UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

International Business

2627-2-F7704M023

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
At the end of the course, students will have acquired knowledge and understanding of the main concepts, theoretical frameworks, and analytical tools used to examine how firms compete and grow across national borders. With reference to Global Strategy, students will understand the main drivers and barriers of internationalization, the influence of economic, institutional, cultural, and competitive differences across countries, the determinants of international competitiveness, the process of foreign market selection, and the main alternative foreign market entry modes. With reference to Global Marketing, students will understand how differences across countries and markets affect marketing decisions, the processes involved in global marketing research, the main choices concerning the international marketing mix, and the organizational and coordination challenges associated with the implementation of global marketing strategies. Particular attention will be devoted to the trade-offs between standardization and adaptation in international markets.

Applying knowledge and understanding
Students will be able to apply the concepts and analytical frameworks introduced in the course to real-world international business situations. With reference to Global Strategy, they will be able to analyze foreign market opportunities and international expansion decisions using relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, and to compare alternative market entry modes by considering firm-specific resources, market conditions, risk, control, and strategic objectives. With reference to Global Marketing, students will be able to collect, organize, and analyze relevant information concerning foreign markets, customers, competitors, and the broader business environment; assess international marketing opportunities and challenges; and use the resulting evidence to develop coherent recommendations concerning international positioning and the design and implementation of the global marketing mix.

Making judgements
Students will develop the ability to critically assess strategic and marketing decisions in international markets under conditions of uncertainty and cross-country heterogeneity. With reference to Global Strategy, they will be able to evaluate alternative strategic options, question underlying assumptions, assess the quality and relevance of available evidence, and formulate independent and well-supported judgements concerning internationalization

choices, market selection, location decisions, and the organization of cross-border activities. With reference to Global Marketing, they will be able to critically evaluate alternative marketing options and formulate well-supported judgements concerning market opportunities, international positioning, and the appropriate balance between global standardization and local adaptation.

Communication skills
Students will develop the ability to communicate analyses, arguments, and managerial recommendations concerning international business issues clearly and effectively. In relation to both Global Strategy and Global Marketing, they will learn to present evidence and conclusions using appropriate academic and managerial terminology, both in written business reports and in oral presentations and discussions, and to support their arguments with relevant data and appropriate analytical tools.

Learning skills
Students will develop the ability to independently identify, select, and critically use academic, managerial, and quantitative sources relevant to international business problems. In relation to both Global Strategy and Global Marketing, through the application of theoretical frameworks to real-world cases, students will strengthen their ability to integrate new information, critically assess alternative interpretations, and autonomously extend the knowledge and analytical skills acquired during the course to new international business contexts.

Contents

The Global Strategy module examines the main strategic challenges faced by firms operating across national borders. It focuses on the drivers and barriers of internationalization, the processes and capabilities underlying international expansion, and the impact of political, legal, economic, social, and cultural differences across countries on firms' international strategies. Particular attention is devoted to the development of international competitiveness, the selection of foreign markets, and the choice of appropriate foreign market entry modes. The module combines theoretical frameworks with their application to real-world international business situations.

The Global Marketing module focuses on the development and implementation of marketing strategies across international markets. The module first addresses global marketing research and the collection and analysis of information on customers, competitors, and market environments in different countries. It then examines the design of the global marketing programme, including decisions concerning products, pricing, distribution channels, and communication. Finally, the module considers the implementation and coordination of global marketing activities, with particular attention to organizational structures, coordination and control systems, and the challenges associated with operating across different cultural contexts.

Detailed program

The International Business course is organized into two modules: Global Strategy and Global Marketing.

GLOBAL STRATEGY
Part I – Internationalization and international competitiveness

1. The decision whether to internationalize
2. Initiation of internationalization
3. Theoretical models of internationalization
4. Development of the firm's international competitiveness

The first part of the module examines the motivations underlying firms' internationalization decisions, as well as the

main barriers and success factors associated with international expansion. The principal theoretical models explaining firms' internationalization processes are introduced and discussed. Particular attention is then devoted to the development of firms' international competitiveness and to the strategic drivers that enable firms to compete effectively across national borders.

Part II – Foreign market selection and entry strategies
5. Deciding which markets to enter: filter and portfolio models
6. The political, economic, and sociocultural environment
7. Foreign market entry strategies: export modes, intermediate modes, and hierarchical modes

The second part focuses on the selection of foreign markets and the choice of appropriate entry strategies. Students examine how firms evaluate the attractiveness of alternative international markets and how political, economic, and sociocultural conditions affect international business decisions. The module then considers the main alternative foreign market entry modes and the factors underlying the choice among export, intermediate, and hierarchical modes.

