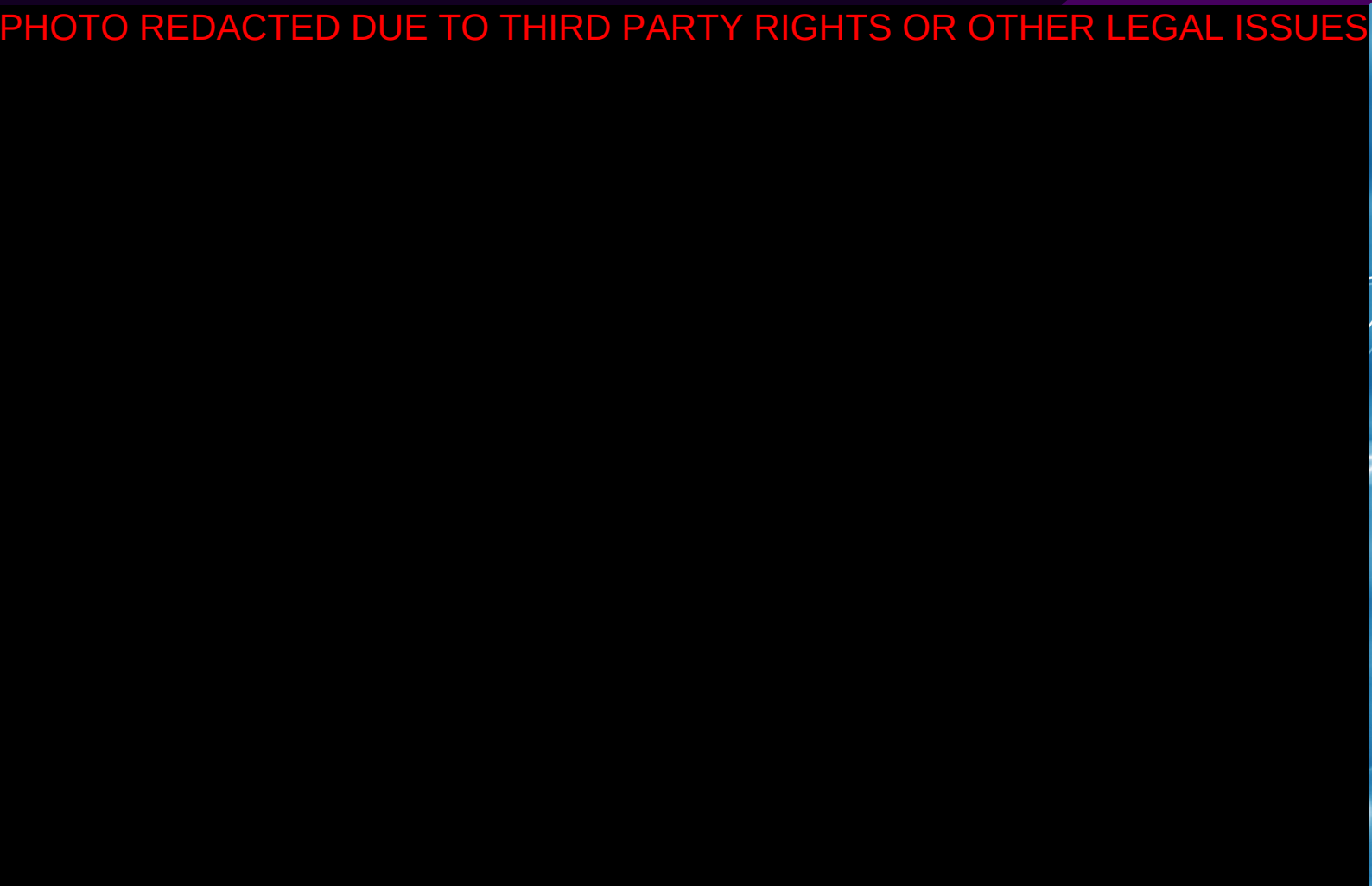
Subject Benchmark Statement

Finance

April 2025



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About this Statement

This QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Finance defines what can be expected of a graduate in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements are an established part of the quality assurance arrangements in UK higher education, but not a regulatory requirement. They are sector-owned reference points, developed and written by academics. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular discipline or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Statement, which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
  - equity, diversity and inclusion
  - accessibility and the needs of disabled students
  - education for sustainable development
  - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
  - generative artificial intelligence
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes, including course design and content, in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are not intended to prescribe any particular approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Rather, they provide a framework, agreed by the subject community, that forms the basis on which those responsible for curriculum design, approval and updating can reflect upon a course, and its component modules. This allows for flexibility and innovation in course design while providing a broadly accepted external reference point for that discipline.

They may also be used as a reference point by external examiners when considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with those of other higher education providers. Furthermore, Statements can support professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with their definitions and interpretations of academic standards.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Finance
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Finance
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Finance graduates.

Relationship to legislation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider which awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The status of the Statement will differ depending on the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards as set out under the Office for Students' regulatory framework. However, Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality arrangements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

Additional sector reference points

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement when designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. In 2024 QAA published an update to the Quality Code, which will be helpful when using this Statement.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in QAA's Glossary. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.

1 Context and purposes of a Finance degree

1.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out what is typically expected of successful graduates from bachelor's and master's level programmes in Finance, or Finance combined with another subject, offered by higher education providers in the UK. It sets out the purposes and characteristics of a Finance degree, distinctive features of the subject, the subject knowledge and skills of a Finance graduate, methods of learning and assessment, and finally, a description of the benchmark standards at the threshold, typical and excellent levels. The study of Finance as a major component of a bachelor's or master's degree involves the consideration of both the conceptual and applied dimensions of finance. 'Conceptual' refers specifically to theoretical aspects, while 'applied' encompasses the practical application of empirical methods and the integration of theory with practice.

1.2 Finance involves the dynamics of national and international financial markets and how these markets interact with economic entities like households, firms, the third sector, financial institutions, and governments. Finance is crucial in decision-making in these economic entities, global in its impact, and a constantly evolving subject. It encompasses traditional areas such as banking, corporate finance, personal finance, investment, risk management and public finance, and integrates emerging fields like climate, green, sustainable, biodiversity, natural resources, and entrepreneurship finance, as well as new technologies, including financial technology (fintech) and artificial intelligence (AI).

1.3 Degree programmes in the subject area of Finance commonly have titles such as 'finance' or 'financial management'. Most bachelor's degree programmes with substantial Finance content also include some elements of accounting and economics. Some courses with titles other than those indicated above, for example, banking, financial services, personal finance, investment, sustainable finance, fintech, finance and data analytics, and finance and AI, may also be relevant to this Subject Benchmark Statement. Some degrees with titles other than those indicated above that include a substantial Finance pathway can also be evaluated relative to this Subject Benchmark Statement. Individual higher education providers are responsible for aligning any specific pathway within a degree programme with the most applicable Subject Benchmark Statement.

