#### Trent University LogoOPSEU JOB DESCRIPTION

**Job Title:** Research Finance Administrator

**Job Number:** SO-310 | VIP: 1301

**Band:** OPSEU- 7

**NOC:** 1431

**Department:** Financial Services

**Supervisor Title:** Manager, Research Finance

**Last Reviewed:**  June 1, 2021

#### **Job Purpose:**

The purpose of this position is to reduce the risk to the university through proactive financial management of external research funding in reviewing research expenses for eligibility and availability of funds. The position requires interpretation of Trent University and external granting agency policies as well as external contracts and related procedures. The Research Finance Administrator provides finance and compliance expertise to account holders, administrative staff, and project staff/students. A strong working knowledge of all the relevant policies must be maintained.

The position contributes to the efficient and effective management of research funds through the review of expenses as well as the timely preparation and distribution of invoices and any related journal entries. This position also assists the Research Accountants with the preparation of financial updates and reports, journal entries where necessary and preparation of Tri Agency F300 Reports, particularly at peak reporting time. This position will liaise with staff and faculty across the University, will work regularly with highly sensitive and confidential information from both internal and external sources, and will be required to assists external auditors in the audit of sponsored funding and expenditures.

#### Key Activities:

##### Restricted Funds Compliance

* 1. Reviews research expenses including but not limited to:
     1. Out of pocket expenses reimbursements
     2. Credit card transactions
     3. Purchase requisitions
     4. Requests to pay (invoices)
     5. Payroll and RFA requests
     6. Internal charges
  2. Checks to ensure the expenses are eligible and documented according to the terms of the relevant funding agreements and any applicable budgets. Uses judgement on matters where the agency terms are unclear.
  3. Checks the balances of the associated research grant accounts to ensure the adequate funds are available and ensures appropriate approvals were obtained.
  4. Follows up with researchers, as required to sort out any other issues that arise during the review of expenses and provides advice on potential solutions.
  5. Provides finance expertise and responds to queries from researchers regarding eligibility of expenses and procedures for payment from research grants.
  6. Supports Research Accountants in providing periodic updates on funds balance and supporting researchers as needed when they are reviewing their account(s).

1. **Information Management:**
   1. Responsible for updating and maintaining delegation of signing authority forms and tracks delegates, restrictions on signing authority and end dates. Removes signing authority and forms when term has expired.
   2. Manages all requests for advances and monitors outstanding advances to ensure prompt follow up and submission of expense reports.
   3. Documents and provides clear and efficient procedures for researchers to apply as needed (e.g., how to look at your accounts in eFin, how to complete an expense reimbursement report, what are the permissible expenses for an overhead research account, how to complete an online requisition for research, etc).
2. **Accounts Receivable Management:**
   1. Reviews restricted funds agreements/contracts to determine invoicing and HST requirements. Creates and distributes invoices to external funding agencies.
   2. Manages invoicing accounts receivable by updating and maintaining restricted funds accounts receivable spreadsheets; tracking invoices created and payments received. Reconciles accounts receivable spreadsheets on a monthly basis and prepares a list of outstanding receivables for follow up with granting agencies.
   3. Prepares monthly accounts receivable journal entries for interfacing into the general ledger system.
   4. Follows up with granting agencies on outstanding receivables in a timely manner.
   5. Provides guidance to research office and centres on HST requirements for external invoicing.
   6. Prepares year end AR and Revenue working papers for Auditors.
   7. Identifies incoming electronic funds and wire transfers on restrictedly funded accounts, and provides the appropriate general ledger account numbers to credit the funds against.
3. Communication and Team Work:
   1. Communicates clearly and professionally in-person and via email and other forms of communication, with a customer service orientation; includes direct communication with researchers.
   2. Provides advice and compliance information with sensitivity and consideration, with the goal of understanding and responding to researcher activity, needs and concerns.
   3. Works with others (in Finance, the Office of Research and other departments) to provide solutions and efficient completion of transactions, tasks and reports.
   4. Maintains research finance email account and manages requests made through request tracker.
4. Periodically prepares Tri-Agency F300 Reports and assists with submission of completed financial reports to faculty and granting agencies on a timely basis.
5. Periodically prepares journal entries for interfacing into GL system (unrelated to accounts receivable journal entries).
6. Maintains a strong working knowledge of the financial policies and procedures of Trent University and the granting agencies through independent reading and group discussions.
7. Resolve identified issues directly, but also consults with Research Accountants and takes direction from the Manager, Research Finance in more complex situations.
8. Provide support to Research Accountants when required.
9. Performs special tasks assigned by the Manager, Research Finance.

#### Education Required:

* Honours University Degree in Business/E-Commerce majoring in accounting.
* Professional Certificate in Research Administration or Research Management through the Canadian Association of Research Administrators considered an asset.

#### Experience/Qualifications Required:

1. Minimum two years of related experience in a computerized accounting environment preferably within a research accounting role.
2. Proficiency in Microsoft Excel mandatory. Experience with Colleague and Romeo programs would be considered an asset.
3. High degree of accuracy, efficiency, skills in proof reading; patience with auditing and repeated review of details.
4. Excellent interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills required; ability to interact professionally and effectively with all constituencies of the University community, as well as with external contacts.
5. Strong knowledge of budgeting and accounting procedures and meticulous attention to detail.
6. Proven ability to work both independently and as part of a team in a complex and multi-faceted work environment.
7. Demonstrated ability to move rapidly between tasks and re-prioritize as required.
8. Strong working knowledge of sales tax and the University tax application tables relating to accounts receivable invoicing and accounts payable activities.
9. Demonstrated ability to exercise judgement and confidentiality to handle sensitive data.

