DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE
Finance Dissertation / Project (BSc Finance)
CLASS CODE: AG436 / 40490
2023/2024 SEMESTERS 1 and 2

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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
- 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

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.

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 and regression analysis.

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.

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 3 week period on any submitted work. As such, students should not expect to receive feedback on anything submitted later than 3 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. 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 finance research papers published by members of the department.

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 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 0 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

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 effects 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. <u>Again, please note that supervisors will not guarantee to provide feedback on any work submitted later than three weeks prior to the dissertation submission deadline.</u> 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

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 <u>end of week zero</u>. Remember to get a coursework receipt for this submission. Note after the end of week 0, 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 two. This will be emailed to students during week 2.

5. Submit an electronic-copy of the dissertation at MyPlace by 4pm Wednesday, 13 of March 2024 (TBC). <u>You must also submit your data file on Myplace by this time</u>. 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 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 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 11 point Times New Roman font.

• The paragraph alignment should be fully justified i.e. use "use control + j" in Microsoft word.

• 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 can be accessed on Myplace.

• 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.

• 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.

Example of Heading and subheadings
3. Methodology and data: An explanation (Level 1. 12 font in **bold**. Period after number).

3.1. Empirical methods (Level 2. Subheading in *italics* NOT bold. Periods after numbers).

3.1.1. Testing vectors (Level 3. This subheading in *italics* NOT bold. Periods after numbers).

• 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 information on binding has already been sent on to students.

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 15,000 words. A dissertation containing less than 8,000 (even for BSc project) words is unlikely to be acceptable.**

Note: More words does not equate with more marks. Marks reflect QUALITY of work.

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.

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 illustrating good practice in structuring a dissertation with students who are preparing for their own dissertation production.

General structure of the dissertation

You should discuss with your supervisor your plans regarding research methodology, style, structure and reasonable length of your dissertation. The structure may be different depending on the guidance and advice of your supervisor. However, as a general guide you should include the follow sections in your dissertation:

••

Title of your project

1. Introduction
➤ States the issue/problem/question to be addressed
➤ Define all the key concepts here (e.g. what is asset pricing, beta, cross section of returns, etc.)
➤ Why this issue/question important and who will benefit from the research? (e.g. write why understanding the determinants of expected returns important and who will benefit from such research).
➤ Summary of hypotheses and findings
➤ Summary of contributions
➤ Signpost your approach and structure of the dissertation

2. Theoretical and empirical literature, hypotheses development and contribution
➤ Provide a detailed write-up on the theoretical and empirical literature that provides theoretical background/framework of your study/research question/s.
➤ State the hypotheses based on the literature review to address your research question/s.
➤ State your specific contribution/s based on the opportunity you have analysed from your literature review, i.e. what is your own contribution that the existing literature does not hold, with evidence.

3. Data and methodology
➤ State the model (i.e. dependent and key independent variables) that you want to use drawing on theoretical framework/economic argument that you may employ for your analysis.
➤ Define all the control variables that affect your dependent variable and what theory/literature justifies their applications.
➤ Describe the data used to test your hypotheses using your econometric framework. In particular, write what are the data, how they are constructed, what are the sources, why you are using these data i.e. which variable/concept they represent etc.
➤ What is the data structure, i.e. time series, cross-section, pooled or panel data.
➤ Summarize the data – Mean, Median, Correlations etc.
➤ Run the econometric regressions. In econometric modelling, how you addressed the issues of:
   a. Heteroskedasticity
   b. Autocorrelation
   c. Omitted variable bias
   d. Endogeniety (i.e. reverse causality)
   e. Other sources of bias i.e. sample selection, unit specific etc.

   Please read the following text to familiarize with methodology
   Principles of Econometrics, 4th Edition International Student Version, R. Carter Hill, William E. Griffiths and Guay C. Lim

4. Empirical results
➤ Describe the results and mention whether they are consistent with the theory (hypotheses) and relate them with the existing evidence in the literature.
➤ Describe statistical and practical/economic significance of your findings.

5. Summary and conclusion
➤ Summarize your research and state the general conclusion with relevant implications.

Important note: Before you finalize the topic, please MAKE SURE that the dataset you want to use are readily available or else after all the efforts of literature review and hypotheses development, you may find there are no dataset to test your hypotheses. Such scenario will be distressing.

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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.

Note: material used for a dissertation needs to be published in English unless specifically authorised by the supervisor.

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 Argryis 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).

