UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Global Strategy

2627-2-F7704M023-F7704M023-2

Learning objectives

The international business environment has become increasingly complex, uncertain, and interconnected. Firms considering expansion into foreign markets need to assess not only the attractiveness of international opportunities, but also their own ability to operate effectively across different geographical, institutional, cultural, and competitive contexts. Entering a foreign market without a clear understanding of these differences may expose firms to significant strategic, organizational, and operational challenges.

The **Global Strategy module**, within the International Business course, introduces students to the main concepts, frameworks, and analytical tools needed to understand how firms compete and grow across national borders. The module focuses on the strategic decisions involved in international expansion, including the assessment of foreign market opportunities, the evaluation of country-level differences, the development of international competitive advantage, and the choice of appropriate foreign market entry modes.

By the end of the module, students will be able to:

1. Recognize and interpret the influence of economic, institutional, cultural, and competitive differences on international business decisions.
2. Understand the main strategic challenges faced by firms operating across national borders.
3. Analyze foreign market opportunities and international business problems using relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.
4. Evaluate and compare alternative foreign market entry modes, taking into account firm-specific resources, market conditions, risk, control, and strategic objectives.
5. Apply core frameworks in global strategy to real-life business cases, with particular attention to international competitiveness, location choices, and the organization of cross-border activities.
6. Develop reasoned strategic recommendations for firms considering or managing international expansion.

Contents

Global strategy is quite challenging. It is “doing business across and beyond borders”. This implies companies face lots of challenges when operating in international markets. Inhibitors might block their international expansion objectives. Even multinationals have experienced several international blunders.
Global managers experience a huge impact of political, legal, and social changes, creating uncertainties on their global strategies.
This course examines the triggers, inhibitors, capabilities, processes, concepts, strategies, and outcomes essential for managers and firms operating globally. A parallel project will apply the analytical frameworks discussed in class to real-world scenarios.

Detailed program

Aligning with the structure of the textbook, the course is divided in the following parts:

PART I

1. The decision whether to internationalize
2. Initiation of internationalization
3. Internalization theories
4. Development of the firm’s international competitiveness

PART II
5. Deciding which markets to enter: The filter and portfolio models
6. The political, economic, and sociocultural environment
7. Market entry strategies: export modes, intermediate modes, Hierarchical modes

In the first part, during the first lectures, the motivations for internationalization and foundational concepts are introduced. We focus also on barriers and success factors, and on the theories behind internationalization. Global business is described. In the next set of lectures, the international competitiveness of companies and nations is studied. The strategic drivers of international competitiveness are deeply studied. A strategy perspective on internationalization will be developed.
In the second part, we introduce market selection in internationalization and entry strategies, that is, once the company has decided to enter additional international markets, it will have to select the most appropriate approach for entering the market. We study in-depth the different strategies to do this (called entry modes) and bring to the fore the reasoning behind choosing the best approach to tap the market potential of a foreign market.
The concluding part looks at organizational and human capital issues to underscore the above developed strategies.

Prerequisites

There are three prerequisites that may have a major impact on successful attendance of this 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 from corporate strategy will be leveraged and applied extensively to the context of international business throughout this course.
2. This 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 would provide 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 connected with expansion into a foreign market. The project follows the structure of the course and entails the application of the core frameworks and concepts of each part of the course 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.

Students attending only the Global Strategy module will be assigned a smaller application task with a more limited scope.
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

First semester

Teaching language

English

Sustainable Development Goals

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