

School of Management

## MGMT310 COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Trimester 2, 2014

### COURSE OUTLINE

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#### Names and Contact Details

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#### Trimester Dates

Teaching Period: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July – Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October

Study Period: Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October

Examination Period: Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October – Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November (inclusive)

#### **Withdrawal from Course**

1. Your fees will be refunded if you withdraw from this course on or before Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014.
2. The standard last date for withdrawal from this course is Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014. After this date, students forced to withdraw by circumstances beyond their control must apply for permission on an '*Application for Associate Dean's Permission to Withdraw Late*' including supporting documentation. The application form is available from either of the Faculty's Student Customer Service Desks.

#### Class Times and Room Numbers

Thursdays: Lecture 10:30 12:20 GBLT1

Thursdays: Workshop 14:40 15:30 RHLT2 (1<sup>st</sup> 6 weeks: July 17-August 21)

#### Course Delivery

Session content will vary during the trimester, including lectures, discussion of case histories or readings, and video material (see detailed schedule at the end of this course outline). The *twelve lectures, case studies distributed via Blackboard, and associated chapters in the textbook* are devoted to introducing the key issues and frameworks addressed with the course. Each lecture will be presented in the understanding that participants have done the assigned reading before the lecture. Lectures will only briefly review chapter content and then add/extend it to cover additional frameworks and perspectives. On occasion, guest speakers may illustrate the lecture material as it applies in New Zealand organizations.

There are no tutorials for this course. Case studies will be covered in class sessions.

The *workshops* will serve primarily to introduce the business simulation software, *Mike's Bikes*. Some additional optional sessions (notified via Blackboard) will be held in the Railway station computer labs where the course lecturer will be available to answer questions related to the simulation.

### **Group Work**

While courses with case analyses have a tradition of group collaboration as part of learning, the majority of the assessment remains strictly individual. Collaboration on individual assignments is not allowed beyond general discussion as to how one might interpret the assignment questions. Please do not formulate shared responses to questions and do not loan out or borrow parts of draft / completed assignments. VUW takes plagiarism seriously and electronic checks, such as Turnitin.com, are used to monitor across the class and against rote copying.

There is a significant group work component in this course associated with the simulation. Some of this group work is likely to require meetings outside of normal working hours (8:30am-5:30pm, Monday to Friday). While the final reports from the simulation must be written up individually, preparation for the simulation and development of a strategy/strategic plan will occur in groups. It is every student's individual responsibility to develop an understanding of all parts of the simulation to assess how these factors contributed to their team's company performance. Equitable contributions to the group's decisions across the simulation are expected.

### **Expected Workload**

Students can expect to spend 150 hours working on this course. That consists of approximately 30 hours of classes (lectures and workshops), 30 hours class and workshop preparation, a further 30 hours starting prior to the mid-trimester break and culminating with the simulation, full involvement in the simulation decisions (approx. 20 hours), and 40 hours completing assignments / exam preparation. The workload will be greatest during the first three weeks after the mid-trimester break, but can be spread across other weeks if students organize their efforts early on.

### **Prescription**

An exploration of strategies and sources of competitive advantage, including generic competitive strategies, multi-point competition, the resource-based view of the firm, and the sustainability of advantage. Also considered will be the evolution of competitive capabilities over time (particularly in the New Zealand context), and implications for stakeholder relationships.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

MGMT310, Competitive Advantage, has four learning objectives. On successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Apply the various theories of strategic management to real-life case study situations. *This will be assessed in individual assignment 1 and the final exam.*
2. Analyse 'strategic tensions' and paradoxes in business situations. *(All assessments).*
3. Discuss and apply critical thinking to a wide range of strategic management issues. *This will be assessed in individual assignment 2 and the final exam.*
4. Understand the dynamic nature of strategies and advantages. *This will be assessed in individual assignment 2 and the final exam.*

### **Course Content**

MGMT310 provides participants with an understanding of the theories relating to competitive and cooperative advantage, the range of advantages available to an organization, sources of any advantages and how particular strategies can leverage these. It also addresses the likely impact and effectiveness of competitive moves and responses, and how the business environment (incl. aspects

specific to New Zealand) affects the types and sustainability of advantages that are pursued for local, regional and global success.

At the end of the course, participants will have added to, and be able to apply, a more in-depth strategic toolkit that will enable them to approach and structure business scenarios and develop clear strategies for the organizations they work with and for. With a focus on designing strategies, the course will provide participants with an opportunity to experience both the process of deciding on a particular strategy as well as having to adapt to competitors' actions and responses.

### **Readings**

The required textbook for the course is Grant, Robert M. (2010/2013). Contemporary Strategic Analysis (8th Edition). J. Wiley & Sons Ltd. Chichester UK (ISBN 9781119941880). The text can also be purchased as an e-book version. While most chapters will be utilised as fully as possible, some examinable material is not covered in the chapters which will be augmented via lectures and online readings. The course will also involve case studies that will be distributed via Blackboard. Details about the simulation software and associated documentation will be posted on Blackboard.

### **Materials and Equipment**

The course involves extensive use of a computer simulation. The software for this simulation will be made available to students by week 3 of the trimester and will also be available in some university computer labs. While the software works best on Windows-based computers, in past years students with Apple PCs have managed to use it equally effectively.

### **Assessment**

From Trimester 1, 2014, a revised Assessment Handbook will apply to all VUW courses: see <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf>.

In particular, there will be a new grade scheme, in which the A+ range will be 90-100% and 50-54% will be a C-.

A student's overall grade in the course will be determined in the following manner:

	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
1	Individual Assignment 1 Case analysis	10%	15 August 2014 by 3:30 pm
2	Group Assignment Mike's Bikes Strategic Plan	10%	15 September 2014 by 12:30 pm
3	Individual Assignment 2 Mike's Bikes analysis	30%	8 October 2014 by 3:30 pm
4	Final Examination	50%	24 Oct. - 15 Nov. 2014
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	

#### **1. Individual Assignment 1 (10%). Due date: 15 August 2014 by 3:30pm**

A case study and questions will be distributed in class on 7 August. You will be asked to analyze the case and write a report using the concepts and frameworks introduced in MGMT310. In answering the questions, please make sure that you translate the material into your own words. This is an individual assignment and it is expected that you will write up the report separately. Details on assessment criteria will be handed out with the case questions and case.

Length: 1000 words (see note on word limits below)

## 2. **Strategic Business Plan (10%) (group assignment: 4-5 students per group)**

The business simulation will be completed in groups of 4-5 people. You should form groups as soon as practicable, and in the third week of class those not in a group will be assigned one by the course lecturer. Your group will need to decide on a strategy to be implemented during the simulation and will need to execute and adjust that strategy. The simulation will involve 8-10 simulated years of competition (a practice run is scheduled to familiarize you with the software starting 8 September). The majority of the simulation will required decisions to be entered online between Friday 19 September and Monday 22 September, sometimes every few hours. **Some decisions will need to be made on Saturday 20 September so please keep this date clear of other commitments.**

By **12:30 pm on 15 September**, your group will need to write up and hand in a strategic business plan for your company (approximately 1500-2000 words). Your group should be prepared to present a preliminary business plan (3-5 minutes) if called on during class on 11 September. You will have a chance to revise your plans based on the discussion from that session. The strategic business plans (10% of your final grade) map out your company's *intended* strategy for the simulation – thus, they are likely to deviate from the strategy/actions actually implemented once you have to adapt to competition and performance results. The plan should highlight the key targets of your intended strategy so that you can re-assess these later to determine if your strategy was successful in the multi-year report (individual assignment 2).

All students in the group will receive the same grade for the strategic plan.

## 3. **Individual Assignment 2 (30%) Mike's Bikes Analysis. Due date: 8 October 2014 by 3:30pm**

Drawing on your intended plan and the results of the simulation, each student will then individually produce a multi-year report (worth 30%) that briefly summarizes your company's progress over the simulation timeframe, clearly identifies why your company did well/poorly, indicates when and why your strategy was changed, and how these decisions were expected to alter your competitive situation. It should also briefly discuss the future plans of your company given the situation it is in at the end of the simulation. Theories and frameworks from earlier in the course should be applied in supporting your analysis.

Length: 2000 words (see note below on word limits)

## 4. **A closed-book 3-hour examination** based on a case study and essay questions **(50%)**.

The examination is worth 50% of the total marks available for this course. It is closed book 3-hour examination. You will be required to answer questions about a case study that will require you to draw on readings and frameworks covered in the course. All sessions during the course are examinable.

### **Examinations**

Students who enrol in courses with examinations are obliged to attend an examination at the University at any time during the formal examination period. The final examination for this course will be scheduled at some time during the following period:

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October – Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November (inclusive)

### **Handing in assignments**

Assignments should be placed, in hard copy form, in the MGMT310 box (no. 25) on the Mezzanine floor of Rutherford House by the due time on the due date. All Hand-Ins should have: an Assignment Cover Sheet (Annex A) stating your name, the course name, assignment name and number, a word count and due date (see attachment and Blackboard for an electronic version). Please put page numbers on each page.

Assignments handed in after the due time/date will be deemed to be late, and must be given directly to an Administrator in RH1022 (The School reception is open between 9am and 5pm) where your assignment will have the time, date and signature noted on the front cover by the person receiving it. If not handed to an Administrator (e.g., slid under a door after hours), the time and date will be recorded as when the Administrator first discovers the assignment.

Students must also have an electronic copy of their work available that will need to be submitted electronically on Blackboard.

### **Mandatory Course Requirements**

In addition to obtaining an overall course mark of 50 or better, students must:

- 1) obtain at least 40 per cent of the marks available (i.e. 20 marks out of 50) for the final examination;
- 2) submit the individual written assignments; and
- 3) equitably contribute to the preparation and implementation of the group assessment (strategic plan) and groupwork (simulation), including being present for both the possible group presentation (11 September) and the 19-22 September simulation decisions.

