

EXAMINATION FOR THE DEGREE OF M.SC IN LAW AND FINANCE
REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR 2016-2017

1. Introduction

This report contains a brief commentary on various central aspects of this year's examinations, and raises any points which the Examiners believe may be important for those who have oversight of the examination of MSc in Law and Finance (MLF) candidates in future years.

2. Timetable

The setting of the timetable for this year's examinations went smoothly. The Michaelmas and Hilary Term examinations for the MLF core courses, First Principles of Financial Economics (FPFE) and Finance respectively, were set in the week after the final class, to give candidates the opportunity to revise for their papers after the finance courses had been completed. The Trinity Term examinations for the law electives were all set in 9th and 10th Weeks and it was possible to ensure that no candidate sat two papers on the same day. This year, three of the finance electives had examinations, and these were set on days that did not clash with any law elective examinations for those candidates taking these finance electives as part of the Finance Stream.

This was the third year that the Finance Stream has been offered as part of the MLF programme, which allows candidates to opt to study a finance component in lieu of one of the two law courses that candidates are usually required to take. The Finance Stream consists of a compulsory course in Corporate Valuation and one finance elective. Candidates taking the Finance Stream had a 100% individual formal coursework assessment for the compulsory finance course, Corporate Valuation, which was submitted in 11th Week of Hilary Term. For their finance elective in Trinity Term, candidates were assessed on the basis of individual formal coursework, due after the end of Trinity Term, and/or by group practical work, due during term, and/or by an examination in 9th or 10th Week, depending on which finance elective they selected.

Delivering the Finance Stream will always involve a degree of administrative complexity and uncertainty since the Law Faculty and Saïd Business School (SBS) operate different course and exam schedules and employ differing timelines for timetabling courses. Coordinating teaching and assessment/examination timetables therefore continues to be an intense challenge for MLF finance electives because these need to be compatible across other programmes in the Law Faculty and SBS. Compounding matters, Master of Business Administration (MBA)/MSc in Financial Economics (MFE) and MLF marks for SBS courses are moderated by different Exam Boards. Building on the experience of delivering the Finance Stream since its inception, effective communication with SBS regarding the provision of information about course timetabling and assessments, helped ensure a structured approach to managing the Finance Stream efficiently in its third year, and that candidates' final marks for finance electives were communicated to the MLF Exam Board within the Faculty of Law's normal timetable for reporting, approving, and releasing marks to candidates. The administrative support provided by a dedicated SBS Programme Support Administrator, acting as an MLF course liaison at SBS for the first time, was especially helpful in ensuring the smooth running of the Finance Stream this year. The operational issues involved in managing the Finance Stream do not detract from the desirability of continuing to offer a Finance Stream in future years, and the MLF Finance Stream will continue to be offered in the academic year, 2017-18.

For the third year running, the assessment regimes for FPFE and Finance incorporated a piece of assessed group work, worth 20% of students' overall mark in each course, to spread the burden of course assessment over a variety of different points in time and modalities with the objective of reducing levels of student anxiety surrounding these two courses.

3. Statistics

Attached at Appendix 1 are the number of entrants, distinctions, passes and fails.

MLF candidates, with the exception of those taking the Finance Stream, each sit two law examinations (or one law examination and write a dissertation) from a set menu of available options that are also open to BCL and MJur candidates. Twelve law elective options were available to MLF students in the 2016-17 academic year. This year, between them, MLF candidates studied ten law electives, not including the dissertation option. Two MLF candidates wrote dissertations. This year, no MLF candidates were awarded any of the law elective prizes.

Twenty candidates out of this year's cohort of 41 candidates, i.e. 49%, opted to take the Finance Stream. They were able to choose their Trinity Term finance elective from a selection of five available options.

Forty out of 41 candidates completed the MLF 2016-17 programme. No candidate failed the programme in 2016-17. One candidate suspended studies. Only one candidate had a resit for a course. Of the 40 candidates that completed, there were 30 passes in total, 19 of which were awarded to male candidates and 11 to female candidates.

Distinctions

Of the 40 candidates that completed this year, 10 out of 40 (25%) candidates were awarded distinctions. This number is similar to the number of distinctions that were awarded in 2015-16 (11 out of 46 (24%)) and in 2014-15 (10 out of 44 (23%)), but is a lower proportion than in 2013-14, when it was 39% (18 out of 46 candidates). However, the proportion of distinctions awarded this year is broadly in line with the proportion awarded in the years prior to 2013-14. In 2012-13 the proportion was 25% (9 out of 36 candidates); in 2011-12 the proportion was 25% (8 out of 32 candidates) and in the first year of the MLF, 2010-11, the proportion was 24% (8 out of 34 candidates).

Seven male candidates, out of a total of 26 who completed the MLF this year, obtained a distinction, i.e. 27%. This is a slightly lower proportion than last year (2015-16), when 29% (8 out of 28 male candidates) obtained a distinction, but a higher proportion than in 2014-15, when 21% (6 out of 29 male candidates) obtained a distinction. In 2013-14 the proportion was 56% (15 out of 27 male candidates), and in 2012-13 it was 28% (7 out of 25 male candidates). In 2011-12, 38% (8 out of 21 male candidates) obtained a distinction, while in 2010-11, 30% (7 out of 23 male candidates) obtained a distinction.

Three female candidates, out of a total of 14 who completed the MLF this year, obtained a distinction, i.e. 21%. This is a higher proportion than last year (2015-16) when 17% (3 out of 18 female candidates) obtained distinctions and, while lower than in 2014-15 when 27% (4 out of 15 female candidates) obtained distinctions, reflects an upward trend in the proportion of female candidates gaining distinctions since the course's inception. In 2013-14 the proportion was 16% (3 out of 19 female candidates), and in 2012-13 it was 18% (2 out of 11 female candidates). In 2011-12 no female candidates gained a distinction, while in 2010-11, 9% (1 out of 11 female candidates) obtained a distinction.

Disparity and variation in performance between gender groups must be treated with some care in a programme such as this, in which the number in each cohort is relatively small, but the gender disparity between the results for men and women is observed on the MLF programme. Following a recommendation from the MLF's Five Year Review Panel in 2015-16, which noted the gender disparity, MLF results since the course's inception have been analysed to determine whether this gender disparity is linked to particular assessment types. This study did not reveal any significant differences in gender performance for different assessment types for the core courses (i.e. group work, essays and exams). However, the proportion of men and women achieving distinctions is something that will continue to be monitored in future years.

4. Turnitin

Turnitin software was used to check for plagiarism for the programme's two assessed essays, which are submitted for the MLF core courses, FPFE and Law and Economics of Corporate Transactions (LECT). Candidates submitted electronic copies of their essays via WebLearn, which helped reduce the time and administrative burden of checking essays through Turnitin directly. Turnitin reports with the highest score were anonymised and checked by the first marker for each course.

5. Plagiarism and late submission of essays and coursework

Candidates receive guidance on the issue of plagiarism and are also referred to the study skills guidance and training opportunities on the Oxford Students website to ensure they are clear on what good academic practice looks like for the purpose of assessed essays. One case of suspected plagiarism was reported to the Proctors in 2016-17 in connection with the LECT essay.

Four coursework assignments for the Finance Stream course, Corporate Valuation, were submitted after the stipulated deadline. The MLF Examiners were authorised by the Proctors to mark the work and apply, or not apply, an academic penalty in accordance with MLF established conventions. There were six cases where the Proctors granted candidates an extension of the deadline for submission of assessed work.

