University of Strathclyde

Department of Accounting and Finance

Honours Year 2014/2015

Draft Notes for Guidance
please note the following guidelines are subject to change prior to the start of term

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Note this handbook is designed to help students with a range of issues associated with the BA Honours Accounting Programme and should be read in conjunction with the rules and regulations published in the official University Calendar available on-line. If you require any further details or interpretations of these rules / guidance notes please contact the Honours Programme Director in BOTH of your principal subjects.
Overview

The honours level is an opportunity to activate and encourage a deeper approach to the learning process, offers a meaningful and critical interaction with the external environment, and allow the construction of a realistic context for the student to place their knowledge and understanding of accountancy. It is perhaps the most rewarding and enjoyable time at university. It is very different from previous years and can seem like very hard work, but if approached in a constructive, positive manner it offers the potential for personal as well as academic development.

Key Elements of the Honours Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dissertation</th>
<th>seminars</th>
<th>student presentations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>case studies</td>
<td>essays</td>
<td>time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group projects</td>
<td>theories and philosophy</td>
<td>debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exams</td>
<td>reading, reading, reading</td>
<td>student centred discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Attributes to be developed in the Honours Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>looking for meaning</th>
<th>general information gathering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>active interest</td>
<td>team-work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical stance</td>
<td>self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relating and organising ideas</td>
<td>dealing with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using evidence and logic</td>
<td>problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effort in studying</td>
<td>ethical reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organised study</td>
<td>oral presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time management</td>
<td>written communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic self confidence</td>
<td>time management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction
Accounting Honours Departmental Aims and objectives.

The aims of the Department in respect of its teaching are twofold:
- to provide an educational experience, encompassing depth of learning, through the medium of accountancy and finance
- to have regard for the long term career aspiration of students in private and public sector employment.

The department aims to
- flexibly respond to new demands and new developments arising from research and practice and
- cover relevant areas of accountancy and finance in the context of existing and emerging issues at national and international level such as:
  - Public domain accountability activities
  - Regulations, law, professional standards, codes of conduct and ethics
  - Corporate and organisational developments
  - Social, environmental issues
  - Theory and operation of capital markets
  - Accounting and its relationship with wider societal issues.

It is intended that students develop knowledge and comprehension, learn to apply that knowledge and comprehension in a manner that encompasses a deeper approach to learning. The deep approach is evidenced by students' powers of analysis, synthesis and evaluation as they progress through their degree programme.

Analysis, synthesis and evaluation are transferable skills of value to students in their future life far wider than the individual subject areas covered. Other transferable skills developed particularly in the honour programme include communication, quantification, interactional and interpersonal skills and the ability to clarify values. During the honours year students are encouraged to use their powers of reasoned argument to enable and empower them to identify with or challenge the material available on any subject.

The honours year provides the opportunity to expand students' knowledge of subject areas covered in the first three years of the courses and to explore new areas. The classes are designed to develop students' approach to learning accounting, by

- Understanding material for yourself rather than passively accepting the interpretation provided by others
- Interacting vigorously and critically with relevant subject material
- Relating your ideas to your previous knowledge and experience
- Using organising principles to integrate ideas
- Communicating these ideas to others
- Examining the logic and consistency of an argument
- Relating conclusions to evidence
- Assembling evidence to support conclusions.

Teaching methods will vary depending on the specific nature of each class. For example, some lecturers may wish to place emphasis on communication skills and teamwork through the medium of presentations and groupwork, while others may use more structured teaching methods and others may use a mixture of teaching methods. The honours year provides an opportunity for you to develop your own approach to learning, which may include the formation of informal study groups with other students.
Accounting Honours Level Programme

Not all of the classes below will run every year.

Single Honours Accounting students must take 2 classes per semester.

Joint Honours Accounting students must take 2 classes in Accounting. It is advisable for Joint Honours Accounting students to take one Accounting class in each semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Honours Accounting Classes</th>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AG420 Auditing Theory and Practice</td>
<td>AG415 Contemporary Issues in International Financial Reporting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG422 Accounting ethics</td>
<td>AG416 Management Accounting Theory and Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG438 Understanding Accounting Technologies &amp; Institutions</td>
<td>AG419 Accounting and Risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Semesters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>AG435 Accounting Dissertation including 10 credits of research methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The 40 credit accounting dissertation class has a taught portion included in the 40 credits worth 10 credits which includes research methodology. There is a separate assignment for the 10 credit research methodology part of AG435.

Joint honours students can do a dissertation in their second principal subject.

A full list of class outlines are available on the departmental webpage.
Single Honours in Accounting
A single honours accounting student has to take an equivalent of 120 credits made up of 4 classes and AG435 Accounting Dissertation.

