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Job Description

Post title: **Head of Finance Operations**

Date last updated/evaluated: August 2025

Author: Sally Crabb

Standard Occupation Code: Not applicable

School / Directorate: Finance

Faculty / Directorate: Professional Services

Job Family: Management, Specialist and Administrative (MSA)

Grade: Level 6

ERE Pathway (if applicable): Not applicable

Post reporting to: Group Financial Controller

Post line report(s): Responsible for Payroll, Pensions, Systems, Buy, Payments, Accounts Receivable, Credit Control, income and Student fees

Post base location: Hybrid: Campus / Home

Job purpose:

* Lead in the delivery of efficient and effective finance operational policy and process across the University with a key focus on service delivery to stakeholders
* Drive transformational improvement of financial operational policies and processes across the University.
* As a member of the Finance Leadership Team, contribute to the management and strategic direction of the Finance, Planning and Analytics Directorate.

## Key accountabilities and indicative time allocation:

1. **25%**

Lead in the development and delivery of a strategy for effective and efficient finance operations across the University. Deliver excellent customer service alongside operational efficiencies, whilst ensuring compliance with relevant organisational policies and procedures, and statutory requirements.

1. **25%**

Lead and develop the finance operations teams (Payments, Accounts Receivable, Credit Control, Income, Fees, Payroll, Pensions, Buy and Systems) to create a single coherent team and approach to finance operations across the Finance, Planning and Analytics Directorate and wider University.

Develop the capability and contribution of directly and indirectly managed team members through effective appraisal, performance management and succession planning, and by motivating and mentoring colleagues to better meet the current and future needs of the Directorate and wider University.

1. **15%**

In liaison with the Group Financial Controller or their delegate, develop control frameworks, ensuring that controls are fit for purpose to enable straightforward and effective transactions across the breadth of University financial transactions. Continuously review appropriateness using a risk-based approach to ensure they remain appropriate and are delivering the required outcomes.

1. **10%**

Contribute to the effective operation of the Finance Leadership team who are responsible for leading and managing the Directorate on behalf of the Finance Executive Leadership team. Provide senior leadership in key areas for the Directorate and lead major projects where required.

1. **5%**

Develop a monthly, quarterly and annual set of KPIs for the finance operations teams to manage delivery of team workloads, to ensure customer demand is met within agreed timescales and demonstrate effective financial performance.

Develop efficient and effective processes and procedures to ensure KPI’s are delivered to inform operational and strategic matters for the Directorate and wider University.

1. **10%**

Lead other major projects within the Directorate as required. Working with the Head of Finance Systems, Finance Leadership and Executive teams to develop appropriate operating models that are supported by Finance and HR Systems. To include contribution to the roadmap for required system improvements and upgrades.

Work closely with other Professional Services including iSolutions, writing Business Cases to request resources and funding where required.

1. **5%**

Contribute to the Directorate al planning processes, including budget planning and monthly review, for finance operations teams and in liaison with the Group Financial Controller.

1. **5%**

Any other duties as allocated by the line manager following consultation with the post holder.

Internal and external relationships:

Internal relationships

* All levels of University Staff to drive business change and compliance.
* Internal customers including staff, Faculties, and other Professional Services
* Procurement
* Human Resources
* i-Solutions

External Relationships

* External stakeholders including students, customers and suppliers
* External advisors including Tax Advisors, HMRC
* Government agencies and other organisations i.e. Office for Students and British University Finance Directors Group

Special requirements:

* None

# Person Specification – Skills and Competencies

All essential and desirable criteria outlined in this Person Specification will be assessed through a combination of recruitment application and CV, and where applicable numerical or written assessment.

**Knowledge, Experience and Qualifications**

Essential

* Comprehensive theoretical knowledge and understanding of the required technical or specialist discipline, accompanied by extensive and varied practical and/or managerial experience.
* The required level of knowledge and understanding will normally have been gained through some or all the following:
	+ Considerable work experience, ideally accredited through registration with a relevant professional body.
	+ Vocational training
	+ Formal qualification(s) equivalent to Level 7 or 8 of the [Regulated Qualifications Framework](https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels) e.g. master’s degree, postgraduate certificate, diploma, doctorate or Level 7 or 8 award, certificate, diploma.
	+ Skill level equivalent to achievement of a professional qualification or postgraduate degree.
	+ Qualified CCAB accountant or relevant professional qualification/experience.
	+ Significant experience of working in a complex financial environment in a large organisation.
	+ Substantial experience of process re-engineering and driving change through systems and people.
	+ Proven strategic management skills in a specialist field and leadership experience.
	+ Substantial experience of delivering a project and restructuring to deliver customer focussed, effective and efficient transactions.
	+ Experience of designing and delivering a framework of controls.
	+ Practical experience of management information provision to include KPIs and dashboards.
	+ Financial regulations and associated strategy and policy development and review.
	+ Excellent working knowledge of a variety of finance systems and ability to develop a best practice approach from a range of options.
	+ Management of large key finance operations functions to include purchasing, accounts payable, accounts receivable, credit control, fees, pension, payroll and systems.