6. Setting of papers

The MLF Board of Examiners reviewed all draft papers carefully, making text changes for clarity and consistency as required and referring queries back to the setter, which were then discussed and resolved. This process ensures consistency of style and standard across papers, and normally obviates queries during the examinations themselves. Exceptionally this year two minor proof-reading faults were raised during the Finance examination, while two queries relating to content and assumption were raised during the FPFE examination.

7. Information given to candidates

The MLF Examination Conventions for 2016-17 are attached as Appendix 3. These Conventions, and all subsequent versions, are made accessible on WebLearn for MLF candidates to view, to which their attention is drawn at the start of each term. An original hard copy of the MLF Exam Conventions is also made available to all candidates at the start of the academic year. In advance of examinations and assessments each term, candidates are referred to the University's Examination Regulations and the examination and assessments information on the Oxford Students website, including a summary of key regulations applicable to all examinations.

8. The written examinations

The MLF examinations generally appear to have proceeded smoothly. The Chair or an alternative of the MLF Exam Board attended at the start of each examination, as did the setter or an alternative.

9. Materials provided in the examination room

Calculators were provided for the examinations for the MLF core courses, FPFE and Finance.

10. Illegible scripts

No candidate had an illegible examination script needing to be typed in 2016-17.

11. Marking and remarking

Scripts were marked and, where required, were second-marked (blind), in accordance with the established practice as set out in the MLF Examination Conventions, with a final mark agreed between the two markers before the relevant exam board meeting. For the MLF, all scripts and papers that were given a mark ending in a 7, 8 or 9 were second-marked. This is because marks for two of the core MLF courses are finalised and released before the final exam board meeting, so there is no opportunity to request that a script be remarked where a mark ends in a 7, 8 or 9 based on a candidate's overall marks profile at the end of the year, as happens for the BCL and MJur.

For the SBS finance courses taken by the Finance Stream candidates, all individual formal coursework submissions and examination scripts were double-blind marked by two assessors at SBS, in accordance with their marking procedures.

12. Factors Affecting Performance Applications and Special Examination Needs

Six candidates submitted FAP ('Factors Affecting Performance Applications') applications. Seven applications were received in total. These applications informed the MLF Examiners of candidates who had circumstances needing to be considered when finalising the course marks and year outcome results. All FAP applications were properly considered under the procedures set out in Examination Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 13, and the Examiners' decisions were recorded in relation to all FAP applications.

Four candidates had adjustments made under Examination Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 12, for all or some of their examinations. Adjustments included taking exams in college, having rest breaks, sitting in the Extra Time Room at the Examination Schools, and having use of a word processor.

Thanks

The Examiners would like to conclude by expressing their thanks to the External Examiner, David Kershaw, for his helpful advice and good judgement throughout the Exam Board process this year.

J. Getzler (Chair)
J. Armour
A. Morrison
D. Kershaw (External)

Appendices to this Report:

[Appendix 1: Statistics for the MLF 2016-2017 Examinations](#)

[Appendix 2: Marks Distributions](#)

[Appendix 3: MLF Examination Conventions](#)

[Appendix 4: Finance Stream Assessment Information](#)

[Appendix 5: MLF Course Prizes](#)

[Appendix 6: Reports on Individual Papers](#)

[Appendix 7: External Examiner's Report](#)

APPENDIX 1:

STATISTICS FOR THE MLF 2016-2017 EXAMINATIONS

												2017					
												Male		Female		Total	
												No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Dist												7	27	3	21	10	25
Pass												19	73	11	79	30	75
Fail												0		0		0	
Total												26		14		40*	

												2016				2015				2014									
												Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
												No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Dist												8	29	3	17	11	24	6	21	4	27	10	23	15	56	3	16	18	39
Pass												20	71	15	83	35	76	23	79	11	73	34	77	12	44	15	79	27	59
Fail												0		0		0		0		0		0		0		1	5	1	2
Total												28		18		46		29		15		44		27		19		46	

												2013				2012				2011									
												Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
												No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Dist												7	28	2	18	9	25	8	38	0	0	8	25	7	30	1	9	8	24
Pass												18	72	9	82	27	75	13	62	11	100	24	75	15	65	9	82	24	71
Fail												0		0		0		0		0		0		1	4	1	9	2**	6
Total												25		11		36		21		11		32		23		11		34	

N.B. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, which may result in the overall percentage result totalling 99 or 101 instead of 100.

* 40 students completed in 2017 rather than 41, as one student suspended studies in 2016-17.

** The two 2010-11 MLF students later completed re-sits during the following academic year, in 2012, which resulted in a final award of 'Pass' for both students. These two 'Pass' results are not included in the 2012 figures above (which relate only to the 2011-12 cohort) and are instead recorded in this note.

APPENDIX 2:

FINAL MARKS STATISTICS, MLF 2016-2017 MARKS DISTRIBUTIONS, AS PERCENTAGES

Paper name	Avg. Mark	No. Sitting	Mark rangers (%)					
			49/less	50/54	55/59	60/64	65/69	70/over
MLF Core Courses								
First Principles of Financial Economics	67.8	40				3	80	18
Finance	72.0	40		3	3	8	18	70
Law and Economics of Corporate Transactions	65.5	40			15	18	35	33

Law Electives								
BCL Dissertation	67.5	2					50	50
Commercial Negotiation and Mediation	61.0	1				100		
Commercial Remedies	64.0	2				50	50	
Comparative Corporate Law	65.2	6				50	33	17
Conflict of Laws	60.0	1				100		
Corporate Finance Law	64.7	13			15	23	46	15
Corporate Insolvency Law	67.6	5					80	20
International Dispute Settlement	66.0	1					100	
International Economic Law	67.0	2					100	
Legal Concepts in Financial Law	64.5	4			25	25	25	25
Principles of Financial Regulation	65.0	23		4	4	26	48	17

Finance Stream Courses								
Corporate Valuation	65.4	20		5	15	15	35	30
Asset Management	62.8	4		25	25		25	25
Cases in Finance and Investments	68.5	2					50	50
Entrepreneurial Finance	67.0	4				25	50	25
Mergers, Acquisitions and Restructuring	62.3	7		14	29	14		43
Private Equity	62.7	3				100		

N.B. 'Average mark' is given to the nearest one decimal point.

All percentages for 'Mark rangers' have been rounded to the nearest whole number, which may result in the overall percentage result totalling 99, 101 or 102 instead of 100.

APPENDIX 3:

MLF EXAMINATION CONVENTIONS

MSc Law and Finance Examination Conventions Academic Year 2016-17

Version	Action	Date
Version 1.0	Published for the start of the new academic year, 2016-17	26/09/16
Version 2.0	Provision of new information regarding: a) the rubrics and materials in the examination room for the law elective courses and; b) the rubric for the compulsory Finance Stream course, Corporate Valuation. Notification of: c) revised rubric for the Finance examination. Inclusion of: d) a new statement on penalties for plagiarism.	16/01/17
Version 3.0	Updated information regarding: a) the law elective courses b) the rubrics for the TT finance elective courses for the Finance Stream c) the dissertation option and electronic submission	24/04/17

Contents

1	<u>Introduction</u>
2	<u>Rubrics for Individual Papers</u>
3	<u>Submission of Assessed Essays, the Dissertation and Group and Individual Assignments</u>
4	<u>Marking Conventions</u>
5	<u>Progression Rules and Classification Conventions</u>
6	<u>Resits</u>
7	<u>Factors Affecting Performance</u>
8	<u>Details of Examiners and Rules on Communicating with Examiners</u>

1. Introduction

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.