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:

BOOK	*Style*	**Author, Initials** (year) Title. Edition (if not the first). Place of publication: name of publisher
	Example	**Johnson, G** and **Scholes K.** (1999) *Exploring Corporate Strategy*. 5th ed. London: Prentice Hall Europe.
JOURNAL ARTICLE	*Style*	**Author, Initials** (year) Title of article. *Title of Journal.* Volume number (part number). Date of issue. First and last pages.
	Example	**Porter, M.E.** (1996) What is Strategy? *Harvard Business Review.* Vol. 74 No. 6. pp. 61-78.
CONFERENCE PAPER	*Style*	**Author, Initials** (year) Title of Paper, in, Editor. Title of Conference proceedings. Place of publication: publisher. page numbers.
	Example	**Beal, T.** and **Reid, C.** (1987) BOJIE: Books on Japan in English: a pc-based bibliographic database, in. *International Conference on Japanese Information in Science, Technology and Commerce.* London: British Library Japanese Information Service. pp. 39-1-39-7.
BOOK CHAPTER	*Style*	**Author, Initials** (year) Title of chapter, in, Editor. Title of book. Place of publication: publisher. page numbers.
	Example	**Osterman, P.** (1991) Impact of IT on Jobs and Skills, in, Scott Morton, M.S. (ed.) *The Corporation of the 1990s: information technology and organisational transformation.* New York: Oxford University Press Inc. pp. 220 - 243.
THESIS OR DISSERTATION	*Style*	**Author, Initials** (year) Title of thesis. Type of thesis, Awarding institution. pages
	Example	**Aitkenhead, I**. (1995) *Multimedia Defined: a study of its effectiveness as a tool for management learning.* Unpublished Master of Business Administration project, University of Strathclyde. p.45-46
ELECTRONIC JOURNAL ARTICLE	*Style*	**Author, Initials** (year) Article title. *Journal title.* volume (if given) pages (if given) [WWW] location of document (date accessed)
	Example	**Maccoll, J.** (1996) Information strategies get down to business, in, *Ariadne* issue 6, November 1996 [WWW] htttp://www.ukoln.ac.uk/ariadne/issue6/cover/ (27th January 1997)
WWW DOCUMENT	*Style*	**Author, Initials** (year) Document title [WWW] location of document (date accessed)
	Example	**Yeates, R.** (1996) NewsAgent for libraries: overview. [WWW] http://www.sbu.ac.uk/litc/newsagent/overview.html (20th January 1996)

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 the scheduled date and time 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.

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.

Many of the lecturers use the following form for marking purposes:

`Honours Finance` Dissertation Feedback Form

This form will be emailed to the student following the final School Exam Board.

Student Name		Student Number	
Title of Dissertation			
Supervisor			

Strengths and weaknesses	
Understanding and use of literature	
Evidence of Originality and Contribution	
Empirical analysis, discussion and conclusions	
Style and Presentation	
Overall Comments	
Second Marker comments:	

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

All honours dissertations go through the Turnitin software package when submitted on MyPlace. 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.

Dissertation Proposal
Please see the separate proposal format on myplace

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
- 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***

Dissertation Skills for Business and Management Students, White, B. Cassell, 1999.

Other useful texts include:
Basic Econometrics, International Edition, Damodar N. Gujarati and Dawn C. Porter

Principles of Econometrics, 4th Edition International Student Version, R. Carter Hill, William E. Griffiths and Guay C. Lim

Using Stata for Principles of Econometrics, 4th Edition, Lee C. Adkins and R. Carter Hill

Using Excel for Principles of Econometrics, 4th Edition, Genevieve Briand

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.

UNIVERSAL MARKING GUIDE (ASSESSMENT DESCRIPTOR) 2009/2010

%	Descriptor
80 – 100	Outstanding demonstration of learning outcomes: • wide, appropriate knowledge and understanding (and where appropriate effective project work) including insight and originality • evidence of reading and thought beyond course/assignment materials • appropriate use of references and exemplars • an outstanding standard of writing and communication and/or presentation
70 – 79	Excellent demonstration of learning outcomes: • wide, appropriate knowledge and understanding (and where appropriate effective project work) including insight or originality • evidence of reading and thought beyond course/assignment materials • appropriate use of references and exemplars • an excellent standard of writing and communication and/or presentation
60 – 69	Comprehensive demonstration of learning outcomes: • wide appropriate knowledge and understanding (and where appropriate effective project work) with only occasional lapses in detail • evidence of reading and thought beyond course/assignment materials • a high standard of writing and communication
50 – 59	Satisfactory demonstration of learning outcomes: • sound knowledge and understanding of essential material (and where appropriate essential project skills) • general accuracy with occasional mistakes and/or uncoordinated use of information
40 – 49	Adequate demonstration of learning outcomes: • basic knowledge and understanding (and where appropriate basic project skills) • omissions and/or weaknesses of presentation and/or logic and/or evidence
30 – 39	Limited demonstration of learning outcomes: • some relevant information and limited understanding (and where appropriate some project work completed under supervision) • omissions and/or weaknesses of presentation and/or logic and/or evidence • lack of familiarity with the subject of assessment and/or assessment vehicle
20 – 29	Inadequate demonstration of learning outcomes: • a few key words, phrases or key ideas • extensive omissions and/or weaknesses of presentation and/or logic and/or evidence • serious errors • inadequate evidence of learning or inadequate project work
1 – 19	Weak performance in learning outcomes • serious errors • extensive omissions and/or weaknesses of presentation and/or logic and/or evidence • deficient evidence of learning or deficient evidence of project work
0	No relevant work submitted for assessment

Data Sources

The department's data resources are largely coordinated by Donna Irving, room 3.33. Donna provides separate information on data availability, which is available through the myplace site for the honours dissertation. If you have any questions you can also email her to arrange a meeting donna.irving@strath.ac.uk.   Please note that all assignment and dissertation data must be accessed through university databases. Any data collected through other methods must be approved in advance by your supervisor.

