

Accounting 242

Accounting and Business Analysis

Course Overview

Financial data is employed in a multitude of analytical research and decision-making contexts such as equity valuation, bankruptcy prediction, acquisition decisions, and managerial performance assessments. In order for the data to be used effectively, however, the nature of the data itself must be understood. For example, effectively using a firm's quantitative history of reported sales revenue in forming forecasts of future cash flows requires an understanding of how the firm defines (i.e., measures) sales revenue. Accounting 242 is designed to increase your ability to understand and utilize the financial data provided in financial statements.

The primary focus will be on developing your ability to engage in accounting analysis, which is the process of assessing how the financial metrics reflect the underlying economic constructs of interest, as well as your ability to utilize or transform the financial data to gain insight into a firm's underlying business strategy, economic performance, and future outlook. For example, after taking this course, you should be able to use the disclosures in a firm's financial report to determine its accounting practices for a particular type of transaction and be able to determine how that policy choice affects its primary financial statements. Given your understanding of the drivers of the statements, you should be able to assess what, if anything, those statements communicate about the effectiveness of the firm's strategy, the firm's underlying economic performance, and the firm's future outlook. Furthermore, you should be able to recast the firm's financial statements to reflect accounting practices that you believe are intrinsically superior or that facilitate more meaningful comparisons with peer firms.

To meet the course objectives, we will rely extensively on case studies involving the financial disclosures of actual companies. Hence, this course is a case-based, as opposed to textbook-based course. Many of the cases are selected to illustrate that significant accounting analysis issues can arise from new organizational and technological innovations. For example, new derivative instruments, securitization vehicles, organizational forms, and intellectual property have all created challenging accounting issues.

The course is roughly divided into three topical areas: revenue recognition, expense recognition, and financial transactions. In the revenue recognition section we will consider questions such as: How do software providers record revenues for software contracts and how does that practice influence the analysis of revenues? How should a technology firm that bundles search and cloud services into a single contract record revenues for the various elements of that contract and how does that practice influence perceptions of value? How might a firm's innovative organizational structure interact with its value chain to distort perceptions of its revenue generating capacity? Why might a start-up firm emphasize non-GAAP measures of revenue instead of traditional GAAP measures of revenue recognition, and why might those measures be more useful for analysis purposes? In the expense recognition section, we will consider questions such as: How should a firm account for costs incurred to attract subscribers and how does that influence assessments of firm performance? How do firms in high R&D industries (e.g., biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries), alter their organization structures in response to R&D expense recognition rules? Why are multinational firms with a great deal of intellectual property (e.g., Apple) able to reduce their effective tax rates to levels substantially lower than statutory rates? Finally, in the financial transactions section, we will consider questions such as: How are derivative contracts reflected in financial statements, and it is possible to distinguish hedging from speculative activities? How do intangibles acquired (e.g., in process R&D, goodwill, and unexecuted contracts) via mergers and acquisitions activity affect future performance metrics?

Curriculum Requirements

For students who are not completing an Accounting concentration, ACCT 242 can be used to satisfy the 1 CU Technology, Innovation, and Analytics curriculum requirement. Students who are completing an Accounting concentration can use ACCT 242 to satisfy 1 of 3 CUs from a set of electives (ACCT 242, 243, 297, 390 and FIN 207). Note that ACCT 242 cannot be counted towards both requirements.

Preparation and Performance, Quizzes, Exams, and Project

Class Preparation and Participation

Prior to almost all classes, you will complete some class preparation questions on Canvas via a web interface. The goal of the class preparation questions is simple – to induce you to read and think about the case study to be discussed in class. Note that the class discussion will build off of the class preparation questions (many of which are very, very simple), as opposed to just going over the answers to the class preparation questions. To obtain credit, you must complete the preparation materials when they are due. No exceptions.

In most instances, the case studies will rely heavily on verbatim excerpts from the actual financial filings (e.g., 10-K reports and 8-K press releases). For those of you who are more comfortable dealing with textbook like problems or highly polished and sanitized cases, dealing with the source material directly will prove frustrating and maddening at times. Unfortunately, that is the way it is when you leave the cloistered halls of academe. By actively engaging in the learning-by-dong (or, in some instances, learning-by-suffering) exercises provided by the cases, however, you will become more comfortable working with real financial statement data.

Quizzes

There will be three quizzes during the semester. The quizzes will be somewhat cumulative in the sense that you are responsible for all topic areas covered up to and including that quiz, although each quiz will be heavily skewed towards the topics covered since the prior quiz. To assist you in preparing for the quizzes, there will be practice problems posted on Canvas.

Final Exam

The final exam will be two-hour cumulative exam based upon a single set of financial statements. The financial statements to be utilized will be made available to you about one week prior to the final exam. You can use any written reference resources including your notes, GAAP guides, textbooks, etc. during the exam. To assist you in preparing for the final exam, there will be a practice exam posted on Canvas. Note that completing the practice exam is not nearly sufficient for preparing for the exam. You should review the material covered during the classes, the quizzes, and the practice problems as well.

