

**BUSADMIN P720
Strategic Management
Winter 2026 Course Outline**

**Strategic Management
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University**

COURSE OBJECTIVE

As the capstone to McMaster's MBA program, this course is designed to unify the functional knowledge you gained during the program. This course will also give you a working knowledge of how firms gain and sustain competitive advantage. In sum, this course will enhance your capacity to do the job of a general manager responsible for setting strategy and managing performance.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Candice Chow
Instructor
chowc28@mcmaster.ca
Office: RJC 231

TA Information
Vineet Nagia
vineet.mcmaster@gmail.com

Ayush Suri
suria@mcmaster.ca

Office Hours: By Appointment – Zoom and in-person office hours will be posted around critical deliverable due dates

Course website: <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value: 3	Leadership: No	IT skills: No	Global view: Yes
Avenue: Yes	Ethics: Yes	Numeracy: Yes	Written skills: Yes
Participation: Yes	Innovation: Yes	Group work: Yes	Oral skills: Yes
Evidence-based: Yes	Experiential: Yes	Final Exam: Yes	Guest speaker(s): Yes

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Strategic management focuses on the concept of strategic analysis, formulation, and implementation by exploring the functions and nature of general management. The course serves as an opportunity to develop skills for strategic thinking and analysis, leadership, communication, teamwork, and cross-functional integration. This course is taught primarily through the case-method and involves readings, lectures, videos, exercises, a simulation, and a live case exam.

What you will learn in this course has utility beyond the senior leadership of organizations. Increasingly, organizations need employees that can think strategically and understand how their actions contribute to the overall success of the firm. What you will learn is applicable to large corporations, but applies to organizations of all kinds, including start-ups, non-profits, and government organizations. The cases and concepts of the course are used to explore the strategic challenges facing such organizations today. The materials used in the course encompass a wide range of industries, businesses, and issues to provide depth and breadth of experience.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to complete the following key tasks:

- Analyze industry structure and environmental trends.
- Assess how a firm's resources and capabilities generate competitive advantage.
- Formulate new strategies under different contexts.
- Explain how firms add value to multiple businesses.
- Implement strategies and organize the firm for success.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Course content, readings and case materials

- <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca> \$ FREE

Reference Materials

- [required] A collection of online readings

**Note, one required and a few further reading selections are Harvard Business Review which must be searched through the McMaster Library. Doing this reduces costs that would be associated with adding it to your coursepack.*

Cases and Readings

- Please Avenue for Update. Will be acquired through HBR

\$FREE

Top Hat membership

- See below for Join Code

\$ FREE

Airline Simulation

- Credit card required \$ 44.95 USD
- Via Email Invitation. <https://www.interpretive.com/>

Top Hat

We will be using the Top Hat (www.tophat.com) classroom response system in class. You will be able to follow the class discussion and submit answers to in-class questions using smartphones, tablets, or laptops.

You can visit the Top Hat Overview (<https://success.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide>) within the Top Hat Success Center which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as provides a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, please contact their Support Team directly by way of email (support@tophat.com), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

OPTIONAL COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Final reading list will be posted on Avenue

EVALUATION

Components and Weights

The course offers a balance of evaluation methods. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Simulation	Strategy Airline Simulation (shared)	30%
Engagement	Classroom Engagement (individual)	25%
Live Case as Final Exam	Live Case and Final Case Exam (shared and individual)	45%
Total		100%

Note: students will remain in the same group for each of the shared components of the course.

NOTE: The use of a McMaster standard calculator is allowed during examinations in this course. See McMaster calculator policy at the following URL:

www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/UndergraduateExaminationsPolicy.pdf

Grade Conversion

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A+	90-100	12
A	85-89	11
A-	80-84	10
B+	75-79	9
B	70-74	8
B-	60-69	7
F	00-59	0

Course Deliverables

Strategy Airline Simulation (30% shared)

In the strategy airline simulation, you will run a fledgling regional airline in a computer simulated world. This simulation provides an environment where students can design, implement, and refine their strategy in a dynamic context. Students compete in groups against their classmates, making decisions across functional management areas related to aircraft acquisition, marketing, operations, human resource development, and financing.

The simulation is an exciting way to explore the complexities and challenges of running a business and integrating multiple functional areas.

Students will work together in groups of about 4-5, to compete against their classmates in the airline simulation. The airline simulation takes place in two stages.

