



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Corporate Strategy

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Course aims and intended learning outcomes

The field of corporate strategy is becoming increasingly important in the business world. Globalisation, deregulation, technological change, the evolution of the institutional contexts and the emergence of new markets and industries are reshaping the corporate strategy of the firms and motivating a change in the companies' boundaries. Drawing on these factors, the course focuses on the strategic management of multi-products, multiple locations and multi-businesses firms.

The course answers the central questions that confront every strategist: What are the firms' resources? How can they be developed and acquired? In which businesses should the firm compete? What are the most appropriate models for growth in different settings (i.e. mergers, acquisitions, alliances and franchising)? How are multi-products, multi-location and multi-businesses firms managed? How social and environmental issues impact on CS? Can corporate social responsibility increase the firms' performance?

By the end of the course, students will:

- be knowledgeable about the concept of corporate advantage, its sources and recognize it in real scenarios;
- know strategies to create value by coordinating strategies and activities in more than one industry with proactive and defensive actions;
- be able to understand existing corporate strategies and make recommendations for horizontal, vertical and geographical changes in the scope of a firm that create value.
- develop the capability to work in a team and manage complex projects;
- be able to collect and use public data to understand a company's corporate strategy;
- be familiar with corporate strategy terminology and able to communicate and present corporate strategies;
- be equipped with the knowledge basis and capacity to collect additional information that is needed to tackle more advanced strategic topics.

Course content

- Introduction to corporate strategy (CS): The evolution of the notion over time, the central role of resources for corporate level strategy.
- Analysis and evolution of businesses portfolio: Core business and diversification. Portfolio matrix. Criteria to enter in new businesses and expansion modes. Diversification and financial performance.
- Structure and management of multi-business firm: Role and dimension of headquarters. Control and cohesion mechanisms. Resources and competencies transfer. The internal entrepreneurship.
- Financial perspective of CS: Assess the financial equilibrium. Firms' values from accounting and financial perspective. The corporate plan.
- Embedding sustainability in CS: Sustainability and shared value creation. The path to embed social and environmental issues in CS.
- Dynamic of CS: The rationales of firms' crisis. Fix the existing problems and manage the change.



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Reading list

Attending students

Articles, business cases and other readings will be provided at the beginning of the course and uploaded on Blackboard.

Selected chapters from O. FURRER, Corporate level strategy. Theory and applications, Routledge, Abington, Oxon, 2016.

Non-attending students

O. FURRER, Corporate level strategy. Theory and applications, Routledge, Abington, Oxon, 2016.

Articles, business cases and other readings will be provided at the beginning of the course and uploaded on Blackboard.

Teaching method

Course activities consist of a series of lectures, class discussions of case histories.

Assessment method and criteria

In the case of attending students, the grade for the course will be determined by a group project (50%) and a written exam (50%). The group project will be based on analyses of the existing corporate strategy and the development of a strategic operation (for instance: acquisition of real existing firm; strategic projects to be internally developed; joint ventures with an existing firm, strategic partnership, etc.) to be implemented by a real company. The group project will be aimed at assessing the ability to understand existing corporate strategies and make recommendations, the capability to work in a team and manage complex projects, the capacity to collect and use public data and the familiarity with corporate strategy terminology and able to communicate and present corporate strategies. The written exam will be based on three essay questions and it will assess the students' knowledge about concepts of corporate strategy. The exam will be held during the first official exam session.

Students who (i) choose not to take the project work, (ii) fail the project work, or (iii) choose to retake the exam despite passing it, will be offered a comprehensive final exam according to the official exam schedule. The comprehensive final exam, will be a written exam based on six essay questions and it will assess both student's knowledge and skills about corporate strategy.

Notes and prerequisites

Students will take part in the course are required to actively attend lectures; to take part in discussions on case histories or examples of concrete situations, and to deliver public presentations in class when scheduled. Students are also required to participate to a group project, where they will analyse the CS of an existing large firm and propose a future strategic initiative for the company (buy an existing company, sell a company of the group, start a joint venture, implement a sustainability policy, etc.).