



MASTER COURSE: MICROECONOMICS OF COMPETITIVENESS (MOC)

PROF. DR. PHILIPPE GUGLER

Spring term 2026

Monday, 11.15am - 2.00pm



Prof. Philippe Gugler and Prof. Michael E. Porter

The MOC course explores the determinants of competitiveness and of Microeconomics of Competitiveness: Firms, Clusters, and Economic Development (MOC) is a university-wide graduate course offered to students from the Harvard University as well as to students from affiliated foreign universities such as the Center for

Competitiveness of the University of Fribourg (www.unifr.ch/competitiveness). The course has been developed by Professor Michael E. Porter & his staff and by affiliates of the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness (HBS).

Successful economic development viewed from a bottom-up, microeconomic perspective. While sound macroeconomic policies, stable legal and political institutions, and improving social conditions create the potential for competitiveness; wealth is actually created at the microeconomic level. The sophistication and productivity of firms, the vitality of clusters, and the quality of the business environment in which competition takes place are the ultimate determinants of nation's and/or region's productivity.

The course Moodle consists of case studies and other written materials plus an extensive library of video content that can be used in class including lectures by Prof. Porter for all sessions and recordings of case protagonists including heads of state, senior ministers, governors, (...).



Microeconomics of Competitiveness (MOC) Michael Porter (HBS) Concept

COURSE ORGANIZATION - 9 IMPORTANT INFORMATIONS

I) Registration: Each student **needs to be registered** in order to get access to the course material via the Harvard electronic platform, **in addition** to the usual registration procedure of the University of Fribourg. Each student will get an invitation to Moodle and the course documentation, which comprises *inter alia* the case studies as well as other publications.

II) Registration: February 13rd - March 13rd, 2026 (Patrizia Conforti, Office G 402, Monday-Friday, **08.30-11.30**). We strongly advise to be **registered at the beginning of the semester (February 16th, 2026) in order to attend the course from the beginning (participation constitutes part of the grading).**

III) Registration costs: 70 CHF (Patrizia Conforti, Office G 402, Monday-Friday, **08.30-11.30**, please bring the exact change). This includes the course documentation and copyrights. Once registered with access to the course material, **we cannot refund** the registration fee due to copyrights agreements with the HBS.

IV) Course documentation (with the case studies): The course documentation will be provided when the registration occurs.

V) Textbook: “On Competition”, by M. E. Porter, Harvard Business Review Book, 2008 (the textbook will be provided on Moodle).

VI) Usual sessions will run every Monday from 11.15am until 2.00pm. Sessions will run for three hours (3x45 minutes). Each session will comprise:

- A case discussion (60 minutes);
- A lecture (75 minutes);

VII) Students will be asked to apply their learning in a team project, which analyzes the level of competitiveness of a selected country (or region in a large country) and one of its clusters. Groups include 3 to 4 students.

VIII) Grading: There won't be any exam (oral or written) at the end of the spring term. The grading will be based on the average of the two following assessments:

- Assessment 1: **Class participation** (mainly during the case studies discussions).
- Assessment 2: **Report and presentation**.

IX) Please note that students have to register for the course at the beginning of the spring term according to the faculty regulations, even though there won't be an actual exam at the end of the term. Students who do not register for the course (and therefore for the exam) lose the right to validate the course. Students **who fail** at the spring term assessment will have to take a written exam (90 minutes). This exam will take place at the fall exam session (end of August – beginning of September 2026).



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COURSE SCHEDULE

(Schedule subject to minor changes)

Date	Session Topic	Case study (course documentation)	Reading (available on the MOC Moodle)
February 16th 11.15am-2pm	Course presentation and organization Team formation, organization, topic allocation Chapter 1: Competitiveness: overall Framework		
February 23rd 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 2: Firms' strategies and operations	ON (HBS case)	"On Competition", Introduction and chapters 1 and 2.
March 2d 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 3: Blue Ocean Strategies and Non-Disruptive (Value-Based) Innovation	CitizenM Case (LSE case)	"On Competition", Introduction and chapters 1 and 2.
March 9th 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 4: Created Shared Value (CSV) Strategies	Patagonia: « Earth Is Now Our Only Shareholder" (HBS case)	"On Competition", chapters 12, 13, and 14 Porter, Kramer, Creating Shared Value, HBR, 2015.
March 16th 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 5: Quality of the Business Environment: the Diamond Model Chapter 6: Clusters and Clusters Development	Growing a Cluster; The Singapore Biomedical Sciences Initiative, (HBS case)	"On Competition", chapters 6 and 7.
March 23rd 11.15am-2pm	Team Project reviews • Medical device cluster in the region of Freiburg-in-Breisgau (video) • Medtech cluster in Galway Region (video)		Dublin Construction Cluster (Agakhanova, Eyer, Mavrogonatou, Premand). The Medtech cluster in Galway (Coussa, Jam, Quirighetti, Rossier).
March 30th 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 7: MNEs and Location Competitiveness	Starbucks' Global Journey, (Journal of World Economy, 2023). Starbucks International Strategy, (The Strategy Institute, 2024).	"On Competition", Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 8.
April 13th 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 8: Globalization of Locations and Firms and Born Global Firms	How Netflix expanded to 190 countries in 7 years (HBS case).	"On Competition", Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 8
April 20th 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 9: Geographical Embeddedness in Global Value Chains	WTO <i>Global Value Chain Development Report 2025</i> , Chapter 3 on Global Electric Vehicle Value Chains. The WEWORK Company: Internationalization of a Born Global Firm, Agnihotri, A., Bhattacharya, S., Ivey Business School Foundation.	"On Competition", Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 8
April 27th 11.15am-2pm	Chapter 10: Economic Strategy at National and Regional Levels Chapter 11: Economic Strategies at the City level: Smart and Innovative Cities	Making Madrid Smart (Center for Competitiveness Case)	"On Competition", Chapter 10
May 4th	Teams' project finalization		
May 11th	Teams' project presentations		
May 18th	Teams' project presentations		