

Engineering Tripos Part IIB, 4E11: Strategic Management, 2021-22

Module Leader

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Timing and Structure

Lent term. 8 sessions + coursework.

Aims

The aims of the course are to:

- provide participants with an opportunity to discuss the strategic challenges facing managers in today's business environment and to develop a facility for critical strategic thinking.

Objectives

As specific objectives, by the end of the course students should be able to:

- show a critical, reflective approach to managerial concepts.
- show familiarity with some of the key models used in strategic analysis and have some understanding of their application and limitations.
- show a broad overview of managerial disciplines and their interdependency.
- understand some of the current "hot" topics in strategic management.

Content

Strategic management involves the comprehensive analysis of a firm and its environment and the development of a course of action for the firm. It is therefore a comprehensive topic drawing together themes from marketing, organisation design, economics, and other business disciplines. The primary aim of this module is to provide participants with an opportunity to discuss the strategic challenges facing managers in today's business environment and to develop a facility for critical strategic thinking. This will require participants not only to understand the course material, but also to apply it to business situations through the analysis of businesses cases in class. This overview of strategy will provide a broad framework for future management study, and a context for engineering practice.

Strategic Management

The lectures will cover a range of topics that provide a basic introduction to strategic management. In each session, the lecturer will introduce a basic concept and explain its role in the strategic management process. The class will then analyse a case or discuss the situation facing some well-known firm in order to explore the application of the concept. The module will cover eight topics.

1. Course Introduction and Industry Analysis
2. Generic Strategies and Competitive Advantage
3. Strategic Innovation
4. Corporate Strategy
5. Strategic Turnaround: How do firms change their strategies successfully?

6. Strategic Failure: Why do strategies fail?
7. Platform Businesses and Non-market strategy
8. Organization, Strategy, and Society

Coursework

Coursework

Coursework activity: Final

You will prepare a complete strategic analysis of the current and future prospects for a company of your choice. The paper should contain a comprehensive industry and market analysis, including a detailed analysis of relevant competitors, and conclude with strategic recommendations (including corporate and business strategies) for top management. The selection of companies for strategic analysis is entirely up to each student; however, firms in industries that are in transition or firms that are undergoing major strategic changes are potentially more suitable for analysis.

Learning objective:

- To get a real life sense of strategy making and implementation by conducting a strategic analysis of an actual firm undergoing strategic challenges.
- The aim is to apply the concepts of strategic management discussed in class (both external and internal analyses) to a real life situation and achieve a better understanding of the literature through application and learning by doing.

Grading criteria:

1. How insightful is your diagnosis and solution?
2. How clearly have you articulated the key issue at hand. For instance, if you pick Vodafone, try to articulate why it faces the challenge you have identified, and what its implications are for its future.
3. The originality and quality of your analysis. The point of the exercise is not to just cut and paste from existing articles that discuss your case. Can you bring better analytical skills to the case at hand? Can you make an original point about the nature of the challenge? Most analysis in the business press tends to be somewhat shallow. Try to rise above it using better analytical skills.
4. How well substantiated are your claims? Are your claims supported by evidence?
5. Finally, is it coherent and logical? We do not want analysis that is fragmented and contradicts itself. Try to make your essay coherent so it flows logically.

Booklists

Please refer to the Booklist for Part IIB Courses for references to this module, this can be found on the associated Moodle course.

Examination Guidelines

Please refer to [Form & conduct of the examinations](#) [2].

UK-SPEC

This syllabus contributes to the following areas of the [UK-SPEC](#) [3] standard:

[Toggle display of UK-SPEC areas.](#)

GT1

Develop transferable skills that will be of value in a wide range of situations. These are exemplified by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Higher Level Key Skills and include problem solving, communication, and working with others, as well as the effective use of general IT facilities and information retrieval skills. They also include planning self-learning and improving performance, as the foundation for lifelong learning/CPD.

IA1

Apply appropriate quantitative science and engineering tools to the analysis of problems.

IA2

Demonstrate creative and innovative ability in the synthesis of solutions and in formulating designs.

KU1

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of essential facts, concepts, theories and principles of their engineering discipline, and its underpinning science and mathematics.

KU2

Have an appreciation of the wider multidisciplinary engineering context and its underlying principles.

S2

Extensive knowledge and understanding of management and business practices, and their limitations, and how these may be applied appropriately to strategic and tactical issues.

P3

Understanding of contexts in which engineering knowledge can be applied (e.g. operations and management, technology, development, etc).

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Links

[1] <mailto:lp433@cam.ac.uk>

[2] <https://teaching24-25.eng.cam.ac.uk/content/form-conduct-examinations>

[3] <https://teaching24-25.eng.cam.ac.uk/content/uk-spec>