UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Global Management Decisions

2526-2-F5602M020

Learning objectives

The course in Global Management Decisions aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the current trends and challenges in global business. We will explore how firms from both developed and emerging countries navigate the complexities of international markets. By analyzing various case studies, students will gain insights into the strategies employed by multinational corporations to expand their global footprint. Additionally, the course will examine the strategic challenges faced by businesses in navigating geopolitical tensions, such as those between major economies, and how these tensions influence corporate strategies and operations. Through these discussions, students will develop a nuanced understanding of the global business landscape, encompassing diverse regions and industries.

Understanding how to effectively organize and manage international businesses is critical in today's global economy. The course will delve into the strategies and structures that multinational corporations adopt to manage their global operations efficiently. We will explore the complexities of building and maintaining a global business empire, highlighting key strategies for success in the 21st century. Topics will include the management of cross-border teams, the integration of diverse corporate cultures, and the coordination of global supply chains. Case studies will illustrate how global companies structure their operations and leverage their core competencies to enhance their competitive edge. For example, in the semiconductor industry, companies must navigate intricate networks of suppliers and manufacturers across different countries, highlighting the importance of strategic supply chain management. These discussions will provide students with practical insights into the organizational dynamics of international businesses.

This course will guide students in developing strategies for successful global expansion and market entry. We will discuss strategic responses to domestic market challenges, such as the expansion of companies abroad to mitigate domestic regulatory pressures. A crucial aspect of this section will be understanding different market entry modes, such as exporting, licensing, franchising, joint ventures, and wholly-owned subsidiaries. We will explore the advantages and disadvantages of each mode and how companies decide on the best approach based on factors such as market potential, investment costs, control levels, and risk management. For example, the semiconductor industry's approach to managing chip shortages through various international partnerships will illustrate the importance of selecting the appropriate entry mode.

In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, it is crucial for future managers to navigate and leverage technological advancements in global business operations. This course will prioritize the exploration of corporate R&D activities and the internationalization of R&D, highlighting their critical roles in driving innovation and maintaining competitive advantage. Students will examine how multinational corporations establish and manage global R&D networks, leveraging diverse talent pools and responding to regional market needs. The semiconductor industry, which faces unique challenges due to its complexity and the geopolitical tensions affecting it, will be used as a case study to demonstrate the importance of innovation and strategic management in maintaining supply chain resilience and efficiency in high-tech industries. These examples underscore the transformative potential of innovation in supply chain management and corporate operations, emphasizing the importance of staying abreast of technological advancements and international R&D efforts to maintain a competitive edge.

Contents

1. International business and global strategy
2. The strategy of international business
3. The organization of international business
4. Entering developed and emerging markets
5. Global production and supply chain management
6. The internationalization of R&D

Detailed program

1. International business and global strategy
a. (Benito et al., 2022; Buckley et al., 2017; Ghemawat, 2011; Werner, 2002)

2. The strategy of international business
a. What is Strategy? (Porter, 1996)
i. Operational effectiveness vs. strategic positioning
ii. Trade-offs between strategic positions
iii. Fit, competitive advantage, and sustainability
b. Measuring organizational performance (Katsikeas et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2013; Richard et al., 2009)
c. Global expansion, profitability, and profit growth
i. Expanding the market
ii. Location economies
iii. Experience effects
iv. Leveraging subsidiary skills
d. Cost pressures and pressures for local responsiveness
e. Choosing a strategy (Alexander & Korine, 2008; Frost et al., 2002; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Rugman & Verbeke, 2004; Taussig, 2017)
i. International strategy
ii. Global standardization strategy
iii. Localization strategy
iv. Transnational strategy
f. The relationship between internationalization and performance (Hitt et al., 1997; Pedersen & Tallman, 2023)

3. The organization of international business
a. Organizational structure
i. Vertical differentiation (Birkinshaw, 1997; Birkinshaw et al., 1998; Björkman et al., 2004)
ii. Horizontal differentiation (Wolf & Egelhoff, 2002)

iii. Integrating Mechanisms (Hansen & Løvås, 2004; Washburn & Hunsaker, 2011)
b. Control system and incentives (Bloom & Reenen, 2007)
c. Organizational culture
d. Organizational change

