Advanced Financial Planning syllabus

Examinable from March 2026

The syllabus is valid for examinations from March 2026.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this examination is to ensure that candidates can demonstrate understanding of the principles of financial planning and are able to analyse and apply financial planning techniques to realistic, practical, examples.

The unit builds on the knowledge gain from holding an RDR-compliant qualification for FCA Activities 4 and 6. It enables candidates to illustrate competence in all aspects of the financial planning process and to evidence a firm level of critical appraisal in relation to:

- The financial planning process
- Existing provisions for realising objectives
- Retirement and estate planning
- Risk management
- Financial and budgetary management
- Creating a financial plan

Students should ensure that they are up to date in their knowledge and that they understand topical issues.

ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

This is a three-hour examination of 100 marks, comprising three sections:

SECTION A: 40% of the marks. This section seeks to establish the factual knowledge and basic ability of the student. It may contain elementary calculations. It is composed of a number of compulsory short-answer questions, covering the whole syllabus.

SECTION B: 20% of the marks. This section seeks to establish the ability of the student to comprehend and apply the syllabus studied. It may contain more advanced calculations and an analysis of financial information. It is composed of one or more compulsory questions.

SECTION C: 40% of the marks.

One compulsory structured question comprising a number of parts, based on a case study designed to test students' ability to demonstrate critical analysis across the depth and breadth of the syllabus material. Candidates must clearly discern between an array of information in order to offer optimal client solutions evidencing both analytical and presentational capability and the ability to prioritise elements of the financial planning process.

CANDIDATE UPDATE

Candidates are reminded to check **cisi.org/candidateupdate** regularly for updates about industry changes that could affect their examinations.

SYLLABUS SUMMARY

Learning Outcome	Title
1	The Financial Planning Process
2	Financial Planning Principles
3	Financial Management
4	Tax Principles and Optimisation
5	Wills, Trusts and their Uses
6	Investment Planning / Asset Management
7	Risk management and Insurance Planning
8	Retirement Planning
9	Estate Planning and Wealth Transfer
10	Business Financial Planning

LEARNING OUTCOME 01 The Financial Planning Process

1.1 Apply the financial planning process to a prospective client relationship
- understand the financial planning process
- understand the importance of financial planning
- identify the different types of clients
- evaluate client needs and objectives
- identify any constraints or conflicts of interest
- identify any impediments to achieving objectives
- determine if the client is vulnerable
- determine the scope of the arrangement
- behave in accordance with FCA's Consumer Duty

1.2 Analyse client information
- determine information requirements based on defined objectives
- assess the completeness and relevance of materials
- analyse quantitative information
- analyse qualitative information
- appraise level of sophistication and financial literacy
- challenge assumptions

1.3 Develop and present recommendations
- identify and evaluate financial planning strategies
- develop a range of recommendations
- present objective recommendations
- understand why recommendations may require modification

1.4 Implement recommendations
- identify activities necessary for implementation
- determine respective responsibilities of the financial planning professional and the client
- evaluate the need to refer to or work with other professionals
- understand regulation relating to sharing client information
- understand conflicts of interest regulations
- identify any disclosure requirements

1.5 Review the client's situation
- determine respective responsibilities of the financial planning professional and the client
- establish the purpose and frequency of reviews
- evaluate the use of an appropriate benchmark
- analyse performance data
- present findings and evaluate level of client understanding
- evaluate client feedback
- evaluate client needs and objectives
- identify any constraints or conflicts of interest
- determine the scope of the arrangement

1.6 Understand how financial technology (Fintech) assists and affects the financial planning process

LEARNING OUTCOME 02 Financial Planning Principles

2.1 Understand the role of the financial planner as a trusted adviser and the distinction between financial planners and financial advisers

2.2 Understand and explain the current and historic economic, social, political and religious drivers and their impact on personal financial planning

2.3 Understand and explain how the law, regulation, rules of conduct (including fiduciary duty) and moral, ethical and religious considerations frame the financial planning process for the client and for the financial planner

2.4 Understand and apply regulatory requirements in relation to:
- advising clients
- consumer duty
- customer due diligence
- data protection requirements
- vulnerable customers

