

## GBUS 2030 From Zero To Exit – Journey of A Start-up (2-credit)

Fall Semester 2025

School of Business and Management | The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

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### Class Meetings

L1                                      Tue      1600 - 1750                                      Rm 6602, Academic Building

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed for students who are interested in starting a business or working for an entrepreneurial company. Students are expected to understand the opportunities and challenges of a start-up journey, from coming up with their own start up idea to incepting the idea, pitching for funding and to growing their own start-up. At the end of the course, they will be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to kick start their business as an entrepreneur. Instructor's approval is required for enrollment in the course. For GBUS students only.

### COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed for students who are interested in understanding the dynamics of entrepreneurship and the start-up ecosystem in Hong Kong. It is designed with a project-based learning methodology to take you through the journey of being a real entrepreneur, from coming up with their own start-up idea to incepting the idea, taking it to the market, selling it to customers pitching for funding and finally, growing own start-up until reaching the exit stage. At the end of the course, you will be familiarized with the skills and knowledge necessary to plan your next move as an entrepreneur. Or more importantly, be familiarized with the essentials of an entrepreneur: Critical thinking, creative mindset and above all, resiliency. All critical elements of career of the next generation.

Speakers with relevant expertise are invited to share with you their experience throughout the course. Topics covered will give you a broad overview of entrepreneurship, including the competition landscape, identifying a business opportunity, gathering funding for and launching a business, developing skills and insights for evaluating, articulating, refining, and pitching your new product or service, and at the end harvesting the fruits of your efforts.

### INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES (ILOs)

This course will support the following learning goals and objectives of the Global Business program:

1. Analyze start-up ecosystems and evaluate the dynamic challenges faced by founders.
2. Evaluate key aspects of entrepreneurial ventures—particularly technology ventures—from both buy-side and sell-side perspectives.

3. Demonstrate a broad understanding of core business functions and practices, those not typically covered by academic curriculum.
4. Apply critical and creative thinking to make effective decisions supported by analytical techniques.
5. Demonstrate resilience by constructively handling objections and rejection.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

You will be led through the journey of establishing a start-up with 10 classroom sessions, each providing an overview to a key aspect of the start-up.

We will start with the preparation, examine the macro and the micro of the start-up ecosystems through 2 sessions

- Current landscape, challenges and opportunities of technology start up in Hong Kong
- Essence of the start-up journey – facing the realities

The next 8 sessions will get down to the work, examining the various operational aspects of your start-up venture:

- Product Design: Managing your creations – from drawing board to board room
- Sales Pitch: Your first success story – selling to strategic customers
- Partnering Strategy: Scaling up your start-up – building a channel business model
- Talent Management: Building a successful team – from garage hobbyist to becoming a CEO
- Branding & Position: Building a brand for your start-up
- Legal: Protecting your business – legal must knows
- Investor Pitch: Are you ready to pitch - your first business plan that matters
- Regional Expansion: Going beyond HK – the regional strategy

## **ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/joseph-koc-aa48332/>

## **ASSESSMENT AND GRADING**

You will be evaluated based on how well you understand and subsequently apply the various skill sets. Such will be demonstrated by you through 3 commentaries to be submitted throughout the semester.

Meaningful in-class participation and contribution is naturally expected. The course operates on a discovery learning principle and your active participation in class is crucial. Your course grade will be determined by the following components:

I. <i>Knowledge-based</i>		
1. Analytic write-up (800 words)		25%
2. Course Project – Recommendation Deck (10 pages max)		15%
3. Course Project – Evaluation Report (1000 words)		25%
	<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>65%</b>
4. Attendance		10%
5. Class Participation		10%
6. Peer Evaluation		15%
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>35%</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Analytical Write-up (25%)

One analytic commentary write-up is to be submitted on the topic to be announced.

Submission is to be made via CANVAS by 1200 noon on 21<sup>st</sup> October. Your commentary write-up will be evaluated based on the following:

Structure of write-up	5%
Clarity of argument	10%
Analytics	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25%</b>

**Late pieces of work will receive a penalty of up to 10 points per 24-hour period.** For clarity, a piece of work that would have been graded as a 100% but was submitted two days late would receive a grade of 80%.

