# International business management

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***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to give a broad and critical understanding of the international business environment within which firms operate. The course provides students with the critical skills and practical tools to better understand the major international management issues and opportunities facing the firms’ internationalization process.

The course addresses the following main questions: (1) Why do firms expand abroad? (2) What do they bring abroad? (3) Where do firms go? (4) How do firms expand abroad? (5) Why are some companies successful in internationalising their business activities while others are not? (6) How do managers cope with the constraints and opportunities of managing the main firm functions they face when managing cross-border operations?

The above questions will be discussed by differentiating managing a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) from managing a large multinational enterprise (MNE).

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

* identify and interpret the phenomenon of globalization, de-globalization, fragmentation, and multipolarity and their major drivers, and geopolitical and international trade and international management implications. Students will also address the emerging managerial and ethical challenges and opportunities underpinning the rapidly changing global business environment and the need to strike a balance international business expansion goal and ethical, sustainable, environmentally friendly (net zero targets) and inclusive goals (knowledge);
* identify and interpret the theoretical and conceptual foundation regarding the fundamental managerial issues involved in doing business within an international environment (knowledge);
* analyze, interpret, discuss, and evaluate international business theories, models, business cases and empirical research data in order to transform them into relevant and actionable knowledge about the global business environment (intellectual skill);
* critically recognize, assess, and review how international business models and theories can be applied for effective and responsible decision-making practices and problem-solving in complex global organizations (transferable skill);
* operate effectively within inclusive multicultural team involved in international business activities by different types of international organizations (transferable skill).

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module 1

Globalization, de-globalization, fragmentation, and multipolar phenomena. The forces shaping globalization and de-globalization. Pro and cons of globalization and de-globalization. The changing world order. Global institutions and regional economic integration (WTO, IMF, The World Bank, UN, G20). Level of integration, free trade area, custom union, common market, economic union, political union. International trade and international trade theories and policies (i.e., mercantilism, absolute advantage and comparative advantage, Heckscher-Olin Theory, product life-cycle theory, national competitive advantage theory). Defining the business: Multinational enterprises (MNEs) vs SMEs and Born Globals (BGs). Foreign market entry mode: Exporting, importing, foreign direct investments, and M&A. Internationalization process. Market/country selection process. Market attractiveness and competitive strength. Foreign exchange market. Cross-cultural management and ethical issues in IB.

Module 2

Managing international business and multinational firms: international marketing and international strategy (global standardization, international, transnational or “glocal”, and multidomestic or “localization” strategies). Sustainable business models and sustainable value creation strategies as a source of competitive advantage. International growth strategies and models. Standardization versus adaptation in the international strategy. The International Structural Stages Model. How firms develop competitive advantages through internationalization: the value creation process for global competitiveness. International business strategy and sustainability. Socially responsible and inclusive growth strategies. Green Economy and Circular Economy strategies. Pursuing the triple bottom-line in international business (i.e., expands conventional business success metrics to include an organization's contributions to social well-being, environmental health, and a just economy). Developing international corporate sustainability strategies for pursuing expansionary goals and Net Zero targets. International business and management in the digital era (i.e., eCommerce, robots, automation, deep learning, machine learning, A.I., Generative A.I., Big Data, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, 3D printing, 5G networks, Cloud Computing, Edge Computing, IaaS, PaaS, SaaS, and AI-as-a-Service models, IoT, metaverse, blockchain, Web 3.0 economy). International firms and organizational architecture. Global human resources management. Staffing policy in international firms. Ethical leadership. Global production, sustainable supply chains and decarbonization goals, global logistics, Outsourcing and logistics, just-in-time inventory, and make or buy decisions.

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

*Required readings*

E-book version of: Hill, Hult (2021). *International Business. Competing in the Business,* McGraw-Hill, 13th edition.

Additional readings are detailed in the teaching materials published in Blackboard. Exams will cover the contents of the course pack (ebook, lectures slides and additional readings/materials available on Blackboard) material.

Recommended journals

*Journal focused on international business management*: Journal of International Business Studies. Journal of World Business. International Business Review. Journal of International Marketing. International Marketing Review. Journal of International Management. Global Strategy Journal. Cross Cultural & Strategic Management. International Journal of Emerging Markets. Thunderbird International Business Review. Management International Review. European Journal of International Management.