1.4 Finance can be studied as part of a joint degree with related or unrelated disciplines, such as accounting, management, economics, business, a modern language, law, engineering, computing, statistics or mathematics. In these instances, this Subject Benchmark Statement should be used alongside other Statements relevant to the joint disciplines. For combined programmes, it is important to ensure that the scope, depth and balance between theoretical concepts and practical applications are maintained, so that neither aspect is neglected in the curriculum.

1.5 While Finance is frequently paired with accounting and economics, a deep understanding of accounting and economics is not necessary, and this will vary between degree providers and programme structures. This Subject Benchmark Statement does not cover single honours degrees in accounting or economics; these are covered by the Subject Benchmark Statements for Accounting and Economics. Joint degree programmes are aligned with the majority of the content of both relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

Purposes and characteristics of a Finance degree

1.6 The purpose of a Finance degree is to educate students to enable them to understand the role of finance in business and organisations, thereby providing a sound foundation for a range of careers. Finance as a degree requires students to study both the fundamentals and cutting-edge developments in finance theory and practice. While encompassing numerous significant areas as described in section 3, it typically focuses on two main subject domains.

1.7 Firstly, Finance as a degree requires students to understand the design and functioning of financial markets, banking markets, stock exchanges, and financial institutions (traditional and newer alternative institutions), along with the roles governments and individuals play within these systems. Secondly, Finance as a degree also requires students to understand the principles of investment and value, corporate finance dynamics, decision-making processes, securities analysis (such as equity, currency, fixed income and derivative instruments), risk management, and international financial management. Moreover, students are also expected to understand contemporary financial areas beyond these traditional domains. These may include, but are not limited to:

- climate, sustainable and biodiversity finance, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing, digital transformation and fintech (for example, cryptocurrency, crowdfunding, peer-to-peer lending)
- the application of AI and data analytics in finance, exploration of alternative investments (that is, those exploring market inefficiencies through unconventional assets and investment strategies such as hedge funds, private equity, private credit, alternative investments and real assets)
- global economic uncertainty and the impact on financial and banking markets and central bank policies, and new evolving strategies used in asset management.

1.8 The curriculum of a Finance degree is founded on the typical finance areas mentioned in paragraph 1.7. Notably, Finance studies can be approached from multiple perspectives - behavioural, ethical, economic, sustainable and statistical/mathematical. At a minimum, students will become aware of the ethical and social dimensions of financial activities and systems, in addition to their economic aspects. This holistic approach cultivates a well-rounded mindset, and decision-making skills using both qualitative and quantitative data to solve problems and make sound financial decisions.

1.9 Finance degree coverage equips students for diverse career paths, including:

- financial manager and controller
- financial analyst
- chief financial officer
- financial adviser
- private wealth adviser
- portfolio manager
- fintech adviser
- quantitative analyst
- retail and investment banker
- stockbroker
- securities trader
- venture capitalist
- chief investment officer
- risk analyst and manager
- insurance broker
- private equity associate

- regulation and compliance expert.

1.10 Finance degrees prepare graduates to work across a range of different sectors, including financial services, such as

- banking
- investment management, including both buy and sell sides
- pension fund management
- insurance

and non-financial services, such as

- industrials
- manufacturing
- service sector
- third sector
- higher education.

1.11 Finance degrees also prepare graduates to work across national boundaries and meet constantly evolving challenges and opportunities in the finance sector.

1.12 Students pursue a degree in Finance for diverse reasons. Some view it as an introduction to the realms of business and the finance sectors, while others engage in Finance studies as an intellectual endeavour in its own right, or as a pathway to further academic pursuits. Given this variety, it is natural that Finance degree programmes are designed with a broad spectrum of objectives to accommodate these differing motivations.

1.13 Finance as a degree subject prepares students with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the global and dynamic world of finance. Higher education providers design their Finance programmes to address broader objectives, such as the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in leveraging Finance education to reduce and eliminate poverty and encourage equality, diversity and inclusion domains where finance plays a crucial role. Additionally, programmes provide students with the necessary tools and skills for success at bachelor's or master's levels. This includes computational skills, as well as an understanding of their applications, evaluation of their output, and limitations in their use. Expanding on this foundation, programmes also integrate higher level intellectual skills, critical thinking, judgement, ethical decision making, the ability to adapt to technological advancements, such as AI, and changing market conditions and uncertainties to fully prepare students for future challenges and opportunities in finance.

1.14 Apprenticeship degrees and programmes in Finance with a placement year will have their own standards to meet, depending on the UK nation the provider operates within, but they can also be informed by the approaches and criteria to bachelor's degrees in Finance described in this Statement.

1.15 Master's degrees in Finance broadly fall into two types:

- Specialist master's degrees in Finance involve the in-depth and advanced theoretical and conceptual exploration of one or more core components typically covered in a bachelor's Finance degrees. These programmes may also incorporate supplementary specialised subjects within or related to the discipline, such as banking, fintech, data analytics, or specific research specialisms in the field. This type of master's degree in

Finance would be expected to be evaluated against the highest levels of achievement outlined in the Subject Benchmark Statement, alongside additional content criteria pertinent to the degree's specialised focus. Typically, applicants for these programmes are required to hold at least a second-class single or joint honours bachelor's degree in Finance, or higher.

- Finance conversion master's degrees are designed for students whose primary field of study does not specialise in Finance or who have studied elements of Finance in a different jurisdiction. While these master's degrees may entail specialised study comparable to that of specialised academic programmes, it is not mandatory. Normally, applicants are expected to hold at least a second-class honours bachelor's degree in a subject other than Finance, though some prior achievements in Finance or related studies may also be required.

For both types of master's degrees, entry requirements will be determined by individual providers and may require specified levels of achievement at undergraduate level.

1.16 Master's degrees in Finance include taught components and a substantial element of self-directed research-based study. This involves personal inquiry into a theoretical domain within the discipline or applying theoretical and conceptual knowledge to address real-world practical projects or significant issues in finance.

1.17 Integrated master's degrees in Finance, where there is an additional year of full-time equivalent study to an undergraduate honours bachelor's degree in the subject, include attainment of the Finance Subject Benchmark Statement's standards for a typical honours degree and to take achievement to master's degree level in their specialist area.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

1.18 Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) encompass a wide range of identity characteristics, including, but not limited to, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief, disability, age, and socioeconomic background. It is recognised that there are many forms of difference and that these are, in part, reflected in legal equality duties, but go beyond that to recognise intersectionalities across the student and staff population. EDI should be meaningfully embedded within the culture and practice of the Finance discipline and in all Finance degree programmes. Finance degree programmes reflect the growing importance and emphasis on EDI in the finance industry itself and make reference to relevant industry-adopted EDI codes, where appropriate.

