

Elevated Opex and Credit Costs to keep RoA at 1.6-1.7%!

Est. Vs. Actual for Q3FY24: NII – **BEAT**; PPOP – **INLINE**; PAT – **MISS**
Changes in Estimates post Q3FY24

FY24E/FY25E: NII -0.7%/0.9%; PPOP +1.0%/-0.4%; PAT -0.1%/-3.6%

Recommendation Rationale

- **Demand remains healthy; Trajectory will be Deposit growth led** – With the bank pivoting towards deposit-led asset growth, AUSFB has calibrated growth around deposits. That said, the bank continues to witness healthy demand across segments and expects to exit FY24E with credit growth of 26-27%. The focus remains on prioritizing yields and adherence to underwriting filters. On the deposits front, consistent efforts are being directed towards building a retail-dominated deposit franchise, with thrust on improving CASA Deposits. The bank continued to make concentrated efforts to enhance the customer wallet-share through cross-selling of CASA, QR codes, personal loans and credit cards to new-to-bank and existing-to-bank customers, thereby ensuring customer stickiness. We expect the bank to maintain a steady CD ratio of 84-85% over the medium term, delivering a credit/deposit growth of ~24% CAGR each over FY24-26E.
- **Credit costs to normalize as book seasons** – GNPA during the quarter inched-up by 7bps with higher slippages, primarily from the credit card portfolio. Additionally, elections in core states of Rajasthan (RJ) and Madhya Pradesh (MP) resulted in slower resolutions and recoveries. Apart from the credit card portfolio, credit costs trends have normalized. The management has highlighted that in the near term, till the credit card book is built and seasons, credit costs will remain range-bound between 6-7% and will eventually stabilize near industry average. Similarly, on the secured book, credit costs are expected to remain stable at 0.5-0.6%. Post the merger with Fincare SFB, microfinance credit costs are likely to be capped at ~3%. With near-term headwinds on credit card portfolio, we expect AUSFB's credit costs to hover in the range of 0.7-0.8% over FY24-26E.

Sector Outlook: Positive

Company Outlook: AUSFB expects margins to remain range-bound between 5.5-5.7% in FY24E and expects to witness improvement as the interest rate cycle reverses, backed by a higher fixed rate book. As the bank continues to invest heavily on tech, digital initiative and product lines, Opex ratios should remain elevated in the near-term, thereby weighing on operational profitability. With higher credit costs normalizing to levels as the book seasons and higher credit costs from the credit card portfolio, we expect AUSFB to deliver RoA/RoE of 1.6-1.7%/14-17% over FY24-26E.

Current Valuation: 3.25x FY26E ABV Earlier Valuation: 3.3x FY25E ABV

Current TP: Rs 780/share Earlier TP: Rs 685/share

Recommendation: We revise our rating on the stock to **BUY** from **HOLD** earlier.

Alternative BUY Ideas from our Sector Coverage

Ujjivan SFB (TP – Rs 64/share), **Equitas SFB** (TP – Rs 122/share)

Financial Performance:

- **Advances** growth was slower at 20/4% YoY/QoQ, owing to slower growth in the core segment (~60% Mix) of wheels (5/-2% YoY/QoQ), MBL (+6/3% YoY/QoQ). However, growth in home Loans (+44/5% YoY/QoQ), Business Banking (+56/11% YoY/QoQ) remained healthy. NII grew by 15/6% YoY, higher than our expectations owing to lower than expected NIM compression. Margins declined by ~6bps and stood at 5.5% in Q3FY24.
- **Non-interest** income growth was primarily driven by healthy fee income (+33/4% YoY/QoQ). Opex growth was elevated (+25/9% YoY/QoQ) to reflect the investment phase resulting in C-I Ratio of 63% vs. 61.3% QoQ. Credit costs (calc.) stood at 96bps vs. 24/71bps YoY/QoQ. PAT de-grew by 4/7% YoY/QoQ.
- **GNPA** increased to 1.98% vs. 1.91% QoQ, owing to higher slippages from the credit card portfolio and slower recoveries from core states of RJ and MP owing to state elections.

