Assessment Plan
B.S. in Finance
2009-2010

1. Student Learning Outcomes

The students who graduate with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Finance from Northern Illinois University will be prepared for successful careers in the field of finance. The success of such students will depend on the acquisition of particular skills that will allow them to perform rigorous, quantitative, analytical tasks and convey the outcomes of such analyses to appropriate audiences.

To this end, the Department of Finance has developed a set of seven student learning outcomes, the demonstration of which would indicate the successful acquisition of the aforementioned skills.

These student learning outcomes are the following:

1. **The graduate must be able to list and distinguish the functional areas of finance.**

   In order to be a successful financial professional one must understand the role that one's particular analysis plays in the broader agenda of the finance department of a corporation, bank, or other institution. Successful demonstration of this student learning outcome would indicate that the graduate is aware of the implications and the contributions of each of the functional areas to the achievement of the overarching goals of the unit within which the graduate will be working.

2. **The graduate must be able to apply analytical tools to solve problems.**

   Many of the tasks that must be performed by the financial manager, even the routine tasks, can be complex. It is therefore important that the graduate be able to decompose a problem into its constituent parts and understand the implications of the interplay among these constituents in order to provide a solution to a particular question or to establish a systematic policy that can be applied in various similar situations.

3. **The graduate must be able to apply statistical tools to solve problems.**

   The concept of risk is fundamental to every functional area of the discipline of finance. The idea of risk, in turn, is inextricable from the mathematical concept of probability; with which the discipline of statistics is concerned. It is therefore imperative that every graduate from the finance program have a firm grasp of statistics, and is able to apply the tools and analyses from statistics to problems related to finance.
4. **The graduate must understand and be able to apply accounting skills.**

The discipline of finance originated as a subset of the field of accountancy. One could even say that in large part finance is the application of economic theory to accounting data. Very commonly the financial manager is using, as the basic fodder for his analyses, the output of accounting processes. Thus, it is important that every graduate acquire basic accounting skills and understand from whence the accounting data she is using is derived.

5. **The graduate must be able to use appropriate technology.**

The practice of modern business, in general, and finance in particular requires that the student be competent with several technological implements. Primary among the tools that graduates must master is the financial calculator. The students must also be familiar with spreadsheet, presentation, and word processing applications.

6. **The graduate must demonstrate adequate written and oral communication skills.**

Acquiring the skills necessary to perform advanced statistical and analytical analysis of a financial nature would be virtually useless if one were unable to communicate the results of such analysis to others. Thus it is necessary that graduates are able to adequately communicate in writing and with the spoken word.

7. **The graduate must demonstrate good interpersonal skills.**

In addition to acquiring skills specific to the practice of financial management and oral and written communication is important that graduates are able to work with others in an appropriate manner.

2. **Explanation of Methods**

The seven student learning outcomes are measured by four methods, as follows:

1. **Embedded Assessment Measures.**

All finance majors are required to take a series of courses in their junior year which constitute the “Finance Core.” These courses are: 1) Corporate Finance (FINA 330); 2) Investments (FINA 340); and 3) Financial Markets and Institutions (FINA 350). The professors in these courses incorporate questions into their examinations which are designed to test the students understanding of: 1) the functional areas within finance; 2) the students’ analytical abilities; 3) the students’ ability to use statistics to solve problems; 4) the students’ understanding of accounting; 5) and their ability to use financial calculators.
2. **Professional Examinations.**

Students majoring in finance have the choice of taking courses in designated tracks. Taking a particular group of courses, which constitute a track, is optional and students are not forced to be in one of the tracks. There are currently three tracks available to finance students, these are: 1) the Investments track; 2) the Corporate Finance/Treasury track; and 3) the Banking track.

For students who choose to specialize in the investments track or the corporate finance/treasury track, the series of courses they would take to complete a track would prepare them to take professional examinations to either be a certified treasury professional (CTP) or be chartered as a chartered financial analysts (CFA).

The Department has set specific goals in terms a student learning outcomes related to the pass rates of our students on these professional examinations. Successful completion of these examinations is an external validation that students have the ability to apply analytical tools to solve problems, have mastered statistical analysis, and have substantial understanding of accountancy.

3. **Surveys of Internship Employers.**

Many of the students in the finance program are involved in internships for which they receive three credit hours.

As part of the internship we administer a survey to the employers. This survey specifically asked questions related to the students’ understanding of functional areas within finance, analytical ability, statistical ability, understanding of accountancy, written and oral communication skills, and interpersonal skills.

4. **Surveys of Graduates.**

The university assessment office conducts surveys of recent and not so recent graduates. To the extent possible, we seek to use the surveys to assess the student learning outcomes.