The supervisory body responsible for approving the examination conventions is the Social Sciences Board's Teaching Audit Committee.

Certain information pertaining to assessments (for example, rubrics for law and finance electives) will be finalised by the Examination Boards in the course of the year and it will be necessary to issue further versions of this document. It is intended that an updated version of this document is published for the start of Hilary Term, when information about the law electives and Finance Steam courses becomes available. A further updated version is planned for the start of Trinity Term, once the details of the law elective papers and assessments for the finance electives have been finalised. When changes are made the Faculty will publish a new version together with a list of the changes and students will be informed. Amendments and modifications to these conventions must be approved by the MLF Exam Board, who are responsible for the course and the examination, and the supervisory body.

This is Version 3.0 of the MLF 2016-17 Examination Conventions, an updated version of the Examination Conventions that was made available to MLF students at the start of Hilary Term. If there are any minor changes to this current version of the Exam Conventions, then a new version – 3.1 – will be created. If there are any major changes then the new version will be renumbered as Version 4.0. Each time a new version is issued, you will be informed by email, and the updates will be listed in the version table above. The new version will also be available on the [MLF Examinations and Assessments Weblearn site](#).

2. Rubrics for Individual Papers

Candidates must complete the following courses:

(a) Three core courses; *and*

(b) either

two law electives, *or*

one law elective and an individual dissertation, *or*

one law elective and the Corporate Valuation course plus one finance elective, as prescribed for the Master in Business Administration or MSc in Financial Economics (i.e. the 'Finance Stream').

Core Courses:

(i) First Principles of Financial Economics (FPFE)

- i. Practical group work exercise (worth 20%). Students will be divided into groups for the assignment, which will be released on WebLearn at 12 noon on Wednesday of Week 5 Michaelmas Term (MT). Answers (one set per group) will be required by 12 noon on Friday of Week 6 MT. (See also 3.3 below).
- ii. 1,500 word assessed essay to be submitted by 12 noon on Friday of Week 10 MT (worth 40%). Footnotes and bibliography are included in the word limit. The title for the essay will be

prescribed by the MLF Board of Examiners and published on WebLearn at 12 noon on Friday of Week 8 MT. (See also 3.1 below).

- iii. 90 minute written examination taken in Week 9 MT (worth 40%). The examination will comprise 10 compulsory questions, each worth 10 marks. All questions will be quantitative (though not necessarily numeric) and will require a brief and unambiguous answer. SHARP EL-531 model calculators will be provided in the examination room.

(ii) Finance

- iv. Practical group work exercise (worth 20%). Students will be divided into groups and presented with a case study, regarding which they will be required to answer all 5 questions set by the examiner. The case study and questions will be released on WebLearn at 12 noon on Friday of Week 1 Hilary Term (HT). Answers (one set per group) will be required by 12 noon on Monday of Week 4 HT. There is no word limit, but brevity is a virtue. (See also 3.3 below).
- v. 2 hour written examination taken in Week 9 HT (worth 80%). The examination will comprise 2 sections. Section A (worth 60 marks) will contain 4 compulsory questions; section B (worth 40 marks) will contain 2 longer questions, of which one must be answered. SHARP EL-531 model calculators and a Formula Sheet will be provided in the examination room. All areas of the Finance course may be examined.

(iii) Law and Economics of Corporate Transactions (LECT)

- i. Group work assessments marked as pass or fail, which consist of assessed conduct of case studies involving preparation and presentation of proposals, and attendance at the deals presentation classes. Students will work in small groups to answer a problem. Each group will have a different submission deadline and these will be set and announced by the course convenor at the start of Trinity Term (TT). Students are required to pass the group work assessment in order to pass the course.
- ii. 5,000 word assessed essay to be submitted by 12 noon on Friday of Week 7 TT (worth 100%). Footnotes and bibliography are included in the word limit. The title for the essay will be prescribed by the MLF Board of Examiners and published on WebLearn at 12 noon on Friday of Week 1 TT. (See also 3.1 below).

Law Elective Courses:

The rubrics for the law elective courses and the materials available in the examination room for each paper are agreed by the Law Faculty's Examination Board during Michaelmas Term, and are set out in the [BCL/MJur Examination Conventions 2016-17](#) on the BCL/MJur WebLearn site.

The format and rubric of examination papers can be found as Appendix A to the BCL/MJur Examination Conventions.

The material which will be available in the examination room can be found as Appendix B to the BCL/MJur Examination Conventions.

Supplementary information pertaining to the law elective courses is set out in the [BCL MJur Examiners Edict 2017 with Schedules.pdf](#) and [Final Case lists notice to candidates 2017.pdf](#).

These documents can be found on the BCL/MJur WebLearn site in Resources under 'Examination Edict' - <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/x/qSLPav>.

The examination timetable for the law electives can be found on the [University website](#).

Optional Dissertation:

An MLF student may offer a 10,000-12,500 word (including footnotes but not including tables of cases or other legal sources) law dissertation, in lieu of one law elective. Permission to write the dissertation must be granted first (see the [MLF Student Handbook](#) for how to request permission and the deadline by which this must be sought), and will depend in part on whether an appropriate supervisor is available. The dissertation must be submitted by 12 noon on Friday of Week 5 TT. (See also 3.2 below).

Finance Stream Courses:

The rubric for the compulsory Finance Stream course, Corporate Valuation, which is taken in Hilary Term by all Finance Stream students, is available on the [MLF Examinations and Assessments Weblearn site](#).

The rubrics for the Trinity Term finance elective courses are also available on the [MLF Examinations and Assessments Weblearn site](#).

3. Submission of Assessed Essays, the Dissertation and Group and Individual Assignments

3.1 Submission of assessed essays

For FPFE and LECT, work is assessed by means of submission of an essay.

Two copies of the essay must be delivered to the Clerk of the Examination Schools, addressed to the Chair of Examiners for the MSc in Law and Finance, C/O Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, OX1 4BG, by the deadline.

A submitted essay must have a cover sheet attached to it containing the title, your candidate number and the number of words used in the essay. The word count that appears on the cover sheet must be the actual word count produced by the software in which the essay is produced. The word count for essays must include all footnotes and bibliography.

The essay must be typed and each copy separately stapled.

Your candidate number (not your name or college) must be written on your essay and also on the envelope in which it is submitted.

A [Declaration of Authorship form](#) must be completed and submitted with the hard copies of your essay by the deadline. This can be found on the [MLF Examinations and Assessments Weblearn site](#).

Late submission of this Declaration may lead the Proctors' Office to recommend an academic penalty. (See the [Examination Regulations 2016, Part 14, section 14.11](#)).

To ensure anonymity, the Declaration of Authorship will be retained in safe keeping by the MLF Administrator and, unless in exceptional circumstances, the contents of the Declaration will not be disclosed to the Examiners until the marks for the essays have been finally determined.

By the same deadline as you formally submit hard copies of the submission to the Examination Schools, you must also upload an electronic copy to WebLearn. Details about how to upload your submission will be provided to all students by email before the submission deadline. Submitted pieces of work will be checked for plagiarism using the Turnitin software.

3.2 Submission of dissertations

If you are offering a dissertation you must read very carefully the requirements set out in the [Examination Regulations 2016, Degrees in Civil Law, Magister Juris, and Master of Philosophy in Law, Schedule B](#), which also applies to the MLF. (See also 4.6 below).

