Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland

The Chartered Governance Qualifying Programme

Interpreting Financial and Accounting Information

Syllabus

Module 4

Interpreting Financial and Accounting Information

Level: **6**

Module type: **Mandatory – Part One Programme**

Total hours study time: **200**

Introduction
The aim of this module is to develop your knowledge of finance and accounting and the ability to use that knowledge to interpret financial and accounting information when providing advice to the board or a similar decision-making body in developing strategy and/or decision making.

The module covers the frameworks of external financial reporting, providing an explanation of the need for the regulation of financial reporting. It discusses the role of the regulatory and conceptual frameworks of financial reporting in enhancing the usefulness of financial information intended to serve a broad group of users in making financial decisions.

The module covers a range of financial reporting topics, from the preparation and presentation of single entity financial statements to a review of key accounting policies based on applying International Standards (IASs and IFRSs), through to the principles of group reporting and the analysis and interpretation of published financial statements.

The module examines the sources of finance available to a company and reviews key financial markets. A range of sources of finance available to a company, both short- and long-term, with their associated advantages and disadvantages are reviewed. The module discusses how a company's financial needs are assessed through planning, forecasting, and budgeting and looks at the importance of cash and cash flow management.

After having determined sources of finance the module evaluates the use of such finance by a company. This includes the cost of capital and capital structure, working capital management and techniques to appraise investment projects, risk assessment techniques and their impact on project appraisal.

The module concludes with an in-depth look at company valuation and analysis methods.

In the exam, you will not be required to prepare financial statements or memorise complicated formulae – a formulae sheet will be provided with your exam paper.

Before studying this module
Students **must** have attained a basic level of understanding of financial accounting and finance.

Learning outcomes

After successful completion of this module you should:

1. Be able to critically engage with the need for the regulation of financial reporting.
2. Be able to understand how published financial statements are constructed and evaluate them to provide insightful interpretation for users.
3. Be able to identify and critically evaluate the sources of finance available to a company.
4. Be able to critically explore financial decision-making theories and techniques and evaluate and use these for decision-making purposes.

Module content

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Section A: The need for regulating financial reporting
10% – 20 Learning hours
LO.1: Be able to critically engage with the need for the regulation of financial reporting</th></tr>
<tr><th>Topic area</th><th>Exemplification</th></tr>
<tr><td>The regulatory framework and the role of International Financial Reporting Standards</td><td>• The need for a regulatory framework:
◦ principles-based versus rules-based systems
◦ statutory frameworks and legal requirements
• Agency theory and the role of corporate governance:
◦ agency theory
◦ agency problem
◦ solutions to the problem
◦ the role of corporate governance
• The role of financial reporting and accounting standards
• Arguments against accounting regulation
• National and company law:
◦ UK Companies Act 2006
◦ UK company size limits for reporting
• International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS):
◦ the IFRS framework
◦ advantages and disadvantages of adopting IFRS
◦ convergence and harmonisation
◦ the roles of the European Commission, UK GAAP and US GAAP
• Barriers to global harmonisation
• Principal differences between IFRS and UK GAAP
• Environmental reporting:
◦ environmental management systems
◦ the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)
• Social accounting:
◦ recent developments in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) towards integrated reporting
◦ Carroll's CSR pyramid</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting</td><td>• The need for a conceptual framework:
◦ scope and purpose of a conceptual framework
◦ limitations of a conceptual framework
◦ the International Accounting Standards Board's (IASB's) Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting
• The objective of general purpose financial reporting:
◦ users of general purpose financial reporting
• Qualitative characteristics of useful financial information:
◦ fundamental qualitative characteristics
◦ enhancing qualitative characteristics</td></tr>
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Topic area	Exemplification

The Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting (*cont.*)	• Financial statements and the reporting entity:
	  ◦ objective and scope of financial statements
	  ◦ reporting period and reporting entity
	  ◦ going concern
	• The elements of financial statements:
	  ◦ assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses
	• Recognition and derecognition of the elements of financial statements
	• Measurement of the elements of financial statements:
	  ◦ historical cost
	  ◦ current value basis
	• Presentation and disclosure:
	  ◦ the statement of profit or loss
	  ◦ other comprehensive income (OCI)
	  ◦ recycling
	• Concepts of capital and capital maintenance:
	  ◦ financial capital maintenance
	  ◦ physical capital maintenance

