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Note: The modules offered and their timing are conditional upon the availability of faculty and may be subject to change.
Strategic Management pathway (Stream A): Course outline

Stream A of the Strategic Management PhD pathway at Cambridge Judge Business School is specifically designed to prepare you to conduct independent, high-calibre quantitave research in strategy and pursue an academic career as a faculty member at a major business school. The stream runs over a period of five years. In your first year you will be registered as a masters student—either on the MPhil in Strategy, Marketing & Operations (SMO) or on the Master of Research (MRes). This is followed by four years of study towards your doctoral degree. The stream has a coursework component consisting of various taught courses and a research component that leads to the PhD thesis, which in most cases is a collection of research papers.

Coursework

The coursework is a combination of foundational and methodological courses and advanced research seminars that introduce you to the main research streams and current academic debates in the field of strategic management. The assessed coursework component (nine required modules) will be completed during the foundation year (when you will be registered for an MPhil or MRes degree) and the first year of your PhD.

A typical set of coursework requirements includes the following modules.

RESEARCH SEMINARS
- Seminar in Strategy Content
- Seminar in Strategy Process
- Organisations and Strategic Innovation
- Marketing Strategy

FOUNDATIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL MODULES
- Fundamentals of Competitive Markets
- Game Theory & Information Economics
- Econometrics I
- Econometrics II

A SAMPLE OF POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL MODULES
- Research seminars in cognate management disciplines, e.g.
  - Organisation Theory
  - Organisational Behaviour
  - Managing Innovative Organisations
- Further foundational and methodology courses, e.g.
  - Organisational Research Methods

Your individual coursework requirement may deviate from the above list as we take into account your prior training and the requirements of your developing programme of research when we design your coursework programme. We will determine the final list of assessed courses with you during and at the end of your masters year.

While the range of assessed courses is confined to nine modules over the course of the foundation year and first year of the PhD, you will be strongly encouraged to continue to attend relevant courses and workshops offered by the university and other institutions throughout the course of your PhD.
Research component

The research component builds on your coursework and normally consists of a research project either conducted jointly with faculty members or closely supervised by the faculty. These projects will lead to papers for journal publication, and these papers will constitute the core of your PhD thesis and form the basis of your academic job market application.

Foundation year: research masters degree

During the foundation year, you are registered for a masters programme: either the MPhil in Strategy, Marketing & Operations or the Master of Research (MRes).

**MPhil:** If you are registered as an MPhil student you may take:
- eight of the nine required PhD coursework modules and an individual research project (IRP)
- or six of the nine required modules and a dissertation (if you have a well formulated dissertation proposal)

**MRes:** If you are registered for the MRes, you will take six of the nine required PhD coursework modules during the MRes year and write a masters dissertation.

You will take any remaining PhD coursework modules during the subsequent first PhD year.

Preparatory Mathematics & Statistics (September)

The MPhil SMO offers a pre-term mathematics refresher course, which starts in mid-September. Its aim is to review the mathematical and statistical methods required for the econometrics modules. Students with strong and appropriate prior training may apply for exemption from this preparatory course. Otherwise, the course is mandatory.

Individual research project

If you are registered for the MPhil in your foundation year, you may undertake a supervised individual research project (IRP). This project will provide first-hand research experience and will prepare you for the individual research activity during the first year of the PhD. You are encouraged to propose a theme for your IRP. Alternatively, you can contact faculty and discuss possible IRP themes with them. If you intend to do an IRP, you will agree its theme with the MPhil director and a supervising faculty member at the beginning of Lent Term. The IRP is equivalent in weighting and workload to one course and may be included as part of the First Year Report at the end of the first year of the PhD (see below).

Masters dissertation

MRes students write an MRes dissertation, supervised by a faculty member, which counts for 50 per cent of the overall mark for the MRes degree. MPhil students with a well formulated dissertation proposal at the start of the year may be allowed to write an MPhil dissertation, counting for the equivalent of three modules, i.e. one third of the final mark of the MPhil.
PhD continuation requirement

If you are registered for an MRes degree during your foundation year, you will proceed to PhD registration without a further application process, provided you achieve a mark of 70 per cent in your dissertation and an average mark of 70 per cent across all assessed components in your MRes year (six course modules and your dissertation, with the latter counting for 50 per cent of the mark).