Compulsory Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Class Title</th>
<th>No. of Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AG435</td>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional Subjects
Four units of accounting classes from the lists above. Note all classes are worth 20 credits.

BA Joint Honours in Accounting
A joint honours accounting and finance/economics student has to take an equivalent of 120 credits made up of 80 credits of classes and a dissertation.

Compulsory Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Class Title</th>
<th>No. of Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissertation (may be in other subject)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional Subjects
40 credits of accounting classes, which is 2 Accounting classes. It is advisable to take one Accounting class in each semester.
40 credits of classes from their second principal subject.

BA in Accounting, Maths and Statistics
A BA joint honours accounting with Maths and Stats student has to take a total of 120 credits

Compulsory Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Class Title</th>
<th>No. of Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AG435</td>
<td>Accounting Dissertation</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional Subjects
A minimum of 20 credits of accounting classes and a minimum of 20 credits from Maths classes and at least 20 credits from Statistics classes.

Bsc Maths, Stats and Accounting
Bsc Maths, Stats and Accounting students have to take a minimum of 120 credits. Within this 120 they must take a minimum of 20 credits of Accounting classes. Instead of an accounting dissertation they have to option of 40480 Accounting Honours Project worth 20 credits). The Honours classification rules are different for BSC student as they include third year as well as fourth year marks.

Examination and Assessment Procedures.
In the honours years all your marks significantly affect the outcome, in that your degree will be classified as either First Class, Upper Second Class, Lower Second Class, Third Class or Ordinary. In years one to three, a mark of 40% constitutes a pass and allows you to proceed to the next level. With a few exceptions (or your own personal satisfaction), it does not matter if you get 41% or 99% for an exam, in the honours year it does. Your performance becomes visible to the outside world, the class of degree you are awarded is determined by a set of rules and criteria and interpreted by those outside university as a level of attainment.

Honours assessment is not about getting over a minimum hurdle, but about achieving your full potential, meeting your own targets or demonstrating to others your abilities. Student's attitude towards assessment change and some find it difficult to gauge the level of performance necessary to achieve the different classification of degree. Each lecturer will have different interpretations of performance, which they will indicate during the course of the classes. Assignments will be marked and feedback to you as appropriate to the objectives of each class.
If you have problems in working out what is required of you ask. Ask your dissertation supervisor, lecturer or Honours Coordinator. They will explain their criteria and what they expect of you. Do not worry if different classes have slightly different criteria.

*Different classes have different objectives, a class designed to develop creative problem solving skills, will have a different set of assessment criteria to one designed to teach formal research methods.*

However the following may be used to help identify the characteristics of the different classes of degrees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>First class</th>
<th>Upper second</th>
<th>Lower second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Structure and Organisation** | Balanced discussion  
  Good relevant examples  
  Clear (not necessarily original) synthesis | Balanced discussion  
  Good relevant examples  
  Generally clear synthesis, perhaps not fully extended in all situations | Discussion shows some balance but may be skewed  
  Some relevant examples  
  At least partial synthesis | Some evidence of discussion but lacking organisation  
  Some examples, relevance may be implicit rather than explicit  
  Limited evidence of synthesis | Little or no evidence of discussion. Examples if any show no evidence of selection for relevance. No synthesis |
| **Knowledge**         | Firm grasp of key articles. Includes sources outside main readings. Linkages with other topics within the degree programme | Firm grasp of key articles within main reading, some reference to sources outside main reading  
  Linkages with other topics within the subject area | Good knowledge of key articles within main reading, less frequent reference to sources outside the main reading. Some evidence of linkage to other topics within the subject area | Basic knowledge and understanding of key articles, some stronger than others; little reference to sources outside the main reading  
  Limited evidence of some contexts relating to the subject area | Substantial gaps in knowledge of materials contained in core reading. |
| **Source Material**   | Good use of key research articles  
  Materials not directly covered in the class | Good use of key research articles  
  Some evidence of reference to materials not directly covered in the class | Competent coverage of key research articles  
  Occasional reference to materials not directly covered in the class | Awareness of key research articles, less skilful use in relation to the essay topic. No reference to materials not directly covered in class | Lack of awareness of key research articles. |
| **Expression / Style**| Impressive, eloquent  
  Surprised by style, presentation and coverage | Clear standard of expression.  
  High standard of styles, presentation and coverage | Expression is sufficient for the reader to understand what is written.  
  Evidence of care taken in style, presentation and coverage | Expression is adequate to communicate the meaning.  
  Quality of style, presentation and coverage is adequate but leaves the feeling that more care could have been taken | Limited clarity of expression reflecting limited understanding of the material covered |
| **Analysis**          | High quality of conceptual understanding  
  Logical formulation of an argument | Good standard of analysis, focusing on the nature of the question and the balance of evidence presented to support the argument | Shows analytical skill but with some gaps in critical evaluation and relying to some extent on accepted criticisms set out in literature or elsewhere | Analytical skill shown but more heavily derived from the work of others, with some reluctance to bring out the candidate’s own reflections | No analytical skill shown. |
| **Logical Conclusions related to the wording of questions** | Candidate’s own opinion logically argued  
  Independent thought  
  Use of a line of argument and support from research findings | Candidate’s own opinion logically argued  
  Clear link back to the wording of the question, with careful analysis of all aspects of the title/topic | Candidate’s opinion logically argued.  
  Primarily relying on conventional wisdom derived from other sources  
  Related generally to wording of question, but not all nuances | Some evidence of ability to present an opinion based on logical argument. Independent thought limited by choice of source material and relying on source opinion. Treats wording of question as general guide; insufficient focus on detail of wording | No evidence of ability to form an opinion. No evidence of independent thought. Little or no regard for the wording of the question |
| **Other Features (as relevant)** | Degree of difficulty of subject matter (taken into account)  
  Good insight into the existing literature | Degree of difficulty of subject matter (taken into account).  
  Competent knowledge of the main literature | Degree of difficulty of subject matter (taken into account)  
  Competent knowledge of the main literature | Degree of difficulty of subject matter (taken into account) | Degree of difficulty of subject matter (taken into account) |
Rules for awarding Degree Classification