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Section B: Understanding and interpreting published financial statements and reports
30% – 60 Learning hours
LO.2: Be able to understand how published financial statements are constructed and evaluate them to provide insightful interpretation for users.</th></tr>
<tr><th>Topic area</th><th>Exemplification</th></tr>
<tr><td>Presentation of single entity published financial statements</td><td>• Objective of financial statements
• Presentation of financial statements:
  ◦ comparative information
  ◦ consistency
• Fair presentation and compliance with IFRS
• Overriding concepts of financial statements:
  ◦ going concern
  ◦ accruals basis of accounting
  ◦ materiality and aggregation
  ◦ reporting period
  ◦ offsetting
• Structure and content of financial statements:
  ◦ how items are disclosed
  ◦ identification of financial statements
• Statement of financial position (balance sheet):
  ◦ line items
  ◦ additional information
  ◦ format of the statement
  ◦ current and non-current classification
  ◦ share capital and components of equity
• Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income:
  ◦ presentation and basic requirements
  ◦ profit or loss
  ◦ other comprehensive income
  ◦ other requirements
  ◦ discontinued operations
• Statement of changes in equity:
  ◦ presentation and basic requirements
  ◦ dividends recognised as distributions
• Statement of cash flows:
  ◦ objective and scope of IAS 7
  ◦ structure of the statement of cash flows
  ◦ categories of cash flows: operating, financing and investing</td></tr>
<tr><td>Other contents and features of published financial statements</td><td>• Content of the annual report and financial statements
• The strategic report:
  ◦ duty to prepare the strategic report
  ◦ purpose and contents of the strategic report</td></tr>
</table>

Topic area	Exemplification

Other contents and features of published financial statements (*cont.*)	• The directors' report:
	  ◦ purpose and contents of the directors' report
	  ◦ statement of directors' responsibilities
	• Notes to the financial statements: structure and contents
	• Segment reporting:
	  ◦ objective and scope of IFRS 8
	  ◦ operating segments
	  ◦ IFRS 8 thresholds and reporting segments:
	  ◦ disclosures for operating segments
	• Reporting the substance of transactions
	• Limitations of published financial statements:
	  ◦ use of historical cost basis
	  ◦ creative accounting or earnings management
	  ◦ intra-group transactions
	  ◦ ignoring non-financial matters
	  ◦ not forward looking
	  ◦ seasonality of trading
	  ◦ comparability
	  ◦ time period

Accounting policies based on IFRS	• Accounting policies:
	  ◦ scope and objective of IAS 8
	  ◦ selection and application of accounting policies
	  ◦ consistency of accounting policies
	  ◦ changes in accounting policies
	  ◦ changes in accounting estimates
	  ◦ prior period errors
	• Accounting for inventories:
	  ◦ scope and objective of IAS 2
	  ◦ measurement and cost of inventories
	  ◦ write-down to net realisable value
	  ◦ the matching principle and expense recognition
	  ◦ disclosure
	• Accounting for property, plant and equipment:
	  ◦ scope and objective of IAS 16
	  ◦ initial recognition and measurement
	  ◦ subsequent recognition and measurement
	  ◦ depreciation
	  ◦ recoverability of the carrying amount and impairment
	  ◦ derecognition
	  ◦ disclosure
	• Accounting for events after the reporting period:
	  ◦ scope and objective of IAS 10

Topic area	Exemplification
Accounting policies based on IFRS (cont.)	◦ adjusting and non-adjusting events • Revenue from contracts with customers: ◦ scope and objective of IFRS 15 ◦ recognition and measurement – the five-step approach ◦ presentation and disclosure • Provisions, contingent liabilities and contingent assets: ◦ scope and objective of IAS 37 ◦ provisions: recognition and measurement ◦ contingent liabilities contingent assets • Accounting for leases: ◦ scope and objective of IFRS 16 ◦ right-of-use asset and lease liability ◦ reporting exemptions
Financial reporting by groups of companies	• Requirement to prepare consolidated financial statements: ◦ laws, regulations and IFRS • Principles for the consolidation of financial statements: ◦ control concept ◦ group structure ◦ the basic method of consolidation ◦ content of consolidated financial statements • Business combinations, fair value measurement and goodwill: ◦ nature of goodwill ◦ impairment of goodwill ◦ fair value measurement in consolidated financial statements ◦ valuation of non-controlling interests • Consolidated statement of financial position (balance sheet) • Consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income • Investments in associates and joint ventures • IAS28 equity method of reporting • A parent company's separate financial statements • Exemptions from preparing consolidated financial statements: ◦ exclusion of a subsidiary from consolidation
Analysis of published financial statements	• The need for financial analysis: ◦ interested parties and stewardship of managers ◦ key financial indicators • Fundamental analysis • Economic analysis • Industry analysis