Practice and dashboard stage (20%). Students will gain access to the simulation in late September and begin a series of 3 practice rounds through February. The objective of this first stage is two-fold. First, it should familiarize students with the simulation and how the system functions. Second, students will use these practice rounds to develop a dashboard support tool to assist strategic decision making during #simulationfestsaturday. This assignment responds to requests by students for opportunities to develop data analytical skills and experiences.

This will include a **Dashboard Support Spreadsheet** and a **Strategy PowerPoint Deck**.

For more details about this assignment, see the Simulation Dashboard Assignment pdf on Avenue.

Late dashboards (spreadsheet and PowerPoint) will be penalized at a rate of 25% per day following the due date.

Simulation Performance (10%)

The second stage begins on **Simulation Fest Saturday from 9am until 2pm**. It runs for **9 simulation decisions** over an exciting on-campus event. (total 10 decisions). Check the Course schedule near the end of the syllabus for detailed dates. In this simulation you compete against other teams in this class. Your team's simulation grade is determined using a ranked score of stock price (50%) and cumulative net income (50%); ties go to cumulative net income. In addition to the highest grade, the names of the team members with the highest performance will be immortalized on a plaque on a course trophy displayed prominently at the Ron Joyce Centre. Bragging rights included.

All students must be present to be qualified for the group marks.

Simulation Fest Day Overview* (This may change slightly)

9:00 - 9:45 Round 2

9:45 - 10:30 Round 3

10:30 - 11:00 Round 4

11:00 - 11:30 Round 5

11:30 - 11:50 Round 6

11:50- 12:10 Round 7

Pizza Time

12:10 - 12:40 Round 8

12:40 - 1:00 Round 9

1:00 - 1:20 Round 10

1:20 - 2:00 Deliberation

Classroom Engagement (25% individual)

In-Class Quizzes, Reflection and Activities. Each class in this course focuses on a particular topic important for properly understanding strategic management. To guide your learning, during class you will answer questions pertaining to a) the prepared case, b) short answer and multiple-choice on concept comprehension, c) short reflections on key strategic concepts, and or d) groupwork activities. To facilitate this the Top Hat presentation platform may be used.

Oral Participation. The daily classroom discussion represents a unique opportunity for you to develop and enhance your confidence and skill in articulating a personal position, reacting to new ideas, and receiving and providing critical feedback from a group of assertive and demanding colleagues. Much of your learning will come from these classroom experiences.

You are expected to come to each class having read cases and assigned readings with a readiness and willingness to contribute to class discussion. Close to half of each class will be focused on case discussions. It is not possible to contribute without having sufficiently prepared for the case. Analyzing the case using the tools and frameworks from the textbook and past classes will give you valuable insights.

A good contribution involves presenting a clear opinion, expressing it civilly, and supporting the opinion with sound logic. Every student shares the responsibility of creating an environment where each member of the class feels comfortable offering his or her opinion. Learning from others and contributing to the learning of others through the experience and insights you share is a key part of this learning process. Contribution will be graded based on quality, quantity, and consistency. Some of the things that will determine a contribution include:

- a) Relevance – Do your comments speak directly to the issues and concepts being addressed? Do they extend our understanding of those issues or concepts? Do they reflect your adequate preparation to participate in the discussion?
- b) Additivity – Do your comments reflect active listening to the comments of other class members? Have they incorporated insights introduced earlier and built upon them?
- c) Substance – Do your comments make a real contribution to the ideas being exchanged? Has anything new been gained from your contribution to the discussion?
- d) Persuasiveness – Have your points been well articulated, argued, and supported? Are your arguments convincing?
- e) Questioning – Have your comments reasonably questioned the comments of others or challenged their assumptions without disparaging the person who offered them?
- f) Amount of participation (this does NOT mean dominating the discussion, rather frequency of additive comments).

Participation will be graded via Peer Review. Students will be selected or volunteer to peer review classroom engagement. Students engaging in this activity will be given 100% for the oral participation for that class. A template will be provided and found on Avenue.

Note: All students are expected to attend ALL classes, this is important as you need to build strong group dynamics to tackle group projects and develop team and leadership skills. Missing more than 2 classes could render you ZERO for the whole 25% of the Classroom Engagement marks.

Note: During Case Discussions, you will be asked to put away your computer, phone, tablet and any electronic devices. Please bring printed material if required, pens and papers for note taking.

Live Case (25% individual) and (20% shared)

Your final exam is a live case that starts on the first day of class. Depending on the case, you may need to engage with the client, ask questions and clarify the problem throughout the duration of the course.

