

Job Description

Job Title:	Graduate Financial Officer
Department:	Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
Reports To:	Assistant Director, Graduate Financial Aid & Awards
Jobs Reporting:	Graduate Awards Officer Graduate Financial Aid Records Specialist
Salary Grade:	USG 10
Effective Date:	July 2018

Primary Purpose

The Graduate Financial Officer reports to the Assistant Director, Graduate Financial Aid & Awards and is accountable to the Associate Vice-President Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA) for the essential financial management and oversight of all financial activity in GSPA, including awards and financial aid. S/he follows proper accounting practices and conforms to the University's policies and procedures. The incumbent is responsible for providing accurate statistics, forecasting and analysis for operating budgets, graduate income and expenditures, etc., to support senior management decision making on issues related to fiscal year budgets, minimum funding guarantees, award program allocations, etc. The incumbent is an expert resource for GSPA and departmental and Faculty administrative staff for financial administration. The financial officer works closely with, and provides support to the Assistant Director, Graduate Financial Aid & Awards and supervises and provides back-up support and direction to the Graduate Awards Officer and Graduate Financial Aid Records Specialist concerning the financial responsibilities associated with their portfolios. The incumbent also works with members of the Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA) systems team in reviewing current award processes and explores electronic methods of efficiencies to enhance the student, staff and faculty experience. Other tasks may be assigned as required throughout the year.

Key Accountabilities

Financial Management and Reporting of Graduate Bursaries, Awards and Scholarships

- Responsible for the administration of graduate awards funded through endowments, trusts, and operating accounts, in regards to the annual planning of award program budget entitlements, annual reconciliation and reporting to the Awards area, departments and Faculties, Office of Advancement, Finance and Provincial Government, etc., as appropriate.
- Responsible for financial forecasting based on past and current expenditures and on funding decisions made by the government and institution and their impact on award program budgets.
- Responsible for monitoring and forecasting the potential income of the scholarship endowments managed within GSPA to support funding decisions within departments and Faculties; providing direction on the recommended annual expenditures of investment income and donated trust funds.
- Responsible for providing the Graduate Operations Committee with statistical data on activity levels of award programs to assist with future planning and possible re-direction of funds.
- Is a liaison with other units (i.e., Student Awards & Financial Aid Office, Office of Advancement) regarding the financial management of accounts for interdisciplinary or institutional awards.
- Has signing authority on operating, trust and endowment accounts within GSPA.
- Responsible for maintaining strong internal financial controls ensuring compliance with University financial policies, guidelines and procedures.
- Participates in internal and external audits as required.

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- Responsible for generating reports for Tri-Agency and Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) trust accounts using university financial system (currently Unit4) to ensure payments have been recorded and balanced by fiscal year-end.

Financial Management of GSPA Operating Budgets

- Responsible for the overall management of the finances for GSPA including identifying potential challenges with long-term goals and proposing solutions to the Director, Graduate Academic Services, and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs as appropriate to facilitate effective strategic decision-making.
- Responsible for preparation of budget projections and financial analysis in order to ensure that short and long-term financial goals are established and realistic, taking into account implications of commitments related to special projects, staff appointments, temporary reassignments, parental leaves, etc.; identifies concerns and potential solutions to facilitate effective strategic decision-making.
- Responsible for reconciliation of GSPA budget accounts and authorization for all account fund transfers, accounts payable and accounts receivable; takes corrective action where required.
- Has signing authority on all GSPA operating budget accounts.
- Responsible for maintaining strong internal financial controls ensuring compliance with University financial policies, guidelines and procedures.
- Participates in and supervises audit activity as required.

Supervision, Leadership and Training

- Provides oversight and direction to the Graduate Awards Officer and Graduate Financial Aid Records Specialist for all daily business processes in their respective tasks including:
 - the training, coaching and collaborative support on financial planning with departments and Faculties to encourage best practices to ensure expenditure goals are met;
 - provision of financial details, budgets and expendables to the Awards Officer for the management of endowments, trusts and operating awards;
 - troubleshooting and analyzing non-standard issues that arise pertaining to Unit4 accounts
- Provides supervisory and operational support to his/her team including:
 - Support for job-related training;
 - Encouragement and support for staff participation in personal and professional development opportunities;
 - Providing annual performance appraisals
- Provides direction to the treasurer and Board of Directors for the Graduate Student Endowment Fund (GSEF) committee as appropriate.
- Liaises with Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) on issues related to graduate student income reporting to support internal planning, decision-making and forecasting.
- Communicates financial information, such as policies, guidelines and procedures to GSPA staff.
- Provides training to GSPA staff engaged in financial activity (e.g., CONCUR, Unit4).

Required Qualifications

Education

- University bachelor's degree in Accounting or Business or equivalent.
- Recognized accounting designation (CPA, CMA, CA) required.