2.5 Apply the principles of risk profiling based on client characteristics

2.6 Calculate the time value of money

2.7 Assess the client's financial knowledge, experience and competence

2.8 Critically assess existing provision in relation to:
- risk profiling
- client's attitudes, biases and level of financial sophistication
- material changes in the client's personal and financial situation
- interrelations between financial planning components
- progress made towards achieving objectives
- the client's ethical, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) preferences

LEARNING OUTCOME 03 Financial Management

3.1 Understand the principles of financial management

3.2 Understand the purpose of statements:
- client net worth
- cash flow

3.3 Identify conflicting demands on cash flow

3.4 Critically assess an existing budget based on:
- cash flow
- income
- obligations
- propensity to save
- attitude towards debt
- insurance needs

3.5 Evaluate the adequacy of existing emergency fund provision

3.6 Analyse financing alternatives
- access to credit
- appropriate/inappropriate options

LEARNING OUTCOME 04 Tax Principles and Optimisation

4.1 Understand the taxable nature of assets and liabilities

4.2 Determine current, deferred and future tax liabilities

4.3 Critically assess the tax structure of client accounts taking into consideration:
- personal circumstances
- risk profile and objectives
- current, deferred and future tax liabilities
- client's attitude towards taxation
- the law
- ethical considerations
- geographic location (onshore/offshore assets and income arising)

4.4 Analyse the advantages and disadvantages of a range of tax planning strategies in line with the client objectives

4.5 Analyse the financial impact of tax planning alternatives

4.6 Prioritise implementation of tax planning recommendations

LEARNING OUTCOME 05 Wills, Trusts and their Uses

5.1 Understanding the purpose of trust in effective legacy planning

5.2 Understand the legal concept of a trust

5.3 Understand the legal basis of trusts including Trustee Act 1925, Trustee Act 2000 and significant case law.

5.4 Understand the trust deed, its purpose and powers it may confer.

5.5 Understand the role of trustees.

5.6 Understand the requirements and process of trust registration

5.7 Understand the role of investment adviser to the trustees.

5.8 Understand the different types of trusts both in lifetime and beyond death

5.9 Understand the taxation of trusts

5.10 Understand the uses of different types of trust in
- achieving desired financial outcomes
- retirement funding
- retirement planning
- protection planning
- estate planning
- taxation management and tax mitigation

LEARNING OUTCOME 06 Investment Planning / Asset Management

6.1 Understand the principles of modern portfolio theory

6.2 Understand the principles of the capital asset pricing model

6.3 Understand the composition of a detailed statement of investment holdings

6.4 Critically assess existing asset allocation

6.5 Understand how behavioural biases influence investment and divestment choices

6.6 Analyse a portfolio to identify cash flows available for investment and expected withdrawals

6.7 Calculate the real rate of return required to meet objectives and time horizons

6.8 Assess potential vehicles for use in client portfolios
- Active and passive investment

6.9 Understand the composition of investment policy statements and periodic reports

6.10 Assess suitability considerations for clients; environmental, social, and governance (ESG)
- sustainability disclosure requirements (SDR)
- anti-greenwashing rules
- stewardship engagement

6.11 Understand climate risks and their potential impact on investment returns

6.12 Understand the risks and returns relating to digital assets

LEARNING OUTCOME 07 Risk Management and Insurance Planning

7.1 Understand and apply different risk management strategies

7.2 Assess exposure to financial loss potentially arising from:
- mortality risk
- morbidity risk

7.3 Critically assess existing insurance coverage in relation to:
- general insurance, including home and other assets and liability
- subrogation principles
- risk tolerance
- obligations

- objectives
- health
- lifestyle

7.4 Prioritise a client's risk management provision

7.5 Assess the implications of changes to insurance coverage

LEARNING OUTCOME 08 Retirement Planning

8.1 Calculate capital and income requirements for:
- retirement
- lifestyle objectives
- healthcare
- long-term care
- education (private schools fees and university)

8.2 Evaluate financial projections based on:
- current position
- assumptions
- objectives

8.3 Critically assess retirement objectives in relation to:
- current position
- assumptions
- lifestyle
- health and morbidity
- allowances and changing legislation