You may be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) in support of this project.

The final exam takes place in four parts; two of which you will work in your groups to accomplish.

PART 1: Live Case - Analysis (Shared 10%)

In part one, students will work in their course groups to conduct analysis of both the resources and capabilities within the firm as well as the external environment in which the firm is operating. Students will use knowledge gained in the course to apply strategic analysis frameworks to this analysis. This case analysis will be graded both on thoroughness and detail as well as how well the analysis highlights the “so what” implications of the internal and external analysis.

Note: While a SWOT analysis can be a useful brainstorming exercise, the strategy tools taught in the class are better ways of organizing this information. Strengths and weaknesses are best organized through VRIO analysis, value chain, and strategic understanding through generic strategy identification and strategy diamond resource analysis whereas opportunities and threats are best organized through PEST, Porter's, Strategic Groups. Seek to show a holistic understanding of how these tools inter-relate.

Analysis portion of report **8-10 pages**, 12-point Times New Roman, single space, 1-inch margins. This page count is inclusive of exhibits and figures. Endnotes can take additional pages as necessary. Make sure to use figures to economize on space. The report must be completed in essay format.

Cite your work using the end note formatting found here though I am comfortable with Chicago or APA style: <https://library.mcmaster.ca/sites/default/files/businesscitation.pdf>

Student groups will submit their solutions through dropbox in Avenue. Submissions will be subject to the turnitin.com service and will be reviewed in accordance with the university's academic integrity policy. Please be careful to read the case exam instructions carefully.

Live Case analysis will be due **Sunday February 15 at 11:59pm** to dropbox. Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 25% per day after the due date.

PART 2: Live Case Strategic Gap (**Individual 10%**)

Students will submit a document outlining the strategic gap they intend to address in your Live Case Exam solution. Strategic gaps constitute mismatches between and among a firm's internal resources/capabilities, the external environment, and the firm's intended and realized strategy. Properly articulating a strategic gap is critical to a comprehensive live case solution as it focuses effort on a strategic solution. *These strategic gap submissions must be completed individually.*

Live Case Strategic Gaps will consist of **maximum 2 pages**, 12-point Times New Roman, single space, 1-inch margins. Additional pages for supporting or illustrative figures and tables are permitted. *Note: if you want specific feedback on the Strategic Gap Analysis, please reach out to your TA or your instructor.*

Cite your work using the end note formatting found here though I am comfortable with Chicago or APA style: <https://library.mcmaster.ca/sites/default/files/businesscitation.pdf>

Students will submit their solutions through dropbox in Avenue. Submissions will be subject to the turnitin.com service and will be reviewed in accordance with the university's academic integrity policy.

Your Live Case Strategic Gap will be due to **Sunday March 22 at 11:59pm**. Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 25% per day after the due date.

PART 3: Live Case Exam (Individual 15%)

Students will submit solutions to the live case exam. These solutions constitute the recommendations you as a consultant to the client are making. This case exam will be graded on how well the proposed solution demonstrates an understanding of the client's strategy, an assessment of strengths and weaknesses including internal and external strategic fit, as well as how proposed solutions are argued to improve strategic fit and performance. *Each case solution must be completed individually.*

Live Case Exam portion **maximum of 7 pages**, 12-point Times New Roman, single space, 1-inch margins. This page count is *inclusive* of exhibits and figures. The report must be completed in essay format. Endnotes and Cover Page can take additional pages as necessary. Make sure to use figures to economize on space. The report must be completed in essay format. Long reports will be penalized at a rate of 10% per page.

Cite your work using the end note formatting found here though I am comfortable with Chicago or APA style: <https://library.mcmaster.ca/sites/default/files/businesscitation.pdf>. Cite your group report like an existing published work such as: "Group 5 Report, 2024". Do not append your group report to the submission as this will activate the plagiarism detection tool.

Students will submit their solutions through dropbox in Avenue. Submissions will be subject to the turnitin.com service and will be reviewed in accordance with the university's academic integrity policy. Please be careful to read the case exam instructions carefully.

Your final solution to the case will be due to **Sunday March 29 at 11:59pm**. Exams that are handed in late will be penalized at a rate of 25% per day.

The case exam is considered the final comprehensive evaluation component of this course. As such, performance on this exam is critical for successful completion of this course.

Note: Due to tight turnaround time between this case exam and final client presentation, no individual feedback will be given. Peer review of the Live Case Exam will be facilitated within the project group.