1.19 In creating an inclusive learning community, providers can draw on appropriate principles, engagement and guidance of embedding EDI in the curriculum (Hanesworth, 2015; Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill, 2020; Stentiford and Koutsouris, 2021). These principles might include enabling potential, nurturing belonging and engagement, increasing awareness and understanding, encouraging an appreciation of others' perspectives, and developing self-reflection. It is important that a conscious and proactive approach to EDI inclusion is adopted within the learning environment, the design of Finance degree content as well as learning and teaching strategies in Finance degrees.

1.20 Finance educators are concerned with differences in the development and functioning of financial systems globally, inclusive access to finance, financial inequality and in promoting environments and cultures where every individual can access study and work opportunities, feeling empowered to achieve their full potential. Access to finance and financial decision-making has profound impacts on individuals' life opportunities and outcomes. Identifying barriers, biases and the ways that inequalities can be manifested and institutionalised are important to addressing EDI in finance, so that these do not hinder access, experience or outcomes. Within the finance sector, implementing EDI policies is

essential in helping address the underrepresentation of minority groups and to ensure a finance career is attractive to the next generation of finance students.

1.21 Finance education can support the progress of organisations (including private, public and third sector) in addressing financial inequality and disadvantage as captured by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, for example, gender equality (Goal 5); decent work and economic growth (Goal 8); reduced inequalities (Goal 10); and peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16).

1.22 Students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds may aspire to study Finance to support their progression to careers in the financial sector and in other related areas. Whether Finance is taught as a stand-alone subject, or in combination with other disciplines such as accounting, business, mathematics and technology, Finance educators must create an environment where all students can thrive, and feel represented and fully included. This starts with widening participation initiatives that reduce the limiting effect of economic disadvantage on a student's access, experience or outcome.

1.23 It is important that Finance degrees are taught and the assessment methods deployed in a manner that reflects EDI principles. A range of learning and teaching modes (in-person, digital, blended, hybrid, hyflex, synchronous or asynchronous, block release, full or part-time) can be considered. Assessment should be designed to be as inclusive as possible, reflecting an awareness of EDI and the opportunity for all students to succeed, including, for example, setting alternative assessments in terms of type, duration and mode, where appropriate. For example, this could include a written assessment instead of a presentation, typed answers instead of handwritten, and allowing students additional time for the exams.

1.24 Embedding EDI in Finance degrees encompasses how learning is supported and enhanced with resources and a mindset that is open to global citizenship. This could include, but is not limited to:

- physical and virtual learning environments must be flexible and reflect student diversity
- different perspectives and inclusivity should be reflected in teaching and assessment materials, including reading materials and case studies, to ensure that a student's background does not become a source of disadvantage in their study of Finance
- consideration of the hidden curriculum is necessary, particularly concerning the language of finance so that this does not act as a barrier to learning, for example see Unpacking your Hidden Curriculum: Guide for educators (qaa.ac.uk).
- consideration of decolonising the curriculum, particularly in the sources of knowledge and disclosures
- providing inclusive opportunities for students to share their own experiences and perspectives without prejudice or judgement, thus showing a value in diversity
- access for neurodivergent community members when designing teaching materials, methods and assessment
- where a placement, work experience or industry visit in a Finance degree is offered, there must be consideration to equality of access for all students.

1.25 There is growing emphasis on adopting a critical approach to how the needs of diverse groups are met through financial products, practices and policies and how these could be a source of persistent inequality for some groups. Finance degrees can play a key role in addressing EDI, exploring key issues, including, but not limited to:

- corporate governance and board structures, including the regulations in the UK Financial Reporting Council (FRC) UK Corporate Governance Code (2024) on diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity
- discussion and debate on bonuses awarded in the finance sector and personal income inequality
- recognising that, traditionally, the financial services sector lacks diversity and highlighting both the regulations and the tangible financial benefits of diversity in the workforce
- highlighting the challenges facing people of different genders and minorities working in the finance sector and industry, for example, biases in workplace remuneration, including the gender pay gap, and barriers in employment opportunities in finance for people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- the evidence of discrimination in credit markets, examining both how and why this exists
- financial exclusion and meeting the financial needs of diverse populations in different types of financial systems
- ethical issues in finance relating to the creation, supply, allocation and use of wealth
- the consequences of a neoclassical emphasis in financial decision-making and examining financial decision-making and planning that addresses and includes EDI issues.

1.26 An EDI approach to the study of Finance will take cognisance of developments that impact on these challenges, such as the implications of increased digital delivery of financial services and the use of AI techniques and algorithms in the finance sector, such as alternative credit scoring technologies, particularly where these can negatively impact on EDI.

1.27 There should be monitoring and review of EDI within Finance degree programmes to examine how effective the current EDI policies have been implemented and how they can be further enhanced.

Accessibility and the needs of disabled students

1.28 Accessibility is concerned with removing barriers so that learners can achieve learning outcomes equitably. Teaching methods in Finance degree programmes reflect the needs of the student body to ensure that each student can succeed and reach their full potential, regardless of their background, disability, health, or other protected characteristics. Accessibility should, as a minimum, meet regulatory requirements and will apply to all stages of the programme, from providing pre-application information through to graduation and beyond. Many providers have their own general accessibility guidance that provides advice and tools to enhance accessibility at the point of design. Some providers also publish accessibility policies which serve as a useful reference point. People with impairments may face barriers to education and employment in higher education institutions. Providing support and adjustments can remove these barriers and therefore support the development of an inclusive environment; please see examples from Advance HE.

1.29 The pedagogy deployed in Finance is based on inclusive curriculum design principles that prioritises accessibility, equity and appropriateness. This will go beyond compliance with the regulatory requirements to include, for example, the following.

- Learning materials are designed with accessibility in mind, using transcripts, closed captions, alternative text to describe images, and other recommended approaches.
- Teaching materials, including cases, reading and issues, covered by the Finance curriculum reflect the diversity of the cohort. This will enable learners to draw on their own rich knowledge to contribute to class discussions.
- All students have access to appropriate and safe learning spaces and resources that support their learning.
- Databases, simulation tools, programming and other software should be accessible to all students, for example, remote access to fixed data terminals, and low stimulation areas. Accessibility is considered in the selection of such products for incorporation into the curriculum. Materials in class consider the hidden curriculum (that is, the implicit expectations for student behaviours).
- The same opportunities for work placement and experiences, internship opportunities, international learning, and extracurricular and co-curricular activities should be available for all students regardless of background, disability or other protected characteristics.
- Teaching methods, including face-to-face, online, digital and asynchronous, are designed to be inclusive and accessible. For example, recording of face-to-face activity and video-enhanced learning can benefit all students.
- Consideration should be taken of barriers to student attendance and achievement, such as caring responsibilities and digital poverty, and steps taken where possible to lessen the impact of these impediments to learning.
- Assessment methods in Finance should consider accessibility issues in achieving the learning outcomes for the module. Often, learning outcomes can be demonstrated by other means in alternative assessments.
- Consideration should be made of a universal design for learning principles and embedded assessment choice in Finance programmes.
- Proactive approaches should be taken in the design of learning and teaching, and assessment, in order to build in inclusivity and avoid creating barriers for students with specific learning difficulties or who are neurodivergent.

