DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE
Finance Dissertation / Project (BSc Finance)
CLASS CODE: AG436 / 40490
2014/2015 SEMESTERS 1 and 2

NAME OF CO-ORDINATOR: Patrick McColgan, Room 3.62
Tel. 0141 548 3690
E-MAIL: patrick.mccolgan@strath.ac.uk

CLASS DESCRIPTION

The finance dissertation is a long piece of academic writing, divided into sections / chapters, that investigates in detail a particular finance topic selected by the student. The student will research their chosen subject by critiquing other researcher’s work, discussing relevant theories and/or methodologies, reviewing literature, collecting data and carrying out your own research on this data, usually involving statistical analysis. Once you have produced your results on your data, you will have to interpret what it all means and write it up in an acceptable academic format. The dissertation submitted must be original, demonstrate initiative and evidence of academic criticism and analysis.

For those students registered for the BA degree you should register for AG436 and the class counts for 40 credits towards your degree. For those students taking the BSc Maths, Stats, and Finance degree, you should register for 40490 and the class counts for 20 credits towards your final degree. Students registered for the BSc project are required to complete all the basic components of the finance dissertation but the depth required is ½ of that required for the finance dissertation. Hereafter, we refer to the dissertation to mean both AG436 and 40490.

CLASS AIMS

The aims of the dissertation are to provide the student with an opportunity to demonstrate their academic skills, by studying in depth a subject in which they have an interest. The dissertation will provide the student with a degree of academic self-confidence and personal satisfaction, based on the experience of studying and researching an area independently. The dissertation is designed to support a student-centred approach to deep learning. Due to the individual input required an interesting, topical, well produced dissertation could help distinguish finance candidates in their search for employment.

The dissertation
• is an independent piece of work,
• demonstrates detailed knowledge and understanding
• requires good organisation and planning

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• shows critical and analytical thinking
• normally involves data collection
• requires data analysis/testing
• illustrates the context of existing knowledge
• requires a high standard of communication and presentation skills
• demonstrates an element of originality and personal input
• puts forward students own ideas, backed up with appropriate evidence
• is built on good academic methods and style.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following learning outcomes will contribute to your self-analysis and reflection in your Student’s Personal Development Planning (SPDP). These learning outcomes will be assessed using the methods explained in the “Assessment” section in this Outline.

Subject-specific knowledge and skills

On completing the dissertation you will:
• be able to produce a complex independent piece of research using recognised research methods
• review literature that collates previously published work in your chosen area
• be able to relate your work to previous published work in a critical and analytical fashion.
• Have developed an academic approach to framing and answering problems
• Have experience in gathering, testing, interpreting, evaluating and presenting information/data
• Be able to reference material and construct a bibliography
• Be able to draw valid conclusions based on your own results, logic, theory, and evidence
• Be able to integrate and synthesize material from a variety of sources into a coherent set of arguments
• Have an awareness of theoretical and/or methodological issues as appropriate to your area of study.

Cognitive abilities and non-subject specific skills

During the dissertation you will:
• Develop a mature learning stance by accepting personal responsibility for progress and direction of learning,
• Have experienced working independently
• Have improved your written and oral communication skills
• Be able to structure and present complex data and ideas in a coherent fashion
• Be better able to question prior knowledge rather than accepting them at face value
• Be able to design an effective approach to researching complex issues
• Have improved your logical and conceptual thinking
• Be better equipped to defend and justify your position
• Improve your statistical/data analysis skills
• Have improved your time management and workload planning skills
• Have experience in research and information retrieval skills

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TEACHING AND LEARNING

The dissertation is an extremely significant part of the overall evaluation of the honours year. Whilst the dissertation is primarily an independent learning process support is provided by the department in a number of ways. Each student will be assigned a supervisor who will advise and support the student throughout the dissertation process. The main role of the supervisor is to provide feedback on the work done by the student. It is not the supervisors’ function to direct or instruct the student in what to do. The relationship with the supervisor is an excellent opportunity to develop dialogue between staff and students; however you must be the active party in the relationship, arranging meetings, submitting work, etc.

It is the student’s responsibility to contact the supervisor. Supervisors will not normally chase the student up. Students are advised to meet the supervisor regularly and establish a good professional working relationship. Students who choose not to do this lose the opportunity to get potentially useful advice and direction, which has in the past resulted in poor dissertations. Again, it is the student’s responsibility to submit drafts of their dissertation chapters to supervisors in sufficient time to ensure feedback on their work. Simple things like keeping appointments made, doing agreed tasks and handing in work when agreed all help a good working relationship. Remember all staff will be supervising around 10 students on top of a teaching, administration, and research workload.