The dissertation must be submitted electronically to WebLearn by 12 noon on Friday of Week 5 TT. On submitting the dissertation, candidates will also be required to submit an online Declaration of Authorship. The examiners shall exclude from consideration any part of the dissertation which is not the candidate's own work or which has been or will be submitted to satisfy the requirements of another course, and the examiners shall have power to require the candidate to produce for their inspection the work so submitted or to be submitted.

Dissertations must be typed, and the number of words must be stated on their first page. The word count that appears on the dissertation must be the actual word count produced by the software in which the dissertation is produced. The word count for dissertations must include all footnotes, but not any bibliography, tables of cases or other legal sources. The dissertation must bear your candidate number. Neither your name nor the name of your college must appear. All dissertations will be checked to confirm the word count and to check for plagiarism, using the Turnitin software.

There is a common approved [Faculty format for all law dissertations and theses](#), which can be found on the [MLF Examinations and Assessments WebLearn site](#).

See page 5 and Schedule III in the [BCL MJur Examiners Edict 2017 with Schedules.pdf](#) for further information regarding the dissertation and instructions on how to submit your dissertation electronically.

3.3 Group work: FPFE, Finance and LECT

For FPFE and Finance, groups must submit answers (one set per group) to all questions by the deadline, usually by uploading an electronic copy to WebLearn. Details about how to submit your group's submission will be provided to all students by email before the submission deadline.

For the LECT group work, the course convener will issue a memo to the class setting out the method of submission and the assignment deadlines before the start of Trinity Term.

For the FPFE and Finance group work, a [Group Declaration of Authorship form](#) must be completed and submitted with the work. This can be found on the [MLF Examinations and Assessment WebLearn site](#).

3.4 Finance Stream: individual and group assignments

Please refer to the [SBS Assessment Information Sheets](#) for guidance about submitting individual and group assignments for Finance Stream courses.

A statement must be submitted with all individual written assignments declaring that the work is that of the individual candidate. In the case of group assignments, a statement must be submitted declaring that each student has contributed significantly and proportionately to the work. All materials

taken from published or transmitted sources must be clearly referenced by standard academic methods such that the Examiners will be able to trace the sources without difficulty.

4. Marking Conventions

4.1 University scale for standardised expression of agreed final marks

Agreed final marks for individual papers will be expressed using the following scale:

70-100	Distinction
50-69	Pass
0-49	Fail

4.2 Qualitative criteria for different types of assessment

Qualitative descriptors are intended to provide summaries of the qualities that will be demonstrated in attaining each classification – Distinction, Pass, Fail – overall.

The qualities a Distinction will demonstrate include acute attention to the questions asked; extensive and detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic addressed; excellent synthesis and analysis of materials; clear and well-structured answers which show an engagement with theoretical arguments and substantial critical facility.

The qualities a Pass will demonstrate include a level of attention to the questions that is satisfactory to good; a satisfactory to good knowledge of the topics in question; appropriately structured arguments; and some familiarity with theoretical arguments pertinent to the topic.

A Fail overall will demonstrate a lack of the qualities required above in respect of one or more papers.

See section 5.1 below for further information about how the different classifications are calculated overall.

For Finance Stream courses, see the [MBA Examining Conventions 2016-17](#) for details of the qualitative criteria.

4.3 Verification and reconciliation of marks

For each paper there will be a team of at least two markers. LECT and the law elective papers are marked by markers from the Law Faculty. Finance, FPFE and the Finance Stream courses are marked by markers from the Saïd Business School.

The markers operate under the aegis of the MLF Board of Examiners and the whole Board meets to discuss and finalise marks, providing an extra layer of assurance in terms of the objectivity of the process, and a means of resolving any situation where two markers are unable to reach agreement.

Where a mark given for a particular element of a course converts into a decimal mark for the overall mark, decimals ending in .5 or above are rounded up, and those ending in .4 or below are rounded down.

After marking has been completed, the MLF Exam Board meet at the end of the academic year and agree a final classification/result for each candidate, having taken account of medical and other special case evidence and having made appropriate adjustments for such matters as absent answers

and breach of rubric. The MLF Board of Examiners also agree on the award of the MLF course prize at this stage.

Marking carried out for MLF core courses (FPFE, LECT and Finance) and law elective courses

The Law Faculty does not operate a marking regime involving the blind second-marking of all scripts. However, extensive second-marking according to a system approved by the MLF Exam Board and supervisory body does take place and the Faculty takes a great deal of care to ensure the objectivity of marking procedures.

For each paper, a minimum sample of 6 scripts, or 20% of the scripts, whichever is the greater number, will always be second-marked, together with (if not already part of the sample):

- any other script/essay which the first marker found difficult to assess (including, potentially those where not all questions have been answered, as well as those of potential course prize winners), and
- any script or essay for which the first mark places a candidate on a borderline that may affect the awarding of a distinction (i.e. 57, 58, 59, 67, 68 or 69), and
- any script or essay for which the first mark is below 50.

For all second-marked papers, the markers meet to compare their marks and consider any differences arising, following which a single mark is agreed by the two markers for each question, and for the paper's mark overall. In exceptional (e.g. medical) circumstances, third readings may take place.

Marking carried out for Finance Stream courses

For Finance Stream courses, see the [MBA Examining Conventions 2016-17](#) for details of the verification and reconciliation of marks.

MLF students will be integrated into groups with MBA and Masters in Financial Economics (MFE) students for the group formal coursework elements of the finance electives. The marks for these course elements are then sent to the relevant boards of examiners for each of the MBA and MFE, and for the MLF. Each examination board is responsible for the appropriate moderation of results and it is therefore possible that the final mark given to MLF students for their group work may differ from that given to the MBA and/or MFE students that were in the same group and submitted the same piece of group work.

4.4 Short-weight convention and departure from rubric

For MLF core course and law elective papers, the mark for a completely absent answer in any script will be zero, and the mark for a part answer will be such a mark above zero as is appropriate, relative to more successful answers, in terms of the quality of what has been written, and the extent to which it covers the question.

The overall mark for a law elective script will be arrived at by averaging the number of marks, to two decimal places, including zeros, over the number of questions that should have been answered on the paper.

If a candidate completes the correct number of questions, but fails to answer a question which is compulsory (e.g. where the candidate does not answer a problem question as required by the rubric of that paper), marks will be deducted and this may affect the final result.

Candidates who write answers in note form may also expect to have their overall mark for the paper reduced.

For Finance Stream courses, see the [MBA Examining Conventions 2016-17](#) for details of the short-weight convention and departure from rubric, which will apply.

4.5 Penalties for late or non-submission

Non-submission

Non-submission will normally be penalised with a mark of zero and may result in failure of the course (not just that particular course component).

Late submission

Application to the Proctors for permission for late submission of work should be made by the candidate's college on the candidate's behalf.

- i. Written work for FPFE and LECT, and the Dissertation: Late submission without permission may be penalised by a deduction of marks using the scale below. (See the [Examination Regulations 2016, Part 14, section 14.9 & 14.10](#)).