Education for sustainable development

1.30 Finance degree programmes embed sustainability with reference to contemporary and evolving guidance, such as that articulated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), OECD Principles of Corporate Governance, Principles of Responsible Investment, Principles for Responsible Banking, Principles for Sustainable Insurance, the UK net zero legislation, and other sustainability initiatives which provide the framework for education in sustainable finance. Sustainable finance here is defined as investment, financing, risk management, insurance underwriting and disclosure decisions that consider the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors of an economic activity leading to long-term sustainable economic activities that work towards a common good.

1.31 Environmental considerations in Finance degree programmes might include the risks presented by climate change as well as the role of finance in mitigation and adaptation and wider environmental issues, for instance, the preservation of biodiversity, prevention of

pollution and the circular economy. Due to net-zero pressure, these considerations most immediately support UNSDG goal 13 (combat climate change) and goal 7 (affordable clean energy). Social considerations refer to issues of inequality, inclusivity, labour relations, investment in people and their skills and communities, anti-corruption and human rights issues supporting, for example, UNSDG goal 8 (decent work and economic growth). Governance considerations include management structures, director remuneration and wider corporate governance practices of both public and private companies supporting, for example, UNSDG goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and UNSDG 17 (partnership for the goals).

1.32 Integrating sustainability considerations in the discipline of Finance involves promoting sustainability practices and advancing knowledge on how to raise, manage and invest money while respecting the UN SDGs. Finance degrees also appreciate the limits of these principles and models while quantifying trade-offs present within sustainability decisions.

1.33 Finance degrees aim to enhance the understanding, knowledge, and abilities of bachelor's and master's students, equipping them to critically address and devise effective, sustainable solutions that promote the stability and sustainability of the financial system. These solutions should be viewed as part of wider attempts across disciplines to address risks and challenges posed by climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, social inequalities, and economic/political uncertainties. These problems are characterised by pervasive uncertainties which require students to foster critical and creative skills that work across discipline boundaries. For example, innovative financing and policy changes are required to provide the significant amount of funding required to conserve nature and to reform policies that will result from biodiversity loss. Finance graduates understand how financial decisions may intentionally or unintentionally influence real-world behaviour in the finance sector and beyond.

1.34 The core skills developed by all Finance degrees align with the learning outcomes identified by the Education for Sustainable Development Guidance developed by Advance HE and QAA. These learning outcomes go beyond environmental issues alone, focusing instead on interconnections and interdependencies between economic, social and environmental factors, supporting the knowledge, skills and competencies that students and staff develop to contribute to a more sustainable future. These core skills include self-awareness, systems, anticipatory and strategic thinking, critical thinking and integrated problem-solving competency. Finance has a direct impact on the design, implementation and evaluation of policies that aim to create sustainable growth and development. Bachelor's and master's degrees in Finance should develop capacities and competencies that prioritise sustainable decision making and disclosure, which can help drive the sustainability agenda for business, the economy and society.

1.35 Core competencies developed by a Finance degree include, for example, comprehension, assessment and analysis of key concepts and evaluation of data with the aim of devising evidence-based and sustainable financial policies. The ability to communicate research findings and formulate clear investment plans for long-lived assets is important for sustainable futures. Financial accessibility and inclusion contribute to improving levels of financial literacy and bring about a more inclusive and fairer society. Developing these skills and competencies in Finance degrees should help students to understand the key role finance can play for the future, for their own careers, the economy and society more widely.

1.36 Finance degree programmes highlight the different areas that finance can contribute to the understanding of sustainability. It is important that students on Finance degree programmes understand the relevant ESG disclosure standards and regulations. Students are presented with the current and expected challenges imposed by the environment and its

resources on the activity of the financial system, public and private companies and other economic entities. Based on the work of the Financial Stability Task Force, the key areas in the field include the measurement and valuation of environmental assets and their possible depletion and restoration; the impact of economic activity on the environment and alternative ways to alleviate this impact; market failure; and remedial policies. Students are exposed to a range of tools, including understanding the usefulness and limitation of financial data, and programming skills, to enable them to devise informed, comprehensive and sustainable financial policies with a real beneficial impact for the society.

Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship education

1.37 Enterprise and entrepreneurship education (EED) supports behaviours, attributes and competencies that are likely to have a significant impact on the individual student in terms of successful careers. It prepares students for changing environments and provides enhanced impact through placements and activities that build links between academic institutions and external organisations. QAA has published guidance on Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education which providers may find helpful.

1.38 The inclusion of EED in Finance degree programmes enhances employability by promoting personal development and confidence in students, attributes that are sought after in the finance sector. Programmes in Finance cultivate a wide range of transferable skills relevant to EED and the entrepreneurial mindset, including innovative and critical thinking, the framing of problems and creative problem-solving, resourcefulness, IT literacy, communication to diverse audiences, collaboration, professional judgement and leadership.

1.39 Finance graduates are familiar with a range of software for data analysis. Many degree programmes not only teach students a range of analytical techniques and methodological approaches but also data collection, data retrieval, data management and security, data manipulation and interpretation, and quality assessment of quantitative and, increasingly, qualitative data.

1.40 Placements, work experience, industry engagement, the use of simulations, and guest lectures in Finance degrees have become more common in recent years. These range from full-year placements and summer internships to virtual internships and industry visits, and include simulation of real-world financial problems and case studies in trading rooms and projects based on current issues in the finance sector. This engagement develops EED in curricula design and these experiences further develop relevant attributes for students entering the finance sector, such as innovation, creativity, open-mindedness, curiosity, adaptability, determination, commercial awareness and business acumen.

1.41 Beyond employment, entrepreneurship education provides competencies to help students lead a rewarding, self-determined professional life, well placed to add social, cultural and economic value at individual, organisational and societal levels through their careers by engaging and leading debates and offering ideas towards creative solutions. Finance graduates should have an appreciation of the wider context of the application of their skills and knowledge, including areas such as sustainability, climate finance and nature and biodiversity finance.

1.42 EED helps prepare students for changing environments, and through the provision of experiential learning can provide learners with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in their future career paths dealing with ever-changing and complex problems in the finance sector. Finance graduates have an awareness of industry developments in the finance sector and advances in practice, including new financial technologies and the innovation and application of AI in finance. Finance students enhance their EED skills and mindset through industry-led case studies, trading simulations, guest lectures by finance

practitioners, dissertations and extended projects, investment competitions, simulations, incubators and hatcheries.

