



## Strategy

Strategy is often seen as a key skill in middle and senior managers. This is a postgraduate level course and is the compulsory starting point on Stage Two of the MBA programme. If you have completed **The Open University Business School** Professional Diploma in Management, this will be your first course on the MBA programme.

**Details on**  
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Code: **B820**  
Level: **Postgraduate**  
Points: **30**

Computer and Internet access required  
3.5-day residential school  
Examination

### Description

Strategy is often seen as one of the key tasks of senior managers, and this course will be particularly helpful to middle managers preparing themselves for more senior positions. It will contribute to your practical development as a manager by providing insights into the theory and practice of managing strategy across organizations. It is concerned with what determines whether an organization survives, prospers or dies. Survival and prosperity depend on the solutions to questions such as: which products or services to offer; whether to pursue single or multiple lines of business; which markets or clients to aim for; whether to limit activities to local markets or pursue success internationally; how to acquire appropriate technologies, knowledge, finance and human resources; in what combinations to apply resources to operations; which skills and capabilities to develop; and how external parties such as competitors, collaborators and government will respond to the solutions found.

Success in strategy depends on matching an organization's distinctive assets and capabilities to its external relationships. The course encourages you to understand the structure of the industries and markets your organization participates in, and to analyse the nature of its external relationships with suppliers, customers, competitors and collaborators. At the same time it helps you to assess the resources and capabilities your organization possesses, both physical assets such as control over distribution channels and intangible informal networks with important partners.

The importance of seeking strategic advantage over competitors is stressed, and you are encouraged to recognize sources of advantage in the distinctiveness of your organization's resources and capabilities and in the structure of its external relationships. Organizational resources

and capabilities are defined broadly in strategy, and the course considers not only technological capabilities and human skills, but also how structure, systems, culture and power develop to create overall capabilities for organizing activities. Managing structure requires the strategist to be aware of the boundaries of the organization, and the course suggests situations in which either competition or collaboration is more likely to lead to success.

Another important task for the strategist is the management of activities to add the most value to resources contributed by all stakeholders and interested parties. This requires an understanding of stakeholders' power, their objectives, and the reasons why they have chosen to collaborate through the organization. The course discusses the organization's purpose, and extends this to consider corporate governance and the influence of government, regulation and other institutions in the environment.

Finally we describe strategic process, noting the effect that contingencies such as hostile, unstable or uncertain environments have on the way that strategies are formed, how organizational politics and culture affect strategy, and the choices available to strategists. The course helps you to understand why your organization's strategies will sometimes





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### What's included

Course books, other printed materials, video cassettes, audio CDs, computer conferencing, website, downloaded software.

### You will need

Video and CD players and a computer as described in our Personal Computing for The Open University Business School Study section.

be realized very much as planned, and sometimes emerge, without planning, from managers' actions.

For most middle managers, strategy presents a change in the complexity of management. The strategist must first and foremost manage the long-term prosperity of the whole organization. This requires ability to bring together the sometimes narrow views of technical, functional, departmental and support activities, and at the same time to recognize which of the issues facing the organization are truly important or strategic. Once a complex problem has been analysed and a strategy formulated, the task of implementing it remains. That is never easy, and the strategist gains

skill from experience and practice.

The course promotes the skill of strategic thinking by supplementing your practical experience with appropriate theories, frameworks and concepts that aid understanding of strategic issues, and then by applying these tools in practical examples, in case studies and in your own organization.

The course includes a structured computer conference activity based on sector and industry study groups. Informal conferences will also be established, so that you can keep in touch and share ideas with other course participants and tutors.

### Summary

Success in strategy depends on matching an organization's distinctive assets and capabilities to its external relationships. This course will help you to develop a better understanding of what business strategy entails, both theoretically and in practice. It will improve your strategic thinking skills and develop your own view of your role in making strategy in the organization. If you register for the MBA, you must take this as your first Stage 2 course after completing the University's Professional Diploma in Management or B713 Fundamentals of senior management (or its predecessor B800 Foundations of senior management). This course provides the framework of strategic issues on which the other MBA courses build.

The course is presented in Romania by CODECS, partnership of The Open University Business School from Great Britain.

### Vocational relevance

The course is related to the N/SVQ (UK) in operational management at Level 5.

### Entry

To register for the MBA you must be aged 25 years or over, with an honours degree or equivalent, and have experience as an entrepreneur, leader, middle or senior manager, or professional who participates in management (e.g. doctor, banker, professor). Although Strategy (B820) is worthwhile on its own, it is particularly aimed at those aspiring to an MBA or management-related postgraduate study. You must still meet the same entry requirements whether you are studying this as a standalone course or as part of a postgraduate qualification. If you are taking the course as part of your MBA you must complete Stage 1 first.

### Residential school

At the residential school (three and a half days) you will take part in intensive case study discussions and practical simulation exercises. The cost of the school is included in the course fee.

### Support from your tutor

You will have a tutor who will help you with the course material and mark and comment on your written work, and whom you can ask for advice and guidance. You will contact your tutor by telephone, correspondence, e-mail and computer conferences. We may be able to offer group tutorials or day-schools that you are encouraged, but not obliged, to attend. Where tutorials are held depends on the distribution of students taking each course.

### Assessment

Three tutor-marked assignments and an examination.

