enrolling students, Open Days, and generating about 17,000 invoices. As always it has been lovely getting to meet new and prospective students, and helping with the thousands of queries we have about Student Finance England and loan applications. Don't forget that if any student needs help or support we have a finance helpdesk located in Student Central where students can go and ask for advice, or book an appointment if they need more in depth help and support. We are really busy at this time of the year and appointments can fill up very quickly, so please let us know as soon as possible if you or anyone you know needs help or advice.

The exciting news from the Student Finance Office this year is the launch of the Student Finance portal – accessible via the Student Hub, where students can log in to see their finance account at the University. For the first time students can view and print invoices relating to this academic year, receipts for payments and make payments all in the same place. This allows students access to much more information about their fees and fee payments at the University, and there may yet be further developments on the portal to increase communication options for students so watch this space!

Student Records

September's enrolment was again held in the Oastler Building, The Student Records Team implemented ideas and suggestions that had emerged from feedback received in last year's successful enrolment. One idea was to run an enrolment survey in order to get an understanding of what we are doing well and where we could possibly improve. Therefore, two iPads were made available for new students to complete the online survey on the day.

- The response rate was 14% (10-15% is viewed as a really good response rate for an online survey).
- 96% of respondents answered 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' when asked how satisfied they were with the level of customer service they had received.
- 91% of respondents answered 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' when asked how satisfied they were with the overall enrolment experience,

Following on from the recent feedback survey, areas that the Student Records Team will be looking to improve include:

- A clearer queuing system in the enrolment venue
- Renaming of the pre-enrolment portal so it is clearer for the students to understand

We look forward to running the enrolment survey again in January 2019 and we aim to achieve an even higher response rate!



PIGS in Blankets

Keep an eye out for our special edition newsletter coming out in the New Year that will introduce the new PIGS within Financial Services!



Wise 'Men' of Finance

John Thompson – 25 Years' Service

John is Head of Procurement and a member of the Senior Management Team in Financial Services. He joined the University in April 1993 as "Senior Storekeeper and Purchasing Officer". John was previously at British Coal in Barnsley responsible for Stores and Purchasing and he has risen through the ranks here to his current position. John now oversees a yearly non-pay spend of £45m, over 3 times the amount when he arrived here. This includes people buying everything from nurse's uniforms to a multi-million-pound Ion Beam system. His leadership has seen the Procurement Department graded at the highest level of Superior in its annual external assessment, which only 8 other universities have achieved. Additionally, John oversees our Purchase Ledger which processed 17,822 invoices and expense claims last year. He also looks after our Insurance portfolio which has seen a significant reduction in claims compared with our peers in the sector.



Finally, John has driven our Customer Service Excellence initiative in Finance from a standing start 5 years ago to 20 Compliance Pluses which is the highest in the University and the only Finance Team in the sector. Not on John's Job Description are Thompson's Tours where he arranges for a group of Financial Services staff to visit other parts of the University so we all have a better feel for what we do.

John is passionate about everything he does – particularly Team Hud which he

regularly quotes to us. The nature of his job is that he knows what's going on around the University and which can be very useful! He's also the heart and soul and character of the Department. You know when he's in the office! And he's not averse to hosting a pub crawl around Barnsley which several colleagues can personally recommend. John has relentlessly strived for value for money throughout his career and even negotiated a reduction in the price of his Long Service gift!

Mary Garside – 30 Years' Service



Mary Garside has worked in Finance since 2002 having joined us from Registry following a restructure and since then she has been a vital and important part of the Student Finance Office. Her 30 years' service at the university started in Admissions for four years followed by the statistics department for four years. Then came a stint in Holly Bank and then back to Student Records before (as she tells us) the best decision of her life to join Financial Services! Who are we to say she's wrong.....

Mary promises to carry on to ensure we keep up with her high standards and the whole department thanks her for her hard work, attention to detail and the ability to all make us laugh without knowing what she has just said is funny.



Steppers

Three teams from Financial Services stepped up to the 2018 STEP challenge which was run by Occupational Health. Even though none of the teams won the overall competition there was a healthy competitive rivalry between the three teams, from Student Finance, ASIS and Agresso. Walking holidays, marathon runs, social walks at the weekends, walking to and from work and taking the stairs meant a combined total of 5,667,052 steps which means we walked to the North Pole...Guess who lives there? Well done to all the steppers and we are all looking forward to next year's challenge.