Outlook

Margin pressures, elevated Opex and normalizing credit costs will continue to keep AUSFB's RoA/RoE range-bound between 1.6%/13-15% over FY24-25E. However, improving fee income with the introduction of AD1 license and improved productivity and newer businesses turning profitable should aid RoA improvement in FY26E. We remain watchful of the impact of merger with Fincare SFB across financial parameters. As the per initial comments of the bank, AUSFB expects the merger to be margin, earnings and book value accretive. We revise our FY25E earnings estimates downwards by 4% owing to higher credit costs while we maintain our FY24E earnings estimates.

Valuation & Recommendation:

The stock currently trades at 3.0x FY26E ABV. We value the stock at 3.25x FY26E to arrive at a target price of Rs 780/share, implying an upside of ~10% from CMP. We revise our rating to **BUY** from **HOLD** earlier.

Key Financials (Standalone)

(Rs Cr)	Q3FY24	QoQ (%)	YoY (%)	Axis Est.	Variance
Net Interest Income	1,325	+6.1	+14.9	1,297	+2.1
PPOP	657	+1.4	+18.2	651	+1.0
Net Profit	375	-6.6	-4.5	396	-5.4
NNPA (%)	0.7	-314 bps	-612 bps	0.6	-7 bps
RoA (%)	1.6	-10 bps	-40 bps	1.7	-8 bps

Source: Company, Axis Research

(CMP as of 25 Jan, 2024)

CMP (Rs)	708
Upside /Downside (%)	10%
High/Low (Rs)	813/548
Market cap (Cr)	47,353
Avg. daily vol. (6m) Shrs.	17,61,796
No. of shares (Cr)	66.8

Shareholding (%)

	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23
Promoter	25.5	25.5	25.5
FIs	41.6	39.7	41.1
MFs / UTI	10.3	11.5	11.7
Others	22.6	23.3	21.7

Financial & Valuations

Y/E Mar (Rs Cr)	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
NII	5,205	6,502	8,101
PPOP	2,527	3,282	4,287
Net Profit	1,576	1,972	2,608
EPS (Rs)	23.6	29.5	39.0
ABV (Rs)	181.0	206.1	239.5
P/ABV (x)	3.9	3.4	3.0
RoA (%)	1.6	1.6	1.7
NNPA (%)	0.4	0.5	0.5

Change in Estimates (%)

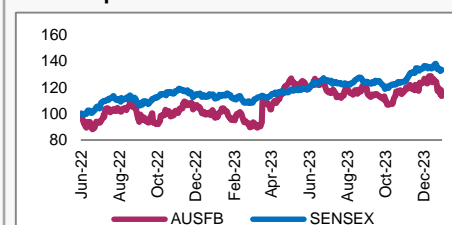
Y/E Mar	FY24E	FY25E
NII	-0.7	0.9
PPOP	1.0	-0.4
PAT	-0.1	-3.6

ESG disclosure Score**

Environmental Disclosure	22.7
Social Disclosure Score	28.8
Governance Disclosure Score	83.6
Total ESG Disclosure Score	45.1
Sector Average	39.1

Source: Bloomberg, Scale: 0.1-100

**Note: This score measures the amount of ESG data a company reports publicly and does not measure the company's performance on any data point. All scores are based on 2022 disclosures

Relative performance


Source: AceEquity, Axis Securities

Dnyanada Vaidya

Research Analyst

Email: dnyanada.vaidya@axissecurities.in

Prathamesh Sawant, CFA

Research Analyst

Email: prathamesh.sawant@axissecurities.in

CA Bhavya Shah

Research Associate

Key Highlights

- **Fincare SFB Merger Synergies** – With the completion of the merger with Fincare SFB (awaiting RBI approval) and roll-out of the AD1 license, AUSFB will be in a position to offer all products across the customer spectrum - domestic or cross-border and bottom-of-the-pyramid or UHNI. The merger will provide the bank with a larger distribution network, better margin products, and the opportunity to diversify its customer base along with its geographical presence.
- **Near-term headwinds in Credit Card Portfolio** – ~75% of AUSFB's credit card issuances have been to NTB customers as against the larger banks that prefer issuances to ETB customers. The bank has been positioning the credit card offering as a hook to attract liability customers and cross-selling and up-selling its other products. The management expects the business to break even by the end of FY25E and contribute positively to FY26E onwards. The cost of acquisition on a blended basis (for NTB and ETB customers) is ~Rs 2,000 per customer and the bank is following a multi-channel acquisition approach which it believes will help scale up any channel as and when required. Interestingly, the yield differential between the home loan portfolio and the credit card portfolio is narrow. However, the credit card business also aids fee income along with interest income, however also incurs higher Opex and credit costs. The yield on the credit card portfolio has contracted YoY owing to regulatory requirement that prevents the bank from charging interest on interest.