If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat)

### **Penalties**

In fairness to other students, work submitted after any deadline will incur a penalty for lateness. The penalty is up to 5% of the marks available (marks available means what the assignment is worth, i.e. a 20% assessment is marked out of 20) for an assignment submitted after the due time on the due date for each part day or day late. (For example, if an assignment is out of 30, then one day late means that 1.5 marks would be deducted for every day late). Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays will be included when counting the number of days late. E-mailing a copy of a late assignment can help to establish when the assignment was completed. Assignments received more than 7 days after the due date will not be accepted and the student will fail the Mandatory Course Requirements.

**In all cases, if you are (or think that you might be) late in submitting an assignment, please contact the course coordinator as soon as possible.** Course Outlines provide a signal to students of forthcoming workload, dates of submission, etc. and thus student study plans should take account of course requirements across all courses. Consequently, workload issues related to other courses and employment will not be accepted as reason for dispensation from mandatory requirements or waiver of penalties. Extensions to submission deadlines for any assigned work will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Students who are unable to comply with any of the mandatory requirements should make a written application for an extension to the due date for submission of assigned work or for waiver of a penalty, in advance, to the Course Coordinator, providing documentary evidence (e.g., medical certificate) of the reasons of their circumstances.

Finally, the ability to write in an economical style is a skill that is valued in both academic and business settings and therefore word limits should be strictly adhered to. +5-10% is within the spirit of the limits. Beyond that, a penalty may be applied or the marker may simply not include the extra words in their assessed grade.

### **Remarking**

Please refer to Section 9 of the [Assessment Handbook](#) and discuss this with the Course Coordinator in the first instance.

### **Use of Turnitin**

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <http://www.turnitin.com>. Turnitin is an on-line plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and submitted to Turnitin. A copy of submitted materials will be retained on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

### **Class Representative**

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details made available to VUWSA, the course coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the course coordinator on behalf of students.

### **Communication of Additional Information**

Any additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to students via the MGMT310 Blackboard site, and urgent messages via email to all class members student email addresses.

### **Student feedback**

Student feedback on University courses may be found at [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback\\_display.php](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php)

### **Link to general information**

For general information about course-related matters, go to <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/studenthelp/general-course-information>

### **Note to Students**

Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning objectives as required for accreditation and academic audit. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of VBS programmes. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the course.

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**MGMT 310 Lecture Schedule (GB LT1) – 2014 – Workshops (RH LT2) – Thursdays**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
1	17 July	<b>Course Introduction, the Pursuit of ‘Value’</b> Reading: <b>Ch. 2 Goals, Values and Performance</b> review Ch. 1 The Concept of Strategy	Yes
2	24 July	<b>Analyzing an Industry</b> Reading: <b>Ch. 3 Industry Analysis: The Fundamentals</b> review Ch. 4 Further Topics in Industry & Competitive Analysis	Yes
3	31 July	<b>Resources and Capabilities</b> Reading: <b>Ch. 5 Analyzing Resources and Capabilities</b>	Yes
4	7 August	<b>Competitive Strategies: Cost Leadership</b> Reading: <b>Ch. 7 Sources and Dimensions of Comp. Advantage</b>	Yes
5	14 August	<b>Competitive Strategies: Differentiation</b> Reading: <b>Ch. 7 Sources and Dimensions of Comp. Advantage</b>	Yes
6	21 August	<b>Management Systems and Advantage</b> Reading: pp. 141-153 <b>Ch. 6 Management Systems: The Fundamentals of Strategy Implementation</b>	Yes
<b>23 August to 7 September: Mid-Trimester Break</b>			
7	11 September	<b>Business Landscape, Rivalry and Evolution</b> Reading: <b>Ch. 8 Industry Evolution and Strategic Change</b> review Ch. 10 Competitive Advantage in Mature Industries	
8	18 September	<b>Review session for simulation</b>	
9	25 September	<b>Developing Advantage through Cooperation</b>	
10	2 October	<b>Advantage in Industries of the “New Economy”</b> Reading: <b>Ch. 9 Technology-based Industries and the Management of Innovation</b>	
11	9 October	<b>Competitive Advantage for New Zealand Businesses</b> review Ch. 12 Global Strategies and the Multinational Corporation Ch. 13 Diversification Strategy	
12	16 October	<b>Course Review and Final Examination Preparation</b> review Ch. 16 Current Trends in Strategic Management	

*All chapters refer to the course textbook: R.M. Grant (2013), Contemporary Strategy Analysis.*

**Case details and specific page readings for this schedule can be found on Blackboard.**



**School of Management**

MGMT 310 Individual Assignment Cover Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

*I have read and understood the university policy on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.  
I declare this assignment is free from plagiarism.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Extension of the due date (if applicable)*

**Please attach a copy of the note authorising your extension.**

Date extension applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

Extension granted until: \_\_\_\_\_

Extension granted by \_\_\_\_\_