Lateness	Cumulative mark penalty
Up to two hours late	1 mark
Up to 24 hours late	5 marks
Up to six calendar days late	10 marks
Beyond six calendar days late	A mark of zero will be awarded

- ii. Group work for FPFE, Finance and LECT: Late submission may be penalised by a deduction of up to 20% of the original mark. Where submission is more than a day late, this may result in the failure of the entire group work assessment, at the discretion of the course tutor.
- iii. Formal coursework (individual and group) and practical work for Finance Stream courses: see the [MBA Examining Conventions 2016-17](#) for details of the penalties for late or non-submission, which will apply.

4.6 Penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter

For MLF courses and the Dissertation, see the [Examination Regulations 2016, Part 16, section 16.6](#), 'submission of theses or other exercises: exceeding word limits and departure from title or subject-matter', for details of the penalties which will apply.

Non-submission penalties will be applied where the Examiners refuse to examine work which exceeds the word limit or where the title or subject matter is different from that approved by the Examination Board.

For the FPFE and LECT assessed essays, the Examiners have determined that an allowance of an extra 3% should be permitted to candidates above the word limit (to make allowance for the manner

in which word-count software operates, which often causes legal citations to inflate the word count). Where a submitted essay exceeds this additional allowance, if the Examiners agree to, they can proceed to mark the work but may then reduce the mark by up to 10 marks.

For Finance Stream courses, see the [MBA Examining Conventions 2016-17](#) for details of the penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter, which will apply.

4.7 Penalties for plagiarism

The Examination Board shall deal wholly with cases of poor academic practice where the material under review is small and does not exceed 10% of the whole.

Assessors should mark work on its academic merit with the Board responsible for deducting marks for derivative or poor referencing.

Determined by the extent of poor academic practice, the Board shall deduct between 1% and 10% of the marks available for cases of poor referencing where material is widely available factual information or a technical description that could not be paraphrased easily; where passage(s) draw on a variety of sources, either verbatim or derivative, in patchwork fashion (and examiners consider that this represents poor academic practice rather than an attempt to deceive); where some attempt has been made to provide references, however incomplete (e.g. footnotes but no quotation marks, Harvard-style references at the end of a paragraph, inclusion in bibliography); or where passage(s) are 'grey literature' i.e. a web source with no clear owner.

If a student has previously had marks deducted for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism the case must always be referred to the Proctors. Also, where the deduction of marks results in failure of the assessment and of the programme the case must be referred to the Proctors.

In addition, any more serious cases of poor academic practice than described above should also always be referred to the Proctors.

5. Progression Rules and Classification Conventions

5.1 Qualitative descriptors of Distinction, Pass, Fail

Distinction (70% and above): Distinction-level performance represents an excellent level of attainment for a student at MLF level. They exhibit the following qualities:

- acute attention to the questions asked;
- a deep and detailed knowledge and understanding of the topics addressed and their place in the surrounding context;
- excellent synthesis and analysis of materials, with no or almost no substantial errors or omissions, and coverage of at least some less obvious angles;
- excellent clarity and appropriateness of structure, argument, integration of information and ideas, and expression;
- identification of more than one possible line of argument;
- advanced appreciation of theoretical arguments concerning the topics, substantial critical facility, and personal contribution to debate on the topic.

Pass (50-69%): Pass-level performance represents a level of attainment which, for a student at MLF level, is within the range acceptable to very good. They exhibit the following qualities:

- attention to the questions asked;
- a clear and fairly detailed knowledge and understanding of the topics addressed and their place in the surrounding context;
- good synthesis and analysis of materials, with few substantial errors or omissions;
- clear and appropriate structures, arguments, integration of information and ideas, and expression;
- identification of more than one possible line of argument;
- familiarity with theoretical arguments concerning the topics, and (especially in the case of high pass answers) a significant degree of critical facility.

Fail (below 50%): Qualities required for a pass-level performance are absent. In assessing the optional dissertation, examiners are particularly instructed by the Examination Regulations to judge "the extent to which a dissertation affords evidence of significant analytical ability on the part of the candidate".

5.2 Final outcome rules

All MLF courses have equal weight and contribute to the overall final classification for the programme.

For courses which are made up of a number of marked elements, each element is marked against the marking criteria and weighted to the correct percentage for its contribution to the overall mark for the paper (see section 2 above). The final outcomes rules are as follows, bearing in mind that the examiners have some discretion to deal with exceptional circumstances, in accordance with the Examination Regulations:

- (a) For the award of the degree of MLF there must be no course mark lower than 50, and all pass/fail course assessment components must be satisfactorily completed. A mark lower than 50, but of 40 or above, may be compensated by very good performance elsewhere, but a mark of 39 or below is not susceptible of compensation.
- (b) For Finance and FPFE, which each have more than one marked component, students must attain a mark of 50 overall rather than in each individual component.
- (c) The award of a Distinction in the MLF will be given to a candidate who:
 - i. secures marks of at least 70 in no fewer than three courses, which must include:
 - 1) at least one finance course; **and**
 - 2) at least one of either a law elective **or** the LECT course**and**
 - ii. achieves marks of not lower than 60 in all courses with satisfactory completion of all pass/fail course assessment components.

For these purposes 'finance course' comprises Finance, the FPFE, and the Finance Stream courses; and 'law electives' includes the dissertation.

Group work assessments in the LECT courses are assessed on a pass/fail basis only.

Where, for good reason, a candidate is unable to join an assignment group, for a group assessment, the MLF Board of Examiners may at their own discretion accept an individual submission for assessment according to the same standards. Students must request permission from the MLF Board of Examiners to submit an individual piece of work before doing so.

Candidates who have initially failed any element of the examination will not be eligible for the award of a Distinction.

Note that the aggregation and classification rules in some circumstances allow a stronger performance on some papers to compensate for a weaker performance on others.

5.3 Use of vivas

Viva voce examinations are not used in the MLF.

6. Resits

Candidates are permitted on only one occasion to retake a failed course/elective for which they failed to obtain an overall mark of 50.

Normally the resit for a failed examination will be a new examination paper and the resit for a failed assessed essay will be a new assignment. The resit for any failed group work may be an examination or an assignment, at the discretion of the course tutor.

Where a candidate fails a course made up of several marked components (e.g. FPFE, Finance), the element to be retaken may be an examination or an assignment or both, at the discretion of the course tutor, taking into account the marks already achieved in the various components.

Where possible (the exception being the law elective written examinations), any resits will take place one term after the original fail mark, as set out below:

- FPFE: in Hilary Term
- Finance: in Trinity Term
- Corporate Valuation: in Trinity Term
- Finance Stream elective: the following Michaelmas Term
- LECT: in September of the same calendar year
- Law electives: June or July of the following year.

If one or more of the subjects studied by the candidate are not available when the candidate comes to be examined, papers shall nevertheless be set for that candidate in those subjects.

Marks for resit papers will be capped at 50, so candidates that resit a paper will not be awarded a mark of above 50 for that particular course component. This will not affect marks awarded for other course components, or for other MLF courses.

For Finance Stream courses, see the [MBA Examining Conventions 2016-17](#) for information about re-sits.

7. Factors Affecting Performance

Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission, under [Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations](#), that unforeseen factors may have had an impact on their performance in an examination, a subset of the board will meet to discuss the individual applications

and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. When reaching this decision, examiners will take into consideration the severity and relevance of the circumstances, and the strength of the evidence. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at meetings of the MLF Board of Examiners to adjudicate on the merits of candidates. Further information on the procedure is provided in the Policy and Guidance for examiners, Annex B and information for students is provided at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance>.