#### Supervision:

* No formal supervision of others is required.

**Job Evaluation Factors:**

**Analytical Reasoning**

Judgement must be used in deciding whether an expenditure is allowable on a research account based on an understanding of the funding agreement, Trent University policies as well as Canadian Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. Each granting agency follows different guidelines and in many instances it may not be clear as to whether an expense should be allowed or not. The incumbent will have to weigh different factors to determine whether to allow or disallow an expense ranging from materiality of the expense, the intended purpose of the expense and the justification given for the expense.

Often spending requests are received prior to the University receiving payment from the funder. Determining whether to allow the transaction(s) requires analysis of the risk to the University for Non-receipt of payment.

The incumbent will have to decide on the appropriate cost code, this will be relied upon for both project reporting and institutional reporting.

The incumbent will have to communicate when an expense is deemed ineligible.

The incumbent is expected to contribute to the development of efficiencies by finding new approaches to the review of expenses.

Prior to invoicing the incumbent must review the research agreement/contract to determine invoicing and HST requirements. The incumbent must decide if an external invoice is required to trigger payment and if so determine if there are any other special requirements and whether HST is applicable and the rate which is dependent upon the product/service researchers are providing and location of the receiving institution.

The incumbent is also expected to provide advice on tax inclusions in contracts prepared by the research office and research centres.

**Decision Making**

Expenditures must be scrutinized for eligibility on a restricted fund account. Many expense types require a justification from the account holder to validate the charge. The incumbent is required to make the decision if the justification is sufficient to meet the requirements of the funding agency and Trent University policy. The incumbent is also required to determine what policies (Trent or granting agencies) supersede the other. Insufficient support for an expenditure can result in the transaction being deemed ineligible by the funder, and a loss of funds.

Decisions regarding HST requirements on invoices to external agencies could impact the University’s reports to Canada Revenue Agency regarding HST collected. Also, invoicing the wrong amount of HST or failing to invoice any HST could delay payment from granting agencies as they will have to request a corrected invoice before being able to issue payment.

**Impact**

Allowing an ineligible expense on a research account can result in a loss of funding for the University. The majority of our research funds received are subject to audit at the discretion of the funder. Any funding found to be paid for ineligible expenses would be clawed back by the funder. Unfavourable audit findings could also impair future funding.

Failing to submit an invoice for payment at the correct time or following up on outstanding receivables could result in a loss of funding to the university, as we may not be in compliance with the terms of the agreement.

Charging incorrect HST rates to external agencies could impact the University’s reports to Canada Revenue Agency regarding HST collected or result in delays to payments.

**Responsibility for the Work of Others**

Indirect Responsibility

* Oversees student and temporary employees performing special tasks for the restricted funds staff (closing files, pulling vouchers, etc.)
* Trains new and/or temporary staff within the department on all duties performed by this position and other areas of expertise.
* When related to research, provides guidance to co-workers regarding tax coding, accounts payable keying, and research requirements (i.e. acceptability of a receipt, signing authority, level of scrutiny required, etc.)

**Communication**

Internal

* Faculty/Staff/Student Employees: answering queries in person, by phone, or by email regarding invoicing and taxes, expense eligibility and other issues related to expense review as well as policy and procedure guidance. The incumbent will be required to communicate professionally when an expense is deemed ineligible.
* Financial Services: ongoing dialogue
* Office of Research: ongoing dialogue

External

* Students: answering queries regarding expense reimbursement, policy discussions, procedure guidance, etc.
* Granting agencies: answering queries regarding invoices submitted, providing assistance regarding payment options.
* External auditors: providing required documentation, answering questions regarding procedures, answering queries regarding accounts receivable invoices, process, and payments.
* Visitors: answering queries regarding expense reimbursement, policy discussions, and procedure guidance.
* Other Universities/Colleges: answering queries regarding recovering costs procedures, communicating at regional conferences regarding research processes and how we handle different situations as they arise in research.

**Motor/ Sensory Skills**

* Fine motor skills/dexterity: All aspects of the position require computer use due to the electronic nature of the work environment.
* Hearing/listening: When communicating with people to ensure that information is communicated and received accurately.
* Visual: Reviewing reimbursements, visa transactions, purchase requisitions etc; reading queries, explanations, and agreements/contracts, verifying numbers, analysis of general ledger reports.

**Effort**

Mental

* Sustained concentration: Required in verification of numbers and information; frequent interruptions result in increased effort required.
* Listening: In communications with faculty and staff in busy office conditions i.e. phones ringing, printers running, staff conversing, seated in open cubicle (no door to close)
* Focus: Must be able to shift priorities and mental focus between several tasks at one time in order to ensure work flow.

Physical

* Keyboarding required for all aspects of the position due to electronic nature of work environment.
* Sitting for long periods of time: review of reimbursement reports require the incumbent to sit for long periods of time. Back, hip, leg strain may result.
* Walking, Standing, Carrying & Bending: Filing, looking up vouchers or journal entries, retrieving print jobs or scanning/photocopying documents, transferring documents between the Finance and Research Offices, boxing files and moving the box to the archive rooms.

**Working Conditions**

Physical:

* Position is required to periodically pack and move files to storage space for document retention.
* Sitting and concentrating for long periods of time.

Psychological

* Position is seated in an open area with regular office traffic passing by the work station. This requires additional effort to maintain focus on tasks at hand.
* Frequent interruptions to work flow for information requests from various sources. This requires a strong ability to prioritize work to allow for completion of tasks within deadlines while providing an appropriate level of customer service.
* Multi-tasking: This position requires the incumbent to be able to do or be aware of several situations, problems, projects at the same time.
* Responding to complaints from public and staff regarding policy or process issues while having to maintain composure and professionalism.