



Introduction to Strategic Management (BOEC0352)

Preliminary syllabus version February 5, 2025

Overview

The course introduces the concepts, tools, and principles of strategic management in today's global business context. The course emphasizes the distinctive perspective of the general manager who has to be attuned to forces in the organization's environment and within the organization that shape firm performance. Topics discussed during the course include understanding the firm's internal and external environment, competitive positioning, creating, and maintaining competitive advantage, strategy formulation, and strategy implementation. In addition to the lectures, students will be able to practically apply theoretical frameworks learned in a business strategy simulation.

Course Objectives

After the course, the participant should

- (1) know the main concepts of strategic management,
- (2) be able to apply the most common frameworks and tools of strategic management, and
- (3) have a basic understanding of how to think and act strategically.

Teaching Method and Materials

The course is taught by combining theory lectures, guest lectures by practitioners, mini case studies, a business strategy simulation, and the independent study of a textbook. The course combines a strong focus on concepts with an orientation toward application. By using mini-cases and a business strategy simulation to situate the concepts discussed, students can experience the application of the abstract concepts of strategy in concrete management situations.

The course will take place in-person in the University of Zurich classrooms. Course materials (lecture slides) will be provided on OLAT. We will provide video recordings of the lectures on OLAT based on technical availability. Please note that we cannot guarantee that all lectures are available by podcast and students not visiting the sessions do so at their own risk.

The course draws upon material from the following textbook:

Johnson, Gerry, Richard Whittington, Kevan Scholes, Duncan Angwin, and Patrick Regnér. *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases*. 13th edition. Harlow, United Kingdom: Pearson, 2023.

Using the 12th edition of the book is also possible.



Passing the Course

To pass the course, students need to pass the business simulation game and the final examination. Please pay close attention to the sections below detailing what passing requirements each element contains. **In short, students need to reach at least 50% of points in the final examination, contribute to group work in the simulation, and present their submission results in the last mandatory simulation session to pass the course.**

Simulation

The course includes a business strategy simulation. Failure to participate in the simulation leads to a failing grade in the overall course. **We will conduct a peer review of group contributions and free-riding will not be accepted.** At the end of the semester, each team will present their journey through the simulation by a brief 3-5 minutes reflection on their decisions and related performance in the simulation. **Attendance in this session is mandatory.** Throughout the semester, student groups will compete in a simulated marketplace against each other, practicing the role of general managers making strategic decisions for a simulated firm. The simulation includes four in-class sessions, self-managed group meetings, and the submission of decisions in the simulation system. We highly recommend visiting all simulation sessions to increase your chances of success in the simulation. Every team member of the best-performing teams will receive bonus points in their final exam based on their firms' competitive performance in the simulation. The exact distribution is subject to the number of teams and industries, and **students can get up to 5% of bonus points of the exam through the simulation.** As for the guest lecture (see below), this bonus only applies if a student passes the exam without it.

Exam

The final examination is scheduled for **02.06.2025, between 12:00-14:00. The exam is likely to take 60 minutes only.** The exam will be held in person at the University of Zurich classroom (for rooms see the course catalogue). The exam will be open book and will be based upon the lectures, the guest lectures, the textbook, and the strategy simulation. To pass the exam at least 50% of the total exam points are required. Bonus points are only added if a student passes the course without it. Please see the course catalogue for the room location.

Guest lectures

Students attending **all three** of the guest speaker sessions will receive a bonus of 5% in their final exam conditional that they pass the exam without a bonus. We expect students to be prepared for these sessions and actively ask questions. There will be questions in the exam related to the guest lectures.



Tentative Schedule of Sessions

Note that the order of sessions might change during the semester. Dates for topics, guest lectures & presentations are preliminary and subject to change – topics/order of individual lectures and guest presenters may change. Changes will be announced in class and posted on OLAT.

Date	Session	Simulation Schedule
17.02.2025	What is Strategy?	Read the simulation guide on OLAT
20.02.2025	Strategic Analysis I: Macro-Environmental Analysis	
24.02.2025	Strategic Analysis II: Industry Analysis	
27.02.2025	Strategic Analysis III: Internal Analysis	
03.03.2025	Creating Competitive Advantage	
06.03.2025	Competitive Dynamics	
10.03.2025	Simulation Session: Introduction to the Simulation	
13.03.2025	Simulation Session: Set-up & Trial Rounds	Practice Rounds
17.03.2025	Simulation Session: Theory and the Simulation	Practice Rounds
20.03.2025	Business Strategy	Round 1 Start
24.03.2025	Strategy in High-Technology Industries	
27.03.2025	Corporate and Strategy	Round 2 Start
31.03.2025	Strategic Choices: Organic Development, M&A and Alliances	
03.04.2025	Strategy Implementation I: Designing Organizational Structures	Round 3 Start
07.04.2025	Strategy Implementation II: Managing through Systems, Processes, and Managing Change	
10.04.2025	Strategy Evaluation and Performance Measurement	Round 4 Start
14.04.2025	Strategy Process	
17.04.2025	Guest Lecture: Anton Kotov, ABB Group SVP & Head of Corporate Strategy and M&A	Round 5 Start
05.05.2025	Guest Lecture: Patrick Spiller, Partner, Deloitte Consulting	
08.05.2025	Guest Speaker: Hannes Braendli, Bain, Partner Agility and Strategy	Round 6 Start
12.05.2025		Simulation End
15.05.2025		
19.05.2025	Simulation Session: Your Results & Presentations	Mandatory attendance
22.05.2025	Course Review, Exam Preview	
26.05.2025		
02.06.2025	Exam	

Housekeeping rules

Please, be mindful of some basic housekeeping rules for the course to avoid misunderstandings: Attendance in lectures is not mandatory except for the simulation lecture mentioned above; however, the exam will be at least partly based on material only discussed in class. All questions are welcome, however, to maximize everybody's learning and minimize misunderstandings, we expect you to ask questions (both on the content and on possible administrative issues such as process/grading and else) during the class (when everybody is still in the classroom) or submit these via email. Our assessment style is fact-based and is not based on personal networking/interaction capabilities. As such, we only use the student ID



while evaluating final examination responses. All communication at the Chair in International Management is expected to be in English.

Instructors and Contact Information

The lecturer of this course is Prof. Thomas Keil, the teaching assistants are Gian-Luca Asquini and Chaowei Zhu. For all enquiries, please contact us at gian-luca.asquini@business.uzh.ch and chaowei.zhu@business.uzh.ch.