In Q3FY24, the bank tied up with ixigo to issue its first co-branded credit card. This partnership has allowed the bank access to over 15 Cr users largely based in Tier II/III cities.

Key Risks to our Estimates and TP

- The key risk to our estimates remains a slowdown in overall credit momentum which could potentially derail earnings momentum for the bank.

Change in Estimates

	Change in Estimates								
	Revised			Old			% Change		
	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
NII	5,205	6,502	8,101	5,239	6,444	-	-0.7	0.9	-
PBP	2,527	3,282	4,287	2,502	3,295	-	1.0	-0.4	-
Provisions	434	645	800	399	567	-	8.7	13.9	-
PAT	1,576	1,972	2,608	1,577	2,046	-	-0.1	-3.6	-

Source: Company, Axis Securities

Results Review

(Rs Cr)	Q3FY24	Q3FY23	% YoY	Q2FY24	% QoQ	9MFY24	9MFY23	% YoY
Net Interest Income	1,325	1,153	14.9	1,249	6.1	3,820	3,212	18.9
Non-Interest Income	450	295	52.5	425	5.7	1,190	701	69.7
Operating expenses	1,117	892	25.3	1,027	8.8	3,160	2,465	28.2
Staff Cost	529	465	13.7	512	3.3	1,548	1,311	18.1
Pre provision profits	657	556	18.2	648	1.4	1,851	1,449	27.8
Provisions and contingencies	159	33	387.0	114	39.0	306	114	168.7
PBT	498	523	-4.8	533	-6.6	1,545	1,335	15.7
Provision for Tax	123	130	-5.6	132	-6.6	382	331	15.4
PAT	375	393	-4.5	402	-6.6	1,162	1,003	15.9
Business Update								
Advances	67,624	56,335	20.0	65,029	4.0	67,624	56,335	20.0
Deposits	80,120	61,101	31.1	75,743	5.8	80,120	61,101	31.1
CASA Deposits	26,446	23,471	12.7	25,666	3.0	26,446	23,471	12.7
CASA Ratio	33.0	38.4		33.9		33.0	38.4	
NIM (%)	5.5	6.2	-70 bps	5.5	0 bps	5.6	6.1	-53 bps
Cost-Income ratio (%)	63.0	61.6	136 bps	61.3	165 bps	63.1	63.1	-3 bps
Asset Quality								
Gross NPA (%)	2.0	1.8	17 bps	1.9	7 bps	2.0	1.81	17 bps
Net NPA (%)	0.7	0.5	17 bps	0.6	8 bps	0.7	0.51	17 bps
PCR (%)	66.0	72.1	-612 bps	69	-314 bps	66	72	-612 bps
Slippages (Rs. Cr.)	325.0	231.0	40.7	349.0	-6.9	991.0	746.0	32.8
Slippage Ratio (%)	1.9	1.7		2.2		1.3	1.7	
Capital Adequacy								
CRAR	20.8	22.0	-120 bps	22.4	-160 bps	20.8	22.0	-120 bps
Tier I	19.5	20.0	-50 bps	21.0	-150 bps	19.5	20.0	-50 bps
Tier II	1.3	1.0	30 bps	1.4	-10 bps	1.3	1.0	30 bps

Source: Company, Axis Securities

AU Small Finance Bank –Financials (Standalone)

Profit & Loss

(Rs Cr)