4. Entering developed and emerging markets
a. Basic entry decisions (Boyen & Ogasavara, 2013; Isobe et al., 2000; Vermeulen & Barkema, 2002)
i. Which foreign market? (Bogner et al., 1996)
ii. Timing of entry (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2000; Shaver et al., 1997)
iii. Scale of entry and strategic commitments
b. Entry modes (Schwens et al., 2011)
c. Selecting an entry mode
i. Core competencies and entry mode
ii. Pressures for cost reductions and entry mode
d. Greenfield venture or acquisition? (Ghemawat & Ghadar, 2000; Seth et al., 2002)
e. Strategic alliances (Spencer, 2003; Tsang, 2003)

5. Global production and supply chain management
a. Strategy, production, and supply chain management (Mukherjee et al., 2023; Powell, 1995; Tokatli, 2007)
b. Artificial intelligence and relocation of production activities (Kinkel et al., 2023)
c. Global supply chain functions (Farrell, 2004)
i. Global logistics
ii. Global purchasing
d. Managing a global supply chain (DeBerge, 2024)
i. The role of just-in-time (JIT) inventory
ii. The role of information technology (Sturgeon, 2021)
iii. Coordination in global supply chain
iv. Interorganizational relationships

6. The internationalization of R&D
a. Product development & R&D
b. Internationalization of R&D (Awate et al., 2015; Castellani et al., 2013; Kuemmerle, 1997)

Prerequisites

The course in Global Management Decisions adopts an approach to the investigation of real-world business phenomena that combines well established theoretical concepts with disciplined empirical investigation. Accordingly, it builds upon the bulk of knowledge that students accumulated while attending previous courses in microeconomics, macroeconomics, industrial organization, statistics, and econometrics.

Teaching methods

Lessons in the Global Management Decisions course are structured to combine lecture-based with interactive teaching. Within each lesson, theoretical concepts and conceptual frameworks are presented, followed by interactive discussions designed to stimulate students in exploring how to apply these concepts and frameworks to real-world business cases. Lessons will be organized as follows:
• 4 (four) three-hours lessons will be conducted using a combination of lecture-based and interactive teaching modes and will be delivered online.
• 5 (five) three-hours lessons will be conducted using a combination of lecture-based and interactive teaching

modes and will be delivered in person.
• 5 (five) two-hours lessons will be conducted using a combination of lecture-based and interactive teaching modes and will be delivered in person.
• 3 (three) two-hours lessons will be allocated to in-class presentation and discussion of project work.

Although course attendance is not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged. Since lessons are based on an interactive teaching approach, students are expected to actively and constructively participate in class discussions, be prepared to comment on assigned readings, and engage in occasional group work.

Assessment methods

The Global Management Decisions course does not include midterm exams. The performance assessment of all students will be based on a two-part exam that is described below.

PROJECT WORK (50% OF FINAL GRADE; GROUP-LEVEL GRADE)
a. At the beginning of the course, students will be organized into groups of at most 4 members. The instructor will assign students to these groups. All students must register on the e-learning platform. Only in special cases, and after a detailed examination of the circumstances, might students be permitted to complete the project work individually.
b. Each group will be assigned the task of writing a business report to analyze the management decisions that a public listed company takes with respect to its international strategy and the implications of those decisions for its financial and non-financial performance.
c. Group members will be asked to give an in-class presentation to discuss the major findings emerging from the business research they carried out.
d. The deadline for submitting the report and the date of the in-class presentation will be communicated at the beginning of the course.
e. The report and the presentation must be uploaded through the e-Learning platform. Guidelines concerning the content and format of the report and the accompanying presentation will be communicated at the beginning of the course.
f. The assessment criteria used to evaluate the business report, and the in-class presentation include:
i. Clarity and Organization: Assess the clarity, coherence, and organization of the assignment structure, including the introduction, methodology, analysis sections, and conclusion. Evaluate the logical flow of ideas, use of headings and subheadings, and overall readability of the assignment.
ii. Critical Thinking and Evaluation Skills: Evaluate the critical thinking skills demonstrated in discussing the significance and implications of the analysis findings for the company's strategy and performance. Consider the ability to critically evaluate alternative explanations, assumptions, and interpretations.
iii. Insightfulness and Originality: Evaluate the depth of insights generated from the analysis and the originality of the interpretations and conclusions drawn. Consider the ability to offer fresh perspectives, innovative solutions, and forward-looking recommendations based on the findings.
iv. Integration of Additional Sources and Research: Assess the integration of additional sources of information, such as academic articles, industry reports, and online resources, to complement the analysis of the company's strategy and performance. Evaluate the relevance, credibility, and depth of the additional sources used.
v. Application of Statistical Methods and Data Visualization: Evaluate the proficiency in applying statistical methods and data visualization techniques to present and analyze the data effectively. Assess the clarity, relevance, and accuracy of the graphs, tables, and charts used to convey the analysis findings.
vi. Presentation and Formatting: Assess the overall presentation and formatting of the assignment, including adherence to formatting guidelines, proper citation of sources, and the use of clear and professional language.