Leverage the peer review and group discussions to facilitate the completion of the final presentation. Additional feedback can be sought by contacting your TA or your instructor via office hours.

PART 4: Presentation to Executives / Panel of Judges (**Shared 10%**)

Following submission of the individual portion of the case exam, students will work in their course groups. They will share and then discuss their individual case exam solutions to arrive at a final recommendation and solution for the client executives. In these groups, students will then prepare a **10-minute** presentation with supporting documentation for delivery as a final exam. Groups will have an **additional 5 minutes** to answer questions. This presentation will take place on the final day of class during normal class time.

Presentations will be graded based on four elements:

1. **Strategic Gap:** The presentation of a clear, concise, and well supported strategic gap. This includes supporting the explanation with key takeaways from strategic analysis covered in the course (i.e. Porter's, Value chain, Strategy Diamond, etc.). This problem may be articulated in terms of a mismatch between a firm's strategy and external environment and/or internal capabilities and features.
2. **Strategic Solution:** A clearly articulated strategic solution including why that solution is appropriate for the identified problem. Stronger solutions clearly explain how the strategic solution addresses mismatches of strategy and external and/or internal analyses.
3. **Implementation.** A well detailed implementation plan that includes short, medium, and long-term action items, key performance indicators (KPIs) and risks. Financials are required. While solutions do not need to be fully costed, groups should be able to answer questions about costs of the proposed strategy, revenue impacts and rough payback periods. *A lack of financials will result in a 20% grade penalty.*
4. **Professionalism.** Presentations should be professional which includes appropriate attire, clarity of presentation, and well answered questions. Stronger presentations pay attention to client branding including current logos and appropriate firm colours.

Please submit presentations files and any other material through Avenue 1 hour prior to class time. Penalty of 25% will be applied for late submission. Zero mark will be given if students are on-show or miss their presentation timeslot

Note: A peer evaluation must be submitted. And all students must present on the final presentation day to be qualified for the 10%. Instructor reserves the right to allocate 2.5% of the 10% to individual performance based on presentation performance and peer assessment.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students that are uncomfortable in directly approaching an instructor regarding a course concern may send a confidential and anonymous email to the respective Area Chair or Associate Dean:

<http://mbastudent.degrote.mcmaster.ca/contact/anonymous/>

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Administrative Assistant.

Instructors are encouraged to conduct an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery. Instructors should provide evaluation feedback for at least 10% of the final grade to students prior to Week #8 in the term.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at:

www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

Students are responsible for being aware of and demonstrating behaviour that is honest and ethical in their academic work. Such behaviour includes:

- following the expectations articulated by instructors for referencing sources of information and for group work;
- asking for clarification of expectations as necessary;
- identifying testing situations that may allow copying;
- preventing their work from being used by others (e.g., protecting access to computer files); and
- adhering to the principles of academic integrity when conducting and reporting research.

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ONLINE ELEMENT

P720 uses some online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course.

Students may be required to use the Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor. The Respondus LockDown Browser is a downloadable program that allows a student to take an Avenue to Learn quiz in a secure environment. Quizzes can be set to use LockDown Browser or LockDown Browser.

For more details about McMaster's use of Respondus Lockdown Browser please go to
<https://avenuehelp.mcmaster.ca/exec/respondus-lockdown-browser-and-respondus-monitor/>

The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses online elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor. XXXXXXXX

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx, Teams, or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ATTENDANCE

Arriving late or missing class disrupts the learning experience for both you and your peers. Punctuality and attendance are crucial to maintaining a respectful, professional and productive environment for everyone, including our faculty.

Instructors may use Top Hat in their course in a variety of ways, including to capture attendance in their classes. Attendance is recorded by submitting a unique 4-digit code displayed in your physical classroom using your personal device.

MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

Missed Mid-Term Examinations / Tests / Class Participation

Please do not use the online [McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#) as this is for Undergraduate students only. The MBA program will not accept an MSAF.

When students miss regularly scheduled term work which contributes 10% or more to the final grade, for legitimate reasons as determined by the DSB Student Services – Academic Office (DSSAO (DSB Student Services Academic Office)), the activity necessary to compensate for the missed work will be determined by the course instructor. The compensatory activities assigned will vary with the nature of the course and the missed requirement. They include, but are not restricted to, an alternative assignment, a rescheduled midterm exam, or re-weighting the marks for the missed component to other mark components. Documentation explaining such missed work must be provided to the DSSAO (DSB Student Services Academic Office) within five (5) working days of the scheduled date for completion of the work.