GLOBAL MARKETING
Part I – Global marketing research

1. The changing role of the international researcher
2. Linking global marketing research to the decision-making process
3. Marketing research based on Web 3.0
4. Generative AI and marketing research
5. Analytics for marketers

This part examines the role of information and marketing research in international marketing decision-making. Particular attention is devoted to the collection and analysis of information concerning foreign customers, competitors, and market environments, as well as to the contribution of emerging digital technologies, generative AI, and analytics to global marketing research.

Part II – Designing the global marketing programme

1. Product decisions
2. Pricing decisions and terms of doing business
3. Distribution decisions
4. Communication decisions (promotion strategies)

This part focuses on the design of the global marketing mix after the firm has selected the foreign markets in which to operate and the appropriate modes of entry. It examines the main decisions concerning product characteristics, pricing, distribution channels, and communication strategies in international markets.

Part III – Implementing and coordinating the global marketing programme

1. Organization of global marketing activities
2. Controlling the global marketing programme
3. The process of developing the global marketing plan

The final part examines the organizational, coordination, and control issues associated with the implementation of global marketing strategies. Particular attention is devoted to how organizational structures and control systems need to evolve as firms expand internationally and operate across different market and cultural contexts.

Prerequisites

There are three prerequisites that may have a major impact on successful attendance of the course:

1. Students must have completed a course in strategic management or corporate strategy (minimum 6 ECTS). This foundation is essential, as the fundamental concepts and conceptual frameworks of corporate strategy will be extensively applied to the context of international business throughout the course.
2. The course has a strong quantitative orientation. Students are expected to possess foundational skills in collecting, systematizing, and analyzing data and to be familiar with the basics of statistical software packages (a basic understanding of STATA is strongly recommended). Prior coursework in statistics, econometrics, or business analytics provides an excellent background for the project work and in-class activities.
3. Given the extensive use of scientific articles and an English-language textbook, fluency in English is required.

Teaching methods

Classes are interactive and will be delivered in person. Each class includes a balanced combination of instructor-led teaching, short videos and business cases for discussion, and applied activities carried out in groups or subgroups, followed by plenary reporting and class discussion.
Students attending the course on a regular basis, namely those attending at least 80% of the classes of both the Global Strategy and the Global Marketing modules, can participate in a comprehensive application project titled “My Firm Expands Abroad”. The application project asks students to develop a detailed plan for how an assigned company should address the strategic and marketing decisions associated with expansion into a foreign market.
The project follows the structure of the course and entails the application of the core frameworks and concepts introduced in the Global Strategy and Global Marketing modules to a real-life setting. The work involves the weekly application of these concepts and frameworks through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of secondary data, including data retrieved from sources such as FactSet. A separate briefing note will provide detailed information on the content of the project and the tasks to be performed.
For students attending the course on a regular basis, the application project will constitute the written component of the final exam, as described in the section of the syllabus titled “Assessment Methods”.

Assessment methods

The International Business course does not include midterm exams. Students can take the final exam according to one of the alternatives described below.

METHOD #1
For students who regularly attend classes, performance assessment is based on a project work and an oral exam. To meet the attendance requirement, students must attend at least 80% of the classes of both the Global Strategy and the Global Marketing modules and carry out the activities proposed during the course, such as quizzes, assignments, class discussions, and related activities.

Project work (50% of the final grade; group-level grade)
At the beginning of the course, students will be required to form a group and register it using the Excel file “Group work - registration form”, available on the e-learning platform. Each group may include a maximum of four members. The deadline for group formation will be communicated during the first class. After this deadline, it will no longer be possible to take the exam according to “Method #1”, and students will automatically be redirected to “Method #2”.
Each group will be assigned the task of writing a business report analyzing the management decisions that a “fictional” company makes with respect to its international strategy and marketing strategy, along with the

implications of those decisions for its financial and non-financial performance.
The deadline for submitting the report and the date of the in-class presentation will be communicated at the beginning of the course.
Group members will be asked to deliver an in-class presentation to discuss the main findings emerging from the business report they have written. 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.

With reference to the business report and the in-class presentation, the following competencies will be evaluated:
i. the ability to critically analyze the major choices made by the company in crafting and implementing its international strategy;
ii. the ability to identify the challenges faced by the company in its international operations and propose viable solutions;
iii. the proficiency in gathering, cleaning, and organizing relevant data from credible sources;
iv. the capacity to question assumptions, evaluate evidence, and present balanced arguments;
v. the proficiency in writing clear, well-organized, and professional business reports;
vi. the proficiency in presenting findings clearly and concisely, using appropriate business terminology and report structure.

