

Job Description

Job Title:	Financial Officer
Department:	Electrical & Computer Engineering
Reports To:	Administrative Officer
Jobs Reporting:	Financial Coordinators
Salary Grade:	USG 9
Effective Date:	November 2019

Primary Purpose

The Financial Officer (Officer) is accountable for the management of the Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) department financial operations and has key accounting and analytical support responsibilities. S/he provides financial information and advice to the Chair and Administrative Officer to support effective management and strategic planning. This includes administration and oversight of financial activity in all funds, long and short term financial planning, and other finance-related functions and special projects. The incumbent is also responsible for the integrity of financial processes and practices to ensure conformity with generally accepted accounting principles and University policies and guidelines, and uniform application and implementation of all financial policies, guidelines and best practices.

Key Accountabilities

Budgeting, Reporting and Financial Planning:

- Develop the department's annual operating budget in consultation with the Chair, Administrative Officer, and Faculty Financial Officer;
- Provide confidential advice and strategies relating to financial and budget sensitive activities;
- Develop business plans e.g. program expansion and new initiatives as required to assess financial viability and sustainability;
- Provide financial analysis in support of current and long term projects;
- Prepare projections of ECE's financial position, identify any concerns, propose potential solutions and initiate corrective action where required;
- Identify financial consequences of long term plans, proposals or changes to enrollment patterns to facilitate effective strategic decision making;
- Analyze impact of government and university funding decision on budget;
- Prepare financial documentation to aid decision making (e.g. budget allocations for various departmental initiatives, teaching resource summaries);
- Review and advise on agreements and memoranda of understanding for relationships with internal and external agencies/institutes regarding management and internal control of research funds;
- Co-ordinate the setup of financial structures to ensure activity is properly managed e.g. cost recovery labs;
- Monitor the financial status of operating, research, trust and endowment funds.

Financial Management and Internal Control:

- Administer and monitor the operating budget, revenues, expenses and overhead allocation;
- Oversee all personal reimbursement requests and faculty professional expense reimbursement claims to ensure accuracy, compliance and eligibility;
- Monitor research accounts and report potential liability of research accounts in deficit;

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- Responsible for departmental research compliance review;
- Oversee the monitoring and internal control of research grants and ensure research activity is in compliance with university policies and procedures as well as those imposed externally by granting agencies;
- Identify and address issues concerning compliance with sponsor agreements;
- Provide financial oversight for CRC and IRC accounts, including financial risk assessment to ensure spending is aligned with the budgets;
- Review hiring documentation relating to the payment of faculty, staff, part-time/casual staff, teaching/research assistants;
- Review independent contractor status requests;
- Authorize new user requests for procurement and invoicing purposes;
- Administer and reconcile payroll of ongoing and temporary staff and faculty;
- Review expenses to ensure compliance with university policies and procedures, including those imposed externally by donors and granting agencies;
- Liaise with other units where interdisciplinary or institutional activity are being performed;
- Responsible for financial management of ECE's trust and endowment funds;
- Signing authority on all operating, trust, and endowment accounts within the department;
- Support effective financial planning, management and internal control and best practices for cost recovery labs;
- Collaborate with the Office of Research to ensure faculty reporting requirements are met;
- Develop, improve and implement strong internal financial controls;
- Liaise with Finance to ensure full application and consistency of financial systems, policies and procedures.

Consultation:

- Provide financial leadership and direction to ECE faculty and staff to ensure compliance and best practices;
- Assist researchers with management of their research accounts and provide necessary direction and information as required;
- Serve as resource for the interpretation and application of financial policies, guidelines and practices;
- Provide guidance on scholarships, research chair agreements, etc.;
- Provide direction to cost recovery labs on establishing financial structures compliant with finance requirements and University policies, guidelines and procedures;
- Provide accounting advice and support to individual researchers and research groups regarding management and internal controls of research funds.

Staff Management and Training:

- Manage recruitment, training, professional development, evaluation, and retention of 4 financial staff;
- Establish priorities and work schedules for staff members, conduct workload assessments, and ensure appropriate staffing levels, including back-up and cross-training support to balance workloads for the smooth and efficient daily operations of the financial team;
- Foster a collaborative environment and ensure ECE Financial Coordinators work proactively to provide a high level of customer service to faculty, staff and students;
- Deal with staff concerns/issues and manage performance concern;
- Serve as resource to faculty and staff related to the University financial (Unit4, Concur) and payroll systems;

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- Provide training, one-on-one guidance, and coaching to ECE staff on financial, reporting and budgetary issues;
- In collaboration with the Office of Research, ensure that sufficient financial training and support is provided to researchers and administrative staff to allow them to manage their accounts;
- Document processes to ensure compliance and clarity; including, regularly reviewing and updating tasks within the financial team to ensure alignment with new Faculty and University initiatives.