As an MPhil student you will need to develop an initial research proposal during the first term of your MPhil year and apply for continuation to the PhD in December. Your application will be assessed by the PhD admissions committee in January on the basis of your research proposal, an admissions interview and your module performance during the first term. Continuation to the PhD will be conditional on your overall performance in the MPhil or parts thereof; the usual condition being a mark of 70 per cent overall.

Summer (July–September)

Continuing students are strongly advised to discuss with their faculty supervisor how to continue their research over the summer prior to the start of their first PhD year. This ensures that you don’t lose valuable time that could be put towards completing your PhD. Students may continue the work that they have begun on their masters dissertation or an individual research project. We prefer students to remain in Cambridge over this period if possible. If this is not practicable (e.g. for visa reasons), students can be supervised remotely via Skype and email.

First year of the PhD

During the first year of your PhD you will complete your coursework requirements and develop a convincing research proposal and execution plan for your PhD. A senior faculty member (your principal supervisor) will work with you to develop your PhD research programme throughout the year.

First year report

You will work with your faculty supervisor to produce a first year report. This research report can take one of two forms:

- A working paper on a specific research question; this working paper will normally be expanded to become your first PhD paper.
- An extended research proposal on the broader theme that you wish to address in your PhD research, including a thorough literature review and a clear plan for the execution of a first research paper during the second PhD year.

Your first year report should demonstrate your ability to formulate sharp research questions, summarise relevant academic debates, critically assess the extant literature and choose appropriate research methods. While you are not required to, you can incorporate any part of your masters work, such as your module essays, IRP or a summer project (if applicable), into your first year report.

Second year continuation requirements

To proceed to the second year of the PhD you will have to gain a mark of 70 per cent for your first year report and pass all required courses (60 per cent pass mark).
While we will continue to monitor your progress closely after the first year of your PhD, there will not be any more formal continuation assessment until the final PhD assessment.

Second year of the PhD

During the second year, you will focus on producing your first research paper. Most students do this by 'learning on the job' and working closely and collaboratively with their PhD advisor, who will normally be a co-author on the paper. You will present your progress frequently – both formally and informally – to the faculty and PhD students in the Strategy & International Business subject group. You will also be expected to submit an abstract of the paper for presentation at the Academy of Management conference. The target for journal submission for this paper is the end of the calendar year, following the Academy of Management presentation.

Third year of the PhD

Following the submission of your first paper, your focus in your third year will be on beginning work on your second paper. You may continue to work with your faculty co-author or another co-author or choose to work on your second paper independently. You can expect your advisors to play a significant role in helping shape the idea for this paper, but you will be expected to take the lead in executing it and be the clear primary author. You will be expected to submit an abstract of the paper for presentation at the Academy of Management conference in the autumn, after which you will be expected to submit the paper to a journal. In parallel with the development of this second paper, you will revise your first paper and continue to present it at seminars and conferences.

Fourth year of the PhD

The fourth year is your job market year. You will present your two papers at the Academy of Management conference and continue to revise and polish them. We will encourage you to spend part of the fourth year as a visitor in a strategic management department of another university, typically in the USA, to build closer ties with potential collaborators and the global strategic management community. Our students have visited top schools around the world, including MIT, UC Berkeley and the University of Michigan.

You will submit your PhD thesis at the end of your fourth year at the latest.

Optional fifth year

Good research requires you to take risks, to explore avenues and tackle issues that are new and original. Research may therefore not unfold as planned and your work may require substantial revision. In fact, many of the most influential research projects ended up taking considerably longer than anticipated. We encourage students to be aspirational and take risks – and we work with them to manage these risks. To accommodate early “wrong turns” and unforeseen delays, we sometimes recommend that a student delays entering the job market by a year and spend an additional year at CJBS (and possibly another university) to work on paper revisions with faculty and strengthen their portfolio of research paper before applying for a junior faculty position. This optional fifth year is typically funded through a combination of post-doc research grants and targeted teaching opportunities, which further strengthen the student’s job market prospects.