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- 5+ years' progressive financial management experience in financial reporting, internal control, financial analysis, budgeting, forecasting and accounting.
- Thorough understanding of financial administration in an academic environment.
- Comprehensive knowledge of the university and graduate studies environment is preferred.
- Supervisory experience is preferred.
- Ability to work both independently and in a collaborative, team-based environment.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Excellent judgement of the relevance and confidentiality of financial data.
- Critical thinking, strong analytical and problem-solving skills, interpersonal, organizational and excellent communication and collaborative skills are required.
- Proven leadership, supervisory and mentoring skills are required.
- Knowledge of university policies and graduate studies regulations and practices related to graduate financial aid and award programs is strongly preferred.
- Intermediate to advanced skills with Microsoft Office is required – Outlook, Excel, Word, SharePoint.
- Knowledge of and experience with Finance account and posting attributes (Unit4), CONCUR and Raiser's Edge is preferred.
- Knowledge of and experience with financial aid records and Query Manager in PeopleSoft Campus Solutions (Quest) is strongly recommended.
- Accuracy, attention to detail and strong problem-solving abilities are essential, as is the aptitude for and experience with conducting research and analyzing data.
- Strong work ethic and ability to accomplish tasks independently in a timely manner is required; adherence to timelines and deadlines is imperative.
- Ability to multi-task with competing and changing priorities and manage significant workload and responsibilities is required.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills are essential.
- Proven interpersonal skills and willingness to participate in and collaborate with others in academic and administrative units is required.
- Successful experience working independently and within a team environment is required.
- The incumbent must demonstrate a professional demeanour when interacting with students, staff and faculty on confidential and sensitive matters.

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** The Graduate Financial Officer interacts directly with all members of the GSPA awards team; Associate Vice-President and Assistant Vice-Presidents, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs; Faculty Associate Deans, Graduate Studies; and members of other functional areas of GSPA including Admissions, Records, Systems, Communications; students; other staff in support units across campus, including but not limited to Finance, Office of Advancement, Office of Research, Student Awards & Financial Aid Office, Institutional Analysis and Planning. The incumbent participates as a staff resource to the Graduate Student Endowment Fund Committee and is a member of the Endowment Fund Management Committee and other working groups as appropriate. S/he acts as a resource and provides direction within GSPA and to department/Faculty administrators. Using a patient and collaborative approach, the incumbent must communicate accounting information to clients, who often have little or no accounting experience, in order to achieve accurate financial accounting and reporting and be able to resolve issues. Externally, the incumbent interacts with the Awards Branch of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) and with the Tri-Agencies in providing annual reports regarding the financial status and annual expenditures for certain awards.
- **Level of Responsibility:** The Graduate Financial Officer supervises the Graduate Awards Officer and Graduate Financial Aid Records Specialist and provides reports and recommendations to the Director,

Graduate Academic Services and Associate Vice-President Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs regarding the overall operating budget within GSPA. The incumbent ensures that financial activity undertaken follows accepted accounting principles as well as university policies and guidelines. Based on the data analysis and budget forecasting the incumbent provides, senior administrators rely upon him/her to provide input on available options to support their decisions. S/he determines the optimal course of action to solve problems and makes recommendations to other stakeholders.

- **Decision-Making Authority:** The Graduate Financial Officer makes financial management decisions and oversees all expenditures from endowments, trusts and operating accounts managed within GSPA. S/he determines available Faculty or department budget based on formulas for university-wide awards paid from operating accounts. Through the management and reconciliation and forecasting of the GSPA operating budget, s/he provides recommendations concerning the direction and utilization of the funds. The decisions the incumbent makes are based on multiple factors: relevant policies, government regulations, strategic objectives. At times, these objectives are competing, so a sound judgement is required. The incumbent makes recommendations about timing and format of actions including but not limited to financial scenarios, carryover and new budget requests. The incumbent continually makes decisions about effective methods of operationalizing initiatives for which s/he is responsible.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Demands typical of an administrative position within an office environment – extensive sitting and concentrated attentive use of one or more senses while doing computer work; dealing with interruptions. Concentrated attention to detail is required in an office environment with competing priorities. The incumbent must be able to manage concurrent assignments and prioritize workloads in order to meet deadlines. Adherence to timelines and deadlines is imperative as is attention to detail and ability to problem solve. The university operates in a decentralized environment in terms of decision-making and centralized environment in terms of establishing standards, policies, procedures and financial systems. Consequently, the accounting and technical skills across university units of those dealing with financial matters vary significantly. Due to the nature and complexities of the university business activities, disagreements and contentious issues and situations may arise from time to time due to differing interpretations of policies and procedures.
- **Working Environment:** Travel: minimal. Psychological Risks: The incumbent must be sensitive to the often extreme and prolonged stresses due to volume, deadlines, demands and interruptions (e.g., phone calls, e-mails, student assistance at the front counter and unplanned but urgent support request throughout the day). This role involves interactions with people who may be upset or aggressive (e.g., students who have escalated an issue, staff or faculty upset with a decision) or providing suggestions to direct reports who are working with upset clients. Working Hours: regular working hours; overtime during peak periods may be required.