<table>
<tr><th>Topic area</th><th>Exemplification</th></tr>
<tr><td>Analysis of published financial statements (cont.)</td><td>

Company analysis
Trend analysis:
horizontal analysis between periods
vertical analysis: common-sized analysis
Ratio analysis
Profitability ratios:
gross profit margin
operating profit margin
net profit margin
return on assets
return on equity
return on capital employed
Limitations of ratio analysis
Accounting irregularities and creative accounting:
errors
fraudulent financial reporting
misappropriation of assets
creative accounting
regulations to prevent creative accounting

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</table>

Section C: Sources of finance, their associated risks and returns *20% – 40 Learning hours* *LO.3: Be able to identify and critically evaluate the sources of finance available to a company.*	
Topic area	**Exemplification**

Working capital management	• The nature and purpose of working capital
	• The working capital cycle:
	  ◦ working capital cycle and the nature of the industry
	  ◦ calculating the working capital cycle
	• Working capital management: profitability versus liquidity
	• Working capital ratios:
	  ◦ liquidity ratios: current and quick ratios
	  ◦ efficiency ratios: asset turnover, inventory turnover, trade receivables collection, trade payables payment
	• The management of inventories:
	  ◦ inventory management techniques
	  ◦ economic order quantity (EOQ)
	  ◦ determining inventory levels
	  ◦ just-in-time system
	  ◦ ABC inventory control
	  ◦ VED (vital, essential and desirable) analysis
	• The management of trade receivables:
	  ◦ factors affecting the level of trade receivables
	  ◦ credit policy
	• The management of trade payables:
	  ◦ factors affecting the level of trade payables
	  ◦ trade payables as a source of finance

Sources of short-term finance	• Features and use of external sources of short-term finance, including advantages and disadvantages
	• Bank and institutional loans:
	  ◦ secured versus unsecured loans
	  ◦ loan covenants
	• Overdrafts
	• Debt factoring
	• Invoice discounting
	• Alternative finance and web innovations:
	  ◦ crowdfunding
	  ◦ peer-to-peer (P2P) lending
	  ◦ invoice trading third-party payment
	• Features and use of internal sources of short-term finance, including advantages and disadvantages
	• Controlling working capital
	• Reducing inventory levels
	• Tighter credit control
	• Delaying payments to payables

Topic area	Exemplification
Sources of short-term finance (*cont.*)	• Sale of redundant assets • Retained earnings

Financial markets and the identification of financing needs	• Identification of financing needs: budgeting and forecasting:
	  ◦ planning, budgeting and forecasting
	  ◦ flexible versus static budgets
	  ◦ budgetary control
	  ◦ cash budgets
	• The need for cash and cash flow management:
	  ◦ need for cash
	  ◦ methods of dealing with cash surpluses and cash deficits
	• Financial markets:
	  ◦ financial market participants
	  ◦ types of financial markets
	• Private versus public markets:
	  ◦ features, requirements and expectations of private versus public investors
	  ◦ advantages and disadvantages of private and public markets
	• The role of the stock exchange
	• Efficient market hypothesis: levels of market efficiency
	• Alternative Investment Market (AIM)
	• Other sources of finance from the private market:
	  ◦ institutional investors
	  ◦ banks

Sources of long-term finance	• Features and use of sources of long-term finance, including advantages and disadvantages
	• Equity or ordinary shares
	• Retained earnings
	• Preference shares
	• Bonds and debentures:
	  ◦ types of bonds and debentures
	  ◦ bonds with fixed interest (coupon)
	  ◦ deep discount and zero-coupon bonds
	  ◦ Eurobonds
	  ◦ share warrants (options)
	• Bank and institutional loans
	• Leasing:
	  ◦ sale and leaseback
	• Securitisation of assets
	• Private finance initiatives (PFIs)
	• Government grants and assistance

Section D: Capital structure and cost; financial decision making

25% – 50 Learning hours

LO.4: Be able to critically explore financial decision-making theories and techniques and evaluate and use these for decision making purposes.