*Other relevant journals*:

The International Journal of Human Resource Management. International Review of Financial Analysis. Research in International Business and Finance. Journal of International Financial Markets, Institutions and Money. Asia Pacific Journal of Management. Emerging Markets Finance and Trade. Emerging Markets Review. Academy of Management Review. Journal of Management. Journal of Management Studies. Strategic Management Journal. Journal of Business Ethics. Business Ethics Quarterly. Journal of Environmental Economics and Management. International Journal of Management Reviews. Supply Chain Management-an International Journal. Journal of Small Business Management.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Teaching methods will stimulate students’ participation and active interactions between students, lecturers and guest speakers. Case histories, business cases and examples on the field will be frequently discussed. During the course guest speaker sessions will be hosted with the specific aim of showing how the tools/frameworks introduced in the lessons work in real business-life contingencies. Precondition to achieve active participation is that students prepare in advance all materials required for the weekly lectures.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students can choose between a “multiple assessment route” and a “single assessment ruote.”

*Multiple assessment route (Attending students)*

Students are evaluated through: class participation (5%); a written final exam (1 hr), including 15 multiple choice questions (15% of the final grade; each question carries two points and no penalties will be applied for wrong answers) and 2 open-ended questions which may include both pure theoretical questions and practical examples regarding the implementation of international business theories (40% of the final grade - each question is equally graded); the group report (35% of the final grade); and a peer assessment regarding the individual contribution in the groupwork (5% of the final grade). Precondition to achieve active participation is that students prepare in advance all materials required for the weekly lectures (readings and cases). For a PASS in the multiple assessment route, both the final written exam and the group report must be a PASS. When a PASS is achieved in the group report, the final written exam can be taken in 5 exam dates (i.e., the grade achieved in the group report will be kept for the 5 scheduled exam dates). A minimum attendance of 75% is mandatory for a final PASS in the multiple assessment route.

*Single assessment route (Not attending students)*

Students are evaluated through: a written final exam (1 hr), including 15 multiple choice questions (15% of the final grade; each question carries two points and no penalties will be applied for wrong answers) and 2 open-ended questions which include both pure theoretical questions and practical examples regarding the implementation of international business theories (40% of the final grade - each question is equally graded); an individual report (45% of the final grade). The written exam is scheduled in 5 exam dates throughout the a.y. For a PASS in the single assessment route, both the written exam and the individual report must be a PASS. Even though attendance is not mandatory for a PASS in the single assessment route, it is strongly recommended.

*Assessment method – further information regarding the group report (multiple assessment route)*

Groups (4/5 students) will be formed during class by students themselves. Groups have to be heterogeneous in terms of gender, nationalities, status (i.e. erasmus vs local student), skills (e.g. working experience, skills, etc). Students have to produce a group report that should be around 5,000 words including the executive summary, but excluding tables, references and appendices. Further details regarding the output of the assignment will be given during the course and made available on Blackboard.

In addition to the group report, each student is required to submit one individual diary (paper and/or electronic copy) on the same day of the group report. The individual diary made of list of meetings detailing how the work was organized and distributed amongst members (one per student). On the course page, students find a template for the individual diary where to give an individual assessment of the contribution given by each individual student to the group work. Each student has to upload his/her individual diary in Blackboard under “Valutazioni/Evaluation” on the same day of the report. The individual diary represents the input for a peer assessment of the contribution given by each individual student to the group work. Students who, without reasonable cause (e.g. continuous or recurrent ill-health, as evidenced by medical certificates), do not fully participate in the group work, or prevent others from doing so, will be penalized and may fail the course. We reserve the right to give students who do not participate in the project a zero grade. We reserve the right to remove disruptive students from a team and to substitute an individual project for them.

*Assessment method – further information regarding the individual report (single assessment route)*

The report should be around 4,000 words including the executive summary, but excluding tables, references and appendices. Further details regarding the output of the assignment will be given during the course and made available on Blackboard.

The submission of the report is the same as for attending students. For other exams sections from January onwards, the submission is two weeks before the exam.