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and AI applications in finance

1.43 GenAI refers to large language models (LLMs) which are AI-based solutions that use deep learning algorithms to mimic creativity and produce new content in response to prompts. GenAI and AI more broadly has found applications in virtually every industry, including the finance sector, and has clear implications for higher education. For example, new technologies are being used by financial institutions and in the financial sector to provide innovative means of delivering financial services, for example financial advice, and in the functioning of financial markets and investment, such as algorithmic trading using AI. This technology has a significant number of use-cases in finance and includes analysing vast quantities of financial data and quickly producing reports and outputs in the domains of payments, credit, lending, fraud detection, crowdfunding, compliance, investment management, insurance, regulation, digital/virtual currencies (including blockchain) and fintech more broadly.

1.44 This widespread use of AI in finance will continue to develop at pace and through the emergence of new technologies and applications. Finance degrees will need to adapt dynamically to future changes in technology as information becomes more easily accessible and AI tools becoming ever more accessible, which will affect the behaviour of companies and managers, which in turn has direct implications for the profession of finance.

1.45 Finance students learn how to make effective use of emerging AI technologies. Finance degree programmes include knowledge and understanding of the ways in which AI, including GenAI, is used in the financial sector, develop student skills in the use of appropriate finance and professional AI tools, as well as understanding the limitations of these tools. Students develop an understanding of the ways in which AI and new technologies may be applied in practice to address specific challenges in finance. Given the widespread use of AI and new technologies in the finance sector, Finance degrees emphasise the need for students to develop critical thinking in the access to, design and use of the increasing volume of AI-generated information. Students are made aware of the ethical implications and potential biases of using new technologies in finance and the impact they are likely to have on established norms and practices within the finance field.

1.46 Teaching and assessment strategies in Finance education adapt to these advancements in AI, including GenAI, leveraging the advantages that they can offer, for instance on assessment design and interactive teaching, while ensuring that students continue to be assessed on their subject knowledge, understanding and skills.

1.47 Maintaining academic and authorial integrity in the context of utilising AI, including GenAI, and new technologies is crucial given the potential for unethical use. Given the dynamic and fast evolving nature of AI and GenAI in general, and their increasing role in education specifically, providers use appropriate due diligence procedures and practices that continually review the latest guidance from QAA as well as evolving guidance from the wider higher education sector, such as the Russell Group Principles on the use of generative AI tools in education.

2 Distinctive features of the Finance degree

Introduction

2.1 Finance degree programmes are designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop a broad-based and intellectually rigorous understanding of the structure of global capital, commodity, foreign exchange, fixed income, and derivatives markets, the instruments that are traded and settled, and the institutions and organisations that operate within these markets. The study of Finance also considers wealth creation and distribution activities. Financial institutions include central banks and regulators, investment and retail banks, asset managers, rating agencies, insurance firms, pension funds and intermediaries to financial markets such as electronic exchanges, clearing houses, broker-dealers and custodians. Recent developments encompass a variety of alternative providers, like non-bank financial intermediaries, electronic money institutions and crypto-trading platforms.

2.2 Finance degree programmes are designed to include learning objectives that are aligned with the knowledge, understanding and skills detailed in section 4 and to reflect appropriate principles of learning, teaching and assessment. They should be designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop critical thinking and apply skills, knowledge and judgement in dealing with finance questions and problems. Finance degree programmes can be pursued from a variety of perspectives, including, but not restricted to, the behavioural, economic, sustainable or quantitative perspectives. The learning objectives are structured to ensure that they integrate the conceptual and applied aspects of the curriculum and the relationship between them and between different areas of knowledge and understanding. Design flexibility is required to facilitate recent developments such as AI and fintech, blockchains and digital assets. Students should be able to evaluate the potential ethical, sustainability and regulatory dimensions of financial activities and systems, and not merely the different functions of financial institutions and firms, or the pricing and risk management of financial products.

2.3 Although Finance is often studied in conjunction with accounting, an in-depth knowledge of accounting is not required. The extent to which accounting is covered will be highly dependent on the structure of the degree programme. However, a reasonable knowledge of the principles of accounting, regulatory environment for financial reporting, contents of financial statements and the use of accounting information for decision-making is required. Other topics in accounting may include, but are not limited to, accountability, responsibility and trust, audit and assurance, and accounting systems. Joint discipline degree programmes that include Finance are designed to ensure that they include the majority of the knowledge, understanding and skills detailed in this Subject Benchmark Statement.

2.4 Finance degree programmes should prepare students for lifelong and self-directed learning. They should be designed to enable students to thrive in a range of careers in finance, including public, private and the third sector, entrepreneurial and enterprise activities, or further academic pursuits.

Design

2.5 Undergraduate Finance degrees are either single honours or joint programmes such as Finance with accounting, management, economics, business, a modern language, law, engineering, statistics or mathematics. Master's degrees in Finance may be generalist in design for those with no prior finance experience or may emphasise specific subject areas in specialist programmes. Specialist master's degrees are for those who wish to broaden or deepen their learning to enhance their careers. They may also be tailored to pre-experience students or those with experience seeking to switch careers or specialise.

2.6 The typical bachelor's Finance degree programme is designed to achieve the learning outcomes defined in section 4.

2.7 There can be great variation in the design and learning outcomes specific to each master's degree, depending on the type of programme.

2.8 Programmes are designed to integrate Finance knowledge and skills appropriately for students to make a positive contribution to the work environment and society.

Progression

2.9 Over the course of a standard bachelor's degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) or, if available, an integrated master's degrees (FHEQ Level 7; FQHEIS Level 11), a Finance student will progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. However, it is expected that each level would see the attainment of knowledge, expertise and experience that builds towards the final achievement of meeting the threshold, typical and excellent subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement. This usually includes successful completion and the award of credit for the full range of learning and assessment, including any practical components.

2.10 Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it would be expected that a student who had achieved a second-class degree or higher would be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking master's study in Finance or a related discipline, for example, banking, financial mathematics, accounting or investment. Entry requirements to master's degree programmes are, however, determined by individual providers and may require specified levels of achievement at bachelor's level.

2.11 Undergraduates studying Finance programmes as part of a combined or joint bachelor's degree with other subjects will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills outlined in this Statement and will add others according to the areas covered in the other subject(s) of their degree. Additionally, they may explore the overlap between different disciplines, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

2.12 Any student enrolled in a standard bachelor's honours degree programme in Finance may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education (FHEQ Level 4; FQHEIS Level 8), a Diploma of Higher Education (FHEQ Level 5; FQHEIS Level 9), or other awards depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard.

2.13 Many undergraduate students decide to spend a semester or a whole year in a professional work placement or abroad, taking advantage of various exchange opportunities available with institutional partners or through sector-wide programmes.

