

2017 FIN536 Corporate Governance Final Paper Guideline

For the final paper, a student is set the goal of choosing an area, writing an intelligent survey of the literature in that area, and coming up with a research proposal for a new paper in the area. The proposal need not be executed in the paper, but should be a substantial one, rather than a stray thought at the end of a literature review. If the proposal itself is long and substantial, the survey component becomes more like a literature review section in a regular paper.

There are two possibilities for your final paper:

(a) A substantial literature review.

The literature review should identify both the key questions and the key contributions in the area. Rather than just list a bunch of papers and talk about what each paper did, the goal should be to communicate the insights and intuitions that link different papers together, in order to provide a comprehensive overview.

(b) A research proposal.

The proposal should identify an important open question in the literature. We are looking for you to generate an idea that in principle is important enough to be publishable in a top-tier finance or economics journal. The proposal should include a discussion of:

- Why is the question important?
- How would you go about answering the question?

If it's a theoretical question, what are the main tradeoffs that need to be modelled? What is new in your approach? If it's an empirical question, what are the data you can use, and what are the hypotheses you will test?

The proposal must be substantial, rather than a stray page tacked on to the end of a large literature review. The goal is to demonstrate that you can think logically and constructively about an important question in finance. The proposal need not be executed; that's why it's only a proposal. However, it must represent a complete research plan.

Evaluation guidelines

1. Is the area/topic chosen an important one, and is it sufficiently broad to allow for a good survey?

2. Survey or Literature Review:

- Does it cover the important papers in the area?
- Does it provide a good overview of the key points in this literature? A good survey should “connect the dots” in the literature, rather than provide a separate detailed analysis of each paper on its own.

3. Research proposal:

- Is the main question in the proposal a good one? Is it new?
- Does the proposal provide a reasonable “road map” via which it can be executed?

For example,

- If it's an empirical paper, we'd like to see some hypotheses that have been developed.
- If it's a theoretical paper, we'd like to see the identification of a new tradeoff or effect, even if the model has not been fully developed.

4. Writing:

- Is the paper well-written? Are both the survey and the proposal clear?