

Lancement et développement de start-ups / Start-up analysis: Commercial and financial due diligence

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Class Day/Time: Thursdays /
16h15-18h or 16h15 - 20h

Classroom: Villanova

Credits: 06

Limit – 32 students

Overview

This course offers a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical experience, providing students with a robust foundation for a career in consulting or any strategic business role.

This course is designed to equip students with the essential skills and knowledge required to excel in consulting and company analysis roles. The course combines theoretical foundations with practical applications, enabling students to understand and analyze business operations, strategies, and performance. Students will learn to develop and implement due diligence processes on startup businesses, enhance their problem-solving skills, and apply consulting frameworks to real-world scenarios.

By the end of the course, students will be able to analyze a business, identify its strengths relative to the competition, and effectively communicate their insights and conclusions to key stakeholders.

Everyone who is selected for this course is required to join the course Moodle:

<https://moodle.unil.ch/course/view.php?id=31943>

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the consulting industry: Gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of business consultants and the role of consultants in start-up due diligence.
- Apply analytical frameworks: Utilize industry-standard analytical frameworks (e.g., SWOT, PESTLE, Porter's Five Forces) to assess business environments and company performance.
- Conduct company analysis: Perform in-depth analysis of companies, including financial statement analysis, operational assessment, and strategic evaluation.

- Enhance problem-solving skills: Apply structured problem-solving approaches commonly used in consulting to address complex business issues.
- Communicate/pitch effectively in a commercial context: Develop and present consulting reports and presentations in a clear, concise, and professional manner.
- Understand ethical considerations: Understand the ethical implications of consulting work and incorporate sustainable metrics into analysis and recommendations.
- Work in interdisciplinary teams and learn how they, individually and as a team, can contribute to the development of sustainable solutions.

Content

The course will include academic and practitioner articles and other sources related to the innovation ecosystem that present a variety of perspectives, including but not limited to, economics, finance, sociology, and psychology. The course lectures, class discussions, and all graded work will be based upon the assigned articles, readings, podcasts, websites, and real-world examples.

Please note: When providing feedback or responding to classmates and/or other groups the objective is to support, challenge, or critique the idea - not the person or the group.

Assigned materials - Preparation and discussion (in class or on the Forum)

You are expected to critically evaluate all of the course materials, not simply accept everything that is presented in the articles, examples, etc. For articles, you should be able to discuss the most important insights from the reading. For press articles and other examples, you should be prepared to present your analysis and an opinion or plan of action targeting the central issues or problems that are highlighted.

When the class meets together, the course will be interactive, which means that the participants and the professor will be having a discussion as opposed to a one-way lecture for the entire class period. Thus, you may be called upon at any time to share your insights, views, and recommendations. You are expected to come to each class session (full class sessions or group meetings) prepared to discuss the assigned readings, examples, etc.

References

A collection of articles from academic and practitioner journals related to the central topics will be used. Additional readings from the popular press (newspapers, magazines, blogs, etc.), podcasts, and videos may be assigned throughout the semester. There is no need to purchase any materials for this course as all the assigned articles are available on the UNIL library electronic databases (All UNIL students have access to the BCUL databases) and all other materials will be accessed directly online or via a link on the course Moodle.

Evaluation

Group work	80%
- Group project report - (40%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Maximum 7,500 words (1.5 line spacing)	
- Group presentation – (40%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">o 10 minutes plus questions from the jury	
Individual work	20%
- Peer assessment within each group	
Total	<u>100%</u>

Note: There is no exam, the final written company assessment will be completed during the regular semester and will be due no later than 01 March 2025 and the final presentations will be on 02 April 2025.

Retake

Any student who fails to achieve a passing grade in the course will be required to complete an individual written assignment based upon a case.

Group work – Report and presentation (80% of course grade)*

Students will evaluate and support an organization seeking to develop its commercial operations. Working in groups, students will analyze the commercial, financial, operational, and strategic aspects of a Swiss-based start-up company and develop a report and a presentation that highlights the opportunities and challenges in the target market while benchmarking against the broader industry.