Acceptable reasons for missed work, along with the [Petition for Missed Term Work](#) and the [MBA Student McMaster University Student Health Certificate](#), can be found on the DeGroote MBA Student website (mbastudent.degrote.mcmaster.ca). Please direct any questions about acceptable documentation to the MBA Academic Advisors (askmba@mcmaster.ca).

University policy states that a student may submit a maximum of three (3) [Petition for Missed Term Work](#) per academic year, after which the student must meet with the Director of the program.

If term work is missed without an approved reason, students will receive a grade of zero (0) for that component.

Missed Final Examinations

Students must be available for the duration of the posted exam period regardless of their personal exam schedule. This is to ensure student availability throughout the entire exam period in the event that an exam must be rescheduled due to unforeseen circumstances (university closure, power outage, storm policy, etc.). A student who misses a final examination without valid reason will receive a mark of 0 on the examination.

Students who have missed a final exam for a valid reason can apply to the DSSAO (DSB Student Services Academic Office) to write a deferred examination by submitting an [Application for Deferring a Final Exam](#) with supporting documentation. The application must be made within five days of the scheduled exam.

The [Application for Deferring a Final Exam](#) and the [MBA Student McMaster University Student Health Certificate](#) can be found on the DeGroote MBA Current Student website (mbastudent.degrote.mcmaster.ca)

Deferred examination privileges, if granted, are normally satisfied during the examination period at the end of the following semester. In select cases, the deferred examination may be written at a time facilitated by the DSSAO (DSB Student Services Academic Office) (DSB Student Services Academic Office) and agreed to by the course instructor.

Requests for a second deferral or rescheduling of a deferred examination will not be considered.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for course work at the outset of term. Students must forward a copy of such SAS accommodation to the instructor normally, within the first three (3) weeks of classes by setting up an appointment with the instructor. If a student with a disability chooses NOT to take advantage of an SAS accommodation and chooses to sit for a regular exam, a petition for relief may not be filed after the examination is complete. The SAS website is:

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

Use of Test Accommodations at McMaster University Burlington Campus Ron Joyce Centre

Whereas Student Accessibility Services (SAS), on Main Campus, determines all MBA student accommodations, the MBA Faculty Office manages the coordination of accommodations for tests, midterms, and exams at the Ron Joyce Centre in Burlington.

Process for Students

- SAS will now be using our online system, MySAS Portal, for graduate students to share accommodation letters with their Instructors and their Faculty/Program. Students will be responsible to activate their accommodations on a term-by-term basis and the approved accommodation letter will be directly sent to the Instructor.
- Students must engage the DSSAO (DSB Student Services Academic Office) to implement their accommodation(s) (e.g., extra-time, memory aid, etc.) for each upcoming test, midterm, or exam, at least two weeks in advance. Students can do this by emailing DeGroote MBA SAS scheduling office at DSBSAS@mcmaster.ca. If a student cannot meet this deadline, they should contact DSBSAS@mcmaster.ca to discuss alternative arrangements. The program is committed to exploring flexibilities where possible to support students.
- All tests, midterms, and exams are booked synchronously with the class's start time. Any deviations from the start time (e.g. start earlier than the class to enable completion at the same end time) requires a discussion with their instructor on protocol at the time of accommodation activation.
- Students will leverage the accommodation (e.g., extra-time, memory aid, etc.), in a designated testing room. Rooms will be booked according to the student's SAS accommodation. Unless the accommodation states otherwise, students should expect that they will be writing in a room with other students. One or more invigilators will always be in the room.

- Following the request to implement the accommodation(s), dsbsas@mcmaster.ca will reach out to the student with their test, midterm, or exam details, including the date, time, and room number. As there may be other students writing tests in the room, we ask that students enter the room quietly and leave all personal items at the front of the room.

All policies and procedures, including restroom access, how extra-time is allocated for assessments under Universal Design, and the submission of memory aids in advance, are consistent with those of SAS on Main Campus. The only variance in procedure is communication around, and physical location of, assessment. There is not a dedicated testing space at RJC. Existing classrooms and lecture halls will be used for most testing. All SAS-approved accommodations will be honoured by our staff; however, core testing elements are not eliminated in alternative testing formats. Students should expect and plan for invigilation, incidental noise, and other potential distractions.

