Abertay University

Candidate Brief

Senior Payroll and Pensions Officer







Closing Date	12 p.m. (Noon) on 27/11/2026
Interview Date	Interviews are expected to take place on 08/12/2026
Grade/Salary	Grade 7 (£39,560.18 - £46,969.76 pro rata)
Hours	We are happy to discuss flexible working arrangements with applicants.
Type of Contract	Indefinite
Annual Leave Entitlement	33 days pro rata plus 8 plus closure days over the festive period and 2 additional closure days pro rata which are determined by the University annually.
Pension	Abertay University Pension Scheme (AUPS)*
Recruiting Manager	Dawn McQueen
Recruiting Manager Contact	d.mcqueen@abertay.ac.uk
Area	Finance
Location	Bell Street, Dundee, DD1 1HG

*If you are currently a member of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), or have recently been a member, you may be eligible to remain in or re-join USS instead.

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1. Abertay University

Abertay University is a modern, pioneering, and ambitious university with around 6,500 students. We have a strong and evolutionary tradition of preparing students for the industries and jobs of the modern world. Abertay has made its mark with high-quality, well-directed teaching and research which, in turn, provides a stimulating and enriching experience for our students.

Abertay University has achieved the Athena Swan Bronze Award, recognising the university's achievements in respect of gender equality. The university is also proud to hold the Race Equality Charter Mark Bronze Award for our ongoing commitment and active steps to improving race equality for our staff and students.

Visit our website for more information on:

- Working at Abertay
- Teaching and Learning
- Research

The City of Dundee

Dundee is a historic city set in a beautiful, sunny location on the east coast of Scotland. As well as being a compact city, Dundee has great schools and beautiful surrounding countryside. Just a little over an hour's drive away from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, Dundee's property prices can be half those of Scotland's larger cities.

Dundee is the UK's first UNESCO City of Design based on its contributions to medical research and the creative industries. From September 2018 Dundee became home to the second Victoria and Albert Museum, the V&A Museum of Design.

The Campus

The heart of the University lies in Bell Street, with most teaching and learning facilities, offices, research centres, and the library all within just a few yards of each other.

You can find out more about the city and Abertay's campus by watching our Working at Abertay video.

Employment within Abertay

Abertay University recognises the value of a diverse working environment and is keen to receive applications from individuals from across all of the equality protected characteristics (race, gender, disability, gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation, religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity, marriage/civil partnership).

The University also supports opportunities for part-time and flexible working and has policies in place to facilitate this. More information on our policies can be found at https://www.abertay.ac.uk/about/working-at-abertay/.

2. The Service and Area

Abertay's Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services directorate brings together a range of essential functions to support the effective running of the University. Departments include finance, procurement and purchasing, IT and corporate information systems, estate development, facilities management, commercial services and projects and business change. Led by Director Andrew Menzies, the directorate is responsible for the Financial Strategy, Digital Strategy, Estates Strategy and Sustainable Development Strategy, and plays a key role in positive internal change and innovation, supporting an excellent staff and student experience, and driving decarbonisation projects central to the University's climate action goals.

The finance team is seeking an individual who will bring an analytical mindset, a professional approach and a strong commitment to customer service to the University. The postholder will provide clear management for the payroll and pensions service, managing and developing the function to deliver an accurate, reliable and responsive service. They will help improve payroll and pensions services and provide approachable and helpful support to staff across the University.

Whilst based in the finance team, the individual will have the opportunity to develop a broad range of professional relationships through collaboration with a wider team at Abertay including individuals working in People Services and Procurement, alongside external providers for pensions and employee benefits.

3. The Role

Role Purpose

To lead and manage the provision of the University's in-house payroll & pensions service, to deliver accurate, timely and compliant payroll and pensions service.
The postholder will lead the University's Payroll and Pensions function, taking ownership and accountability for its effective operation and development. They will provide clear leadership, ensure robust and compliant service delivery, and drive improvements to processes, controls and the employee experience

The postholder will have overall responsibility for the effective operation of the University's Payroll and pension function, ensuring robust monthly processing, effective controls, statutory compliance, reliable pension administration and a professional service to employees and managers.

The role provides overall direction and quality assurance across the payroll cycle, while remaining directly involved in operational processing. It works in close partnership with Finance, People Services, Management Accounts, Information Technology and external bodies (e.g. pension providers, UCEA, BUFDG, salary sacrifice scheme providers) to ensure that employee, payroll, pension and financial data are complete, reconciled and supported by a clear audit trail.

Role Specific Duties and Responsibilities

- Lead and take overall responsibility for the accurate, timely and compliant delivery of the University's payroll and pensions service.
- Act as the University's technical expert on payroll and pensions, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, HMRC requirements and pension scheme regulations.
- Lead the administration and governance of the University's pension schemes, including statutory and year-end requirements and relationships with pension providers.
- Maintain effective financial controls across payroll and pensions, including payments, reconciliations, payroll journals, statutory liabilities and audit requirements.
- Lead the investigation and resolution of complex payroll and pension issues, ensuring risks are managed and appropriate controls and improvements are implemented.
- Act as the functional lead for iTrent payroll and pensions, overseeing system developments, testing and improvements and working with internal teams and external providers.
- Line manage and develop the Payroll & Pensions Officer, ensuring effective workload management, knowledge sharing and business continuity across the service.
- Provide specialist advice and guidance to employees, managers and senior colleagues, and represent payroll and pensions in relevant University projects, policy developments and service improvements.