When you meet your supervisor for the first time agree the frequency and pattern of meeting. Regard meetings with your supervisor as an opportunity to engage in meaningful academic debate. To help you with your relationship with your supervisors, the following checklists of what supervisors will and will not do should prove helpful.

Supervisors Will:

- Help identify a suitable topic
- Provide suggested academic reading
- Suggest data sources
- Identify gaps in your knowledge and help you to put them right
- Identify extra skills you need and advise on how to acquire them
- Advise on planning, methodology and interpretation of results
- Read and commenting on draft chapters. Remember it takes time to read and understand dissertations so give plenty of time for supervisors to comment.
- Be constructively critical of your work and offer helpful suggestions. Be prepared to challenge new ideas and defend your own points of view.

Supervisors will NOT

- Be responsible for ensuring that your dissertation is of a certain standard!!!
- Do the work
- Correct spelling or grammatical errors
- Do the worrying. If you lack motivation and display a could-not-care-less attitude then don’t be surprised if they give you minimal support
- Give orders and arrange meetings with you.

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Remember if you have any problems with your supervisor or questions on the process, you can contact the honours coordinator.

Copies of selected dissertations can be accessed on the myplace website for the dissertation. However, these will be used for structure only. We have also posted individual sections (literature review, data and hypotheses, empirical analysis, etc) from past dissertations on this website to give an overview of the quality associated with first and upper second class dissertations.

Support on theoretical and methodological issues is also available through the individual classes in the Finance Honours Programme. In addition, the introductory dissertation sessions in week 1 of the teaching term are designed to cover the main building blocks of dissertations; literature reviews, management of data, regression analysis, and conducting an event study.

The department has a number of student-centred learning packs that may be useful for students to develop appropriate skills and research techniques. They include:

- Action Planning
- Confidence with Numbers
- Coping with Pressure
- Critical Analysis
- Essay Writing
- Gathering and Using Information
- Group Work
- Identifying Strengths and Improving Skills
- Improving your Learning
- Negotiating and Assertiveness
- Note Taking
- Oral Presentation
- Reflecting on your experience
- Organising yourself and your time
- Solving Problems
- Revising and examination techniques
- Report Writing
- Seminars, Group Tutorials & Meetings
- Visual Communication

You may wish to work through these packs in areas that you have identified yourself as in need of development, or use Centre for Academic Practice services.

Specific guidance will be provided as to relevant support by student's supervisors.

Students are strongly recommended to take advantage of courses provided by the library in how to maximise their use of the university library facilities. Similarly students are recommended to contact the Centre for Academic Practice who offer regular classes and support for student learning skills.

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Feedback will be available two ways:

1. Approval of the suitability of the topic/proposal week 2.

2. Comments on draft chapters submitted by students by individual supervisors. This is for students to arrange with their supervisors. Do not leave this until close to submission. If a student does not use this feedback mechanism that is their choice. However, lack of progress will be identified at the end of the first semester and I would speak to any problem cases identified by any supervisor.

Please note, the department’s policy is to provide feedback within a 2 week period on any submitted work. As such, students should not expect to receive feedback on anything submitted later than 2 weeks prior to the dissertation submission deadline.

The Finance honours director will deal with any problems if they arise. Note the dissertation is students’ responsibility and there is no formal feedback at any defined dates, other than above.

Students will not be given any indication of their mark by their supervisor.

The Dissertation Process

There are a number of stages associated with producing a successful dissertation. These stages need not occur in the sequence listed below. In reality, many of these stages will occur at the same time. A common experience is that many of these tasks will be happening at once e.g. reading and reviewing academic papers, collecting data, developing statistical expertise, redrafting your plan, meeting with your supervisor. Depending upon your topic and methodology, the time and sequence of each stage will vary.

Your supervisor will be able to advise on the most appropriate mix and sequence for your topic. The way you plan your work should take into account your complete academic workload and assessment requirements, job interview plans, and other important events in the relevant period. However, it is strongly recommended that you plan to complete your data collection by the end of the first semester.

1. Identify Area of interest.

You should identify a subject area and make preliminary contact with your preferred advisor as soon as possible and agree an initial subject area prior to submitting your dissertation proposal by the end of week 2. From the meetings at the end of the third year this process should have started this either before you break up for or during the summer holidays. Preliminary ideas and discussion should be made with the finance honours director or directly with individual supervisors where these have been identified.