2.14 Full master's degree programmes (FHEQ Level 7; FQHEIS Level 11) typically comprise a workload equivalent to one year of full-time study, usually of 180 credits (see the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, and the Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree). Following the taught programmes, students normally work on a self-directed project or dissertation which ideally should include empirical work. There is an increasing trend to provide applied projects where students work on a live brief or combine their dissertations with an internship. Some institutions hold three semesters, and instead of a master's dissertation they offer additional taught course units/modules or projects.

2.15 Related FHEQ Level 7 awards, such as a Postgraduate Certificate and a Postgraduate Diploma, can be offered as standalone awards or as stages in the progression towards a master's degree. This can facilitate continued professional development at different stages of a professional career. They can also be offered as exit awards.

2.16 Integrated master's degrees (FHEQ Level 7; FQHEIS Level 11) normally comprise a four-year full-time programme or a part-time programme of not less than five and not more than eight academic years, of which study equivalent to at least one academic year full-time is at Level 7 of the FHEQ.

2.17 Students at master's level should be educated having in mind that the opportunity to conduct research is an important aspect, as some will explore further study opportunities.

Flexibility

2.18 At providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the duration of a full-time programme leading to a standard bachelor's degree is three years, or four years for an integrated master's degree. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study and integrated master's five, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education. Students following part-time routes, including bachelor's programmes with placements, accumulate academic credit in proportion to the intensity of their study, and their total study time and credit value would be the equivalent of those achieved on full-time routes.

2.19 Full-time programmes leading to a masters' degree are typically 12 months in duration. Part-time masters' degrees comprise the same number of credits over a longer time.

2.20 Higher education providers structure the programmes they offer to support students' learning and attainment and be inclusive to all students. Finance degrees should be offered in a variety of learning modes and with assessment to suit students' learning and other needs. Depending on the educational mission of the provider, this may include opportunities to engage in learning on campus in person, online, and/or through hybrid learning, arranged in terms, by semester, year-long, block, or other formats. These may be offered in full and/or part-time modes of study, in person, digital, blended, hybrid, hyflex, block release, and synchronous/asynchronous, and credit may be accumulated through the completion of micro-credentials, short-accredited learning, recognition of prior learning or accreditation of prior experiential learning with the possibility of switching between modes of study.

2.21 When structuring flexibility into Finance degrees it is essential to ensure that programmes are coherent and meet the benchmarks in this Statement. Flexibility in Finance degrees may be required to meet EDI obligations and partnership relationships may also offer additional flexibility.

Partnership

2.22 Degree-awarding bodies may deliver programmes in partnership with other providers through validation and franchising arrangements. Others may work with partners who deliver specific elements of the programme through placement learning or as part of a degree apprenticeship. Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, play an important role in helping partners design provision that contributes to threshold standards being met in a specific subject area.

2.23 Degree programmes and the student experience can be enhanced by partnerships that may include working with organisations in a wide range of public, private and not-for-profit organisations in the UK or overseas:

- in the creation of programmes - for example, school-leaver courses, industry-based part-time master's study, degree apprenticeships, franchise arrangements and transnational degree programmes

- in the creation of learning materials and authentic assessment - for example, interviews, video cases or live consultancy
- in the provision of advanced practice - for example, placements and work experience which can enhance finance awareness
- in the creation and running of extracurricular activities aligned to the programme - for example, exchanges, study abroad, hackathons, site/field visits, volunteering in the UK or overseas
- in the provision of programmes offered by other providers.

2.24 Finance degree programmes may reflect the requirements for recognition by professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Such recognition enables learners to develop management skills that can be applied and contextualised in the workplace. As finance is intrinsically embedded within every workplace, a professional standards framework may be developed, drawing upon a relevant professional body, and embedded within programmes to measure individual learner skills and identify development areas as well as future continuous professional development. This supports lifelong learning and the value of underpinning academic knowledge in the workplace.

2.25 Providers, designers and educators of Finance degree programmes may engage with a wide range of networks, national and international bodies as well as learned societies - for example, AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), ACT (Association of Corporate Treasurers), BAFA (British Accounting and Finance Association), CBI (Chartered Banker Institute), CFA Institute (Chartered Financial Analyst), CISI (Chartered Institute for Securities and Investment), EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development), FMA (Financial Management Association), GARP (Global Association of Risk Professionals), and PRMIA (Professional Risk Manager's International Association) to embrace good practice, stimulate discussion, share ideas and provide development opportunities.

2.26 Some programmes give students advanced standing in professional bodies, can provide accelerated progression to professional qualifications and/or cover some of the curriculum for professional finance exams, for example, Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), Chartered Institute for Securities and Investment (CISI), Chartered Banker Institute (CBI), Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS), The Association of Corporate Treasurers (ACT), Global Association of Risk Professionals (GARP) and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (AICPA-CIMA). This is a particular feature of specialist master's programmes but is not uncommon across other master's programmes and shorter awards and can also be offered with Level 7 microcredits (see the Characteristics Statement on Micro-Credentials).

Monitoring and review

2.27 Academic quality assurance in Finance degree programmes requires monitoring and regular review, both internal and external (including annual, periodic and continuous). Degree-awarding bodies, and their collaborative partnerships, routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic programme review according to their own needs, and considering the student voice will form part of this. They draw on a range of external reference points, including this Subject Benchmark Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation are periodic assessment of a programme, conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from both current and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future programme planning.

2.28 External input and review is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Providers use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an independent perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved, and content is appropriate for the subject. This is typically external peer review but can include employers, alumni and professional bodies. The involvement of external parties in the review process is key to the success of a Finance degree programme. Employers are included because many students expect to gain employment in one of the most rapidly changing and important sectors of the global economy. The review process gives these interested parties the opportunity to influence learning outcomes that are currently important for employability. Professional bodies, such as those listed in paragraph 2.25 above, may also be included, for degrees having professional affiliations and/or accreditations. These typically require evaluation to ensure that both the curriculum and the assessment modes meet their requirements for affiliation and/or accreditation. The evaluation is usually done through a combination of site visits and desk-based reviews.

2.29 The external examining system currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are secured by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They consider the types of programmes offered to students, progression throughout the degree programme, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within other UK higher education providers. External examiners are asked to produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to Finance programmes, courses and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.30 Providers may also wish to form advisory boards consisting of key stakeholders as an additional form of external guidance and monitoring. Members may be drawn from alumni, local, regional, national and international employers of the institution's graduates, and other stakeholders. The remit could include advice on authentic assessments, placements, curriculum, employability, EDI, or more broadly the strategic direction of the course.