### Course Project – Analysing To Advice Of A Start-up

- Presentation – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025
- Submission should be no longer than 10 pages of slides
- Evaluation Report submission deadline – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025
- Submission should be no longer than 1000 words

All start-up founders are of the opinion that their solutions are unique. That they have identified pain points that are of importance. Above all, pain points that there are important enough that people would care. They are also, in most cases, the founders are of the opinion that they know where they should be taking their start-up companies, how and when, both in the geographical and strategic senses. But do they really?

Your Course Project give you the chance to validate. Working as group, you will examine and study a start-up company that is in the midst of a growth path. Your will be validating various aspects of the business model established by the founder, including but not limiting to the following

1. Pain Point(s)
2. Product Market Fit

### 3. Growth and Expansion Strategies

You will develop a report with no more than 1,000 words, presenting your findings and conclusions to the founder of the start-up as to the validity of his / her business model. Your report should include any recommendations to the founder you see as critical to ensure successful implementation of the various strategies e.g. organisation and structure, go-to-market strategies, pricing models, or even a new business model in case you do not agree with the existing one.

During the last class session, you will present to the founder of the start-up company for 5-minute on your findings and recommendations. You will be evaluated based on the following:

<b>Recommendation Deck</b>	Structure of Presentation	5%
	Feasibility of your recommendations	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>		15%
<b>Evaluation Report</b>	Structure of Report	5%
	Recommendations	10%
	Analytics	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>		25%

You will be meeting the founder of the start-up company during one of the earlier classes. One project consultation session after the class session will be held to allow progress check as well as for you to clarify understandings.

#### Class Participation

Your participation assessment will reflect the quality of your contribution to the collective learning environment. You can contribute by participating in class discussions, asking probing questions that move the discussion forward, integrating and building on others' comments, and taking class exercises seriously. You are not expected to speak up in every class session. Some of the best contributors participate less often than the most active speakers, the issue is one primarily of subjective perception of quality, not a count on the objective number of times you have spoken up.

Attendance policy: Attendance will be counted towards your participation grade. If you need to miss a class, arrive late, or leave early, please email to inform the IA 24 hours prior to class.

#### Peer Evaluation

You will be assigned to work with fellow students from your class to study to understand the business model of the case company volunteering itself to the course as a subject of study. Your active participation in project discussion and contribution of ideas is essential and critical to the successful development of recommendations to the case company.

You and your team members will provide evaluation on each other based on your participation and contribution to the project. You will be expected by your team members to take on an active role in sharing your understanding of the business model of the case company, your point of view and opinion towards its feasibility and in the end, recommendation by your team. Every bit of your contribution counts.

## MAPPING OF COURSE ILOs TO ASSESSMENT TASKS

Assessment Tasks	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Analytic Write-up	ILO1, ILO2, ILO4	This task assesses students' ability to understand and apply start-up ecosystem concepts (ILO1), evaluate entrepreneurial challenges (ILO2), and synthesize well-argued ideas (ILO4).
Recommendation Deck	ILO3, ILO4, ILO5	This task demonstrates students' ability to understand core business practices (ILO3), apply creative thinking in forming recommendations (ILO4), and communicate effectively (ILO5).
Evaluation Report	ILO2, ILO3, ILO5	This task requires students to evaluate technology ventures (ILO2), assess internal/external business functions (ILO3), and express their findings clearly (ILO5).
Participation & Peer Evaluation	ILO5	Peer evaluation promotes students' reflective thinking, teamwork, and communication (ILO5), by encouraging fair and constructive assessment of each member's contribution.