Desirable

* Understanding of UK and International tax in a Higher Education environment.
* Higher Education experience.
* Experience of implementing and managing shared service functions.
* Experience of UNIT4 Business World finance system and Zellis Resourcelink HR system

**Teamwork and Communication**

Essential

* Proactively manages team dynamics, setting quality standards and creating an environment that engages and motivates others.
* Fosters and maintains working relationships within and beyond the University.
* Proactively works with senior managers across the University to achieve work outcomes.
* Negotiates effectively on behalf of the Directorate or University to achieve work outcomes.
* Develops and leads key communication strategies.
* Able to drive business change across the University
* Able to develop and lead key communications strategies
* Able to explain financial concepts to non-finance professionals.
* Professional skills
* Report writing skills for committees and boards.
* Able to proactively develop team dynamics and performance, ensuring quality standards are consistently achieved.
* Able to organise and prioritise own and teams short, medium and long-term workloads to meet deadlines.
* Able to foster positive relationships both within and outside of own Directorate
* Able to proactively work with senior managers across the University to achieve key deliverables.
* Uses persuasion and positively influences others to develop and agree long-term priorities and strategic plans.
* Experience of providing training.

**Planning, Organisation and Resource Management**

Essential

* Manages and shapes the direction of a professional, specialist or technical area of activity.
* Plans and manages major new projects or work activities, where precedent may not exist, ensuring plans complement wider strategic plans.
* Able to plan and shape the direction of specialist or professional area of activity.
* Able to organise major new initiatives, with little or no precedent.
* Able to co-ordinate the collation and validation of data from multiple sources.

**Problem Solving and Initiative**

Essential

* Demonstrates authoritative awareness of the theories and practices of a professional, specialist or technical field, and an ability to apply this to achieve work outcomes and resolve deep-rooted or highly complex problems.
* Develops significant new concepts and original ideas within professional or specialist field to address issues of strategic importance.
* Able to develop significant new concepts and original ideas in response to the need to develop the commerciality of the University.
* Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills.
* Proven ability to act independently and resolve complex issues.

# Job Hazard Assessment

A full health clearance is required for this role where any hazards marked “**^**”, using the agreed Occupational Health referral template [available from here](https://sotonac.sharepoint.com/teams/HealthWellbeing/SitePages/Occupational-Health.aspx). Where a full health clearance is required, this will apply to all role holders, including existing members of staff.

## Physical Environment

Working outside **^** Not applicable

Exposure to noise levels >80dbA **^** Not applicable

Working with dust or fumes **^** Not applicable

Working with skin irritants **^** Not applicable

Working with chemicals (industrial or cleaning) **^** Not applicable

Working in a confined space **^** Not applicable

Working at height **^** Not applicable

Working with sewage **^** Not applicable

Contact with cytotoxins **^** Not applicable

Exposure Prone Procedure (EPP) work **^** Not applicable

Contact with clinical specimens or pathology work **^**  Not applicable

Direct patient care or patient contact Not applicable

Exposure to temperature extremes Not applicable

Frequent hand washing Not applicable

Ionising radiation Not applicable

## Psychological and Social Environment

Working shifts **^** Not applicable

Working nights **^** Not applicable

Lone working Not applicable

Working with children Not applicable

Exposure to persons with challenging behaviourNot applicable

Working with larger groups Not applicable

## Equipment, Tools and Machines

Working with vibrating machinery or tools **^** Not applicable

Driving duties e.g. LGV, PCVs, forklift trucks **^** Not applicable

Food handling Not applicable

Contact with latexNot applicable

## Physical Abilities

Prolonged physical movements or actions e.g. walking **^** Not applicable

Prolonged Standing or Sitting **^** Not applicable

Moving or handling heavy loads **^** Not applicable

Repetitive pulling or pushing **^** Not applicable

Repetitive climbing (steps, stools, ladders, stairs) **^** Not applicable

Repetitive crouching, kneeling or stooping Not applicable

Repetitive lifting Not applicable

Fine motor grips (e.g. pipetting) Not applicable

Repetitive reaching below shoulder height Not applicable

Repetitive reaching at shoulder height Not applicable

Repetitive reaching above shoulder height Not applicable

# Behaviours

Our [Inclusion and Respectful Behaviour Policy](https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations-policies/policies/inclusion-respectful-behaviour) describes the expectations of everyone who is a part of our community.

Our **Southampton Behaviours** (below) outline the responsibilities we each have in working collaboratively to achieve our University strategy.

**Personal Leadership**

 - I take personal responsibility for my own actions and an active approach towards my development.

 - I reflect on my own behaviour, actively seek feedback and adapt my behaviour accordingly.

 - I demonstrate pride, passion and enthusiasm for our University community.

 - I demonstrate respect and build trust with an open and honest approach.

**Working Together**

 - I work collaboratively and build productive relationships across our University and beyond.

 - I actively listen to others and communicate clearly and appropriately with everyone.

 - I take an inclusive approach, value the differences that people bring and encourage others to contribute and flourish.

 - I proactively work through challenge and conflict, considering others’ views to achieve positive and productive outcomes.

**Developing Others**

 - I help to create an environment that engages and motivates others.

 - I take time to support and enable people to be the best they can be.

 - I recognise and value others’ achievements, give praise and celebrate their success.

 - I deliver balanced feedback to enable others to improve their contribution.

**Delivering Quality**

 - I identify opportunities and take action to make improvements.

 - I plan and prioritise efficiently and effectively, taking account of people, processes and resources.

 - I am accountable for tackling issues, making difficult decisions and seeing them through to their conclusion.

 - I encourage creativity and innovation in others, to deliver workable solutions.

**Driving Sustainability**

 - I consider the impact on people before taking decisions or actions that may affect them.

 - I embrace, enable and embed change effectively.

 - I regularly take account of external and internal factors, assessing the need for change, and gaining support to move forward.

 - I take time to understand our University strategy and communicate this to others.