Groups will be assigned in class and the objectives and grading criteria for the two components will be explained in class and posted on the Moodle.

*NOTE: All written assignments must be uploaded on the course Moodle via the link provided. Written assignments submitted late will be graded as follows:

- 0-30 minutes late – 10% of the maximum points possible will be deducted
- 30-60 minutes late – 20% of the maximum points possible will be deducted
- More than 60 minutes late – 35% of the maximum points possible will be deducted

All written assignments should be submitted in Word or PDF and should be formatted using font size 10-12, 1.5 line spacing, and 2.5 cm margins.

Individual work – peer assessment (20% of course grade)

Peer-evaluation of contribution to the group project: All project group members will be surveyed at the end of the module with respect to the contribution of each person to their respective group project. Each student will be required to allocate 100 points across their entire group, including themselves, based upon their perception of each member's contribution to the group project. Contribution to the project includes both an individual's engagement in the concept assessment process as well as their impact on the group dynamics.

Additional engagement (not graded)

Throughout the semester selected questions or examples will be posted on the course Moodle, which is intended to promote an informal on-line discussion or debate amongst the class participants. Students may initiate a discussion on the Forum about a topic related to the project or innovation or sustainability, a recent event in the world of finance, or other related topics/questions. Forum posts should contribute to a supportive online learning environment. A high-quality Forum post incorporates course reading materials and key concepts into the discussion, demonstrates diplomacy and good communication skills, and adds value to our thinking on the topic.

Class attendance

Attending the course sessions is expected. If you will be absent, please contact the instructor and inform Mathieu and me prior to class.

Provisional course schedule (subject to change)

Session 1: Introduction and overview of the course (Y. Darbellay) 10 October 2024

- Understand the background, process, and key activities related to the course
- Gain insights and an understanding of the consulting process
- Develop an initial set of problem-solving and analytical tools

Session 2: Team dynamics (L. Berthoud) 14 November 2024

- Understand the principles of team dynamics
- Develop and apply effective team collaboration strategies
- Create and utilize a comprehensive team charter

Session 3: Due diligence and industry mapping (J. Petty) 28 November 2024

- Understand the fundamental concepts of due diligence
- Identify and utilize industry mapping tools and frameworks to assess the competitive landscape of the industry
- Learn the different types of due diligence (e.g., financial, legal, operational) and the steps involved in conducting thorough due diligence

Session 4: Impact and sustainability (TBC) 12 December 2024

- Understand the principles of sustainable business practices
- Evaluating the impact of a startup on society and the environment
- Assessing a company's sustainability strategy

(NOTE: The spring semester schedule will be updated on Moodle once confirmed)

Session 5: Preparing for on-site meetings (Y. Darbellay)

- Learn key communication and relationship management skills
- Learn to apply active listening strategies to better understand client needs
- Enhance meeting preparation and follow-up processes

On-site meetings with companies

Session 6: Presentation preparation and tips when pitching to the jury (A. Headon)

- Learn to articulate key ideas clearly and confidently, ensuring that both verbal and non-verbal communication are aligned
- Enhance students' ability to develop effective presentation structure and content
- Learn how to incorporate visual aids and technology effectively

Session 7: Presentation dry run and feedback (A. Headon & Y. Darbellay)

- Refine Delivery and Timing
- Enhance Content Clarity
- Prepare for the questions from the jury

Final presentations (02 April 2025)

Session 8: Team reflection and process review (L. Berthoud)

- Analyze team dynamics
- Critically evaluate team processes
- Assess team performance, identify areas of improvement, and engage in reflective discussions that promote continuous learning.

-----**The course schedule will be posted and updated on the course Moodle**-----

The course syllabus and pre-class assignments are subject to change. All updates will be announced in class and posted on the course Moodle.