## GRADING RUBRICS

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Developing	Needs Improvement
<b>Content &amp; Analysis</b>	Deep, insightful analysis; well-researched with strong evidence.	Clear analysis with good research; minor gaps.	Surface-level analysis; limited research.	Lacks critical analysis; insufficient research.
<b>Creativity &amp; Innovation</b>	Unique solutions; exceptional originality.	Demonstrates creativity; some novel ideas.	Minimal innovation; relies on conventional approaches.	Lacks originality; repetitive or derivative.
<b>Collaboration &amp; Teamwork</b>	Excellent teamwork; balanced contributions.	Good collaboration; occasional imbalances.	Uneven participation; some disengagement.	Poor teamwork; dominant or passive members.

<b>Presentation/ Professionalism</b>	Polished delivery; clear, engaging, and error-free.	Effective communication; minor issues.	Basic delivery; lacks clarity or flow.	Unprepared; confusing or unprofessional.
<b>Timeliness &amp; Adherence</b>	Meets all deadlines; follows guidelines perfectly.	Minor delays or deviations.	Multiple delays or guideline issues.	Missed deadlines; ignores requirements.

### FINAL GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of subject matter, expertise in problem-solving, and significant creativity in thinking. Exhibits a high capacity for scholarship and collaboration, going beyond core requirements to achieve learning goals.
B	Good Performance	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the main subject matter, competence in problem-solving, and the ability to analyse and evaluate issues. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to work effectively with others.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Has threshold knowledge of core subject matter, potential to achieve key professional skills, and the ability to make basic judgments. Benefits from the course and has the potential to develop in the discipline.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter and lacks the necessary problem-solving skills. Shows limited ability to think critically or analytically and exhibits minimal effort towards achieving learning goals.

### COURSE AI POLICY

All use of AI during the preparation or completion of Assessment Exercises is permitted to the extent that it serves as a research tool. You are allowed to quote from AI tools, but you must list them as an inline citation.

### COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Assessment marks for the interim and final presentation will be communicated within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include strengths and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback, including marks, should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

## RESUBMISSION POLICY

[No resubmission is allowed]

To ensure fairness for students who submit assignments on time, a penalty for late submission is listed as follows:

- Late submission within 24 hours: **10-point penalty** will be applied.
- Late submission between 24 to 48 hours: **20-point penalty** will be applied.

## REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

There will not be required textbook. All course material will be distributed online through CANVAS site at.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

## DECLARATION

The Course Instructor and GBUS Program Office reserve the final right to revise the syllabus as needed.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic
1	2 SEPT	Current landscape, challenges and opportunities of technology start up in Hong Kong
		Speaker: Raymond Chu   Associate Director   University Liason   HKSTP
2	9 SEPT	Essence of the start-up journey – facing the realities
		Speaker: Chris Shum   Co-Founder & CEO   Asiabots
3	16 SEPT	Managing your creations – from drawing board to board room
		Speaker: Mr. Edmund Chan   CO-founder   Meat The Next
4	23 SEPT	Your first success story – selling to strategic customers
		Speaker: James Yiu   Business Development Manager   Alliance Construction Materials Limited
5	30 SEPT	Scaling up your start-up – building a channel business model
		Speaker: Mr. Ronald Wong   Director   Commercial Business   Lenovo (HK) Limited
<b>NO CLASS ON 7 OCTOBER</b>		
6	14 OCT	Meeting The Start-up Founder
		Speaker: Mr. Edmund Chan   CO-founder   Meat The Next
7	21 OCT	Building a successful team – from garage hobbyist to becoming a CEO
		Speaker: Matthew Li   Co-founder   Nova Innotech Limited
8	28 OCT	Protecting your business – legal must knows
		Speaker: Ms. Anny Cheung   Chief Financial Officer   Full Nature Farm
9	4 NOV	Start-up project consultation session

Week	Date	Topic
10	11 NOV	Are you ready to pitch - your first business plan that matters
		Speaker: Mr. Mike Lam   Principle Partner, Venture   Centillion
11	18 NOV	Going beyond HK – the regional strategy
		Speaker: Felix Wong   Co-founder   Logflows
13	25 NOV	<b>Recommendation feedback to case company (group presentations)</b>
		Mr. Edmund Chan   CO-founder   Meat The Next