

Research Policy

The purpose of this research policy is to ensure that retail investors understand the way in which we arrive at our view on whether to 'buy, sell or hold' an investment.

The views and opinions given should not be seen to be direct personal recommendations as investments and/or services may not be suitable for every investor and if in doubt you should contact a financial adviser.

The policy initially outlines the key risk and investment factors to be considered and understood within each asset class, before outlining the material used to arrive at those views and finishes by outlining the 'conflicts of interest' policy in place.

The asset classes are split out as follows:-

1. Equities (Shares) including Investment Trusts
2. Unit Trusts and Open Ended Investment Companies (OEICs)
3. Gilts and Bonds
4. Exchange Traded Funds and Exchange Traded Commodities

1. Equities (Shares) including Investment Trusts

Our views on each share or investment trust will include four distinct categories:

- Opinion
- Risk category
- Investment horizon
- Investment objective

We generally only follow the FTSE 100 constituents and a small number of companies outside this listing.

Opinion

Each share or investment trust view is classified into one of three groups as follows:

Buy: expected to outperform the market or other companies within its sector.

Hold: expected to perform in line with the market or other companies within its sector.

Sell: expected to underperform the market for reasons mentioned within the commentary or due to wider uncertainty over its recent and future prospects.

Risk category

Direct investment into shares and investment trusts is regarded as moderate risk, relative to other forms of investment. Within this overall rating, shares on which we publish a view are given one of three risk classifications:

Lower Risk: shares in this category will, in the main, be FTSE 100 companies and are regarded as lower risk relative to medium and smaller-sized companies.

Medium Risk: mostly FTSE 250 companies, with some FTSE 100 judged in terms of market size and volatility.

Higher Risk: companies within this classification will, in the main, be smaller companies, such as those which make up the FTSE SmallCap Index or are constituent members of AIM. It may occasionally include larger companies, the reasons which will be outlined in their respective commentaries.

NB: In times of extreme economic and market volatility, some company shares may have their risk rating increased due to the continuing uncertainty and significant movements in their share price. This will therefore naturally lead to a potentially greater number of Medium and Higher risk ratings.

We recommend for lower risk shares a stop loss level of 12.5%, for medium risk 15% and for higher risk a stop loss of 20%. Stop losses are indicated on our FTSE 100 Buy List, and are taken from the point of the initial publication of our view and are not a tracking stop loss. Stop losses should be set from the point of your purchase price.

Investment horizon

Each share or investment trust view is classified under one of the following three groups:

Short term: where we expect the share price to provide the potential for significant upside within the next six months. Companies attributed this time horizon are likely to be those of a higher risk profile (ie. FTSE SmallCap and AIM) where there is generally greater movement within their share price.

Medium term: where we expect the share price to provide the potential for out performance over the next 6-18 months. Companies attributed this time horizon are likely to be those of a medium risk profile (ie. FTSE 250 constituents or members of the FTSE 100 due to their size and volatility)

Long term: where we expect the share price to provide a steady upward movement over the next 18-36 months. Companies attributed this time horizon will predominantly be constituents of the FTSE 100.

NB: In times of extreme economic and market volatility, some company shares may have their investment horizon increased or decreased due to the continuing uncertainty and significant movements in their share price. This may therefore naturally lead to a potentially greater number of Medium and Long term ratings.

Investment objective

All shares and investment trusts will indicate the overall investment objective where we offer an opinion, under one of the following three groups:

Balanced: shares categorised as providing a balanced return will generally provide a dividend yield of between 2-4% gross along with some capital growth.

Growth: shares categorised as providing growth aim to increase the capital value of an investment over time with very little if any dividend yield provided.

Income: shares categorised as providing income are those that generally have a dividend yield of 4% gross or greater. There is likely to be little capital growth in the investment.

NB: At any given time, and in times of economic and market volatility, some company shares may have their investment objective changed.

Sector view

We also publish views on market sectors. Each individual sector is classified under one of the following risk categories. It should be noted that the classification is primarily based on the underlying FTSE 100 constituent members (if appropriate) and not those outside of that listing.

Low: sectors attributed this rating are deemed to be of a more defensive and less volatile nature than the main FTSE 100 index.

Medium: sectors attributed this rating are deemed to contain FTSE 100 constituents that generally have share price movements in excess of the daily movement of the FTSE 100 index.

High: any sector attributed this rating is unlikely to contain any FTSE 100 constituent and generally all underlying constituents are felt to be of a higher risk investment nature.