Normally the dissertation subject area would be within the sphere of subjects taught within the department; however you should not feel inhibited in your choice. Consider the various

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finance research papers published by members of the department. You can see this from the notice board or on the departmental web page.

The departmental web pages and dissertation website contain a list of dissertations undertaken by students in previous years and the members of staff involved in their supervision. A list of dissertations available for borrowing is also available on this website. The purpose of these is to give students a sense of structuring their own dissertation, and is not designed to provide an additional source of subject-specific reading material.

Choosing a topic is one of the most difficult aspects of the project.

To help you pick a topic, try the following exercises:

- Was there a particular topic that captured your interest during your previous classes?
- What data sources can you access?
- Is there an issue that interests you currently in the academic press or contemporary events in the news?
- From your previous employment or future employment are there finance issues that are practical and relevant in this work.

Your project must be viable. Many ideas require access to data that is not readily available or take too long or cost too much to collect. Your project must be specific and focussed. Once you have identified a broad subject area you should try to narrow it down by reading about the topic and through discussion with potential supervisors. Do not simply select a topical issue, which is impossible to collect data on or analyse.

2. Specific topic identified
This will include:
- an early literature search, identifying and reading a number of key references
- generation and development of ideas

3. Topics refined to develop dissertation proposal
- initial plan of work and research design
- initial formation of research question and/or hypothesis to test
- initial selection of methodological approach and data collection
- approach potential supervisor for comment and advice

4. Proposal written and approved
- fill in and submit dissertation research form to the department office by the end of week 2 of the first semester. See section on dissertation proposal below.

5. Collection of data, information and literature
- collect data, database access, observations, interviews, questionnaire
- conduct detailed literature search, assemble and read academic articles
- conduct preliminary data analysis as the data comes in
- write up initial literature review and critique of key articles

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6. Analysis and evaluation of collected data, information and literature
   • display and present data collected
   • use statistical or other data analysis techniques
   • review the literature and attempt to clarify the role and contribution of theory
   • consider affects on practice
   • explore and clarify links with published work

7. Writing Up

Drafts should be prepared on an on-going basis, do not leave writing up until the end. Again, please note that supervisors will not guarantee to provide feedback on any work submitted later than two weeks prior to the dissertation submission deadline. Start writing as soon as possible and give samples to your supervisor to allow for effective feedback.

   • Seek feedback from your supervisor
   • Compile bibliography
   • Choose a style and structure
   • Set out tables, figures, diagrams
   • Remember you will always underestimate how long it takes to write up your dissertation.

8. Final draft and submission
   • proof-reading
   • checking for consistency, completeness, logic, coherence and integration of parts
   • verifying validity of conclusions and recommendations

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Key Dissertation Milestones

1. Identify area of interest, recommended to do this by end of the summer vacation.

2. Submit research proposal form to Accounting and Finance Office by end of week two. Remember to get a coursework receipt for this submission. Note after the end of week 2, any student who has failed to submit a proposal will not receive a finance dissertation supervisor.

3. Check approved dissertation list and assigned supervisor by end of week three. This will be emailed to students during week 3.

5. Wednesday 1st April 2015, submit two bound copies of the dissertation to the department office and one electronic copy in MS Word to Donna McDougall (d.mcdougall@strath.ac.uk) by 4pm. You must also hand in your data CD to the department office by this time. Dissertations submitted in any other way will not be deemed to have been properly submitted and thus liable to late submission penalties. As the dissertation is also submitted electronically, late submission penalties will be applied over weekend days, as well as days during the working week.

DO NOT SEEK EXTENSIONS FROM THIS DATE FROM INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISORS. ANY PROBLEMS AT ANY STAGE SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED TO THE FINANCE HONOURS DIRECTOR.

Dissertation Length Structure and Format

Please observe the following rules for presentation of your final version.

- The project report must be typed on A4 paper, on one side of the paper, leaving margins as follows:
  - top 20mm
  - right-hand 25mm
  - bottom 40mm
  - left hand 40mm.

- The typescript must be even, one and a half line spaced with an 11 point font.

- All pages of the text and appendices should be numbered in Arabic numerals. Tables of contents, lists of figures, etc., preceding the text should be numbered in lower case Roman numerals. All page numbers should be placed centrally on the page, about 30 mm above the bottom edge.

- The layout for the title page and for the front cover follows this information.