8.4 Understand the impact of changes in assumptions on financial projections

8.5 Critically assess potential trade-offs to meet retirement objectives

8.6 Understand the factors to consider in relation to pension consolidation and pension transfers

8.7 Understand risks in retirement and the pros and cons of a range of decumulation strategies

LEARNING OUTCOME 09 Estate Planning and Wealth Transfer

9.1 Understand the range of taxes and expenses typically attributable at death

9.2 Calculate projected net worth at death

9.3 Calculate potential expenses and taxes at death

9.4 Critically assess a financial plan in relation to:
- estate planning objectives
- family relationships
- marital status/civil partnership
- business commitments
- legal agreements
- specific needs of beneficiaries

9.5 Analyse the liquidity of an estate at death

9.6 Critically assess potential estate planning strategies including living estate planning

9.7 Understand potential constraints to meeting estate planning objectives

9.8 Demonstrate a high level of understanding of Wills, Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs), deputyships, deeds of family arrangements, deeds of variation, probate process (including probate administration and intestacy).

9.9 Explain lifetime charitable gifting methods and techniques

9.10 Explain postmortem charitable gifting methods and techniques

9.11 Understand the considerations of the use of alternative investment vehicles

LEARNING OUTCOME 10 Business Financial Planning

Know, understand and be able to apply knowledge of:

10.1 the most common types and legal forms of a business - private limited company (Ltd), public limited company (PLC), Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), partnership and sole trader/self-employed

10.2 the key elements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Partnership Act 1890 and the Limited Liability Partnership Act 2000

10.3 the difference between a commercial undertaking (carrying on of a trade, profession or vocation) and an investment undertaking (an undertaking structured for financial investment purposes)

10.4 the incorporation process, the memorandum and articles of association of a company or the partnership deed, its purpose and powers it may confer

10.5 the role of shareholders, directors and partners

10.6 the difference between owner-manager directors and non-shareholding directors

10.7 the taxation of the different types of business – Corporation Tax, Income Tax, Value Added Tax (VAT), taxation of capital gains and National Insurance

10.8 statutory and management accounts including a profit and loss account, a balance sheet and a statement of cashflow

10.9 pre-emption rights

10.10 business protection strategies including insurance cover, shareholder protection strategies and keyperson protection strategies

10.11 employee benefits provision (life assurance, critical illness insurance, disability/sickness pay insurance, private medical/dental/optical insurance, pension scheme, additional benefits – season ticket loans, nursery funding, cycle to work schemes etc) including the concept of “cafeteria benefits”

10.12 directors’ or partners’ retirement planning and funding

10.13 the issues relating to sale of a business

10.14 the issues related to business succession planning

10.15 the value of company shares to determine values for shareholder agreements

10.16 the value of partnership shares to determine values for partnership agreements

10.17 the value of a keyperson in the business

10.18 Understand liability risks, e.g. Directors and Officers Liability insurance (D&O) to protect the business

READING LIST

Periodicals and Newspapers

1. Financial Times
2. FT Weekend
3. The Economist

Books

Essential

J Butler, 2014, *Wealth Management*
(2014) ISBN: 9781292004693

P Hann and M Somers, 2026, *The Fault Lines of Finance: Understanding and preventing financial misconduct*

P Ring, J Lowe, L Luu, 2024 *Global Pension Challenges: Pensions, Saving and Retirement in the Twenty-First Century*

ISBN 9781032309262

Recommended

A Abbey and A Ford, 2009, *How much is enough? Making financial decisions that create wealth and well-being*
ISBN 978-1929774838

M Anthony, 2002, *Your Clients for Life: The Definite Guide to Becoming a Successful Financial Life Planner*
ISBN:0793149541

J Armour, D. Awrey, P. Davies, L. Enriques, JN. Gordon, C. Mayer, and J Payne, 2016, *Principles of Financial Regulation*

ISBN: 978-0198786481

P.D., Armson, 2016, *Enough: How much money do you need for the rest of your life?*

ISBN: 978-1530800551

B Bachrach, 2000, *Values-based financial planning*
ISBN: 9781887006033

C Bayley, 2025, *How to Save Inheritance Tax 2025/26* (Taxcafe publications updated annually)
ISBN: 9781917392020

J Dashfield, 2015, *The Client-centred Financial Adviser*
ISBN: 9781909116245

C. Davies, 2011, *Winning Client trust*
ISBN: 9781907722-462

R Diliberto, 2006, *Financial Planning The Next Step: A Practical Guide to Merging Your Client's Money with their Lives*
ISBN 978-0975344842

T Granger, 2026, *Business Protection and Corporate Financial Planning*
ISBN: 97819163125-2-4

T Hale, 2013, *Smarter Investing*
ISBN: 9780273785378

M Housel, 2020, *The Psychology of Money: Timeless lessons on wealth, greed, and happiness*
ISBN: 9780857197689

G Kinder, 2014, *Life Planning for You*
ISBN: 9780979174360

G Kinder, 2006 *Lighting the Torch*
ISBN: 9780975344859

L Luu, J Lowe, P Ring (2022) *A Practical Guide to Financial Services*
ISBN 9781032130996

D. H. Maister, C.H. Green, R.M. Galford, 2000, *The Trusted Advisor*
ISBN: 0743212347

R Wagner, 2016, *Financial Planning 3.0: Evolving Our Relationships with Money*
ISBN-13: 978-1478772392

Recommended Articles

S Asebedo and M C Seay, 2015, 'From Functioning to Flourishing: Applying Positive Psychology to Financial Planning', *Journal of Financial Planning.* Available at https://www.financialplanningassociation.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/NOV15%20JFP%20Asbedo.pdf

S Asebedo, 2019, 'Financial Planning Client Interaction Theory (FPCIT)', *Journal of Personal Finance* Vol.18, Issue 1, pp.9-23

K Black, Jr., Conard S. Ciccotello, Harold D. Skipper, Jr., 'Issues in Comprehensive Personal Financial Planning,' *Financial Services Review*, Volume 11, Number 1, 2002, pp.1-9

VL Bogan, CC Geczy, JE Gable, 2020, 'Financial Planning: A research agenda for the next decade', available at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/cfp2.1094

B Boileau, J Cribb, C Emmerson, 2025, 'Individuals' challenges managing pensions through retirement', Institute of Fiscal Studies. Available at https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-03/Individuals-challenges-managing-pensions-through-retirement-1.pdf

J Corrigan, W Matterson, 2009, 'A Holistic Framework for Life Cycle Financial Planning', available at https://sias.org.uk/media/1163/a-holistic-framework-for-life-cycle-financial-planning.pdf

S Hanna, S Lindamood, 'Quantifying the Economic Benefits of Personal Financial Planning', *Financial Services Review* (2010), Vol. 19 (No 2), available at https://academyfinancial.org/resources/Documents/Proceedings/2009/4C-Hanna-Lindamood-2.pdf

S Hanna, 'The Demand for Financial Planning Services', *Journal of Personal Finance* (2011), Vol. 10, No1, pp. 36-62, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228293068_The_Demand_for_Financial_Planning_Services

W Hou, 2022, 'How well do retirees assess the risks they face in retirement?'. Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. Available at https://crr.bc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/IB_22-10.pdf

K Irving, 'The Financial Life Well-Lived: Psychological Benefits of Financial Planning', *Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance Journal* (2012), Volume 6 Issue 4, 47-59, available at https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1385&context=aabfj

E Jetton, 2009, 'Moving from financial planning to financial life planning'. Available at https://thefiduciaryinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Moving-from-Financial-Planning-to-Financial-Life-Planning-TIAACrefJetton.pdf

Royal London, 2021, *Exploring the advice gap: The opportunities, the challenges and the need to work together*. Available at https://adviser.royallondon.com/globalassets/docs/adviser/misc/br4pd0007-exploring-the-advice-gap-research-report.pdf.

Vanguard, 2025, 'The emotional and time value of advice' available at https://corporate.vanguard.com/content/dam/corp/research/pdf/the_emotional_and_time_value_of_advice.pdf

T Warschauer, D Sciglimpaglia, 'The economic benefits of personal financial planning: An empirical analysis', *Financial Services Review* 21 (2012) 195-208
Zeka, B., Goliath, J., Antoni, X., Lillah, R., 2016, 'The factors influencing the use of financial planners', *Journal of Economic and Financial Services* April 2016, 9, 1, 76-92, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323374579_The_factors_influencing_the_use_of_financial_planners

Websites

https://www.fpsb.org

https://www.fca.org.uk/firms/consumer-duty

Podcasts

The Financial Life Coach Podcast (no new content for a while but a lot of good stuff)

TRAP:The Real Adviser Podcast

NextGen Planners

Kitces & Carl