

Commerce 4FM3
Personal Financial Planning and Advising
Winter 2026 Course Outline
Finance and Business Economics
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University

COURSE OBJECTIVE

This course will build upon the basic concepts and theories learnt in the pre-requisite course on Personal Financial Management (Commerce 4FL3/4FP3) and expand on them in a case-oriented setting. This course is suitable for two types of students:

1. The Do-it-Yourself Investor: Those who simply want to have a better handle on their personal finances. You will also learn the limits of your own advice capabilities and when to access and recognize good quality advice at a reasonable price.
2. Possible careers are with banks, brokerages, credit unions, and insurance companies as wealth managers, financial planners, financial advisors and commercial bankers.

This course attempts to integrate several disciplines which include tax planning, budgeting, savings and debt management, risk management, insurance and the law, investment management, retirement and estate planning, traditional macro-economics and behavioral economics, and ethical decision making and personal financial strategy.

This course will also cover key trends currently affecting investment advice such as growth and use of Robo-advisors, Fintech and other channels through which advice is available

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Section 1: Tues 8:30 am - 11:20 am
Class Location: (Available on Mosaic)

Sumit Bose, MBA CFP FMA CIWM FCSI

Instructor

sbose@mcmaster.ca

Office: TBA

Office Hours: by appointment

Tel: (905) 525-9140 x 26194

(as office is used by various instructors, please do not leave messages)

Course Website: <http://www.degroote.mcmaster.ca/UG/register.html>

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value:	3	Leadership:	Yes	IT skills:	No	Global view:	Yes
Avenue:	Yes	Ethics:	Yes	Numeracy:	Yes	Written skills:	Yes
Participation:	Yes	Innovation:	Yes	Group work:	Yes	Oral skills:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Yes	Experiential:	No	Final Exam:	Yes	Guest speaker(s):	Yes

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will go through all relevant topics and strategies for dealing with various financial planning matters. By the end of the course, students will be able to analyse a range of planning issues, including:

- The financial planning process;
- Factors affecting financial planning, including personal, career, and retirement issues;
- Personal income taxation;
- Capital assets and trusts;
- Business income taxation;
- Investments and savings options and vehicles;
- Retirement income and planning; and
- Estate planning.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Avenue registration for course content, readings and case materials

- <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>

KPMG Tax Planning For You and Your Family 2023. *Carswell*

\$39.05

- Purchase a hardcopy at the bookstore

COURSE DELIVERY AND TOOLS

Learning Activities	Delivery	Description	Tool(s)
In-Class	In Person	Live sessions led by your instructor	
Class Discussions	In Person	Posted Participation Questions/Cases discussed during Live Class	

NOTE: The use of a McMaster standard calculator is allowed during examinations in this course.

Texas Instruments BA II Plus financial calculator is recommended and will be used in class. However, any calculator that performs time value of money functions is acceptable.

See McMaster calculator policy at the following URL:

www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/UndergraduateExaminationsPolicy.pdf

COURSE OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

A combination of lectures, discussion and problem solving. Students will be encouraged to think, analyze, evaluate, and problem-solve, not memorize. Students are expected to come to class on time and be prepared for the class, i.e., to have read the assigned reading and to have done the assigned problems.

Missed tests/exams will receive a grade of zero unless the student has submitted and been approved for a Notification of Absence or MSAF.

All work will be evaluated on an individual basis except in certain cases where group work is expected. In these cases, group members will share the same grade.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Components and Weights

Evaluations	Weight	Description
Participation	10%	Attendance and engagement in weekly class Contribution (individual)
Assignment	30%	Assignment on Avenue to Learn (Group)
Midterm #1	25%	Multiple Choice and Short Answer or Case (individual) (open book)
Midterm #2	35%	Cumulative Multiple Choice and Short Answer or Case (individual) (open book)

COURSE DELIVERABLES

GROUP CASE ASSIGNMENT

The group assignment is worth a total of **30%** of your final grade and group members will share the same grade.

The final case, distributed to the students during the course of the term, will be completed by students in groups. Students will form **groups of three to five students**. The **Group leader** will **email the list** of group members to the instructor by the end of the third week of the term. All group members will be assigned identical grades for group work. More details of the format, structure, and content coverage will be provided during the course of the term.

The assignments are due at the start of class indicated on the class schedule section of the course outline. Late assignments will not be accepted unless the student and the professor have made prior arrangements.

MIDTERM #1

Midterm #1 exam is worth **25%** of your final grade. The midterm #1 exam is open book, with a combination of multiple-choice and essay or case-based questions. The exam will cover material from the text book, readings, handouts, website material assigned, lectures and class discussions.

MIDTERM #2

The Midterm #2 exam will be cumulative and is worth **35%** of your final grade. The midterm #2 exam is open book, with a combination of multiple-choice and essay or case-based questions. The exam will cover material from the text book, readings, handouts, website material assigned, lectures and class discussions.

PARTICIPATION – CLASS CONTRIBUTION

Class Participation is worth **10%** of your final grade. It is imperative that students prepare for every class. No class attendance results in zero mark.

Name cards and class pictures are used to help give credit for your participation. You must have a name card with your full first and last name clearly written and displayed in front of you for every class.

Your contribution is an essential component in the overall education process. Contribution takes place in many forms: asking informed questions in class, making intelligent comments, reading the case and being prepared to discuss the issues, actively listening to your peers and working with others. Please remember that quantity is no substitute for quality.