- Maintain effective relationships with Finance, People Services, Management Accounts, Information Technology Services, HMRC, pension providers, auditors and other external partners.
- Own the development, implementation and maintenance of the payroll and pensions control framework, ensuring the function has fully documented processes and an up-to-date catalogue of standard operating procedures (SOPs), with clear ownership, review arrangements and consistent application across the service.
- Oversee and coordinate statutory submissions, payroll year-end, the implementation of legislative changes, pension returns and automatic-enrolment requirements, ensuring responsibilities and deadlines are clearly defined and met; coordinate international payroll with Accounts Payable and third-party providers.
- Take responsibility for the validation and quality assurance of payroll and pensions outputs, ensuring independent review and appropriate payment authorisation, accurate payroll costing, robust year-end working papers and timely management reporting; escalate material risks and discrepancies, with final accounting judgements remaining with Finance.
- Set and oversee customer service standards for payroll and pensions, ensuring enquiries are handled accurately, sensitively and promptly and that feedback informs service improvements. Ensure accurate pension records and clear, accessible employee guidance, FAQs and intranet content; coordinate responses to FOI, survey and pay-and-reward information requests.
- Any other reasonable duties as required for the role, including developing and maintaining such digital and other skills that are necessary for the role.

4. Person Specification		
Attributes	**Essential Selection Criteria**	**Desirable Selection Criteria**
Education/ Qualifications	Relevant payroll, pensions, finance or business qualification, or equivalent knowledge gained through substantial practical experience.	
Knowledge and Experience	Substantial practical knowledge of UK payroll administration, including PAYE, National Insurance, statutory payments, deductions and payroll controls. Experience of occupational pension administration and contribution reconciliation in a multi-scheme or similarly complex environment. Experience of delivering payroll activities to fixed immovable deadlines with a high level of accuracy. Experience of providing technical direction, quality assurance, coaching or oversight within a payroll and pensions service. Significant experience of using a Payroll and/or HRand payroll systems, with the ability to interrogate reports, identify anomalies and maintain reliable records and identify improvements Strong practical skills in Microsoft Excel, with the ability to analyse data, use formulas and produce accurate spreadsheets. Ability to reconcile payroll, pension and financial data and maintain a clear audit trail. Ability to explain technical payroll and pension matters clearly, sensitively and	Experience in higher education, the public sector or another complex, policy-led organisation. Experience of MHR iTrent Experience of L&G or defined contribution scheme, LGPS, Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme/SPPA and/or USS administration. Experience of designing controls, documenting procedures, testing system changes or improving payroll and pension processes. Experience of managing a member of staff or a team

	accurately to a range of audiences. Ability to prioritise competing deadlines, investigate discrepancies and recognise when an issue requires escalation. Demonstrable integrity and discretion when handling sensitive personal and financial information. Ability to acquire and maintain necessary digital skills for the role.	

5. Competencies

In order to achieve Abertay University's goals all employees need to demonstrate the following competencies:

Effective Communication

Definition: The use of appropriate communications media and methods to convey, explain or discuss information in a manner that is clear and accurate for the target audience.

Expected Level: The ability to use verbal and written material in a well-structured, clear and concise manner. Take the initiative to keep others informed and ensure an appropriate method of information is adapted to meet the needs of the recipient to help their understanding of the topic.

Liaison and Networking

Definition: Active participation in, contribution to or leadership of internal/external networks which build positive relationships and promote collaborative working.

Expected Level: Exchanges information and ideas with others outside own teams as a means of keeping up to date. Involved in networks to benefit own area of work Promotes a positive image of the Institution and actively promotes the work and image of own team and the institution internally and externally.

Planning & Organising

Definition: Proactive planning, prioritisation and organisation of work activities and resources to ensure best value is achieved whilst maintaining service availability and quality standards.

Expected Level: The ability to agree and plan objectives and resource requirements for area of operation and monitor overall progress, ensuring corrective action is taken if required.

Initiative and Problem Solving

Definition: Showing desire for continuous improvement in individual and team performance by actively contributing to problem solving and responding positively to opportunities for development.

Expected Level: The ability to analyse problems to identify their causes and take action to prevent recurrence of problems. Consider possible solutions to identify those which offer wider benefits.

Decision Making

Definition: Active contribution to/leadership of decision-making processes within the team which ensure objectives are achieved and quality standards are maintained.

Expected Level: The ability to help others to explore options that initially appear to be inappropriate and recognised when a decision is or is not needed. Ensure that options are weighed, outcomes identified and chances of success are considered.

Team Development

Definition: Active engagement and/or leadership in the development of the team's knowledge and skills to enhance team attributes, improve quality and support achievement of objectives.

Expected Level: The ability to support and develop other members of the team, identifying development needs and opportunities, providing guidance and constructive feedback, and taking appropriate action to build individual and team capability so that objectives are achieved effectively.

6. Application Process

Making your application

Internal Applicant

When you are ready to start your application, you can apply via Employee Self-Service, there will be a link called 'Apply for a Job'. The application form will be populated automatically with the personal data currently held about you.

External Applicant

When you are ready to start your application, you will be prompted to register on our online recruitment system, which can be found at https://www.abertay.ac.uk/about/working-at-abertay/jobs

You will be guided through all of the stages of the application form. You will also be asked to upload your curriculum vitae. Within the online application form you will be asked to provide a supporting statement, this should be used to provide evidence that you meet all essential criteria within the person specification, including the essential competencies. Providing evidence is crucial as the essential criteria are mandatory requirements for the post. If you do not provide sufficient evidence for these requirements then we cannot guarantee that you will be short-listed for interview.

Interviews

It is anticipated that interviews for the post will be held on the date stated on the first page of this document or as soon as possible after the closing date. Applicants who are shortlisted for interview will be sent details of time and venue as soon as possible after the closing date.

If you have any queries regarding your application, please contact:
recruitment@abertay.ac.uk; +44 (0)1382 308961

Committed to Equal Opportunities

Abertay University, Dundee is a Scottish Registered Charity, No: SC016040