- The title page should be immediately followed by an abstract (not more than 300 words) giving a précis of the nature and scope of the project.

- Acknowledgements are not necessary for those whose normal duties include supervision of dissertations or projects. If, on the other hand, it has been found necessary to seek information and special assistance (particularly from outside the Department) this should be acknowledged. The wording should be simple and concise.

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A table of contents is essential and serves to provide the reader with a framework of the dissertation. Normally only major headings from the text are listed, but if the report is long or its structure complex it may be felt desirable to incorporate subheadings. The headings or subheadings listed in the Table must be worded exactly as they appear in the body of the text.

Appendices (if any) are treated as part of the text for this purpose, and should be listed in Table of contents.

If the dissertation contains many tables, figures or illustrations, a separate page should be devoted to a list of them, giving the Table or figure number, title and the page number where it may be found.

List of symbols used or glossaries of specialist terms should be listed and their full interpretations given.

The thesis should be printed single sided on A4 paper and the administrative staff in the office will deal with the photocopying and binding of the material on your behalf.

**Declaration.**

A declaration such as follows should be included:

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts in the University of Strathclyde, and accords with the University regulations for the programme as detailed in the University Calendar.

I declare that this document embodies the results of my own work and that it has been composed by myself. Following normal academic conventions, I have made due acknowledgement of the work of others.

Signed

Date

**Copyright**

A copy of your dissertation will be deposited in the department library and a digital copy can be placed on the relevant secure access online system. This will be accessible only by Faculty staff and current registered students of the Faculty. Your dissertation will not be accessible outside of the Faculty or University in either hardcopy or digital form. If we receive an external request for access we will attempt to contact you for permission. An exception to these arrangements would be dissertations containing commercially sensitive information, in which case access would only be available to appropriate members of staff on a need to know basis.

Dissertations may also be selected by Faculty staff to be used (in whole or in part) for teaching and learning purposes with students in the Faculty. An example would be

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Length of Dissertation

It is impossible to be specific about the length of a dissertation. In general terms it may be anticipated that the narrative (excluding tables, diagrams, questionnaire specimens, references or other appendices) may be expected to be anywhere between 10,000 and 20,000 words. A dissertation containing less than 10,000 words is unlikely to be acceptable.

*more words does not equate with more marks.*

There is no optimum length for a dissertation; it very much depends on the topic and research methodology adopted.

Appendices may be used to provide supporting evidence but will not contribute directly to the assessment of the dissertation. Students may wish to include in appendices evidence that confirms the originality of their work or illustrates points of principle set out in the main text.

You should discuss with your advisor your plans regarding research methodology, style, structure and reasonable length of your dissertation. As a general guide your dissertation should contain the following sections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overview where you identify the research questions and signpost your approach and structure of the dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- This section will evaluate the key relevant articles of your topic and outline the evaluatory framework or principal theories you will use in the rest of the dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods/methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- This section will be used to describe the methods you have chosen to gather the evidence to help answer your research question. It should also be used to identify any limitations associated with your research methods and explain why you chose it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical results and evaluation in light of prior literature;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- This section is used to describe and present any empirical evidence you have gathered or constructed. It will also evaluate the empirical data using the evaluatory framework described in the literature review section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- This should be used to present any conclusions that can be drawn from the previous sections, further research requirements and an answer to your research question. Please note that a successful dissertation does not require a positive or negative answer to the research question. The process of investigating the research question is as important in a time-limited project such as this dissertation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Referencing

When writing an essay, you will gather evidence relevant to the essay title. 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.

If you quote material from an article in your essay, one method of referencing (the Harvard or parenthetical referencing system) 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. If you are taking a direct quote you must also report the page number from the document.

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 bibliography should contain an alphabetic listing of the articles you have read. Thus the bibliography should include Miller and O’Leary (1987), but not Argyris (1952).

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In essays, we want you to develop your ideas and state your opinions. However, the work of other people will be important to the development of your own thoughts and ideas. You need to identify what ideas of other people you have drawn upon, so that we can know how you have drawn upon these ideas in forming your own conclusions.