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES
(RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to the DSSAO (DSB Student Services Academic Office) **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

POTENTIAL MODIFICATION TO THE COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

RESEARCH USING HUMAN SUBJECTS

ONLY IF APPLICABLE

Research involving human participants is premised on a fundamental moral commitment to advancing human welfare, knowledge, and understanding. As a research intensive institution, McMaster University shares this commitment in its promotion of responsible research. The fundamental imperative of research involving human participation is respect for human dignity and well-being. To this end, the University endorses the ethical principles cited in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans:

<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca>

McMaster University has mandated its Research Ethics Boards to ensure that all research investigations involving human participants are in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement. The University is committed, through its Research Ethics Boards, to assisting the research community in identifying and addressing ethical issues inherent in research, recognizing that all members of the University share a commitment to maintaining the highest possible standards in research involving humans.

If you are conducting original research, it is vital that you behave in an ethical manner. For example, everyone you speak to must be made aware of your reasons for eliciting their responses and consent to providing information. Furthermore, you must ensure everyone understands that participation is entirely voluntary. Please refer to the following website for more information about McMaster University's research ethics guidelines:

<http://reo.mcmaster.ca/>

Organizations that you are working with are likely to prefer that some information be treated as confidential. Ensure that you clarify the status of all information that you receive from your client. You **MUST** respect this request and cannot present this information in class or communicate it in any form, nor can you discuss it outside your group. Furthermore, you must continue to respect this confidentiality even after the course is over.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your registration and continuous participation (e.g. on A2L, in the classroom, etc.) to the various learning activities of MBA P720 will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

USE PROHIBITED

Students are not permitted to use generative AI for the assessments below. In alignment with [McMaster academic integrity policy](#), it “shall be an offence knowingly to … submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source”. This includes work created by generative AI tools. Also state in the policy is the following, “Contract Cheating is the act of “outsourcing of student work to third parties” (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639) with or without payment.” Using Generative AI tools is a form of contract cheating. Charges of academic dishonesty will be brought forward to the Office of Academic Integrity.

- In Class Case Analysis
- Simulation

SOME USE PERMITTED

Except for the assessments listed above

Students may use generative AI for [editing/translating/outlining/brainstorming/revising/etc] their work throughout the course so long as the use of generative AI is referenced and cited following citation instructions given below. Use of generative AI outside the stated use [editing/translating/outlining/brainstorming/revising/etc] without citation will constitute academic dishonesty. It is the student’s responsibility to be clear on the limitations for use and to be clear on the expectations for citation and reference and to do so appropriately.

**Use Permission may change and this section will be updated and students will be notified accordingly.

COURSE SCHEDULE

MBA P720

Essential Business Skills: Foundational Principles in Strategic Management
Winter 2026 Course Schedule

Date	Overview and Learning Goals	Readings and Cases	Dates and Deadlines
1-Week of Jan 6, 7	Introduction to Strategic Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding strategic management Introduction to the course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Class 1 Readings</u> available through Avenue 	
2-Week of Jan 13, 14	External analysis for a changing environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding dynamism to industry analysis Strategic groups Uncertainty, foresight, and visioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Class 2 Readings</u> available through Avenue In Class Exercise Live Case Presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Live Case Questions Due Sunday Jan 18 at 11:59pm</i>
3-Week of Jan 20, 21	How can organizations create sustainable value through innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Mover Advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case: Interface: The Journey Towards Carbon Negative <u>Class 3 Readings</u> available through Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Simulation Practice Round 1 due Saturday Jan 25 at 11:59pm</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Sustainable Value • Strategic Innovation 		
4-Week of Jan 27, 28	<p>How do organizations decide when and how they should expand?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to corporate strategy • Vertical Integration – Make vs Buy • The Build Borrow Buy framework • Combatting new market entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Netflix: Will Content be Enough? • <u>Class 4 Readings</u> available through Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Simulation Practice Round 2 due Friday Feb 1 at 11:59pm</i> •
5 – Week Feb 3, 4	<p>Where do resources and capabilities come from and how do they evolve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversifying successfully • Building resource-based competitive advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Eastman Kodak Company: Reviving Through Diversification • <u>Class 5 Readings</u> available through Avenue • In Class Exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Simulation Practice Round 3 due Sunday Feb 8 at 11:59pm</i>
6-Week of Feb 9, 10	<p>Analyzing strategic alliances as a mechanism to compete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding strategic alliances • Mergers and acquisitions • Generic Strategies • Value Chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Tiffany and Swatch: Lessons from an International Strategic Alliance • <u>Class 6 Readings</u> available through Avenue 	<i>Live Case Group Analysis Due Feb 15 11:59pm</i>