Y/E March	FY23	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Net Interest Income	4,425	5,205	6,502	8,101
Other Income	1,034	1,575	2,055	2,606
Total Income	5,460	6,780	8,557	10,707
Total Operating Exp	3,440	4,253	5,275	6,420
PPOP	2,019	2,527	3,282	4,287
Provisions & Contingencies	155	434	645	800
PBT	1,865	2,093	2,637	3,487
Provision for Tax	437	517	665	879
PAT	1,428	1,576	1,972	2,608

Source: Company, Axis Securities

Balance Sheet

(Rs Cr)

Y/E March	FY23	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
SOURCES OF FUNDS				
Share Capital	667	668	668	668
Reserves	10,311	11,749	13,544	15,911
Shareholder's Funds	10,977	12,417	14,212	16,579
Total Deposits	69,365	86,715	1,07,465	1,33,515
Borrowings	6,299	8,569	10,572	13,705
Other Liabilities & Provisions	3,575	3,879	4,763	5,899
Total Liabilities	90,216	1,11,580	1,37,012	1,69,698
APPLICATION OF FUNDS				
Cash & Bank Balance	9,425	5,452	6,435	7,995
Investments	20,072	30,035	36,148	44,910
Advances	58,422	73,251	90,940	1,12,472
Fixed Assets & Other Assets	2,297	2,841	3,489	4,321
Total Assets	90,216	1,11,580	1,37,012	1,69,698

Source: Company, Axis Securities

Ratio Analysis
(%)

Y/E March	FY23	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
VALUATION RATIOS				
EPS	21.4	23.6	29.5	39.0
Earnings Growth (%)	-40%	10%	25%	32%
BVPS	164.6	185.8	212.7	248.1
Adj. BVPS	161.0	181.0	206.1	239.5
ROAA (%)	1.8%	1.6%	1.6%	1.7%
ROAE (%)	15.4%	13.5%	14.8%	16.9%
P/E (x)	33.1	30.0	24.0	18.1
P/ABV (x)	4.4	3.9	3.4	3.0
PROFITABILITY				
NIM (%)	6.1	5.6	5.7	5.8
Cost-Income Ratio	63.0	62.7	61.6	60.0
BALANCE SHEET STRUCTURE RATIOS				
Loan Growth (%)	26.7	25.4	24.1	23.7
Deposit Growth (%)	31.9	25.0	23.9	24.2
C/D Ratio (%)	12.2	11.1	10.4	9.8
Equity to Assets (%)	18.8	17.0	15.6	14.7
Equity to Loans (%)	23.6	20.7	18.8	18.3
CAR	23.6	20.7	18.8	18.3
CAR Tier I	21.8	19.1	17.2	16.7
ASSET QUALITY				
Gross NPLs (%)	1.7	2.0	2.2	2.3
Net NPLs (%)	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5
Coverage Ratio (%)	75.0	77.5	77.6	77.9
Credit Costs	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8
ROAA TREE				
Net Interest Income	5.6	5.2	5.2	5.3
Non-Interest Income	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.7
Operating Cost	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2
Provisions	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.5
Tax	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6
ROAA	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.7
Leverage (x)	8.6	8.6	9.3	10.0
ROAE	15.4	13.5	14.8	16.9

Source: Company, Axis Securities

AU Small Finance Bank Price Chart and Recommendation History



Date	Reco	TP	Research
28-Jan-22	BUY	713	Result Update
26-Apr-22	BUY	780	Result Update
20-Jul-22	BUY	650	Result Update
20-Oct-22	BUY	750	Result Update
20-Jan-23	BUY	755	Result Update
26-Apr-23	BUY	765	Result Update
24-Jul-23	HOLD	700	Result Update
31-Oct-23	HOLD	685	Result Update
06-Nov-23	HOLD	685	Company Update
29-Jan-24	BUY	780	Result Update

Source: Axis Securities

About the Analyst



Analyst: Dnyanada Vaidya

Contact Details: dnyanada.vaidya@axissecurities.in

Sector: BFSI

Analyst Bio: Dnyanada Vaidya is MMS (Finance) with over 6 years of research experience in the Banking/NBFC sector.

About the Analyst



Analyst: Prathamesh Sawant, CFA

Contact Details: prathamesh.sawant@axissecurities.in

Sector: BFSI

Analyst Bio: Prathamesh Sawant is MBA (Finance) and CFA Charter holder with over 7 years of experience in Equity Research & Valuation.