**Bibliography**

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). In the bibliography reference 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 an article has been written by three or more authors, 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.
Examples of entries in bibliography:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOOK</td>
<td><strong>Author, Initials</strong> (year) Title. Edition (if not the first). Place of publication: name of publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOURNAL ARTICLE</td>
<td><strong>Author, Initials</strong> (year) Title of article. <em>Title of Journal</em>. Volume number (part number). Date of issue. First and last pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFERENCE PAPER</td>
<td><strong>Author, Initials</strong> (year) Title of Paper, in, Editor. Title of Conference proceedings. Place of publication: publisher. page numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOOK CHAPTER</td>
<td><strong>Author, Initials</strong> (year) Title of chapter, in, Editor. Title of book. Place of publication: publisher. page numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS OR DISSERTATION</td>
<td><strong>Author, Initials</strong> (year) Title of thesis. Type of thesis, Awarding institution. pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTRONIC JOURNAL ARTICLE</td>
<td><strong>Author, Initials</strong> (year) Article title. <em>Journal title</em>. Volume (if given) pages (if given) [WWW] location of document (date accessed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWW DOCUMENT</td>
<td><strong>Author, Initials</strong> (year) Document title [WWW] location of document (date accessed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment

The dissertation is written piece of assessment and the document submitted is what is assessed, rather than the process. Each dissertation is double marked. Your supervisor and one other member of staff will independently mark separate copies of the submitted document using a standard marking protocol and then will meet to jointly agree upon a mark. Dissertations are subject to scrutiny by the external examiner to ensure integrity and equity in the marking process and to confirm the overall standard of work.

The specific criteria used to assess each dissertation will vary according to the topic, methodology and methods used.

You will not be given your dissertation mark prior to the final examination diet. Dissertation marks will be provided in the normal fashion by Student Registry, not from the Department. **Your supervisor will not release your mark and any feedback or informal indications as to the quality of the dissertation cannot be relied upon as authoritative.**

Late submission of the dissertation will be penalised in line with the Business School faculty policy on late submissions. Any dissertation submitted after 4pm on **Wednesday 1st April 2015** will incur an automatic deduction in line with this policy.

It should be noted that when considering whether a reason is acceptable, account would be taken for the fact that students should have been working on their project for a full academic year. **It is the students’ responsibility to maintain adequate computer back-ups of their work to ensure against corruption and data loss. Last minute computer or printing problems are unlikely to be regarded as valid reasons for late submission.** Some further guidance on maintaining adequate backups of your work can be found here:

[http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/aug/01/students-how-to-back-up-your-work](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/aug/01/students-how-to-back-up-your-work)

Students submitting late must include a letter explaining why they were late and presenting their grounds as to why the late penalty should be mitigated. The dissertation co-ordinator, after consulting the relevant supervisor, will reply in writing with his/her decision on the late penalty. All late penalty deductions will be discussed and reviewed in the internal Finance Honours Exam Board.

If you foresee any potential problems with completing your dissertation in time, you are strongly advised to contact your supervisor and finance honours coordinator as soon as possible. The department will look more favourably on mitigating late penalties relating to problems that were notified contemporaneously rather than after-the-fact excuses.

Please contact Jillian D’Agostino in the Department of Accounting and Finance if alternative formats of teaching materials are required or if you need any other assistance.
Many of the lecturers use the following form for marking purposes:

**Honours Finance - Dissertation Assessment Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor or second marker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments on dissertation, indicating main strengths and weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and coherence</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of theoretical analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of empirical analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review/relevance of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research effort/resourcefulness/creativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommended Mark** signed:

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**Plagiarism**

Please note the University’s regulations on plagiarism.

You can improve the quality of your project (and your mark) by reading and citing any relevant work published by other authors. Indeed, you should never make unsupported assertions. You must not, however, attempt to claim someone else’s work as your own. The penalties for this are severe.

It is vital to provide a bibliography at the end, which lists all of the books, and articles you have cited.

The departmental website contains the full text of the University policy on ‘Dealing with instances of possible academic dishonesty by students’. Academic dishonesty includes cheating in written examinations, collusion, submitting the work of another person in the name of the student, falsification of data and plagiarism. Plagiarism means presenting someone else’s ideas or work as if they were your own. To protect yourself against inadvertent plagiarism you must be careful to acknowledge all source material used in writing essays and in preparing coursework projects.

Some students seem to be confused about what is acceptable when writing the dissertation. Supervisors have come across several draft chapters, which comprise ‘cut and paste’ from various sources (economic reports, company accounts and academic articles). This constitutes plagiarism, a form of cheating, which is a serious offence.

It is important that you make sure that you are not guilty of plagiarism. If you are unsure what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, can we suggest that you first look at the following web site and then perhaps also discuss the issue with your supervisor:

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

We also scan all honours dissertations through the Turnitin software package. Details of this can be found at www.submit.ac.uk. Turnitin operates by comparing the work submitted by the student to publicly available sources on the Internet and details of other student’s work that have been submitted through the server by Strathclyde and other participating institutions. It then returns a % match between the submitted work and content taken from its database sources. Honours dissertations, which are required to be the students’ individual and original work, should have low direct match scores with material already written / published in other sources. Individual class lecturers may choose to use this software at their own discretion.

Please contact Jillian D'Agostino in the Department of Accounting and Finance if alternative formats of teaching materials are required or if you need any other assistance.
Dissertation Proposal
A proposal is a summary of the work you intend to do for the dissertation, containing:
- A statement of the nature and purpose of the study
- An account of the background of the study
- What you intend to do in the time available.

Writing a proposal is intended to make you think about all of the related issues connected with a dissertation, helping you organise your thoughts logically and should provide a degree of confidence in how to proceed. A good proposal will also help allocate a supervisor who has an interest and expertise in your chosen area. A proposal should not limit your ideas and creativity, but it is a way of getting you to think in practical terms about how you intend to research and write your dissertation.

The key areas of the proposal are:

Name and Course
Title:
Dissertations should have a title, at this stage a working title will do. You can decide on the final version when the dissertation is nearly complete. Try to pick a title that communicates the aim of your study, don’t worry about your title being long-winded, it is an academic study not a best seller.

Aims
You should identify the questions your research is intended to answer. Once you start working on your dissertation these aims may change in emphasis and in number, however it is essential at the beginning to specify the precise focus of the research and identify the key concepts. When working on your aims attempt to give it some originality by stating how your work will be different from what you already know about the subject. How is your work similar to or different from other writers on the subject?

Relationship to other work – reviewing the literature
At the proposal stage some attempt must be made to review the literature. At this stage this does not mean reading everything, but you should be able to list a working bibliography. A good start is to locate and read 10 articles on you topic. An early visit to the library web pages will also inform you of the volume of literature on your topic. You need to know what other people have written on your topic in terms of theory, current issues and professional practice. An initial literature review may help in deciding the best methodology and research techniques to use.

Methodology /Data/ Research methods
This is the most important part of the proposal, time spent working on the way data and information is collected and analysed is never wasted. How you study a problem is as important as the results you collect. A balanced methodological approach using appropriate well-thought out data collection techniques ensure the conclusions and recommendations you make are valid and credible. This section should identify:
- What is the methodological approach taken
- Specific methods of collecting data, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, case study, participant observation
- What is your intended sample
- Are you going to use a number of techniques

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• How do you intend to analyse and interpret your results
• Practical problems with data collection – money/time.

Plan of Work – time scale
Effective time management is essential, dissertation has a deadline, and you need to work backwards and estimate how long each stage will take. All stages seem to take longer than planned so allow for this.

Resources Required
Will you need (and do you have)
• access to databases, specialist software, special computer equipment.

Working Bibliography
This is a list of the literature sources you have currently identified as relevant, using the referencing guideline identified in this class outline.

Further details on proposals are contained in chapter 6 ‘Dissertation Skills’ by Brian White.

Re-assessment
As this is an honours class there are no re-assessment opportunities

Pre-requisites
You must satisfy the Honours Finance Programme entry requirements.

Reading
Reading forms a major part in the dissertation process; however the reading will be contingent upon the topic and research methods chosen. Searching for this literature is the responsibility of the student and will not be provided by the department.

However, some texts may prove useful in assisting the dissertation process and the following text is **highly recommended for all students**


*Other useful texts include:*

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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

It is very important that, as well as achieving the learning outcomes planned for the course, you are confident about when and how you achieved these outcomes. You will be given the opportunity to reflect upon the dissertation process and provide feedback to the course director on your dissertation experience.

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UNIVERSAL MARKING GUIDE (ASSESSMENT DESCRIPTOR) 2009/2010

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<td>80 – 100</td>
<td><strong>Outstanding demonstration of learning outcomes:</strong></td>
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<td>• wide, appropriate knowledge and understanding (and where appropriate effective project work) including insight and originality</td>
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<td>• wide appropriate knowledge and understanding (and where appropriate effective project work) with only occasional lapses in detail</td>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory demonstration of learning outcomes:</strong></td>
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<td>• basic knowledge and understanding (and where appropriate basic project skills)</td>
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<td><strong>Limited demonstration of learning outcomes:</strong></td>
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<td>• some relevant information and limited understanding (and where appropriate some project work completed under supervision)</td>
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