8. Details of Examiners and Rules on Communicating with Examiners

The external examiner for the MLF for the 2016-17 academic year is Professor David Kershaw (LSE). The internal examiners are Professor Joshua Getzler (Chair), Professor Alan Morrison and Professor John Armour.

Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners.

APPENDIX 4:

FINANCE STREAM ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

MBA/MLF 2016-2017
Corporate Valuation
Assessment Information Sheet
Hilary Term Elective

Assessment Summary

Component	Weighting	Submission Deadline	Time	Group Size	How to Submit	ID Number
Formal Coursework (Individual)	100%	Friday Week 11 (31 March 2017)	by 12 noon	n/a	Upload to SAMS	Candidate Number (6 or 7 digits)

Formal Coursework Assignment Instructions

For this course you are required to submit **one** piece of individual formal coursework.

Formal coursework will involve questions based on a case study. **The questions are both qualitative and quantitative** and ask for knowledge and analysis. The underlying themes are to assess corporate value in a specific corporate context and to make use of this assessment in strategic and financial decision-making. The marking distribution will reflect the students' grasp and synthesis of economic and financial knowledge gained in the course – that is, their ability to move beyond quantitative financial modelling which relies on management forecasts provided in the case studies to a more nuanced quantitative and qualitative analysis which questions the robustness and plausibility of management forecasts.

Case Study *Berkshire Partners (HBS 9-205-058)*

Harvard Case 9-205-058 is your assessed case study, which you should work on individually and submit **by the deadline and method stated above**.

Assignment Questions

- What is the (unleveraged) asset value of Carter's? Explain your assumptions, especially where they differ from the management forecasts for revenues and firm free cashflows.
[40 marks]
- Assuming that Berkshire bids for Carter's, should Berkshire's use the Goldman staple-on financing package? Suggest an alternative financing package, which meets the constraints given in the case, explaining the advantages and disadvantages of the alternative package relative to the Goldman package. What are the costs of debt for the two options? (Explain any assumptions made.)
[35 marks]

- Should Berkshire undertake the deal? Explain any assumptions made.
[25 marks]

The precise meaning of a case is sometimes unclear. If you think that the wording is in some way ambiguous then you should state clearly your interpretation of the case, and you should identify any assumptions which you make. If you are clear and your interpretation is reasonable then you will not lose marks simply because your answer is not identical to mine. You *will* however lose marks if your working is unclear. Pay special attention to the format of your document: it needs to be presented in such a way that it is clear to the marker how your analysis has been performed.

The word limit for the assignment is 4,000 words including any appendices, tables or references.

MBA/MFE/MLF 2016-2017
Asset Management
Assessment Information Sheet
Trinity Term Elective

Assessment Summary

Component	Weighting	Submission/ Exam Dates	Time	Group Size	How to Submit/ Venue	ID Number
Practical Work <i>Group assignment</i>	30%	Friday Week 7 (9 June 2017)	by 12 noon	5	Upload to SAMS	Practical Work Number (5 digits)
Examination <i>(1.5 hours)</i>	70%	Week 9/10 Trinity Term (TBC)	TBC	n/a	TBC	Candidate Number (7 digits)

Practical Work

The purpose of the **group assignment** is to apply all of the material covered in the course to a real world situation. The investment committee of a College Endowment is debating the pros and cons of various types of investments and the students are asked to evaluate each of the arguments and to propose their own well-argued solution for the college endowment portfolio. The maximum word count for this assignment is 2000. Students will work in groups of 5 for this purpose. Extensive feedback will be provided during the last lecture (week 9). Most of these comments will be distilled by experienced professionals who execute and supervise this type of analysis on a daily basis.

Examination

There will be ten questions; answer will usually consist of a short essay.

[MARKING CRITERIA](#)

MBA/MFE/MLF 2016-2017
Cases in Finance and Investments
 Assessment Information Sheet
 Trinity Term Elective

Assessment Summary

Component	Weighting	Submission/ Exam Dates	Time	Group Size	How to Submit/ Venue	ID Number
Practical Work 1 (Group)	10%	Monday Week 3 (8 May 2017)	by 12 noon	Max 5	Upload to SAMS	Practical Work Number (5 digits)
Practical Work 2 (Group)	10%	Monday Week 6 (29 May 2017)	by 12 noon	Max 5	Upload to SAMS	Practical Work Number (5 digits)
Practical Work 3 (Group)	10%	Monday Week 7 (5 June 2017)	by 12 noon	Max 5	Upload to SAMS	Practical Work Number (5 digits)
Formal Coursework (Individual)	70%	Monday Week 10 (26 June 2017)	by 12 noon	n/a	Upload to SAMS	Candidate Number (7 digits)

Practical Work

Students are required to form groups of up to 5 by Friday 28 April 2017, and to remain in the same group for all assignments. Groups must be registered on [SAMS](#) for all assignments by the deadline above. The groups are expected to work on 3 cases (each case will be weighted at 10%) and are expected to prepare and to present a 2 page case executive summary in PowerPoint, covering all questions, modeling and analysis as requested in the summaries below. The PowerPoint files for each case must be submitted via Upload. Feedback will be given for the presentations during the lecturers and you will receive a mark for each of the following practical work assignments;

Practical Work 1

The Leverage Finance Case – Avusa

- Sector Media & Publishing
- Target Co in Africa, headquartered in South Africa
- UK based LBO fund is looking to raise leverage finance

The materials to review and work to prepare (in advance)

- A short Information Memorandum
- Research reports – Capital IQ, Thomson, Bloomberg

- Guidelines / Questions by Lecturer and Goldman team
- Financial historical model
- Leverage Finance model (template)

The analysis (morning session) with Lecturer

- Present a 2 page executive summary with your findings
- Discuss main case questions
- Discuss main credit analysis & leverage finance concepts

Practical Work 2

The LBO Case – Retail Co

- Sector Food & Retail
- Target Co in UK
- UK based LBO fund is looking to invest

The materials to review and work to prepare (in advance)

- A short Information Memorandum and Research reports
- Guidelines / Questions by Lecturer and Bridgepoint
- Financial and operational model for retail development
- PE Valuation model (template)

The analysis (morning session) with Lecturer

- Present a 2 page executive summary with your findings
- Discuss main case questions
- Discuss main PE finance concepts including the distress case

Practical Work 3

The Mergers & Acquisitions Case – Watson / Specifar

- Sector Media & Publishing
- Target Co in Africa, headquartered in South Africa
- UK based LBO fund is looking to raise leverage finance

The materials to review and work to prepare (in advance)

- A short Information Memorandum
- Research reports – Capital IQ, Thomson, Bloomberg
- Guidelines / Questions by Lecturer and Goldman team
- Financial historical model
- Leverage Finance model (template)

The analysis (morning session) with Lecturer

- Present a 2 page executive summary with your findings
- Discuss main case questions
- Discuss main credit analysis & leverage finance concepts

Formal Coursework

The purpose of the individual assignment is to test the finance & investment case analysis, finance structuring, valuation and investment presentation skills of the students. The assignment will be to prepare an investment case **EITHER** in the leverage finance **OR** distress & restructuring **OR** M & A **OR** private equity **OR** project & infrastructure finance.

Students are required to submit a PowerPoint Presentation of **up to 25 slides** (plus Appendix - optional) plus the Excel Valuation Model, from the following 2 elements and analysis:

- **An Investment Case Analysis** in a specific sector (investment ES proposal, business analysis, operational model analysis, financing structure, valuation, risk analysis, main terms). This should be submitted as a PowerPoint file, and a PDF version of the same file.
- **A Finance Valuation Risk Analysis Model** (case operational model, financial analysis, financial structuring, valuation and risks analysis model). This should be presented in Excel.