Project

You will prepare an Accounting Analysis project with a group of 2 to 4 fellow students (each group can have no less than 2 and no more than 4 students – no exceptions). The project will require your group to complete a thorough analysis of the financial statements of a company selected by you. Your group, however, should select a company with at least one interesting/contentious accounting issue that has significant consequences for the “look and feel” of the financial statements. Details regarding the Accounting Analysis Project are provided in the Accounting Analysis Project assignment on Canvas.

Grading

Grades will be based upon the following allocation scheme:

Class Preparation and Performance	15%
Quizzes	30%
Final Exam	30%
Project	25%

Class Materials

Canvas

Class Preparation Materials

In advance of each class you should work through the material required for the pre class quiz associated with that class. The quiz can be found in the assignments tab of the Canvas site. The files associated with each class can be found in the files tab, and there will be a folder for each class. Within each folder will be three subfolders. The subfolder labeled Pre Class Materials will include cases, problems, or teaching notes that should be read prior to class. These items can be linked from the quiz page as well. The subfolder labeled In Class Materials will contain class slides as well as any other material we will cover in class that is not included in the Pre Class Materials. The class slides will be available at 6:00 PM the evening before class. The Post Class Material Subfolder contains material distributed during class, brief technical notes for the cases or problems discussed, and optional readings related to what was covered in class. This material will be made available at the end of the day that the class session is held.

Final Exam Materials

There will be a final exam during the exam period. The exam will be based upon a single set of financial statements. Those statements will be made available on Canvas via a folder titled Final Exam.

Your Introductory Text as a Starting Point

There is no text for the class. Your introductory accounting text can provide a useful reference/starting point for some of the material we will cover. Teaching notes will supplement the introductory material for particular cases.

FASB Accounting Standards Codification (ASC)

You will also have access to the Financial Accounting Standards Board's (FASB's) searchable accounting standards codification (ASC). The ASC is a great reference for technical accounting, although it is not necessarily the user-friendly. (It becomes friendlier with use.) To access the FASB site go to

<http://www2.aaahq.org/ascLogin.cfm>

The user name is XXXX and the password is XXXXXX.

Instructor Availability

My office is in 1321 SHDH, my phone number is (215) 573-7533, and my email address is pef@wharton.upenn.edu. Office hours are by appointment. Please contact me in advance to make an appointment. You are also welcome to stop by to see me at any time. If you stop by and I have other commitments, I will be happy to make an appointment with you for later in the day.

Accounting 242: Accounting and Business Analysis
 Spring 2019
 Summary Class Schedule
 (Tentative: Subject to Modest Changes)

Session	Day	Date	Topics	Case(s)
1	Thursday	01/17	Introduction	Wired Wanda's
2	Tuesday	01/22	An Innovation to Balance Sheets and Income Statements: The Statement of Cash Flows	None
3	Thursday	01/24	Revenue Recognition Fundamentals	Homex
4	Tuesday	01/29	Reporting Innovations and Comparability: Accounting Policy Changes	IT Associates
5	Thursday	01/31	Sales or Subscriptions: Revenue Recognition for Software Services	Mediterranean Express
6	Tuesday	02/05	Organizational Innovation and Revenue Generation	TBA (or Ford)
7	Thursday	02/07	Driving Sales Through Consumer Financing: Receivables & Securitization	Tesla
8	Tuesday	02/12	Innovating Beyond GAAP: Non GAAP Reporting Metrics	Autonomy and HP
9	Thursday	02/14	Product Bundling: What is Driving Sales?	None
10	Tuesday	02/19	Quiz 1	Cisco and Diamond Foods
11	Thursday	02/21	Expense Recognition Fundamentals	Prepaid Legal
12	Tuesday	02/26	Managing Expectations: Expense Recognition Timing	Boeing
13	Thursday	02/28	Customer Acquisition Costs	Alza
14	Tuesday	03/12	Program Accounting (Hopes and Dreams?)	Par Pharma
15	Thursday	03/14	Organizational Innovation: Coping with R&D Expensing	TBA
16	Tuesday	03/19	Contracts, Commitments, and Contingencies/Leases	None
17	Thursday	03/21	Compensation Innovations: Accounting for Contingent Compensation	MGM
18	Tuesday	03/26	Earnings and Earnings per Share	TBA
19	Thursday	03/28	Quiz 2	Ebix
20	Tuesday	04/02	Long-Term Debt and Fair Value Accounting	Musselman Steel
21	Thursday	04/04	Understanding Financial Reporting for Taxes	Southwest Airlines
22	Tuesday	04/09	Tax Planning Innovations: The Case of Intellectual Property	Coca-Cola
23	Thursday	04/11	Breaking Old Promises: Pensions and Other Post Employment Benefits	Shaw Group
24	Tuesday	04/16	Financial Innovations: Derivatives and Hedging	
25	Thursday	04/18	Organizational Boundaries: Control and Significant Influence	
26	Tuesday	04/23	Acquired Intangibles	
27	Thursday	04/25	Summary and Conclusion	
28	Tuesday	04/30	Quiz 3	