Honours examinations and coursework assignments are graded on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Mark</th>
<th>Honours Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70% and above</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% to 69%</td>
<td>2.I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%-59%</td>
<td>2.II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%-49%</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 40%</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final award will be determined by the following rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Degree</th>
<th>Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Class</td>
<td>Average mark of 70%(^1) or above with at least 60 credits at 70% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Second Class</td>
<td>Average mark of 60 – 69% with at least 60 credits at 60% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Second Class</td>
<td>Average mark of 50 – 59% with at least 60 credits at 50% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Class</td>
<td>Average mark of 40 - 49% with at least 80 credits above 40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assessment for each class is a mixture of formal examination and coursework. Each class outline will identify the specific nature of the assessment strategy. Copies of past examination papers are available on the departmental web pages.

Useful Skills

This section outlines a number of useful pieces of information that will prove useful to the development of important learning skills and help you achieve your personal objectives in the honours year. The honours programme offers you an opportunity to develop a number of valuable learning skills and abilities. The portfolio of skills required to succeed in the honours programme is different from previous years and often the classes will highlight weaknesses in your approach to learning, e.g. undeveloped reading, writing skills, inexperience in group work, lack of consideration of time management. This can cause unnecessary stress to certain students. However these skills can and should be learned. You need to be aware of your personal strengths and weaknesses and be prepared to develop the necessary skills. To assist in this process the department has a wide range of self-study skill packs that are freely available to all. These include:

- Confidence with Numbers
- Gathering and Using Information
- Coping with Pressure
- Essay Writing
- Identifying Strengths and improving skills
- Negotiating and Assertiveness
- Oral Presentation
- Group Work
- Reflecting on your experience
- Note Taking
- Organising yourself and your time
- Solving Problems
- Revising and examination techniques
- Report Writing

Alternatively the Centre for Academic Practice run a number of workshops and possess a wide resource base accessible to all students. (See University Webpage for further details).

\(^1\) The mark for each class will be weighted according to its credit value.
Referencing Guidelines

When writing an essay, paper or dissertation you will gather evidence relevant to the topic. That evidence will include the opinions of others as published in academic and professional works. It is important that you indicate in the text the source of the information used. If you use ideas, hypotheses or opinions of other people, you need to indicate that these are not your ideas, by clearly identifying the source. Consequently, references are required not only for quotes, but also for other information taken from specific sources.

Using the Harvard System

When you include a citation (i.e. you want to use someone else’s work), put the year of the publication in brackets after the author’s name, to signal that it is a citation. The corresponding reference will be found in an alphabetically arranged list at the end of the article, paper or dissertation, in a section headed References.

Example of citing references in the text

If you quote material from an article in your essay, one method of referencing is as follows:

“The best strategy for survival for a big firm might be to increase its size”.
(Singh, 1971, p.142)

However, instead of using a direct quote, you may in the essay state:

One possible survival strategy for a large firm is in increasing its size (Singh 1971).

This is not your idea, and you need to state so clearly.

Here is an example of a citation.