Assessment criteria

The student's preparation is evaluated according to the following grading scale:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Commmon description** | **Open questions** | **Group report, Individual report** |
| **30 - 30 cum laude** | Excellent quality showing a full achievement of learning outcomes beyond normal expectations. | Excellent breadth and depth of knowledge of subject matterFull understanding of questionsOriginal and very well formulated arguments, strongly connecting different knowledge objects | Full understanding of multi-cultural business contextsStrong and fully rigourous use of evidenceExcellent efficacy of applied analysis, with many original and critical arguments |
| **27-29** | Very good quality showing that learning outcomes are surpassed | Good breadth and depth of knowledge of subject matterVery good understanding of questionsClearly developed arguments, with some original arguments and connections between knowledge objects | Very good understanding of multi-cultural business contextsVery good use of evidenceVery good efficacy of applied analysis, with some original and critical arguments |
| **24-26** | Good quality showing that learning outcomes are achieved and to some extent surpassed | Adequate breadth of knowledge of subject matterQuite complete understanding of questionsClearly developed arguments, with few original arguments | Quite complete understanding of multi-cultural business contextsAdequate use of evidenceAdequate efficacy of applied analysisOriginality and critical thinking are present, but limited |
| **21-23** | Basic quality with clear evidence that learning outcomes are achieved | Basic breadth of knowledge of subject matterBasic understanding of questions with some inadequaciesDeveloped arguments, without original arguments | Basic understanding of multi-cultural business contextsBasic use of evidence with some inadequaciesBasic applied analysis with some inadequacies and without original and critical argumentations |
| **18-20** | Sufficient quality showing that learning outcomes are being achieved | Sufficient knowledge of subject matter, even though breadth and depth of knowledge are lackingPartial understanding of questionsArgumentation is present, but limited | Partial understanding of multi-cultural business contextsPartial use of evidenceApplied analysis is framed, but limitedArgumentation is present, but limited |
| **0-17**  | Unsatisfactory quality showing that learning outcomes are not achieved | Absent or poor knowledge of subject matterAbsent understanding of questionsArgumentation is absent | Absent or poor understanding of multi-cultural business contextsAbsent or wrong use of evidenceAbsent or wrong applied analysisArgumentation is absent |

The student's class participation is evaluated according to the following grading scale:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score (equivalent to 5% of the final grade)** | **Description**  |
| **+1,5**  | Excellent breadth and depth of interventions, with many and very well formulated arguments regarding the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the discussed topics Excellent discussion of empirical evidences, with many original and critical arguments regarding case studies and guest speeches (and site visits, if applicable) |
| **+1** | Good breadth and depth of interventions, with some well formulated arguments regarding the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the discussed topics Good discussion of empirical evidencee, with some original and critical arguments regarding case studies and guest speeches (and site visits, if applicable) |
| **0** | Absence/meaningless of formulated arguments regarding the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the discussed topicsAbsence/meaningless of original and critical arguments regarding the discussion of case studies and guest speeches (and site visits, if applicable) |

The student's peer assessment that is an evaluation of the contribution of your fellow team members during the group project follows this scale:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3**  | contribution above group average  |
| **2**  |  average contribution (compared to rest of group)  |
| **1**  |  contribution below group average |
| **0**  |  no contribution |
| **-1** | hindrance to the group efforts |

Each member of the group should fill the form for the individual diary provided on Blackboard and give justification of their ratings. Your assessment will be combined with those of your other group members and may be used to moderate individual marks for the group work.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

N. ECTS - 8

Enrollment requirements – No prerequisite courses are required to attend this course.

Language of instructions - English

Attendance – A minimum attendance of 75% is mandatory for a final PASS in the multiple assessment route. Even though attendance is not mandatory for a PASS in the single assessment route, it is strongly recommended.

Associated courses – Corporate strategy, International corporate finance, Managerial economics, Project management, Supply chain management

International dimension – International teaching materials are used throughout the course.

Business connection - The course makes extensive use of contemporary business cases and examples.

Professional context - International managers and entrepreneurs are responsible for the proper design and implementation of well-structured and articulated internalization plans to explore growth opportunities in the global marketplace. In todays’ highly interconnected, digital, globalized, environmentally and sustainability-oriented world, managers are required to master the use of analytical tools; big data, and to formulate and executive complex business strategies and decisions based on timely, accurate, and relevant information and effective business planning processes.

Further information – Additional information regarding the course schedule and delivery, learning assessment, expectation and policies, general announcements, and additional course materials will be posted on Blackboard.

*Expectations and policy*

Use of devices - All smartphones, tablets and other electronic devices should be turned off during class. Use of laptops in the class is a privilege and not a right. Laptops are to be used for class activities only. If you are seen surfing, chatting, e-mailing, etc., you will lose laptop privileges.

*Course schedule*

The course schedule will be made available weekly and published on Blackboard following the scheme below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| #Session/Date | Teacher | Topics | Required readings/case |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)