For the literature review part of your dissertation you need to access a number of academic journals. You can access these in a number of ways.

Library

The library has a large stock of important accounting, finance, and more general business academic journals. If you are unsure about the library and what it has to offer Strathclyde University Library has a number of sessions that introduce you to using the library and its resources.

The library sessions demonstrate range of library resources on how to find journal articles, introduce you to key databases, referencing and search strategies. For details on these sessions and for any help with library services, please contact:

Lorna McNally
Business Librarian
Research and Learning Support
Andersonian Library
St James Road
Glasgow
G4 0NS
Tel : 0141 548 2567
Email: lorna.mcnally@strath.ac.uk

Library guide (Libguide) for Accounting and Finance that brings together the entire Library's resource that are of interest to Accounting & Finance can be accessed through the following link.

http://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/accounting_and_finance

Outside resources

SSRN: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/DisplayAbstractSearch.cfm
You can search and download abstracts and full text of research papers in law, economics, finance, accounting and management. This site is particularly useful for searching on unpublished working papers, but there is no clear method of assessing the quality of some of the articles on the website.

The National Bureau of Economics Research: http://www.nber.org
A search facility for a number of working papers in economics and finance.

The following finance organisation sites are also useful:

American Finance Association: http://www.afajof.org
British Accounting and Finance Association: http://bafa.ac.uk/
European Accounting Association: http://www.eaa-online.org/r/default.asp?iId=KJIMD
Eastern Finance Association: http://www.easternfinance.org
European Corporate Governance Institute: http://www.ecgi.org
European Finance Association: http://www.efa-online.org/r/default.asp?iId=ILGLJ
European Financial Management Association: http://www.efmaefm.org/
Financial Management Association: http://www.fma.org
Western Finance Association: http://westernfinance.org

Students can follow the links for annual conferences, colloquia, small group workshops, etc. on these sites to find some of the most up-to-date working papers (particularly those with a focus in the UK) in finance, economics, accounting, business, and management available anywhere on the web.

Note: it is often tempting to spend a lot of time trying to get information/papers, remember at some stage this has to stop and you need to start READING the papers that you collect.

Final Degree Classification

Examination and Assessment Procedures

This section contains the regulations for BA business students. BSc and BA IBML students should consult the regulations in your own department. In the honours years all your marks significantly affect the outcome, in that your degree will be classified as 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 and honours entry requirements), 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 fed back to you with comments to assist in that process. A wide range of assessment methods will be used. Your dissertation supervisor will provide valuable information to help calibrate your efforts in relation to your desired outcome.

If you have problems in working out what is required of you, <u>ask</u>. Ask your dissertation supervisor, lecturer, or the Honours Co-ordinator. 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 maybe used to help identify a first class performance.

First Class Attributes:

Structure and Organisation	Balanced discussion Good relevant examples Clear (not necessarily original) synthesis
Knowledge	Firm grasp of key articles Includes sources outside main readings Linkages with other topics within the degree programme
Source Material	Good use of key research articles Materials not directly covered in the class
Expression/Style	Impressive, eloquent Surprised by style, presentation and coverage
Analysis	High quality of conceptual understanding Logical formulation of an argument
Logical Conclusions related to the wording of questions	Candidate's own opinion logically argued Independent thought Use of a lone of argument and support from research findings
Other features	Degree of difficulty of subject matter Adding something to the literature

Rules for awarding Degree Classification

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

Percentage Mark	Honours Grade
70% and above	I
60% to 69%	2.I
50%-59%	2.II
40%-49%	III
Below 40%	Fail

First Class

Average mark across all papers of 70% or above with at least half of your credits at 70% or more.

Second Class (Upper Division) 2.1

Average mark of 60-69% with at least half of your credits at 60% or above.

Second Class (Lower Division) 2.2

Average mark of 50-59% with at least half of your credits at 50% or above.

Third Class

Average mark of 40-49% with at least two thirds of your credits above 40%.

RELEVANT EXTRACTS FROM SBS GUIDELINES

The foregoing criteria are designed for the use of Boards of Examiners in deciding their recommendations in most cases. It is stressed however that it is the ultimate responsibility of Honours Boards to recommend in the case of every candidate that result which is deemed just in the light of his/her examination performance as a whole …… Only in exceptional circumstances should the Honours Board of Examiners recommend the award of an Honours degree lower than that indicated by the guidelines.