Topic area	Exemplification

The cost of capital and capital structure	• The importance of the cost of capital
	• Cost of equity using the capital asset pricing model:
	    ◦ capital asset pricing model (CAPM)
	    ◦ risk-adjusted discount rate (RADR)
	    ◦ unsystematic and systematic risk
	    ◦ measuring systematic risk and circulation of the RADR
	    ◦ linking β with required returns: the security market line
	    ◦ assumptions and criticisms of the CAPM
	• Cost of equity using the dividend valuation model
	• Cost of debt:
	    ◦ irredeemable debt
	    ◦ redeemable debt
	• Weighted average cost of capital (WACC)
	• Capital structure
	• Factors affecting capital structure
	• Financial gearing: equity gearing, total gearing and interest gearing (or interest cover)
	• Operating gearing
	• The traditional approach to capital structure:
	    ◦ gearing and the cost of equity (Ke)
	    ◦ gearing and the cost of debt (Kd)
	    ◦ weighted average cost of capital (WACC)
	    ◦ limitations of the traditional view
	• The Modigliani-Miller (MM) theory of capital structure:
	    ◦ without taxes
	    ◦ with taxes – the trade-off theory
	    ◦ criticisms of the MM trade-off theory
	• Real world approaches:
	    ◦ pecking order theory
	    ◦ real world factors

Project appraisal techniques	• Identification and analysis of projects:
	    ◦ costs, benefits and risks
	• Factors affecting project appraisal:
	    ◦ relevant versus non-relevant factors
	• Project appraisal techniques
	• Non-discounting methods: payback period
	• Non-discounting methods: accounting rate of return (ARR)
	• Discounted cash flow (DCF) techniques based on the time value of money:

Topic area	Exemplification
Project appraisal techniques (*cont.*)	◦ the time value of money ◦ compounding ◦ discounting ◦ negative interest rates • DCF methods: net present value (NPV) • Discounting annuities: ◦ annuity factors ◦ discounting a perpetuity • DCF methods: internal rate of return (IRR) • DCF methods: discounted payback period • Impact of inflation and tax on project appraisal: ◦ impact of inflation on interest or discount rates ◦ impact of inflation on cash flows ◦ tax effects • Capital rationing and use of the profitability index: ◦ types of capital rationing ◦ dealing with single period capital rationing using the profitability index
Risk assessment in investment appraisal techniques	• Risk and investment decisions: ◦ risk preference of investors • Risk assessment models • Sensitivity analysis, including advantages and disadvantages • Scenario analysis • Simulation modelling • Expected value and expected net present value (ENPV): ◦ standard deviation and the coefficient of deviation • Event tree diagrams • The role of portfolio management: ◦ objectives and elements of portfolio management ◦ portfolio risk and return ◦ the efficient frontier ◦ the application and limitations of portfolio theory
Company analysis and company valuation methods	• Investment valuation ratios, including their interpretation and limitations: • dividend payout ratio ◦ earnings per share ◦ price/earnings ratio • Relative value measures: ◦ steps in relative value analysis • Valuation using the dividend valuation model (DVM) • Valuation using discounted cash flows (DCF) • Valuation using the capital asset pricing model (CAPM)

Topic area	Exemplification

Company analysis and company valuation methods (*cont.*)	• Application of efficient market hypothesis (EMH) in company valuation
	• Shareholder value analysis (SVA):
	  ◦ value creation
	  ◦ value drivers
	  ◦ free cash flow
	  ◦ calculation of shareholder value in SVA
	  ◦ strengths and weaknesses of SVA
	• Economic value added (EVA) as an alternative to SVA:
	  ◦ strengths and weaknesses of EVA
	• Measuring value creation:
	  ◦ total shareholder return (TSR)
	  ◦ market value added (MVA)
	  ◦ the effects of dividend payments on shareholder wealth
	  ◦ stock market influences

Section E: Interpretation and evaluation of financial and accounting information *15% – 30 Learning hours* *This section brings together the techniques and indicators from the earlier sections of the syllabus. This is supported by illustrating, through the use of real-world based published financial statements, the level of evaluation and analysis expected of a Chartered Governance Professional.*	
Topic area	**Exemplification**
Interpretation and evaluation of financial and accounting information	• Accounting and financial ratios • Interpretation and evaluation • Limitations of ratios • Introduction to the case studies • Case 1 – A FTSE 100 manufacturing company • Case 2 – A retail baking company • Case 3 – An early-stage IT company

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