

Reading 32: Financial Reporting Quality

Question #1 of 26

Question ID: 500865

A mechanism to discipline financial reporting quality for securities that trade in the United States that is not typically imposed on security issuers elsewhere is that:

- ✓ **A)** management must attest to the effectiveness of the firm's internal controls.
- ✗ **B)** financial statements must be audited by an independent party.
- ✗ **C)** the firm must provide a signed statement by the person responsible for preparing the financial statements.

Explanation

A signed management statement about the effectiveness of the firm's internal controls is required by U.S. regulators for securities that trade in the U.S., but not elsewhere. The other two items are typically required by securities regulators worldwide.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS f

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #2 of 26

Question ID: 492021

Mechanisms that enforce discipline over financial reporting quality *least likely* include:

- ✓ **A)** accounting standard-setting bodies.
- ✗ **B)** government securities regulators.
- ✗ **C)** counterparties to private contracts.

Explanation

Accounting standard-setting bodies issue financial reporting standards but do not enforce compliance with them. Securities regulators and counterparties to private contracts are among the mechanisms that discipline financial reporting quality.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS f

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #3 of 26

Question ID: 472416

With regard to a firm's financial reporting quality, an analyst should *most likely* interpret as a warning sign a focus by management on an increase in the firm's:

- X **A)** cash from operations.
- ✓ **B)** pro forma earnings.
- X **C)** asset turnover ratios.

Explanation

One potential warning sign of low-quality financial reporting is management's focus on "pro forma" or non-GAAP measures of earnings. Increases in operating cash flows or asset turnover ratios are not typically viewed as warning signs of poor financial reporting quality.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS g

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
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Question #4 of 26

Question ID: 460649

Aggressive accounting choices by management are *most likely* to:

- ✓ **A)** comply with generally accepted accounting principles.
- X **B)** produce decision-useful financial reporting.
- X **C)** report sustainable earnings.

Explanation

Management may follow generally accepted accounting principles and still make biased (i.e., aggressive or conservative) accounting choices. Biased accounting choices diminish the decision-usefulness of financial reporting. Aggressive accounting choices are those that increase earnings, revenues, or operating cash flows in the current period (and likely reduce them in later periods).

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS c

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #5 of 26

Question ID: 460653

Conditions that may cause firms to issue low-quality financial reports are *best* described as:

- X **A)** unstable organizational structure and deficient internal controls.
- ✓ **B)** opportunity, motivation, and rationalization.
- X **C)** inappropriate ethical standards and failing to correct known reportable conditions.

Explanation

The three conditions that often lead to low-quality financial reporting are opportunity, motivation, and rationalization.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS e

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
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Question #6 of 26

Question ID: 460650

With regard to the goal of neutrality in financial reporting, accounting standards related to research costs and litigation losses should be viewed as:

- ☐ A) biased toward aggressive financial reporting.
- ☒ B) biased toward conservative financial reporting.
- ☐ C) promoting neutral financial reporting.

Explanation

Some accounting principles, such as IFRS and U.S. GAAP standards for expensing research costs and recognizing probable litigation losses, reflect conservatism rather than neutrality, in that they require earlier recognition of probable losses and later recognition of probable gains.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS c

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
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Question #7 of 26

Question ID: 500863

Which of the following is *least likely* to be a motivation for managers to issue financial reports of low quality?

- ☐ A) Enhancement of the manager's career.
- ☐ B) Keeping earnings above the same period in the prior year.
- ☒ C) Accounting controls are weak within the company.

Explanation

Weak accounting controls may offer an opportunity to issue low quality reports but is not in itself a motivation to do so. The other two choices are motivations that might cause management to issue low quality financial reports.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS d

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #8 of 26

Question ID: 498766

Which of the following accounting warning signs is *most likely* to indicate manipulation of reported operating cash flows?

- ☐ A) More aggressive revenue recognition methods than comparable firms.
- ☒ B) Capitalizing purchases that comparable firms typically expense.
- ☐ C) Higher estimated salvage values than are typical in a firm's industry.

Explanation

Capitalizing purchases that other firms expense increases reported CFO by classifying the cash outflows as CFI. Revenue recognition methods and accounting estimates may affect reported income but are unlikely to affect the amount or classification of cash flows.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS i

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
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Question #9 of 26

Question ID: 500862

Which of the following is *least likely* one of the combinations of the quality of financial reporting and quality of reported earnings along the spectrum of financial report quality?

- ☐ A) Reporting is compliant with GAAP, but the amount of earnings is actively managed to smooth earnings.
- ☐ B) Reporting is not compliant and includes numbers that are fictitious or fraudulent.
- ☒ C) Reporting is not compliant with GAAP, although reported earnings are sustainable and adequate.

Explanation

When reporting is not compliant with GAAP, the sustainability and adequacy of reported earnings cannot be determined. The other two choices fall on the spectrum of the quality of financial reports.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS b

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
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Question #10 of 26

Question ID: 500864

Which of the following is one of circumstances that is conducive to issuing low-quality financial reports?

- ☒ A) There is a large range of acceptable accounting treatments.
- ☐ B) Earnings per share are highly variable from year to year.
- ☐ C) Balance sheet values are likely to violate debt covenants.

Explanation

A large range of acceptable accounting treatments is conducive to manager bias affecting the quality of financial reporting. In such a circumstance, misleading estimates and accounting choices that do not flow from the economic reality of a firm's transactions fall more into the category of mistakes rather than fraudulent reporting. Potentially violating debt covenants is considered a motivation for low quality financial reporting. Variability of earnings could be a motivating factor for earnings smoothing but are not necessarily conducive to low quality financial reporting.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS e

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #11 of 26

Question ID: 492019

A spectrum for assessing financial reporting quality should consider:

- ☐ A) quality of earnings only.
- ☐ B) quality of financial reports only.
- ☒ C) both quality of financial reports and quality of earnings.

Explanation

Both quality of financial reports and quality of reported earnings are elements that should be considered in a spectrum for assessing financial reporting quality.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS b

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #12 of 26

Question ID: 456303

Samantha Cameron, CFA, is analyzing the financial reporting quality of Redd Networks. Cameron examines how the company is responding to strict debt covenants and investigates executives' holdings of stock and options in the firm, which are believed to be quite high. Which condition that may lead to low-quality financial reporting is Cameron investigating?

- ☒ A) Motivation.
- ☐ B) Opportunity.
- ☐ C) Rationalization.

Explanation

The issues Cameron is investigating represent incentives that may lead to low-quality financial reporting.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS e

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #13 of 26

Question ID: 460655

Which of the following actions is *least likely* to increase earnings for the current period?

- ☐ A) Recognizing revenue before fulfilling the terms of a sale.
- ☐ B) Selling more inventory than is purchased or produced.
- ☒ C) Decreasing the salvage value of depreciable assets.

Explanation

Decreasing the salvage value will result in higher depreciation expense and lower earnings in the current period. Recognizing revenue before fulfilling all terms of a sale is an aggressive revenue recognition method that will increase earnings in the current period. For firms that use LIFO inventory accounting and in an increasing price environment, selling more inventory than is purchased or produced will increase earnings unsustainably in the current period.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS h

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
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Question #14 of 26

Question ID: 460652

Management is *most likely* to be motivated to produce low-quality financial reports when:

- ☒ A) earnings are less than analysts expect.
- ☐ B) managers' compensation is unrelated to the firm's share price.
- ☐ C) the firm is not required to abide by loan covenants.

Explanation

Meeting analysts' earnings expectations may motivate management to produce low-quality financial reports. Earning compensation based on the share price and avoiding breaches of loan covenants are also possible motivations.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS d

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #15 of 26

Question ID: 460648

If a firm's financial reports are of low quality, can users of the reports assess the quality of the firm's earnings?

- ☐ A) Yes, because if financial reports are of low quality, earnings are also of low quality.
- ☐ B) Yes, because users can assess earnings quality independently of financial reporting quality.
- ☒ C) No, because low-quality financial reports are not useful for assessing the quality of earnings.

Explanation

Financial reports that are of low quality make it difficult or impossible for users of the statements to assess the quality of the firm's earnings, cash flows, and balance sheet values.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS a

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #16 of 26

Question ID: 460651

Aggressive accounting choices include:

- ☐ A) decreasing the estimated useful life of an asset.
- ☒ B) classifying interest paid as an investing cash flow.
- ☐ C) increasing the valuation allowance of a deferred tax asset.

Explanation

Aggressive accounting choices are those that increase earnings, operating cash flows, or asset values in the current period. Classifying interest paid as an investing cash flow, rather than as an operating cash flow, results in higher CFO and lower CFI. The other choices are examples of conservative accounting choices because they decrease earnings in the current period.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS c

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #17 of 26

Question ID: 498765

An IFRS-reporting firm includes in its financial statements a measure that is not defined under IFRS. The firm is *least likely* required to:

- ☐ A) define and explain the relevance of this measure.
- ☒ B) show this measure for all periods presented.
- ☐ C) reconcile this measure with the most comparable IFRS measure.

Explanation

IFRS require firms that present a non-GAAP (i.e., non-IFRS) measure in their financial reports to define the measure and explain its relevance, and to reconcile the differences between this measure and the most comparable IFRS measure.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS g

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #18 of 26

Question ID: 456304

A significant increase in days payables above historical levels is *most likely* associated with:

- X **A)** an unsustainable increase in reported earnings.
- X **B)** an increase in net working capital.
- ✓ **C)** low quality of the cash flow statement.

Explanation

A significant increase in days payables may indicate that payables have been "stretched" (not paid or paid more slowly), which increases operating cash flow in an unsustainable manner and calls the quality of the reported cash flow values into question. Stretching payables does not affect earnings because the related expenses were recognized in the period incurred. An increase in days payables will decrease net working capital, other things equal.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS i

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #19 of 26

Question ID: 492020

In which of the following situations is management *most likely* to make conservative choices and estimates that reduce the quality of financial reports?

- X **A)** The firm must meet accounting benchmarks to comply with debt covenants.
- ✓ **B)** Earnings for a period will be higher than analysts' expectations.
- X **C)** Management's compensation is closely tied to near-term performance of the firm's stock.

Explanation

Management might be motivated to "manage earnings" by making conservative choices and estimates in periods when earnings are higher than expected, delaying recognition of some of these earnings to later periods. Meeting debt covenants or improving stock performance in the near term are more likely to motivate management to make aggressive accounting choices and estimates.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS d

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #20 of 26

Question ID: 460656

Under which inventory cost flow assumption is a firm *most likely* to show an unusual increase in gross profit margin by sales in excess of current period production?

- ☐ A) Average cost.
- ☒ B) LIFO.
- ☐ C) FIFO.

Explanation

Under LIFO and with increasing prices, a firm that sells more goods than it purchases or produces in a period may show an unsustainable increase in gross profit margin because items recognized in cost of sales are valued older, lower prices, while sales are recorded at current, higher prices.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS i

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #21 of 26

Question ID: 500861

The quality of a company's reported earnings is low when they:

- ☐ A) are lower than for the prior-year period.
- ☒ B) are not sustainable.
- ☐ C) do not conform to GAAP.

Explanation

The quality of a firm's earnings is considered to be low if they are not sustainable or if they are not of a sufficient level to provide an adequate return to investors. When financial reports do not conform with GAAP, the user cannot evaluate the quality of earnings in terms of adequacy or sustainability.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS a

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #22 of 26

Question ID: 460654

Which of the following requirements are *most likely* to create incentives for management to manipulate earnings?

- ✓ **A)** Debt covenants.
- X **B)** Disclosure regulations.
- X **C)** Audit requirements.

Explanation

Debt covenants that require a firm to meet minimum financial measures may give management an incentive to manipulate earnings. Audit requirements and disclosure regulations are mechanisms that discipline financial reporting quality.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS d

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #23 of 26

Question ID: 414653

If management is manipulating financial reporting to avoid breaching an interest coverage ratio covenant on the firm's debt, they are *most likely* to:

- X **A)** capitalize leases.
- X **B)** understate assets.
- ✓ **C)** overstate earnings.

Explanation

Debt covenants may require a firm to maintain a minimum interest coverage ratio (EBIT / interest expense). Manipulating the financial statements to increase the interest coverage ratio would most likely involve overstating earnings, or possibly understating liabilities (for example by using operating leases instead of capital leases) to decrease interest expense. Understating or overstating assets would not affect the interest coverage ratio.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS h

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #24 of 26

Question ID: 492018

On a spectrum for assessing financial reporting quality, which of the following represents the highest quality?

- X **A)** Reporting is compliant with GAAP but reporting choices and estimates are biased.
- X **B)** Reporting is not compliant with GAAP but the numbers presented reflect the company's actual activities.

- ✓ **C)** Reporting is compliant with GAAP and decision useful but earnings are not sustainable.

Explanation

A firm can have high financial reporting quality even if its earnings quality is low, such as a firm that recognizes one-time gains in a period and identifies them clearly. Biased accounting choices and non-compliance with GAAP represent lower-quality financial reporting.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS b

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #25 of 26

Question ID: 414656

Joe Carter, CFA, believes Triangle Equipment, a maker of large, specialized industrial equipment, has overstated the salvage value of its equipment. This would:

- ✓ **A)** overstate earnings.
X **B)** overstate liabilities.
X **C)** understate earnings.

Explanation

Overstating the salvage value reduces depreciation expense, which in turn increases earnings.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS h

Related Material:

- Key Concepts by LOS
-

Question #26 of 26

Question ID: 492017

Which of the following is *most accurately* described as a characteristic of a firm's quality of earnings?

- ✓ **A)** Sustainability.
X **B)** Relevance.
X **C)** Completeness.

Explanation

Quality of earnings relates to the level and sustainability of a firm's earnings. Relevance and faithful representation (including completeness and neutrality) are characteristics of a firm's financial reporting quality.

References

Question From: Session 9 > Reading 32 > LOS a