3 Content, structure and delivery

3.1 This section specifies subject-specific knowledge and skills that are outcomes of successful completion of a Finance bachelor's or master's degree. Associated with each item is a set of examples, given in parentheses. The examples are given to help illustrate the outcomes of a Finance degree, not to function as a set of prescriptions. It is not intended that degree programmes should include all the examples, and it is for Finance degree providers to design their programmes to map their individual degree programmes to the broad areas outlined in this Statement. It is recognised that most degree programmes will include additional learning outcomes to reflect expertise and the changing finance sector. It is also recognised that these sets of knowledge and skill may be covered at different depth and detail during a bachelor's or master's degree.

Subject-specific knowledge and skills

3.2 On completion of a bachelor's degree covered by this Subject Benchmark Statement, a student is generally expected to have the following subject-specific knowledge and skills.

- An appreciation of the contexts in which finance operates, including knowledge of the institutional framework necessary for understanding the role, operation and function of markets and financial institutions (for example, the economic, ethical, legal, political, regulatory, social and tax environment, both national and international; the firm; the capital markets; and the public sector).
- Knowledge of the major theoretical tools and theories of finance, and their relevance and application to theoretical and practical problems (for example, the concept of arbitrage and examples of its use; financial mathematics; informational efficiency; optimal risk sharing; portfolio theory; asset pricing models and the valuation of securities; cost of capital; derivatives and derivative pricing; risk management; information asymmetry; principal-agent relationships; signalling; trading mechanisms, the risks presented by climate change, green finance, climate finance, finance for nature and biodiversity; corporate finance, capital budgeting; behavioural finance; personal finance and literacy, scope and impact of financial regulation, term structure and the movement of interest rates; determination of exchange rates; and financial intermediation).
- An understanding of the relationship between financial theory and empirical testing, and application of this knowledge to the appraisal of the empirical evidence in one or more major theoretical areas. The appraisal should involve some recognition of the limitations and evolution of empirical tests and theory (for example, the efficient markets hypothesis; asset pricing anomalies; risk management; pricing of derivatives and other securities; portfolio management; interest rates; exchange rates; raising capital and capital structure; agency theory; and sustainability).
- An ability to interpret financial data, including those arising in the context of the firm or household or national levels from accounting statements and data generated in financial markets. The interpretation should involve analysis using statistical and financial decisions and procedures routinely available in spreadsheets and other statistical/econometric software packages. It may involve the skills necessary to manipulate financial data and conduct statistical and econometric tests (for example, estimation and interpretation of asset pricing models; financial modelling and projections; event studies; elements of panel data analysis, including endogeneity and causality effects as well as time series analysis, such as serial correlation, mean reversion, and time-varying volatility). Interpretation of financial data can also involve critique of the results and understanding the judgements involved, and assumptions and limitations of financial data.

- An understanding of the financing arrangements and governance mechanisms and structures of business entities and other organisations, and an appreciation of how theory and evidence can be combined to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of such arrangements (for example, decisions related to sources of finance and financial structure; the pricing of corporate securities; the market for corporate control; corporate governance, including aspects related to diversity and equality; environmental, social and governance issues; financial planning; and international dimensions of finance).
- An understanding of the factors influencing the financial management and investment behaviour and opportunities of private individuals (for example, bonds, equities, and derivatives; money market instruments; risk aversion; risk/return trade-offs; portfolio management and performance measurement; pensions and long-term savings; the tax treatment of savings and investments; international diversification; foreign exchange risk; objectives of, and constraints on, institutional investors and advisers).
- An understanding of financial service activities in the economy, the factors that are changing these activities over time, and an appreciation of how finance theory and evidence can be employed to aid such understanding (for example, ideas of information asymmetry, moral hazard and risk sharing could be employed to analyse the fundamental nature of services, such as insurance, pensions, bank lending and consumer credit, and also explore fundamental problems arising in such financial service provision; the efficient market hypothesis could be used to explore the value added by investment and financial services).
- An ability to understand financial statements, and a reasonable appreciation of the limitations of financial reporting and disclosure practices and procedures (for example, financial statement analysis; the relation between cash flow accounting and accrual accounting; discretionary accounting practices; and financial statement derived measures of financial performance, including risk).
- An understanding of the organisation, scope and wider impact of regulatory activity in the finance sector; the rationale for regulation; the requirements and obligations on financial firms and markets, the differentiated nature across finance industries and economies; the implications for professionalism of finance practitioners.
- An ability to assess the role of different technologies, including digital, AI, including GenAI, and the latest technology developments, in enabling innovative means of delivering financial services and in the functioning of financial markets and investment (for example, in the domains of payments, credit and lending, fraud detection, crowdfunding, compliance, investment management, insurance, regulation and digital/virtual currencies).
- An ability to understand personal finance concepts, identify how to develop competencies in the domains of financial literacy and capability. Appreciate the social and economic value of widening access to finance using a variety of channels, including those that have emerged outside of mainstream avenues.
- An ability to understand the role of the finance sector in addressing the challenges and impact of the risks presented by climate change and other environmental risks; the growth and functions of green/climate finance, finance for nature and biodiversity, and sustainable finance products and initiatives.
- Knowledge of appropriate programming, data visualisation, AI, and other computing skills required in the modern finance profession will be part of a degree programme. An ability to use such techniques on actual economic, financial or social data using suitable statistical or econometric software. An appreciation of both quantitative

and qualitative data and ability to select appropriate research methods to analyse such data.

Cognitive abilities and generic skills

3.3 On completion of a bachelor's degree covered by this Subject Benchmark Statement, a student is generally expected to have the following cognitive abilities and generic skills:

- critical evaluation of arguments and evidence
- independent and self-managed learning
- analysis, filtering and evaluation of data, and drawing reasoned conclusions concerning structured and, to a more limited extent, unstructured problems from a given set of data and from data acquired by the student
- location, extraction, management and analysis of data from multiple sources, including acknowledging and referencing of sources
- numeracy, including the processing and analysis of financial and other numerical data and the appreciation of statistical and econometric concepts at an appropriate level
- selection and application of relevant research tools to design, guide and interpret financial, social and environmental policies
- using technology for the acquisition, analysis and communication of financial information
- communication, including presenting quantitative and qualitative information, together with analysis, argument and commentary, in a form appropriate to the intended audience, and verbal and/or non-verbal as well as written presentation
- working with others (such as through group projects).

Teaching and learning

3.4 It is the responsibility of each higher education provider offering a degree programme in Finance to select a set of teaching, learning and assessment activities that is appropriate for meeting the aims and desired outcomes of the degree. Whatever set of activities is determined, providers will be able to demonstrate how these activities enable students to achieve the subject-specific knowledge and skills, the cognitive abilities and generic skills set out above.

3.5 No one set of teaching and learning activities is uniquely suitable to the study of Finance independent of the context of the degree programme. The design of such activities considers:

- the need to achieve an appropriate balance between the conceptual and theoretical and applied aspects of the subject
- the extent to which the degree programme reflects current research and contemporary debate in the subject
- the nature of the student population addressed by a particular provider, for example predominantly full-time or full-time with a period of professional practice students, mainly part-time students currently in employment, level of relevant experience, countries of origin
- the mode of delivery (for example, full-time, full-time with a period of professional practice or international experience, part-time, modular and blended learning).