About the Associate



Associate: CA Bhavya Shah

Contact Details: bhavya1.shah@axissecurities.in

Sector: BFSI

Analyst Bio: Bhavya Shah is Chartered Accountant and CFA level 2 cleared with over 18 months of research experience in the Banking/NBFC Industry.

Disclosures:

The following Disclosures are being made in compliance with the SEBI Research Analyst Regulations 2014 (herein after referred to as the Regulations).

Axis Securities Ltd. (ASL) is a SEBI Registered Research Analyst having registration no. INH000000297. ASL, the Research Entity (RE) as defined in the Regulations, is engaged in the business of providing Stock broking services, Depository participant services & distribution of various financial products. ASL is a subsidiary company of Axis Bank Ltd. Axis Bank Ltd. is a listed public company and one of India's largest private sector bank and has its various subsidiaries engaged in businesses of Asset management, NBFC, Merchant Banking, Trusteeship, Venture Capital, Stock Broking, the details in respect of which are available on www.axisbank.com.

ASL is registered with the Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for its stock broking & Depository participant business activities and with the Association of Mutual Funds of India (AMFI) for distribution of financial products and also registered with IRDA as a corporate agent for insurance business activity.

ASL has no material adverse disciplinary history as on the date of publication of this report.

I/We, Dnyanada Vaidya, MMS Finance, Prathamesh Sawant, CFA, CA Bhavya Shah author/s and the name/s subscribed to this report, hereby certify that all of the views expressed in this research report accurately reflect my/our views about the subject issuer(s) or securities. I/We (Research Analyst) also certify that no part of my/our compensation was, is, or will be directly or indirectly related to the specific recommendation(s) or view(s) in this report. I/we or my/our relative or ASL does not have any financial interest in the subject company. Also I/we or my/our relative or ASL or its Associates may have beneficial ownership of 1% or more in the subject company at the end of the month immediately preceding the date of publication of the Research Report. Since associates of ASL are engaged in various financial service businesses, they might have financial interests or beneficial ownership in various companies including the subject company/companies mentioned in this report. I/we or my/our relative or ASL or its associate does not have any material conflict of interest. I/we have not served as director / officer, etc. in the subject company in the last 12-month period. Any holding in stock – No

5. ASL has not received any compensation from the subject company in the past twelve months. ASL has not been engaged in market making activity for the subject company.

In the last 12-month period ending on the last day of the month immediately preceding the date of publication of this research report, ASL or any of its associates may have:

Received compensation for investment banking, merchant banking or stock broking services or for any other services from the subject company of this research report and / or; Managed or co-managed public offering of the securities from the subject company of this research report and / or; Received compensation for products or services other than investment banking, merchant banking or stock broking services from the subject company of this research report; ASL or any of its associates have not received compensation or other benefits from the subject company of this research report or any other third-party in connection with this report.

Term& Conditions:

This report has been prepared by ASL and is meant for sole use by the recipient and not for circulation. The report and information contained herein is strictly confidential and may not be altered in any way, transmitted to, copied or distributed, in part or in whole, to any other person or to the media or reproduced in any form, without prior written consent of ASL. The report is based on the facts, figures and information that are considered true, correct, reliable and accurate. The intent of this report is not recommendatory in nature. The information is obtained from publicly available media or other sources believed to be reliable. Such information has not been independently verified and no guaranty, representation of warranty, express or implied, is made as to its accuracy, completeness or correctness. All such information and opinions are subject to change without notice. The report is prepared solely for informational purpose and does not constitute an offer document or solicitation of offer to buy or sell or subscribe for securities or other financial instruments for the clients. Though disseminated to all the customers simultaneously, not all customers may receive this report at the same time. ASL will not treat recipients as customers by virtue of their receiving this report.