7 - Week of Feb 17, 18	Midterm Recess		
8-Week of Mar 3, 4	Building and sustaining ecosystems to drive strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliances, platforms, and ecosystems • Disruptive technologies • Evaluating strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: The strategic transformation of John Deere: Precision Agriculture, AI, and the Internet of Things • <u>Class 7 Readings</u> available through Avenue 	<i>Simulation Dashboard due Sunday Mar 8 at 11:59pm</i>
9 - Week of Mar 10, 11	Working Week for Live Case		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#simulationfest Saturday Mar 14* (TBD)</i>
10-Week of Mar 17, 18	Strategic considerations when expanding internationally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for entering foreign markets • Operating a global firm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Tim Hortons: Bringing Canada's iconic coffee to China • <u>Class 8 Readings</u> available through Avenue 	<i>Live Case Individual – Strategic Gap Due Sunday Mar 22 11:59pm</i>
11-Week of Mar 24, 25	Strategizing through a changing organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and competitive advantage • Organizational design and structure • Organizational culture, capabilities and strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Corporate Strategy at Berkshire Partners • <u>Class 9 Readings</u> available through Avenue 	<i>Live Case Individual – Strategic Solution Due Sunday Mar 29 at 11:59pm</i>

12-Week of Mar 31, Apr 1	“What is Strategy” revisited <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intended and Realized Strategy• Improvisation in Organizations• Giving Voice to Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case: Honda (distributed in class)• <u>Class 10 Readings</u> available through Avenue	
13 Week of April 7, 8	Final Case Presentations	Live Case presentations to client	

Learning Objectives and Readings

Class 1 - Introduction to Strategic Management

Learning Objectives

1. Be able to articulate what strategy is and is not
2. Understand the key elements of mission, vision and values
3. Articulate a strategic management process

Required Reading

- Eight Shifts that will take your strategy into high gear <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/eight-shifts-that-will-take-your-strategy-into-high-gear>

Further Reading

- Strategic Planning: A Roadmap to Success <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/strategic-planning-a-roadmap-to-success/>
- Porter, M.E. (1996) What is Strategy, Harvard Business Review [Search in library collection]

Class 2 - External analysis for a changing environment

Learning Objectives

1. Apply the Porter's 5 Forces framework in conducting an industry analysis
2. Integrate a range of environmental analysis tools and foresight to build a dynamic view of an industry
3. Apply the strategic group model to reveal performance differences between clusters of firms in the same industry
4. Understand the importance of uncertainty for strategy and firm performance

Required Reading

- A strategy for thriving in uncertainty <https://www.bain.com/insights/a-strategy-for-thriving-in-uncertainty/>

Further Reading

- Refresher: Porter's 5 Forces <https://hbr.org/video/3590615226001/the-explainer-porters-five-forces>
- Confronting Uncertainty in Strategy <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-to-confront-uncertainty-in-your-strategy>
- The Uncertainty Advantage <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/The-Uncertainty-Advantage?gko=6b60b>
- Industry Analysis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUKAX0E4ckM> [12:52]

Class 3 - How can organizations create sustainable value through innovation

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the interconnection of sustainability and strategy.

2. Distinguish different types of innovation and their implications for strategy.
3. Identify the importance of company culture and capabilities in generating high performance outcomes.
4. Understand the mechanisms of first mover advantage

Required Reading

- Triple Bottom Line <https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-the-triple-bottom-line-22798>
- How to build an alliance against corporate short-termism <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-to-build-an-alliance-against-corporate-short-termism>

Further reading

- Creating Shared Value <https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PL85B3155A0F0B30D0&v=1vK3cxnP6I4>
- Net-Zero Next Moves for CEOs <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/electric-power-and-natural-gas/our-insights/net-zero-next-moves-for-ceos>
- Suarez and Lanzolla (April 2005) The Half-Truth of First-Mover Advantage, Harvard Business Review. [Search in library collection]
- Disruptive Innovation <https://hbr.org/video/2688242135001/the-explainer-disruptive-innovation> (2 minute video)
- Crossing the Chasm <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-97AXOPzJo> (5 minute video)

Class 4 - How do organizations decide when and how they should expand

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the factors that drive firms to make vs buy
2. Examine the opportunities and risks of addressing new market entrants
3. Evaluate a firm's value chain to assess firm competitive advantage