Other:

- Member of the senior staff operations committee giving planning, vision and issue resolution;
- Act as backup to Administrative Officer with regard to financial matters;
- Assist with implementation of new financial initiatives within the department and provides suggestions on process and organizational improvements;
- Represent department at Faculty finance meetings;
- Participate in ad hoc financial projects and strategic planning as required;
- Special project analysis, reporting and other duties as required.

**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess and correct health and safety hazards, as required.*

Required Qualifications

Education

- Bachelor's Degree in Finance or accounting related discipline or related education and experience.
- Canadian accounting designation (CPA, CA, CMA) is preferred.

Experience

- Minimum five (5) years' progressive experience in financial management. An understanding of the academic environment, in particular research environment are preferred.
- Extensive experience in financial reporting, internal control, financial analysis, budgeting, forecasting and accounting.
- Advanced experience with MS Excel including pivot tables, look-ups, scenario analysis, etc.
- Experience with online financial reporting systems, databases e.g. FileMaker, SharePoint.
- Working knowledge of online human resource management and payroll systems desirable. Experience with Workday an asset.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Strong financial acumen, including financial planning and analysis, budgeting, and forecasting experience is required.
- Effective interpersonal skills and ability to build collaborative working relationships.
- Strong communication (oral and written) are essential to provide financial advice on accounting and process issues.
- Excellent analytical and problem solving skills with the ability to integrate and analyze information quickly.
- Strong planning and project management skills
- Proven ability to manage multiple demands, conflicting priorities and deadlines with a high level of initiative, accuracy and detail.
- Tact, judgment, and diplomacy are essential while working with confidential information.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and in a team environment.
- Knowledge of research granting agencies and their programs is preferred.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience interpreting uWaterloo policies, procedures and guidelines preferred. |
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Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Internally, communicates with employees in all groups and areas at all levels. Makes contact to obtain action, reach agreement, influence and negotiate, occasionally to promote or settle highly sensitive matters. Must be able to tailor communication relating to financial information to the needs and understanding of the audience.
ECE faculty members are highly professional very research- and service-oriented, and maintain close ties with industry.
 - Faculty members, staff, Lab Directors, sessionals, post-doctoral fellows, research and temporary employees
 - Students and visitors
 - Faculty Financial Officer and Faculty Financial Analyst
 - Engineering Research Office
 - Finance
 - Human Resources
 - Procurement and Contract Services
 - Office of Research
 - Graduate Awards Office
 - Undergraduate Awards Office
 - Faculty and administrative staff in other departments/schools regarding interdisciplinary programs
 - Co-operative Education
 - Institutional Analysis and Planning
 - Information Technology Services
 - Externally, makes contact with partner or potential partner organizations to obtain action, reach agreement and negotiate:
 - Contractors and suppliers
 - External funding sources
 - Auditors
- **Level of Responsibility:** The job has specialized work with minimal supervision. This is a senior staff position accountable for overall financial controls, monitoring and reporting. Leadership role in guidance and monitoring oversight for research accounts. S/he is responsible for functional direction and coaching/training of financial staff. Independent judgment in areas of time management, task prioritization, organization and decision-making. Responsible for developing and implementing, with the Administrative Officer, strategic plans, practices and approaches to support the department's mission.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** The incumbent has signing authority on all operating, trust, endowment and special project funds within the department. Makes decisions based on multiple factors: relevant policies, government regulations, strategic objectives. Often these objectives are competing so judgment is required. Must be comfortable working within a framework of multiple principles and guidelines and applying professional judgement in situations where clear direction is not available and interpretation is required. Makes decisions about appropriate actions to address financial issues/concerns. Provides financial input as required for day-to-day management and decision making on strategic planning, budget spending and resources.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** The position requires listening closely to clientele and colleagues in order to provide them with appropriate guidance. Exposure to a fast-paced service oriented environment with constant interruptions, the need to juggle competing priorities, and changing needs. Must possess mental fortitude and patience in cross-cultural and inter-personal relations with a large international clientele.

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- **Working Environment:** ECE is a busy team oriented environment and responds to requests to assist faculty, staff and students in their teaching, learning, research and related activities. The incumbent deals with difficult situations, complaints or problems involving students, professors, staff, etc. on a daily basis. This role involves exposure to disagreeable situations and deals with people who are upset, frustrated or angry,. Responds to high volume of competing demands and people with varying needs. Provides information or explanations that may not be well received by the recipient. There may be ambiguity of situations and shortcomings in data, and some internal clients may be demanding, may request breaking policy, and some situations may require escalation. This role responds to situations where there is a lot of pressure to find a solution quickly.