ORAL EXAM (50% OF FINAL GRADE; INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL GRADE)
The closed-book oral exam covers the following areas: (1) Topics discussed in the selected textbook chapters and in the articles marked as compulsory in the syllabus: one question will be asked on this area; (2) The topic of the business report that students are required to submit as part of their group project: two questions will be asked on

this area. In answering these questions, students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical contents of the report presented, as well as the ability to connect the concepts discussed in the report with the theoretical frameworks introduced during the course.
This exam aims to evaluate students' ability to articulate their knowledge clearly and coherently, engage in critical discussions, and demonstrate their analytical and strategic thinking skills in real-time. Additionally, the oral examination provides an opportunity to assess the students' autonomous thinking and problem-solving abilities, as well as their capacity to integrate and apply theoretical knowledge to practical, real-world scenarios. Through this format, students will also be evaluated on their communication skills, including the ability to present their ideas effectively and respond to questions with confidence and clarity.

HONORS (LAUDE)
Provided the student demonstrates excellent performance in the project work and oral exams, the awarding of honors (laude) is contingent upon and regular, proactive, and constructive participation in course activities and debates.

Plagiarism and inappropriate use of AI tools:
It is imperative that all work submitted is your own and properly cites any sources or influences. Plagiarism, which includes copying text or ideas from sources without proper attribution, is strictly prohibited and will result in academic penalties. Additionally, while AI tools can be helpful for research and drafting, the use of AI-generated text must be transparent and limited to ensuring grammatical correctness and coherence. Submitting content generated or significantly altered by AI as your own original work is unacceptable.
All submitted essays will undergo rigorous scrutiny for originality and compliance with academic standards. We employ advanced plagiarism detection software and have mechanisms in place to detect inappropriate use of AI-generated content. Any violation of these guidelines will be taken seriously and will lead to the invalidation of the submitted essay and the requirement for the students involved to write a new report.
Additionally, adhering to these standards is not only about your academic integrity but also about your duty to your classmates. Engaging in plagiarism or misuse of AI undermines the efforts of your peers who are committed to producing original work and upholding the values of fairness and honesty in our academic community. Please approach your essay with integrity and diligence, as these are foundational to your academic growth and professional development.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Textbook
Hill, Charles W.L. 2025. International Business: Competing in the global marketplace, 2025 release. McGraw Hill, New York.

The specific chapters from the textbook required for this course will be communicated at the outset of the course.

Articles in academic journals
The readings listed below are mandatory and must be studied for the oral exam.

Ghemawat, P. (2011). The Cosmopolitan Corporation. Harvard Business Review, 89(5), 92–99.
Ghemawat, P. (2007). Managing differences: The central challenge of global strategy. Harvard Business Review, 85(3), 58–68.
Washburn, N. T., & Hunsaker, T. B. (2011). Finding great ideas in emerging markets. Harvard Business Review, 89(9), 115–120.
Bartlett, C. A., & Ghoshal, S. (2000). Going global: Lessons from late movers. Harvard Business Review, 78(3), 132–142.
Farrell, D. (2004). Beyond offshoring: Assess your company’s global potential. Harvard Business Review, 82(12), 82–90.
Wilson, K., & Doz, Y. L. (2012). 10 Rules for Managing Global Innovation. Harvard Business Review, 90(10),

84–90.

Semester

From April 2026 to June 2026

Teaching language

English

Sustainable Development Goals

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS