

MBA Program
STRATEGY
Sample Course Outline



SUMMARY:

“All strategies are abstractions which exist only in the minds of interested parties. It is important to remember that no one has ever seen a strategy or tackled one; every strategy is an invention, a figment of someone’s imagination, whether conceived of as **intentions** [before action takes place] or inferred as **patterns** to describe actions that have already occurred”.
Henry Mintzberg

The subject combines an analytical approach to the issues of the firm’s competitive success or failure, with an emphasis on the exercise of judgement by senior managers in the strategic management of the organisation. The teaching methods reflect this combination, using a mix of lecture, class discussion and case studies. The cases selected represent a mixture of Australian and foreign companies, competing in a wide variety of industries.

Course Title:	Strategy	Course No. MNGT5280
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Prerequisites/Sequence. NIL – this is a CORE course in the MBA.

Course aims / objectives.

The central objective of this course is to enable you, as a general manager, to develop strategic perspective – or, put simply, to practise thinking strategically. The core questions to think about are simple: why has this organization performed well (or badly) in the past? What is needed for it to achieve high performance in the future? But there is no single formula; the strategy field is characterised by a range of voices and approaches which cannot be easily merged into one. So these should be seen as a range of perspectives, competing with each other for our time and attention.

I suggest that you could have two primary learning goals:

- to understand the range of major conceptual frameworks and approaches in the field, and
- to develop strategic judgement by selecting approaches from this range and using these to analyze specific case studies

Preliminary readings to be done prior to the first class. NIL

Detailed list of Texts & References to include Recommended Readings for the whole course.

There is no required textbook for this course. The coursepack is extensive with articles or chapters by a range of different authors. If you have a strong preference to read a single integrated text, then I recommend:

either

G. Saloner, A. Shepard and J. Podolny: *Strategic Management* (John Wiley 2001).

or

J. Davis & T. Devlin: *The Essence of Corporate Strategy* (Allen & Unwin, 1997).

Readings 3.1, 4.2 and 4.5 are also drawn from leading texts.

A rather different approach is taken by Henry Mintzberg who has attempted to survey the whole field of strategic management and group its main contributions and ideas in a set of “schools”. This is published as H. Mintzberg, B. Ahlstrand, J. Lampel: *Strategy Safari a guided tour through the wilds of Strategic Management* (Free Press, New York 1998). A useful summary of this was published in the spring 1999 issue of the *Sloan Management Review*.

In terms of planning your reading, the team will be organized roughly into four chunks:

Weeks 1 & 2 : Topics 1 & 2
Weeks 3 & 4 : Topics 3 & 4
Weeks 5 & 6 : Topic 5
Weeks 8 – 10 : Topics 6 & 7

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Lecture Guides by Week / Course Schedule - Assessments Due

Assessment of this course will be based on the following components:

	Due
First WAC (800 words) (individual assignment)	Week 3
Second WAC (1,200 words) * (group assignment)	Week 4
Feedback to others on WAC * (group assignment)	Week 5
Third WAC * (group assignment)	Week 6
Fourth WAC (individual assignment)	Week 8
Term Paper (groups to be formed by students)	Week 10 (or 11)

* For these components, groups will be assigned by the instructor

Please note that, in terms of assessment, I reserve the right to award a further mark (up to 10%) to each student based on the quality of your contribution to class discussion of cases. This subject relies heavily on the willingness of class members to engage effectively in these class discussions and so quality will be rewarded.

Assessment requirements as follows:

WAC (Written analyses of cases)

Each WAC will have a specific word limit, which will be enforced. The intention is not so much to help me manage the marking process but more importantly to focus your write-up on strategic analysis. The one thing to avoid is simple restatement of facts from the case. What I am looking for is strategic insight (what really matters here) supported by careful logic (i.e. pulling the evidence together in as tight and compelling a way as possible). As you will probably discover, I encourage you to use data and graphical analysis to illustrate and support verbal argument.

As a final thought: read the assignment carefully and follow the directions!

Late assignments

Each WAC and the rivalry assignment are due at the start of the class in which it is to be discussed. I will not accept late submission of these assignments, but will require subsequent submission of a written analysis of a substitute case (with an automatic reduction of 5 marks).

Term Papers

You are requested to organize yourselves into teams of three persons (unless I specifically authorize a variation). The assignment is to analyse a strategic issue facing one or several firms in Australia today. The focus is on developing a "live case study". I expect a team report in the range of 8 – 10 pages with supporting exhibits, tables etc. as appropriate. I want the teams to feel free to choose a company or industry or strategy issue of real interest to the members – and would be happy to discuss a proposal with you if you wish. Since it may help to have one or two examples by way of illustration, let me suggest a few: 1) Innovators, 2) Rapid Growth, 3) Rivalry, 4) Globalisation.

Mid-term Exam	No		WAC 1 (individual) - 10%
			WAC 2 (group) - 15 %
			Feedback to others (group)–10%
End-of-term Exam	No	Weighting of each assessment component	WAC 3 (group) – 20%
			WAC 4 (individual) – 20%
			Term Paper (group) – 25%
Group assessment	Yes		
Individual assessment	Yes	Is the course	Graded
Group Presentation	No	Late Policy [deduction of marks for last assignment(s) /project(s)]	5%
Individual Presentation	No	Return of assignments & projects: where should they be handed in?	Class / MBA Office / Email

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