3.6 Learning is organised and supported to encourage active learning and support employability. The learning process can be managed using a variety of approaches, including lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, peer teaching and learning, project-based learning, technology-enabled learning (for example, trading simulations), experiential learning, placements at the programme level, and practice-based learning.

3.7 In terms of delivery methods, blended learning, incorporating a mixture of online and in-person elements and appropriate combinations of synchronous and asynchronous materials and activities can be considered. This approach offers greater flexibility to students and educators, but it could create challenges related to engagement and motivation of students to fully benefit from these approaches. Technology-supported learning and assessment needs to be innovative, working with both students and the technology, to keep students motivated and proactively address potential issues with academic integrity. The application of the blended learning approach must maintain academic integrity.

3.8 Students on both bachelor's and master's taught programmes in Finance often have diverse backgrounds. Programme directors and course leaders should consider specific help for subject-specific language, mathematical (where appropriate) support, academic writing, as well as study and examination skills support.

Assessment

3.9 No single form of assessment activity is uniquely appropriate for evaluating student achievement on degree programmes in Finance. Programmes involve a suitable balance and mix of assessment activities to allow and require students to demonstrate not only their understanding of the conceptual and applied aspects of finance but also the cognitive abilities and non-subject-specific skills they have developed during their studies.

3.10 The assessment design and format consider the balance between formal and informal, summative and formative assessment activities and other forms of non-assessed experiences that together contribute to the development of a Finance graduate. Formative assessment is typically used within an overall assessment plan to provide feedback and feed forward, building confidence for summative assessments. This enables graduates to develop their reflective skills and assess their own progress.

3.11 The balance and mix of assessment activities consider the effectiveness and reliability of the chosen activities in providing indicators of individual performance in terms of the outcomes. To ensure that all the bachelor's and master's taught degrees develop respective skills for their future careers, a module and also programme-level analysis of assessment design and methods is valuable.

3.12 Problem-solving skills and higher order reasoning skills are particularly important to Finance graduates as they follow a wide range of careers and further studies in different fields. Authentic assessment design aiming to equip students with these skills is valued.

3.13 Finance graduates may benefit from a different range of assessments, including traditional closed-book examinations, research projects, essays, open-book examinations, multimedia assessments, group assessments and other non-traditional formats. The data-driven topics in Finance naturally lead to data-oriented forms of assessments, which could include research or applied projects or dissertations. This reflects the real-world environment, including workplace, and a useful assessment of wider applied skills.

3.14 Where appropriate, the design of teaching and learning activities, together with associated assessment activities, can usefully be informed by current pedagogical developments and research in these areas (including developments in technology). Also, regular reviews must be undertaken to ensure that such activities remain 'fit for purpose' and

up to date in achieving the programme's desired outcomes with respect to this Subject Benchmark Statement.

4 Benchmark standards

Introduction

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum threshold, typical and excellent standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded a bachelor's degree in Finance. Demonstrating these standards over time will demonstrate that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of bachelor's graduates in Finance.

4.2 Most students are likely to perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards outlined below. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to Annex D of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies for further guidance.

4.3 Please note that the minimum threshold, typical and excellent standards are not intended to specify universal competence standards for a discipline. If a provider chooses to develop competence standards (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) as part of a programme specification these can be informed by the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement along with any PSRB requirements. In these circumstances, providers should follow the most recent guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Threshold level

Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.4 A student graduating with a Finance bachelor's degree will be able to:

- demonstrate a depth of knowledge of the main concepts, theories and tools used in finance
- apply acquired knowledge to finance problems relevant to individuals, companies, institutions and society
- demonstrate understanding of the institutional, economic, political, regulatory and social environments within which finance operates
- recognise the fundamental importance of reliable governance structures and of ethical considerations in financial decision making
- understand the operation, regulation and supervision of financial markets and some of the services and products traded in these markets
- understand the fundamentals of valuation, security analysis and portfolio management
- collect, manage, synthesise and interpret financial, accounting and economic data
- execute straightforward statistical analyses of financial data using software packages
- assess the significance, problems and limitations of finance theories and associated empirical evidence
- demonstrate a critical appreciation and understanding of how finance theory and empirical evidence can be used to guide policy and practice
- understand the importance of finance as a key lever to achieve sustainable outcomes for society and the planet

- understand the impact fintech exerts on financial services through innovations such as AI, blockchain and digital payments
- distil and summarise financial knowledge and information, communicating (both verbally and in writing) knowledge and/or information effectively to diverse audiences
- demonstrate collaborative and leadership skills by working productively in both finance and interdisciplinary teams
- assert intellectual independence and critical judgement.

Typical level

4.5 Typical graduates can distinguish themselves from threshold graduates by demonstrating a breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding and showing a clear and critical insight of the Finance discipline. They will demonstrate a rigorous understanding of Finance theories, paradigms, methods, concepts and principles along with a strong understanding of some specialised topics within the Finance field. They will possess a sophisticated ability to select and critically appraise a wide range of information, sources, views and knowledge which may be specialised within a sub-discipline of Finance or interdisciplinary in nature and recognise the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of sources and knowledge. With a degree of autonomy, they will conduct thorough background investigation, reading, analysis, research, and/or study and solve complex finance problems, applying a wide range of established methodologies accurately. They will meaningfully select, evaluate, synthesize, discuss, communicate and present different information and results with substantiated arguments and demonstrate thorough and thoughtful interpretation of complex ideas and a high level of creativity and originality throughout their work.

Excellent level

4.6 Excellent level graduates can distinguish themselves from threshold and typical graduates by showing exceptional knowledge and understanding of the Finance discipline, significantly beyond the typical level and beyond what has been taught. They will demonstrate an exceptional knowledge of Finance theories, paradigms, methods, concepts and principles and will have in-depth knowledge of a range of specialised areas within the Finance field. They will assert intellectual independence and conduct thorough and extensive background investigation, reading, analysis, research, and/or study well beyond the typical range. They will possess an exceptional ability to critically appraise a wide range of sources, views and knowledge and masterly appreciate the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of those views, sources and knowledge. They will show exceptional problem-solving skills and a strong ability for decision-making and for solving complex finance problems, with a high degree of autonomy, justifying and evidencing the use and application of a wide range of established methodologies critically and accurately. They will proficiently select, evaluate, synthesize, discuss, communicate and present different views, information and results. They will construct and present substantiated arguments and demonstrate a sophisticated perception and critical insight of complex matters and ideas and an exceptional level of creativity, flair and originality throughout their work.

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6 Membership of the Advisory Group

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Finance 2025

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