There will be ample opportunity to contribute to the class. The format of the in-class discussions of cases may take a variety of forms including: group analysis of single case issues during class, presentation of issues and leading discussions of the case issues.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you take an active role in class. If this is a problem for you, I urge you to talk to me to discuss ways that you can make a contribution. The grading for the class contribution in each class is as follows:

Grade	Student Contribution
0	Does not show up for class.
1	Attends class but says very little.
2	Makes a significant contribution to the class by making important points with a significant element of originality or demonstrating mastery of difficult theoretical issues or concepts; is always prepared having read and analyzed prior to class, the various aspects of the problems and issues involved, shares in class presentations, contributes to in-class group work.

Note that there is no partial (non-integer) participation grade awarded for a class. Students may be asked to share their detailed analysis with, or otherwise present their solutions to, the class in order for their contribution to be qualified as significant.

Since student participation is an important component of this course, official McMaster student ID photographs will be used to ensure that each student is assessed accurately. The instructor will use the photograph to ensure the accuracy of participation marks, group work, and for identifying students for grading purposes

USE OF CALCULATORS AND COMPUTERS

Students may use any calculator or computer during the term as aids.

Texas Instruments BA II Plus + financial calculator is also recommended. However, any calculator that performs time value of money functions is acceptable.

Calculators are allowed during the exam; however, ***no calculator, computer, or device may be used to access the Internet during the time of a test or an exam.***

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR INSTRUCTOR:

Communicating with Your Instructor:

During the course, your instructor will interact with you on various course matters on the course website using the following ways of communication:

- **Announcements:** The instructor will use **Announcements** on the Avenue Course Home page to provide you with course reminders and updates. Please check this section frequently for course updates from your instructor.
- **Email:** If you have a conflict that prevents you from completing course requirements, or have a question concerning a personal matter, you can send your instructor a private message by email. The instructor will respond to your email within 24 to 48 hours. Make sure to add '4FM3' in the subject line of email.
- **Zoom Meetings:** Students can also **request** a Zoom meeting by requesting the instructor by e-mail.
- **(In Case of classes moving to an online format,** Online Virtual classes will be held via Zoom meeting. The link to register for the online class will be posted on Avenue. Students are required to join the online lectures with their full names for participation and attendance)

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student.

All students must receive feedback regarding their progress prior to the final date by which a student may cancel the course without failure by default.

- For Level 1 and Level 2 courses, this feedback must equal a minimum of 20% of the final grade.
- For Level 3 courses and above, this feedback must equal a minimum of 10% of the final grade.

Instructors may solicit feedback via an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery.

Students who have concerns about the course content, evaluation methods, or delivery should first reach out to the course instructor. If your concern remains unresolved after speaking with the instructor, you may then reach out to the relevant Area Chair for further consideration.

REQUESTING RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar [“Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”](#) and the link below*;

<http://ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

* Non-Commerce students must follow the Missed Course Work protocols outlined by their home faculty and Program Office.

COURSE MODIFICATION

From time to time there may be a need to remove/add topics or to change the schedule or the delivery format. If these are necessary, you will be given as much advance notice as possible.

GENERATIVE AI

USE PROHIBITED

Students are not permitted to use generative AI in this course. In alignment with [McMaster academic integrity policy](#), it “shall be an offence knowingly to ... submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source”. This includes work created by generative AI tools. Also state in the policy is the following, “Contract Cheating is the act of “outsourcing of student work to third parties” (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639) with or without payment.” Using Generative AI tools is a form of contract cheating. Charges of academic dishonesty will be brought forward to the Office of Academic Integrity.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn, LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your enrolment in **Commerce 4FM3** will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

A course evaluation will be conducted near the end of the term. Students are asked to participate in this evaluation

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Commerce 4FM3
Personal Financial Planning and Advising
Winter 2026 Course Schedule**

Dates	Schedule
Week 1	
Tues, Jan 6 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Planning Process,• Creating an Engagement Letter- KPMG Chap.1 Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case Study 1 - Letter of Engagement
Week 2	
Tues, Jan 13 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code of Ethics and Practice Standards www.fpcanada.ca Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case Study 2 - Code of Ethics Group Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students to form groups of 3-5 members for the assignment
Week 3	
Tues, Jan 20 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taxation 1 - KPMG Chap. 2, 9, 4, 5, 6 Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case Study 3 - Tax Planning 1 Group Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group leader to email list of group members to instructor

Dates	Schedule
Week 4	
Tues, Jan 27 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Taxation 2 - KPMG Chap. 8, 10, 11, 14, 16 Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Case Study 4 - Tax Planning 2
Week 5	
Tues, Feb 3 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Investments Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue)
Week 6: Midterm Exam #1	
Tues, Feb 10 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Midterm #1 Exam on <i>(Lecture Topics for Weeks 1 to 4)</i>
WEEK 7 : February 16 - 22: MIDTERM RECESS	
Week 8	
Tues, Feb 24 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Investments - KPMG Chap. 7 Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Case Study 6 - Investments
Week 9	
Tues, Mar 3 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Insurance Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Case Study 7 - Insurance

Dates	Schedule
Week 10	
Tues, Mar 10 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retirement Planning - KPMG Chap. 3, 4, 20 Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case Study 8 - Retirement Planning
Week 11	
Tues, Mar 17 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Estate Planning - KPMG Chap. 21, 22• Integrating the components of a Financial Plan.• Behavioral Finance.• Trends in Financial Planning (e.g. Fintech, Robo-advisors, AI, Blockchain, etc) Participation: (Class discussion cases posted on Avenue) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case Study 9 - Estate Planning
Week 12 – Midterm Exam #2	
Tues, Mar 24 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	Midterm #2 Cumulative Exam <i>(Lecture Topics for Weeks 1-11)</i>
Week 13: Group Assignment Due and Career Planning	
Tues, Mar 31 (8:30 am - 11:20 am)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career Planning• Course Evaluations
	<i>Financial Planning Case assignment (group) <u>due</u></i>