Miller and Rock (1985) develop an asymmetric information model in which a firm’s decision to raise external capital conveys information to the market that the current cashflow is lower than expected.

Miller and Rock are acknowledged as the original source of the argument that the person writing wants to draw to your attention. The corresponding reference, which would allow you to read more about their ideas, if you wanted to, is listed in the reference section at the end of the essay. In practice you may need to cite two or more publication by one author. Often these publications will occur in different years, so the date in brackets clearly distinguishes them from each other. Occasionally, an author will have published two articles in the same year both of which you wish to cite. In that case, the citations read Miller and Rock (1985a) and Miller and Rock (1985b). Each reference should then be listed in the reference section at the end of the essay.

It can also happen that your citations refer to the same author but to widely separated sections of the original text. It is unsatisfactory simply to cite Mikkelson (1981) every time because the reader will not know which parts of the source material related to which of your points. In this case you should include page numbers in your citation. For example

Building on Mikkelson’s (1981, p 240) hypothesis that management may refrain from calling in order to retain the debt tax shield. Elsewhere you may state: Mikkelson’s (1981, p 245) data covers the period 1975 – 1979. The corresponding reference should be listed only once in the reference section. NB: There are no commas before or after the brackets, unless required for grammatical purposes.

Another practical difficulty can arise if you want to avoid the stilted language that often results from struggling to ensure that a sentence containing a citation always includes the cited author’s name. The solution is easy, you can include the author(s) name(s) at the end of the sentence or paragraph. For example:

In the presence of asymmetric information between managers and investors, financial decisions such as cash dividend payments, are likely to signal firm’s high quality (e.g. Joan and Williams, 1985 and Yoon and Stark, 1995).
You may on occasions want to refer to findings from an article which you have not read, but which has been referred to in the work of another person. For example, Miller and O'Leary (1987) discussed research by Argyris (1952). If you want to refer to the idea generated by Argyris, but you are unable to read the 1952 paper because of time constraints or lack of availability, you will need to explain how you obtained the information. There are several ways in which academic authors do this, but one approach you may find useful is:

According to Miller and O'Leary (1987), it was held by Argyris (1952) that the mechanisation of accounting techniques was depersonalising organisational controls.

By doing this you also protect yourself against the risk that Miller and O'Leary may have misunderstood what Argyris actually wrote.

If you want to directly quote material from Argyris, as reproduced in Miller and O'Leary (1987), one method of referencing is as follows:

Accounting techniques “. . . have reached the ultimate state of dwelling in an electronic tube and emerging only to shake a mechanical finger at erring human beings” (Argyris, 1952, foreword, in Miller and O'Leary, 1987, p257)

For undergraduate dissertations and essays, the Reference Section should contain an alphabetic listing of the articles you have read. Thus it should include Miller and O'Leary (1987), but not Argyris (1952).

**Listing References at the end of the Dissertation:**

If you have referenced the work of other people, you need to give a full reference to the source in the bibliography. Examples of references from various sources are given below. (Underlining may be used as an alternative to italics). The reference section will be ordered alphabetically.

If there are two or more references by the same author(s) in the same year, add a,b,c, etc. on to the year (see newspaper example below)

If three or more authors have written an article, give the name of all the authors in the bibliography. However, in the text, use the name of the first author, followed by *et al.* and the year of publication. For example, Fama *et al.* (1969) was the application of event study methodology.

**Referencing Books**

The following should be used when listing references where the citations come from books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The surname of the author or authors followed by their initials</td>
<td>Fairburn, J.A. and Kay, J.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The year of publication in brackets</td>
<td>(1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The title of the book written in italics or underlined</td>
<td>Mergers &amp; Merger Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The edition of the book followed by the name of the publisher</td>
<td>1st Ed, Oxford University Press</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reference would appear in the list at the end of the essay as


If you are referring to only part of a large book in the dissertation, always specify the bits that are relevant by adding page numbers (pp. 193 – 220) or the chapter (Chapter 6) at the end of the reference.

Referencing Journal Articles

The following should be used when listing references where the citations come from journal articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The surname of the author or authors followed by their initials</td>
<td>Fama, E.F.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The year of publication in brackets</td>
<td>(1980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The title of the article, surrounded by quotation marks</td>
<td>“Agency Problems and the Theory of the Firm”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The title of the journal written in italics or underlined</td>
<td>Journal of Political Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The volume and issue number</td>
<td>Vol. 88, No. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The page numbers are then written after the abbreviation pp.</td>
<td>pp. 288-307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Other Examples

Newspaper article where the author is known

Articles where the author is unknown

Official Documents

Internet

In the case of Internet reference, you should use the normal format for the name of author, title and then add the Internet address and the date accessed.