Procurement

Changes to Financial rule 19.6 Tender and Quotation Thresholds

Procurement Services recently submitted to the University's Audit Committee proposals to bring tender and quotation thresholds in line with the supply markets that the University currently operates within. This follows market investigations by Procurement into tender and quotation thresholds at other Institutions and across the public sector.

Previous Tender & Quotation Thresholds (to 31st October 2018)

Order Value (ex VAT)	Action Required
£1 - £3,000	Budget Holder shall have the discretion to decide whether or not to obtain quotations, but value for money must always be obtained
£3,001 - £50,000	Budget Holder shall be required to obtain at least three written quotations
Over £50,001	All items will require a minimum of three competitive tenders

Revised Tender & Quotation Thresholds

The following thresholds and actions are applicable from 1st November 2018:

Aggregate Order Value (ex VAT)	Action Required
Schools and Services	
£1 - £5,000	Budget Holder shall have the discretion to decide whether or not to obtain quotations, but value for money must always be obtained
£5,001 - £50,000	Budget Holder shall be required to obtain at least three written quotations. Copies of quotes to be stored within Agresso.
Over £50,001	All items will require a minimum of three competitive tenders
Estates & Facilities Only	
£1 - £10,000	Budget Holder shall have the discretion to decide whether or not to obtain quotations, but value for money must always be obtained
£10,001 - £50,000	Budget Holder shall be required to obtain at least three written quotations
Over £50,001	All items will require a minimum of three competitive tenders

Important: To support the new threshold for obtaining quotes, purchasers within Schools and Services will be required to upload copies of quotes to Agresso. This should be done as part of the requisition process when the value is between £5,001 and £50,000. Step by step guidance on how to do this simple procedure will be provided by Agresso Support.

For requirements between £1 and £5,000 (£10,000 for Estates and Facilities) Best Practice means purchasers are still required to obtain a written quotation, recorded on company letter headed paper and filed for audit purposes.

Procurement Services will audit all procurements in line with these recommendations to ensure that the guidelines are followed and take action where necessary to correct any malpractice.

Please note that separate thresholds may apply for purchases made with research grant monies (e.g. ESIF). Further guidance should be sought from the funding body prior to any purchase being made, mistakes can be costly.

Aggregate Order Value

For the purpose of these thresholds, the estimated value of a procurement must include all contractual considerations over the lifetime of the contract, excluding VAT. All purchasers are required to estimate the value of their purchase/s to the

best of their ability; it is not acceptable to claim that uncertainty prevents you doing this.

Additional Costs: In addition to the initial purchase price, consideration should be given to additional costs that will be incurred throughout the contract period e.g. delivery, maintenance, consumables, training, consultancy, fees, etc. To arrive at the aggregate value, all such costs should be considered.

Extension or renewal: If there is any possibility that the contract will be renewed or extended beyond the initial requirement, these costs must be included in the aggregate value.

Multiple Purchasers: If different Schools/Services make multiple purchases of the same thing within a 12-month period, then the value of each purchase aggregates together to determine the action required. This is the case even when different suppliers are used.

Budget Holders should monitor their own aggregate spend with suppliers, and Procurement Services is responsible for monitoring the University's net aggregate spend.

Exceptions

The only exceptions to the rules governing tender & quotation thresholds are:

- when a Sole Supplier Authorisation Form has been approved by the Director of Finance.
- where the procurement is urgent enough to warrant immediate action. A detailed justification should be recorded for audit purposes and if possible the action should be approved by the Vice Chancellor or suitable deputy, prior to the order being placed.

N.B. In the case of Sole Supplier, best practice will require the purchaser to get a written quote on Company letter headed paper to accompany the Sole Supplier Form.

New starters and Leavers

Financial Services would like to introduce our newest member of the team Pam Bains, Student Records team leader.

Goodbye and good luck to Alice Shaw who has left the department to join PINS, also best wishes to Roo Sarwar who is on secondment with the Research and Enterprise Post Award Team, our loss is their gain!