Students will be asked to choose a company for this assignment that is **different** to that chosen by any other member of the class, as you need to develop your own individual assumptions and final content (**not similar text, assumptions or analysis with any other older version**). Students register their choice on a first come first served basis. Further instructions on how to register your company will be sent to you nearer the time.

How to submit the Formal Coursework assignment

The method of submitting this assignment will be electronically to SAMS in the same manner as Practical Work assignments. You will be required to submit 3 files;

- One Excel Spreadsheet of the Investment Case Analysis
- One PowerPoint of the Finance Valuation Risk Analysis
- One PDF copy of the Finance Valuation Risk Analysis

MARKING CRITERIA

MBA/MFE/MLF 2016-2017
Entrepreneurial Finance
Assessment Information Sheet
Trinity Term Elective

Assessment Summary

Component	Weighting	Submission/ Exam Dates	Time	Group Size	How to Submit/ Venue	ID Number
Formal Coursework Individual assignment	100%	Monday Week 9 (19 June 2017)	by 12 noon	n/a	Upload to SAMS	Candidate Number (7 digits)

Formal Coursework

For this course you are required to submit an individual assignment.

This will be an individual take-home assignment that will be distributed no later than June 1st. The assignment will require you to use the conceptual and quantitative frameworks discussed in class. It will involve the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of a concrete business problem. It will also require some creative thinking for solving business problems. The assignment will consist of

- 1) A critical evaluation of a business plan from an investor perspective, using the frameworks discussed in class. This part will consist of approximately 1500 words, and will account for 28% of the grade
- 2) A critical review of the financial projections from the business plan, alongside with a proposed alternative model of financial projections. This part will consist of approximately 250 words and a new spreadsheet built by the student. This part will account for 14% of the grade.
- 3) A proposed valuation and term sheet. Student can use the templates discussed in class, but will be asked to fill in their own numbers and terms. This part will account for 14% of the grade.
- 4) An investment recommendation that explains what due diligence remains to be done, and what the main conditions should be for making an investment. This part will consist of approximately 250 words and will account for 14% of the grade.
- 5) An essay question of approximately 2000 words that is based on the content of the cases and readings discussed in class, and that will account for 30% of the grade.

MARKING CRITERIA

MBA/MFE/MLF 2016-2017
Mergers, Acquisitions & Restructuring
Assessment Information Sheet
Trinity Term Elective

Assessment Summary

Component	Weighting	Submission/ Exam Dates	Time	Group Size	How to Submit/ Venue	ID Number
Examination <i>(2 hours)</i>	100%	Week 9/10 Trinity Term (TBC)	TBC	n/a	TBC	Candidate Number (7 digits)

Examination

There will be a two-hour exam comprising approximately sixteen compulsory questions based on the lectures and readings for the course. The purpose of the exam is to assess students understanding of and ability to analyse the material presented in the course.

MARKING CRITERIA

MBA/MFE/MLF 2016-2017
Private Equity
Assessment Information Sheet
Trinity Term Elective

Assessment Summary

Component	Weighting	Submission/ Exam Dates	Time	Group Size	How to Submit/ Venue	ID Number
Practical Work <i>Group assignment</i>	30%	Friday Week 6 (2 June 2017)	by 12 noon	5	Upload to SAMS	Practical Work Number (5 digits)
Examination <i>(1.5 hours)</i>	70%	Week 9/10 Trinity Term (TBC)	TBC	n/a	TBC	Candidate Number (7 digits)

Practical Work

The **group project** must consist of a set of PowerPoint slides with a maximum of 20 slides (and no more than 3,000 words), including any appendices, tables and references. Students will work in groups of 5 for this purpose. The purpose of the group project is to test understanding of the various steps that must be taken to assess the valuation of a private company when viewed from the perspective of a private equity fund and its investors, including the importance of the proposed financing structure. Extensive feedback will be provided during the last lecture (week 9). In fact, the whole of the last lecture is dedicated to commenting on the pieces of group coursework that have been submitted. Most of these comments will be distilled by experienced professionals who execute and supervise this type of analysis on a daily basis.

Examination

There will be ten questions; answer will usually consist of a short essay.

[MARKING CRITERIA](#)

APPENDIX 5:

MLF COURSE PRIZES

Core MLF Prizes

First Principles of Financial Economics: Miss Christine Hiu Shuen Lo, St Cross College

Finance: Mr Yash Kumar, Wadham College

Mr Andrew Lunardi, Harris Manchester College

Law and Economics of Corporate Transactions: Mr Jonathan Chan, Lincoln College

Best overall performance in the MLF: Mr Debaditya Datta, St Hugh's College

Law Option Prizes

No MLF students were awarded any law elective prizes in 2016-17.

APPENDIX 6:

REPORTS ON INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

First Principles of Financial Economics

Examiner's Report Michaelmas Term 2016

1. Structure

The students were required to submit practical work in groups of four or five, sit an exam, and submit an essay. The practical work had a weighting of 20% of the total mark, for which students in the same group received the same marks. The exam weighting was 40%, and the essay weighting was 40% of the total mark.

2. Statistics

The average mark was 68, with a standard deviation of 2.0.

8 out of the 41 students got distinction. No one failed.

The highest final mark was 71, and four students shared this honour.

3. Plagiarism

No concerns about plagiarism were raised.

4. Examination

There were 10 questions in the examination. Each of them was worth 10 points, totalling 100.

The examination weighting was 40% of the total mark.

On average, question 3 got the lowest mark while question 10 got the highest.

The average of the examination was 66, with a standard deviation of 4.0.

Some students performed extraordinarily well in the exam, and no students failed the exam.

5. Assessed essay

The essay weighting was 40% of the total mark. The average was 66, with a standard deviation of 2.3.

The essays were generally good. In most cases, students were capable of articulating the arguments that were presented in class, be it a verbal or more technical analysis.

6. Practical work

The practical work weighting was 20% of the total mark. The average was 75, with a standard deviation of 0. The students in the same group were awarded the same mark for the practical work. All students did well in the practical work.

Finance
Examiner's Report
Hilary Term 2017

The standard in this paper was very high. Forty one candidates sat the examination; 29 received a grade of at least 70.

Question-by-question summary statistics are presented in Table 1. One student answered both Section B questions; only the higher of the two marks is used in the calculation of statistics.

Table 2 shows the distribution of total marks across all candidates.

Question:	1	2	3	4	5	6
No. Answers:	41	41	41	41	22	19
Avg:	13	13	10	9	28	28
SD:	2	3	2	2	4	4
Max:	15	15	13	13	36	32
Min:	8	3	3	5	21	19

Table 1: Summary statistics.

Mark:	<50	<60	<70	<80	<90	<100
Cumulative:	0	2	13	34	41	41

Table 2: Total mark distribution.

Section A

This section comprised four compulsory short questions that tested basic financial calculations. They covered basic discounted cashflow calculations, interest rate and foreign exchange swaps, CAPM and taxation, and the IPO process. All were answered well, and there were no serious systematic problems.

Section B

Question 5. This question asked candidates to plot payoff diagrams for a basic options trading strategy, to solve a one period binomial option pricing problem and to comment upon the relevance of the Black Scholes formula in the property market. It also tested basic CAPM calculations. It was well answered. There were some basic errors in the drawing of the payoff diagram, and some candidates failed to appreciate that the Black Scholes question had nothing to do with the formula: it attempted to test comprehension of the trading strategies used to derive the formula.