NB: When searching by sector, all constituents within that sector will be returned and the risk profile of that sector will not necessarily be representative of the non FTSE 100 companies which generally carry a higher degree of risk.

How we arrive at our recommendations

Our Advice team draws on a range of news, analysis and research tools to provide the base data for their views.

The primary source is the Proquote facility, available directly to each team member, and providing access to:

- Regulatory News Service (RNS) information, a route by which all companies quoted on the UK markets (LSE and AIM) must release all market-sensitive information
- AFX News service, covering business, financial, economic and general news
- Charts, from intra-day to 9 years
- Broker recommendations, providing individual and consensus views from leading analysts
- Fundamentals data, accessible for individual shares and market sectors and including historic and forecast P/E ratios, earnings per share forecasts, past results, current dividends, directors' dealings, volumes of trading, Net Asset Values (NAVs)
- Brokers' research, direct access to brokers' notes and research on individual companies

By using a mix of this information, our advisers form an opinion on the current and, more importantly, future prospects of individual companies. Both the immediate and longer-term prospects are taken into account.

Specific, personal advice provided to customers of The Share Centre will be given in the light of further information being provided about their personal financial circumstances and may therefore, vary from the published view.

Our views will be updated on our website as required and the date of the latest update will be included within the text.

Previous recommendations

During the period 1 April 2010 to 30 June 2010, The Share Centre's recommendations consisted of:

Buys 54% Holds 36% Sells 10%

2. Unit Trusts / Open Ended Investment Companies (OEICs)

Our views on investments within a unit trust or OEIC (funds) are based on a longer time horizon, generally 3 to 5 years or longer.

We only publish an opinion on those funds shown within the Platinum 120 range on our website and these are all classified in their view as a 'buy'.

Funds can hold a much broader spread of underlying asset classes including cash, bonds and equities. Therefore we use different classifications when assessing the risk profile of a fund and within each category there are varying degrees of risk depending upon the size and nature of the underlying investments. Funds given a rating of L1 are classified as having the lowest risk, whilst those rated H10 are classified as having the highest risk and potential to be the most volatile.

L1 – Cash/Money funds: these have the lowest level of risk and funds within this category will display low volatility.

L2 – UK Gilt Funds: these will be funds which predominantly contain UK Government Gilts of varying maturity.

L3 – Corporate Bond Funds: these type of funds invest in companies that issue debt to raise capital. The overall risk of these funds needs to be considered in conjunction with their underlying assets. Those funds that primarily invest in 'Investment Grade' debt will tend to be less volatile and at risk to company defaults compared to those that focus on 'Non-Investment Grade' debt.

M4 – Property Funds: these types of funds can invest either directly into bricks & mortar or property company shares. Investment may include overseas holdings.

M5 – UK Equity and Global Managed Funds: UK equity funds will generally focus on UK companies with investments varying between large FTSE 100 companies through to small AIM/Fledgling FTSE companies. For those funds defined as 'global' and that have the underlying assets diversely spread across all key regions of the world without focussing entirely on one region.

M6 – European Funds: these funds will generally look to invest across the European spectrum excluding the UK.

M7 – North American: these funds will generally focus on North America, however there may be occasions when they invest outside of this geographical arena.

H8 – Asia: funds within this risk profile will include countries such as Japan, Australia and developed economies from the Asian basin, excluding China.

H9 – Emerging Markets: funds within this risk profile will predominantly contain those that focus on developing and emerging economies such as those within BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China).

H10 – Specialist: funds within this risk profile will focus on those that are specialist or specific to an industry i.e. Technology but excluding property which has its own risk rating.

Investment Objective

All funds will indicate the overall investment objective where we offer an opinion, under one of the following three groups:

Balanced: funds categorised as providing a balanced return will generally provide a dividend yield of between 2-4% gross along with some capital growth.

Growth: funds categorised as providing growth aim to increase the capital value of an investment over time with very little if any dividend yield provided.

Income: funds categorised as providing income are those that generally have a dividend yield of 4% gross or greater. There is likely to be little capital growth in the investment.

How we arrive at our recommendations

Our Advice team draws on a range of news, analysis and research tools to provide the base data for their views.

The primary source is Financial Express Analytics, available directly to each team member.

In addition, the Advisers regularly meet with the relationship managers and directly with the Fund Managers when required from the various Fund Houses.

News is sourced from the wide variety of external publications and publications made directly available to the Advisers from the Fund Houses.

Fundamental data includes: beta, alpha, Sharpe ratio, Treynor measure, Jensen measure, performance comparative to benchmark and sector, positive and negative periods, r2, tracking error and downside risk.