The assessment criteria used to evaluate the business report and the in-class presentation include:
i. Critical Thinking and Evaluation Skills: this criterion evaluates the critical thinking skills demonstrated in discussing the significance and implications of the analytical findings for the company's strategy and performance. It considers the ability to critically evaluate alternative explanations, assumptions, and interpretations.
ii. Clarity and Organization: this criterion assesses the clarity, coherence, and organization of the assignment structure, including the introduction, methodology, analysis sections, and conclusion. It evaluates the logical flow of ideas, the use of headings and subheadings, and the overall readability of the assignment.
iii. Insightfulness and Originality: this criterion evaluates the depth of the insights generated from the analysis and the originality of the interpretations and conclusions drawn. It considers the ability to offer fresh perspectives, innovative solutions, and forward-looking recommendations based on the findings.
iv. Integration of Additional Sources and Research: this criterion assesses 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. It evaluates the relevance, credibility, and depth of the additional sources used.
v. Application of Descriptive Statistics and Data Visualization: this criterion evaluates the proficiency in applying descriptive statistics and data visualization techniques to present and analyze data effectively. It assesses the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the graphs, tables, and charts used to convey the analytical findings.
vi. Presentation and Formatting: this criterion assesses 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.

Students can submit the business report constituting the project work only once, at the end of the course. The grade assigned to the project work will remain valid for all exam sessions within the corresponding academic year. If a student is not satisfied with the assigned grade, she/he may opt to take the exam according to "Method #2".

Oral exam (50% of the final grade; individual-level grade)
The objective of the oral examination in the International Business course, covering both the Global Strategy and the Global Marketing modules, is to assess students' understanding and application of key concepts and theories related to the management of international businesses. The oral examination comprises a minimum of three questions and covers the topics discussed in the written report submitted as part of the project work.
Students who take the exam according to "Method #1" should be aware that their performance in the oral exam may result in a final grade that is lower than the grade obtained in the project work and, under certain conditions, may determine failure of the entire exam.

Plagiarism and inappropriate use of AI tools
It is imperative that all submitted work be original and that any sources or influences be properly cited. Plagiarism,

including copying text or ideas from sources without proper attribution, is strictly prohibited and will result in academic penalties. In addition, 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 one's own original work is unacceptable.
All submitted essays will undergo rigorous scrutiny for originality and compliance with academic standards. Advanced plagiarism detection software will be used, and mechanisms are in place to detect the 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, the dissolution of the group, and the requirement that the students involved take the exam individually, as specified under "Method #2".
Adhering to these standards is not only a matter of academic integrity but also a responsibility toward one's classmates. Engaging in plagiarism or misusing AI undermines the efforts of peers who are committed to producing original work and upholding the values of fairness and honesty within the academic community.
Students are therefore expected to approach their essay with integrity and diligence, as these are foundational to their academic growth and professional development.

METHOD #2
For students who do not attend classes, performance assessment is based on a two-part exam, comprising a written exam and an oral examination.

Written exam (50% of the final grade)
The written exam includes 20 (twenty) multiple-choice questions based on the selected chapters of the textbook and aims to assess students' preparation on the exam syllabus.
The chapters pertaining to the Global Strategy module are:
Chapter 1: International marketing in the company
Chapter 2: Initiation of Internationalization
Chapter 3: Theoretical models for internationalization
Chapter 4: Development of the company's international competitiveness
Chapter 5: International marketing research
Chapter 7: The cultural international marketing environment
Chapter 8: The international market selection process
Chapter 10: Export modes
Chapter 11: Intermediate modes
Chapter 12: Hierarchical modes
The chapters pertaining to the Global Marketing module are:
Chapter 14: Product decisions in international marketing
Chapter 15: Pricing decisions in the international marketing programme
Chapter 16: Distribution decisions
Chapter 17: Communication decisions (promotion strategies)
Chapter 18: Organization, implementation and control of the international marketing programme

For each question, there is only one correct answer. Each correct answer is awarded 1.5 points, while no penalty is applied for incorrect answers. Students will be admitted to the oral exam only if they correctly answer at least 12 questions out of 20. Students will have 30 (thirty) minutes to complete the written exam.

Oral exam (50% of the final grade)
The objective of the oral examination in the International Business course is to assess students' understanding and application of key concepts and theories related to the management of international businesses. The oral examination comprises a minimum of three questions and covers the topics presented in the selected chapters of the textbook.
This exam aims to evaluate students' ability to articulate their knowledge clearly and coherently, engage in critical discussion, and demonstrate analytical and strategic thinking skills in real time. In addition, the oral examination provides an opportunity to assess 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)
Irrespective of the exam method selected, namely “Method #1” or “Method #2”, and provided that the student demonstrates excellent performance in the assessed components of the exam, the awarding of honors (laude) is contingent upon regular, proactive, and constructive participation in course activities and debates.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Hollensen, Svend and Bogdanovic, Ana (2025), Global Marketing, Harlow, UK, Pearson, 9th edition.
Besides, all slides used in class and selected academic articles of the Professors referred to in classes, and provided on e-learning, will be required examination material.

Semester

From September to December 2026

Teaching language

English

Sustainable Development Goals

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE