November 2018 Update

2017 saw the completion of the functional review of the financial support activities provided by the Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster Research Finance and Financial Affairs. Since that time, Financial Affairs and the Research Finances offices have been working on implementing recommendations arising from that review. These changes have been developed in consultation with cross-faculty researcher and administrator focus groups and other stakeholders. This update provides further detail regarding progress of implementation, which has continued since the communication provided in June of this year.

MOSAIC Usability and Workflow:
Effective the second week in December, several updates to Mosaic will be made as part of a larger plan to increase usability and user-friendliness. Upcoming improvements include:

1. An upgrade to the Travel and Expense module that will provide a more fluid interface that is scalable for use with different screen sizes (e.g. tablets, phones) and provides efficiencies such as accounting chartstring defaults and recalling most commonly used expense types.
2. The creation of two new Finance “navigation collections” (one for administrative tasks and one for administrative reporting) that will group relevant menu items together with the ability to bring the selected item’s screen to the same page. This will reduce the amount of navigation required (fewer clicks). These changes in large part affect tasks undertaken by administrators. For researchers, the “My Research” tile will also be further refined to provide easier navigation; that process is currently in the requirement gathering stage
3. Inclusion of related content such as quick guides and policies directly within a finance task page. For example, when entering a journal entry, you will see the applicable training guide and journal entry policy links available on that page.

Changes to Workflow include:

1. For all transactions in finance, with the exception of P-card, the workflow approval order for research related transactions which are reviewed by Research Finance* will place the research accountant approval ahead of the PI/Delegate. For those transactions which are reviewed by Research Finance* this will ensure eligibility and compliance prior to PI/delegate approval and eliminate the PI/Delegate having to re-approve transactions that were returned by the Research Accountants.
2. Attachments to a travel and expense report can now be added by anyone in the workflow steps which eliminates the need to send back a return for missing supporting documentation.

*Change to research compliance checking
The Finance Review indicated that McMaster’s conservative approach to risk, which resulted in the research finance offices checking 100% of transactions, has led to a lack of value-added services. Review of data has indicated that the McMaster research community is well-versed in the expectations of both the university and the funder and that errors in submission are rare.

Through consultation with focus groups within McMaster, external colleagues and with assistance from KPMG, McMaster has developed a new sample-based approach to risk for Travel and Expenses which will facilitate increased customer service while keeping risk to the university very low. Through this approach, the research community will see fewer returns through the MOSAIC system. The research finance offices will experience increased efficiency, allowing greater attention to value-added
A sampling approach for other types of transactions is also in development. Data on the impact of this new approach will be reviewed annually, with processes revised as needed. **This new approach will begin in January 2019.**

**Research Project Statement**
Work is underway to move the Research Project Statement to the Business Intelligence (BI) tool. This will allow the report to be enhanced to include labour distribution data so that researchers will be able to see which students/employees they are paying. A summary dashboard report showing all of a researcher’s projects and ending balances will also be developed. Usability enhancements include the ability to see multi-project summaries and to easily customize the dashboard. Research Project Statements will be emailed to researchers each month and can also be accessed on an ad hoc basis. **The expected completion date is May 31, 2019.**

**Renewal of the Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide – McMaster involvement in Pilot Project**
The Tri-Agencies (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) have launched a new initiative to reduce administrative burden and harmonize requirements across the three agencies. This new approach focuses on principles and, in most cases, allows institutions to rely on their own institutional policies without having to also meet additional requirements based on Tri-Agency rules.

McMaster was one of 10 institutions across the country invited to participate in the pilot of this new initiative. **Through January to June of 2019,** McMaster will begin operating under the direction of the new Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide and will assist in its evaluation and assessment. The Finance and Research Finance teams are currently reviewing McMaster’s policies and the new guidelines from the Tri-Agencies to determine any potential gaps and/or amendments to existing McMaster policies. These are expected to be minimal. As they work through the policies, these offices are also reviewing different types of expenditures to assess the impact of the new approach. Impact to the research community will be tracked, summarized and communicated to researchers and department administrators.

**MacBuy:**
**Over the next several months,** McMaster will implement a streamlined eProcurement system, “MacBuy”. This new functionality allows for a shopping cart purchasing experience, supports e-invoicing, improves reporting and analysis and provides a supplier portal.

A Town Hall held November 27 was well attended and the presentation will be communicated via the Daily News, McMaster Update and MOSAIC News in the coming weeks. Updates on the progress of the project will be communicated monthly beginning in January 2019 and a Town Hall will be scheduled for March 2019.

**Mosaic Billing and AR module (MacBill)**
In **June 2018,** McMaster began implementation of the billing and accounts receivable modules of MOSAIC for several departments. As of the end of September 241 invoices, totalling over $2.41 million had been issued. This new functionality within Mosaic will ensure that external customers are billed on a timely basis, and that payments can be easily tracked and identified for customers. Implementation has brought many benefits to the University, including:

- Customers are billed on a timely basis
• Billing Units are generating an official McMaster invoice customized by department
• Billing Units can easily send reminder notices to customers until the invoice is paid
• As payments can be easily tracked and identified for customers, the number of unclaimed payments has decreased
• Complete listings of unpaid invoices are available by department
• Revenue is recognized at the time of invoicing

Work is complete on this project and all phase one users for non research departments are live. It is anticipated that MacBill will be used in the near future for any new research projects where invoicing is needed, for example, research funding provided by the private sector. In those cases, Research Project Statements will include a note identifying the portion of funding that has been invoiced but not yet received.

FHS Admin Hub:
A new model is being explored to better support research and operating finance in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). The proposed model involves providing better support to individual PIs and departments by having some financial transaction entry done by staff who will specialize in that work. For example, departments or research groups might have employees who enter all of the travel claims for their areas. Detailed data-gathering regarding how financial transactions are entered by FHS users has taken place. The next step is a pilot where the “hub model” will be tested.

The launch of a pilot hub is planned for the spring of 2019.

These are only some of the initiatives underway that support the findings and recommendations of the review of financial support activities at McMaster. If you have questions or want to learn more, contact the Research Finance office at finrev@mcmaster.ca