Specific, personal advice provided to our customers will be given in the light of further information being provided about their personal financial circumstances and may, therefore vary from the published views.

Our views will be updated on our website as required and the date of the latest update will be included within the text.

3. Gilts and bonds

Gilts and bonds are classified within the following risk profiles and based on the investor holding the investment from the point of purchase to the maturity/redemption date.

Low: all UK Government issued Gilt Edged Securities are categorised as low risk as there is little chance of default.

Medium: all UK Corporate issued bonds where the quality of the debt has been rated as 'investment grade' by either Standard & Poors, Moody's or Fitch.

High: all UK Corporate issued bonds where the quality of the debt has been rated as non-investment grade by either Standard & Poors, Moody's or Fitch.

For an explicit list of the corporate ratings available by the various agencies, please visit www.share.com/bonds.

The investment grade rating attributed to a particular issue of corporate debt may be of a higher or lower rating to that of previously issued debt and that of the overall company rating.

How we arrive at our recommendations

Our Advice team does not currently publish any views on these investments with regard to a buy, sell or hold position on the website. They have merely given their opinion of the potential risk rating that we consider appropriate for the various types of investments available under this investment category.

Our Advice team may on occasion recommend these investments to those customers registered for and using the Advice service. Any Gilt/bond that may be recommended to advice registered customers will have been selected using a primary source of Bondscape.

4. Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) and Exchange Traded Commodities (ETCs)

Due to the vast and diverse nature of these investments, they have their own risk ratings covering three categories. The search tools contained within our website will show the risk rating we have attributed to the relevant ETF/ETC.

Low: this level of risk is predominantly attributed to those ETFs that focus on Gilt and bond investments covering the UK, European and US markets.

Medium: this level of risk will cover investments and sectors such as those which are either equity, property backed or defensive in their nature, covering the UK and European markets. The vast majority of trackers which focus on the main key markets and those commodity backed ETCs that either invest 'physically' into the commodity or track the 'spot rate' of the main key natural resources.

High: this level of risk is attributed to all those investments that generally cover Emerging markets and commodities that are not generally precious metals. It may include tracker funds on emerging economies and those ETFs/ETCs that allow investors to 'short' particular indices or commodities.

NB: We currently only list and risk rate ETFs/ETCs once there is sufficient customer interest in that ETF/ETC.

How we arrive at our recommendations

Our Advice team does not currently publish any view on these investments with regard to a buy, sell or hold position on the website. They have merely given their opinion of the potential risk rating that they consider appropriate for the various types of investments available under this investment category.

Our Advice team may on occasion recommend these investments to those customers registered for and using the Advice service.

Investment research policy

We have adopted a formal policy to govern the operation of our advice services, as follows:

1. Investment research is intended to be an objective assessment of a fund, a company, sector or market and is prepared and published by our Advice team, which is subject to oversight by our Compliance and Legal Services team.
2. All members of our Advice team are salaried employees. Profit-sharing arrangements exist for each individual and are related to the general profits of the firm, or other performance-related objectives. Profit-sharing is not linked to specific transactions or to recommendations contained in investment research.
3. The Advice team manager supervises the members of the Advice team and reports directly to the Compliance and Legal Services Director.
4. Members of the Advice team are prohibited from being involved in activities which may in any way suggest they are representing the interests of The Share Centre or of a client if the activity is likely to appear to be inconsistent with providing an objective and unbiased assessment of the value or prospects of the relevant investments.
5. Advice team members must not participate in marketing activity, for example, in pitches to solicit or obtain business from the issuer of a relevant investment, if this could give the perception of a later bias in their investment research. Likewise, Advice team members must not act in a way which appears to be representing the issuer of a relevant investment, for example, in roadshows relating to issues or allocations of relevant investments.
6. We will not offer or accept an inducement to provide favourable investment research coverage.
7. We will not give effective editorial control to someone whose role or commercial interests might reasonably be considered to conflict with the interests of the clients to whom the investment research is to be published or distributed. Accordingly, we do not allow anyone other than a member of the Advice team or specific individuals whose key roles involve the approval and publication of investment research before its release. We will only allow a limited number of people outside the Advice team, to view our investment research before publication for the verification of information contained within it. These people are likely to be members of the Compliance team, the Marketing team and the independent company used to produce and edit The Shareholder and The Fundholder Magazines.
8. Investment research will only be published or distributed via our usual channels, which include The Shareholder and The Fundholder magazines, The Share Centre's web sites, www.share.com, www.sharemark.co.uk, www.thesharecentresays.com and external financial publications.
9. Any member of our staff seeing sight of The Shareholder or The Fundholder magazine ahead of our customers will not be allowed to deal or act on any investment research until such time as the intended recipients have had a reasonable opportunity to act on it.
10. We will always consider whether or not our business activities could create the perception that our investment research may not be a true and fair analysis of the market in, or the value or prospects of, a relevant investment. Where we believe such an impression may be created, we will delay or restrict the publication of the investment research.
11. We will always make available additional information, such as disclosures, that we feel appropriate to accompany investment research we publish or distribute.
12. Investment research will not be initially prepared for our internal use and then later used for publication or distribution to clients.
13. No member of the Advice team or specific individuals whose key roles involve the approval and publication of investment research may buy or sell an investment which has been, or will be, the subject of published investment research or on which the individual has provided a public comment to the media originated by us for the 10 days preceding and/or subsequent to the date of the release or comment.
14. In very exceptional circumstances, members of The Advice team or specific individuals whose key roles involve the approval and publication of investment research may, with prior written approval from a Director, undertake personal transactions to which investment research relates where personal circumstances such as financial hardship require the individual to liquidate a position.
15. No member of our staff, whether or not a member of the Advice team, may communicate the substance of any investment research, except as set out in this Policy.