Question 6. This question tested the Modigliani Miller proposition and its proof, and it examined some basic portfolio theory. It was well-answered without serious systematic problems. Some candidates failed adequately to tie their discussion of risk management to the assumptions underlying the MM propositions.

Law and Economics of Corporate Transactions
Examiner's Report
Trinity Term 2017

Forty candidates submitted essays, all of whom had already successfully completed the group work component of the course. The essays were generally of a high quality and collectively demonstrated an impressive level of comprehension of the issues. Thirteen candidates (33%) obtained distinction marks in this paper, twenty-one candidates (53%) obtained upper second-class marks and six candidates (15%) obtained lower second-class marks. No candidate failed this paper. Candidates are reminded that, unlike for the LECT group work, they must not cooperate for the LECT essay; any such collusion is subject to a sanction.

In general, candidates who obtained high marks focused their energies on analysing the facts set out in the question. Many of the weaker answers demonstrated good knowledge of contracting problems in the abstract, but struggled to link generic descriptions of such problems to the specific issues arising in the question. This was compounded in many cases by a tendency to list issues that might, if further information were available, be found to be present. While of course further information *might* reveal further issues, candidates who focused on the facts set out in the question were better able to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge of contracting problems to particular facts.

Better answers sought to prioritise the significance of the issues discussed, and demonstrated a keen sense of the linkage between price and non-price terms: appreciating that extensive contractual protection for E would affect the price of the acquisition, and consequently directing energies toward terms calculated to maximise the parties' *joint* surplus.

The first part of the question called for an assessment of the legal and economic risks involved in C's relations with customers, employees, and strategic partners.

- All candidates identified the potential hold-up problems faced by C in relation to A and B. Better answers were distinguished by analysis of the extent to which the provisions of the existing contracts mitigated these issues, including the legal question whether or not the termination provision was enforceable.
- All candidates identified potential hold-up and agency problems in relation to X and Y, and most saw the potential relevance of the allocation of stock in C to 'senior executives'. Most candidates also identified the combined problems of adverse selection and uncertainty faced by the parties to the strategic partnership with D. Better answers explained how the interaction of these two factors made it hard for the parties to use standard contractual commitments to signal they are a 'good' type.

The second part of the question asked candidates to advise E, in light of the risks already discussed, how best to structure the terms of its acquisition of V's shares in C. At the core of this section was the fact that V knows much more about C's business, and in particular its relationships with its contractual counterparties, than E does.

- All candidates identified the potential adverse selection problem posed for E. Most considered contractual mechanisms to mitigate this, including conditions precedent, warranties and indemnities, and a possible earn-out. Better answers paid close attention to the timescale and likely impact on transaction price of the various possibilities.
- Most answers also correctly identified the agency problem faced by E during the period between signing of the share purchase agreement and completion of the transfer, and many considered

the relative merits of locked-box and completion accounts mechanisms in this respect, along with the possible use of a material adverse change clause. Better answers saw that the post-completion arrangements for X and Y would have a significant impact on the incentives of these two individuals during the pre-completion period. The best also explored mechanisms for ensuring that negotiations with D were not conducted in this period in a way contrary to E's interests.

The third and final part of the question sought advice about how best to manage the risks in C's contractual relations going forwards, assuming E proceeds with the acquisition. Obvious points included the terms of X and Y's compensation, the imminent renegotiation of B's contract, and the potential relevance of E's motivation for the acquisition to C's relations with A and B. Better answers distinguished themselves in particular by the quality and sophistication of their recommendations regarding the strategic partnership with D, drawing on the 'contracting for innovation' literature.

APPENDIX 7:

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT TRINITY TERM 2017

External examiner name:	David Kershaw	
External examiner home institution:	London School of Economics	
Course examined:	Masters in Law and Finance	
Level: (please delete as appropriate)		Postgraduate

Please complete both Parts A and B.

Part A					
		<i>Please (✓) as applicable*</i>	Yes	No	N/A / Other
A1.	Are the academic standards and the achievements of students comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which you have experience?	Yes			
A2.	Do the threshold standards for the programme appropriately reflect the frameworks for higher education qualifications and any applicable subject benchmark statement? <i>[Please refer to paragraph 6 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>	Yes			
A3.	Does the assessment process measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)?	Yes			
A4.	Is the assessment process conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations?	Yes			
A5.	Did you receive sufficient information and evidence in a timely manner to be able to carry out the role of External Examiner effectively?	Yes			
A6.	Did you receive a written response to your previous report?				N/A
A7.	Are you satisfied that comments in your previous report have been properly considered, and where applicable, acted upon?				N/A
<p><i>* If you answer "No" to any question, please provide further comments in Part B. Further comments may also be given in Part B, if desired, if you answer "Yes" or "N/A / Other".</i></p>					

Part B

B1. Academic standards

- a. *How do academic standards achieved by the students compare with those achieved by students at other higher education institutions of which you have experience?*

In all respects the programme sets itself, and achieves, the highest of academic standards: the Exams and Assessments are demanding and thoughtful; the examination process is rigorous and fair; the feedback and written comments on assessments are detailed and well-balanced; and student performance is very strong.

In all respects the programme complies with the best practice I am aware of in my own institution and in other institutions, where I have acted as an external.

- b. *Please comment on student performance and achievement across the relevant programmes or parts of programmes (those examining in joint schools are particularly asked to comment on their subject in relation to the whole award).*

In the scripts that I reviewed I thought that student performance was very impressive. This is an extremely difficult interdisciplinary programme and I was very impressed at how so many of the students have such strong grasp of financial, legal and transactional issues. Obviously, I do not know whether the scripts I reviewed were from students with a legal or finance background, but clearly many must have been from a legal background. To generate law students who can operate so comfortably in the financial realm is a great achievement for the programme.

B2. Rigour and conduct of the assessment process

Please comment on the rigour and conduct of the assessment process, including whether it ensures equity of treatment for students, and whether it has been conducted fairly and within the University's regulations and guidance.

I thought the examination process was rigorous and fair in all respects. I was provided with adequate information and Ms Chandler responded to additional requests most efficiently. The Chair of the Exam Board was impressive in the care that he took to ensure that all issues were fully discussed and that appropriate account was taken of all special circumstances. The process evidenced both the centrality of high standards but also a real concern for fair student treatment.

B3. Issues

Are there any issues which you feel should be brought to the attention of supervising committees in the faculty/department, division or wider University?

None

B4. Good practice and enhancement opportunities

*Please comment/provide recommendations on any **good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment**, and any **opportunities to enhance the quality of the***

learning opportunities provided to students that should be noted and disseminated more widely as appropriate.

I have no comments in this regard. The programme is superb.

B5. Any other comments

Please provide any other comments you may have about any aspect of the examination process. Please also use this space to address any issues specifically required by any applicable professional body. If your term of office is now concluded, please provide an overview here.

I have no further comments. I would congratulate the MLF team on a superb and world leading programme. And I would like to add my thanks the Catherine Chandler for her excellent work and assistance, and to Prof. Getzler for the careful, fair and rigorous way in which he Chaired the Exam Board.

Signed:	David Kershaw
Date:	2 August, 2017

Please email your completed form to: external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk, and copy it to the applicable divisional contact set out in the guidelines.