

**Special Topics in International Business:
040152 KU Family Firm Internationalisation (MA) (4ECTS) WS2024/25**

Course Instructor:

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Course Description and Objectives

This course provides students with theoretical frameworks of how to work entrepreneurially and professionally, in and with family firms, and manage effectively the unique challenges that these organizations face when operating in the international context.

Family firms are the most ubiquitous form of business organization globally and the enduring influence of families on business and society is an essential part of the backbone of any world economy. Family businesses are different from any other profit-seeking organization due to the family's influence on the firm's strategic goals, governance structures and competitive resources. We will consider how aspects such as ownership, succession, sibling rivalry and relationships with non-family members affect the international strategic choices of family firms in terms of entry modes, location choices, strategic partnerships, processes and post-entry dynamics. Consistently with its practice-oriented nature, this course will include also guest lectures from family business leaders, consultants and experts, in order to foster interactions between the students and the entrepreneurial community.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand the unique strategic and managerial challenges for family firms operating internationally.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of family firms in the international context.
- Critically appraise how family heterogeneity in terms of family structures, functions, interactions and events affect family firm internationalization choices.
- Consider the different strategic drivers of family business behaviour at international level.
- Comprehend how the factors occurring over time to the family and the business affect internationalization process and outcomes.
- Evaluate how contextual factors, such as institutions, market and industry contingencies affect family firm internationalization.

Course Textbook and Additional Readings:

Exam preparation material.

The study material is based on the following research papers. Moreover, at the end of each lesson, slides in .pdf format will also be provided and will be part of the exam preparation material.

1. Arregle, J. L., Duran, P., Hitt, M. A., & Van Essen, M. (2017). Why is family firms' internationalization unique? A meta-analysis. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 41(5), 801-831.
2. Arregle, J. L., Hitt, M. A., & Mari, I. (2019). A missing link in family firms' internationalization research: Family structures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 50(5), 809-825.
3. Banalieva, E. R., & Eddleston, K. A. (2011). Home-region focus and performance of family firms: The role of family vs non-family leaders. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 42(8), 1060-1072.
4. Debellis, F., De Massis, A., Petruzzelli, A. M., Frattini, F., & Del Giudice, M. (2020). Strategic agility and international joint ventures: The willingness-ability paradox of family firms. *Journal of International Management*, 27(1), 100739.
5. Debellis, F., Rondi, E., Plakoyiannaki, E., & De Massis, A. (2021). Riding the waves of family firm internationalization: A systematic literature review, integrative framework, and research agenda. *Journal of World Business*, 101-144.
6. Debellis, F., Rondi, E., Buckley, P. J., & De Massis, A. (2024). Family firms and the governance of global value chains. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 1-14.
7. De Massis, A., Frattini, F., Kotlar, J., Petruzzelli, A. M., & Wright, M. (2016). Innovation through tradition: Lessons from innovative family businesses and directions for future research. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 30(1), 93-116.
8. Hennart, J. F., Majocchi, A., & Forlani, E. (2019). The myth of the stay-at-home family firm: How family-managed SMEs can overcome their internationalization limitations. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 50(5), 758-782.
9. Kano, L., Ciravegna, L., & Rattalino, F. (2021). The family as a platform for FSA development: Enriching new internalization theory with insights from family firm research. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 52(1), 148-160.
10. Kano, L., & Verbeke, A. (2018). Family firm internationalization: Heritage assets and the impact of bifurcation bias. *Global Strategy Journal*, 8(1), 158-183.
11. Rondi, E., Magrelli, V., Debellis, F., & De Massis, A. (2024). The evolution of craft work in the strategic development of a family enterprise. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*.

Optional Reading (book)

- Zellweger, T. (2017). *Managing the family business: Theory and practice*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Course Evaluation:

The evaluation is structured as follows:

1. Participation in class discussion (10%)
2. Midterm examination: Multiple-choice exam (20% of the final grade)
3. Final exam: Open-ended questions covering the whole content of the course (40%)
4. Report and Presentation of a Group project - further details will be discussed on lecture 1 (30%)

Evaluation standard

90% - 100% | 1

80% - 89% | 2

70% - 79% | 3

50% - 69% | 4

Course policies and useful information:

- Both the course and the exams will be held in **English**. During the course active participation is required during all lessons.
- Lectures usually take place on Tuesdays from 6.30 pm till 8 pm. The final day for the research project presentation (**31st January 2025**) will take the **entire afternoon** (check syllabus).
- During the course there will a guest lecture by an entrepreneur of a multinational family firm that will be used to observe “on the pitch” some concepts that we will face during the first theoretical lessons. The practical case discussed with the entrepreneur will be part of the open-ended questions of the final written exam. Therefore, attendance to the guest lecture is mandatory. This guest lecture will exceptionally take place on **Friday 22nd November** from 09:45 am to 13:00.
- Students wishing to take this course *must register via [u:find/u:space](#)* (with points) during the registration period. The maximum number of participants is 50.
- Registered students who, for whatever reason, are not able to take the course *must de-register* electronically by the 8th October 2024. Students who decide to drop the course after this deadline will be graded with 5 (failed).

It is absolutely essential that all registered students attend the first session on 3rd October 2024 (Introduction) as failure to do so will result in their exclusion from the course.

SESSIONS	ROOM	AGENDA	REFERENCE READINGS
(1) 3 Oct 2024 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 9	Introduction to course, definition of family firm, strengths and weaknesses of family firms in the international	Arregle et al. 2017 ETP Debellis et al. 2021 JWB Kano et al. 2021 JIBS
(2) 10 Oct 2024 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 9	Governance of international family firms	Arregle et al. 2019 JIBS Kano & Verbeke, 2018 GSJ
(3) 17 Oct 2024 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 9	Goals, strategy and performance of international family firms	Banalieva & Eddleston 2011 JIBS Hennart et al. 2019 JIBS
(4) 24 Oct 2024 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 9	Location and foreign entry mode choices by family firms	Debellis et al. 2020 JIM Debellis et al 2024 JIBS
(5) 07 Nov 2024 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 9	Midterm Exam	
(6)(7) 22 Nov 2024 (10.00 pm – 12.30 pm)	HS 6	Guest Lecture	
(8) 28 Nov 2024 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 9	Innovation through tradition in family firms	De Massis et al. 2016 AMP Rondi et al. 2024 SEJ
(9) 16 Jan 2025 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 9	Recap/summary	
(10) 23 Jan 2025 (6.30 pm – 8 pm)	HS 6 HS 9	Final Exam	
(11)(12) 31 Jan 2025 (4.45 pm - 8pm)	HS 9	Group presentations	