Conflicts of interest

We aim to identify and prevent conflicts of interest which may arise between us and our customers, and between one customer and another, in order to avoid any adverse effect on our customers. We have a Conflicts of Interest Policy which sets out procedures, practices and controls in place to achieve this and which is available upon request from the Compliance and Legal Services team.

The avoidance of potential conflicts of interest is a key consideration so operational structures and procedures, password-controlled systems, data hierarchy, and the clear segregation of roles and responsibilities are all designed to work towards preventing any conflicts arising in the first place.

The Conflicts of Interest Policy applies to all officers (whether Executive or Non-Executive), employees and any persons directly or indirectly linked to the Share plc group of companies ("the Group") and refers to interactions with all customers of the Group.

Specific procedures are also adopted to ensure control and dissemination of investment research:

Chinese Walls

Flows of price-sensitive information between individual and/or internal departments are controlled by the operation of a policy of 'Chinese Walls'. Such barriers are procedural, rather than physical, and apply in a number of situations. Examples include restricting the availability of research on a new buy recommendation to just the Advice team prior to general publication, or knowledge which is not generally available being obtained about a Corporate client by their Relationship Manager.

Where an individual is in possession of such information they may not disclose it to another party without ensuring that the disclosure is necessary and appropriate, commensurate with a 'need to know' policy. Only such level of information as is required to meet the use to which it is to be put (eg Compliance sign-off for the research or operational planning) may be disclosed and the receiving individual is then bound by the same restrictions.

Register of information

Where a member of staff believes that they have, or may have, information about a quoted company or a company traded on Sharemark that is not in the public domain and is likely to affect the share price of the company once it becomes generally known, that member of staff must immediately register that information with our Compliance and Legal Services Team.

The Compliance and Legal Services team maintains a register of such information and that member of staff will be prohibited from:

- Any personal account dealings within that stock
- Where the member of staff works within the Advice Department, making a recommendation in relation to that stock
- Divulging the information to any other individual, except with the express approval of the Compliance Officer

Compliance will also be made 'insiders' in respect of the information received. These restrictions remain in place until either the information is in the public domain or it ceases to be price sensitive.

The Register of information is subject to regulatory inspection.

Gifts and Inducements

Members of staff must not solicit, offer or accept any gift or inducement which may influence their independence or business judgment, or which could create a conflict of interest with any duty owed to the company or its clients.

This restriction does not include special promotions on products and services which have been agreed by the directors of The Share Centre, nor does it cover corporate gifts and hospitality which are considered to be incidental to the ordinary business of the company. Examples of gifts and inducements which should not be offered or accepted include cash, gifts readily convertible into cash or any other object of significant value.

Individuals are required to register hospitality or gifts, whether given or received, with an estimated value in excess of £50 with the Compliance and Legal Services team and to seek guidance from that department if in doubt about the suitability of any gift. Such occasions are recorded in the Register of Gifts and Inducements which is subject to regulatory inspection.

PO Box 2000 Aylesbury Bucks HP21 8ZB
Phone 01296 41 41 41 Fax 01296 41 41 40
Email info@share.co.uk Visit www.share.com