DEFINITION OF RATINGS	
Ratings	Expected absolute returns over 12-18 months
BUY	More than 10%
HOLD	Between 10% and -10%
SELL	Less than -10%
NOT RATED	We have forward looking estimates for the stock but we refrain from assigning valuation and recommendation
UNDER REVIEW	We will revisit our recommendation, valuation and estimates on the stock following recent events
NO STANCE	We do not have any forward looking estimates, valuation or recommendation for the stock

Disclaimer:

Nothing in this report constitutes investment, legal, accounting and tax advice or a representation that any investment or strategy is suitable or appropriate to the recipient's specific circumstances. The securities and strategies discussed and opinions expressed, if any, in this report may not be suitable for all investors, who must make their own investment decisions, based on their own investment objectives, financial positions and needs of specific recipient.

This report may not be taken in substitution for the exercise of independent judgment by any recipient. Each recipient of this report should make such investigations as it deems necessary to arrive at an independent evaluation of an investment in the securities of companies referred to in this report (including the merits and risks involved), and should consult its own advisors to determine the merits and risks of such an investment. Certain transactions, including those involving futures, options and other derivatives as well as non-investment grade securities involve substantial risk and are not suitable for all investors. ASL, its directors, analysts or employees do not take any responsibility, financial or otherwise, of the losses or the damages sustained due to the investments made or any action taken on basis of this report, including but not restricted to, fluctuation in the prices of shares and bonds, changes in the currency rates, diminution in the NAVs, reduction in the dividend or income, etc. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. Investors are advised to see Risk Disclosure Document to understand the risks associated before investing in the securities markets. Actual results may differ materially from those set forth in projections. Forward-looking statements are not predictions and may be subject to change without notice.

ASL and its affiliated companies, their directors and employees may; (a) from time to time, have long or short position(s) in, and buy or sell the securities of the company(ies) mentioned herein or (b) be engaged in any other transaction involving such securities or earn brokerage or other compensation or act as a market maker in the financial instruments of the company(ies) discussed herein or act as an advisor or investment banker, lender/borrower to such company(ies) or may have any other potential conflict of interests with respect to any recommendation and other related information and opinions. Each of these entities functions as a separate, distinct and independent of each other. The recipient should take this into account before interpreting this document.

ASL and / or its affiliates do and seek to do business including investment banking with companies covered in its research reports. As a result, the recipients of this report should be aware that ASL may have a potential conflict of interest that may affect the objectivity of this report. Compensation of Research Analysts is not based on any specific merchant banking, investment banking or brokerage service transactions. ASL may have issued other reports that are inconsistent with and reach different conclusion from the information presented in this report. The Research reports are also available & published on AxisDirect website.

Neither this report nor any copy of it may be taken or transmitted into the United State (to U.S. Persons), Canada, or Japan or distributed, directly or indirectly, in the United States or Canada or distributed or redistributed in Japan or to any resident thereof. If this report is inadvertently sent or has reached any individual in such country, especially, USA, the same may be ignored and brought to the attention of the sender. This report is not directed or intended for distribution to, or use by, any person or entity who is a citizen or resident of or located in any locality, state, country or other jurisdiction, where such distribution, publication, availability or use would be contrary to law, regulation or which would subject ASL to any registration or licensing requirement within such jurisdiction. The securities described herein may or may not be eligible for sale in all jurisdictions or to certain category of investors.

The Disclosures of Interest Statement incorporated in this document is provided solely to enhance the transparency and should not be treated as endorsement of the views expressed in the report. The Company reserves the right to make modifications and alternations to this document as may be required from time to time without any prior notice. The views expressed are those of the analyst(s) and the Company may or may not subscribe to all the views expressed therein.

Copyright in this document vests with Axis Securities Limited.

Axis Securities Limited, SEBI Single Reg. No.- NSE, BSE & MSEI – INZ000161633, ARN No. 64610, CDSL-IN-DP-CDSL-693-2013, SEBI-Research Analyst Reg. No. INH 000000297, SEBI Portfolio Manager Reg. No.- INP000000654, Main/Dealing off.- Axis Securities Ltd, Unit No.1001, 10th Floor, Level-6, Q2 Building, Aurum, Q Parc, Plot No. 4/1, TTC, Thane – Belapur Road, Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai. – 400 710., Regd. off.- Axis House,8th Floor, Wadia International Centre, PandurangBudhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai – 400 025. Compliance Officer: Jatin Sanghani, Email: compliance.officer@axisdirect.in, Tel No: 022-49212706