Required Reading

- Make or Buy: Three pillars of sound decision making <https://www.strategyand.pwc.com/gx/en/insights/2011-2014/make-three-pillars-sound-decision.html>
- How Netflix Changed Entertainment and Where It's Headed – Reed Hastings <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsAN-TEjfN0> [20:51 video]

Further reading

- Corporate Growing Pains: Build, Borrow or Buy? <https://knowledge.insead.edu/strategy/corporate-growing-pains-build-borrow-or-buy-2318>
- Mastering Organic Growth <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/mastering-three-strategies-of-organic-growth>

Class 5 – Where do resources and capabilities come from and how do they evolve?

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the difference between business-level strategy and corporate-level strategy
2. Understand the factors that lead to successful diversification
3. Understand how to exploit core competencies and resource-based competitive advantages when diversifying

Required Reading

- Beating the Odds in Market Entry - McKinsey Quarterly <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/beating-the-odds-in-market-entry>

Further Reading

- Capability Driven Strategy https://www.strategyand.pwc.com/media/file/CDS-Gain-the-right-to-win_infographic.pdf
- Dynamic Capabilities <https://www.davidjeece.com/dynamic-capabilities>

Class 6 - Analyzing mergers as a mechanism to compete in diversified markets

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the motivations and causes behind acquisitions
2. Understand factors associated with successful integration post acquisition
3. Understand the importance and challenges associated with ESG compliance

Required Reading

- When Bigger Isn't Always Better – McKinsey <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/when-bigger-isnt-always-better>

Further reading

- From Competitive Advantage to Corporate Strategy <https://hbr.org/1987/05/from-competitive-advantage-to-corporate-strategy>
- Creating Corporate Advantage <https://hbr.org/1998/05/creating-corporate-advantage>
- Corporate vs Business Strategy Explainer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X50pXorhtjY>

Class 7 - Building and sustaining alliances and ecosystems to drive strategy

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the intricacies and challenges associated with building ecosystem and platform businesses
2. Understand how to build strategies around dynamically changing technologies
3. Understand how to evaluate the efficacy of a strategy

Required Reading

- Ecosystems for the Rest of Us <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/Ecosystems-for-the-rest-of-us>

Further Reading

- The CNH Industrial Autonomous Tractor Concept <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7Os5Okf3OQ>

- AI Driven Competitive Advantage Isn't the Future, It's Now <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/ai-driven-competitive-advantage-isnt-the-future-its-now/>

Class 8 – Strategic considerations when expanding internationally

Learning Objectives

1. Compare and contrast different modes of entering foreign markets.
2. Understand the difficulties of operating in multiple markets

Required Reading

- 5 Common Challenges of International Business You Should Consider <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/challenges-of-international-business>
- Options for Competing in International Markets <https://opentextbc.ca/strategicmanagement/chapter/options-for-competing-in-international-markets/>

Further reading

- Chapter 7 Competing in International Markets <https://opentextbc.ca/strategicmanagement/part/chapter-7/>
- Global Flows: The ties that bind in an interconnected world. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/global-flows-the-ties-that-bind-in-an-interconnected-world>
- Next Generation Global Organizations
https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/dotcom/client_service/Organization/PDFs/Next_generation_global_organizations.ashx

Class 9 – Strategizing through a changing organization

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how growth can create strategic challenges for firms
2. Explain how organizational structure and culture can support or hinder strategy.
3. Students should understand the critical importance of culture to strategy (“culture eats strategy for breakfast”).
4. Critically apply agency theory, explain how companies use governance mechanisms to align principals and agents.

Required Reading

- Five Bold Moves to Quickly Transform your Organization’s Culture <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/five-bold-moves-to-quickly-transform-your-organizations-culture>
- Groysberg, Lee, Price, and Cheng (Jan-Feb 2018) The Leader’s Guide to Corporate Culture, Harvard Business Review [Search in library collection]

Further Reading

- The Business of Culture <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/the-business-of-culture/>

- Simon Sinek: How to Build a Company That People Want to Work For <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INjECrw7YYs> (9 minutes)

Class 10 – “What is Strategy” revisited

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the difference between intended and realized strategies
2. Consider the strategic importance of organizational improvisation

Further Reading

- Mannucci, P., Orazi, D., de Valck, K. (March 2021) Improvisation Takes Practice, Harvard Business Review [Search in library collection.]