Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Barcelona
Course Code / Title: BC/BUSN 370 The Business of FC Barcelona
Contact Hours: 45
Recommended Credits: 3
Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Business / Marketing, Management, Cultural Studies
Language of Instruction: English
Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course analyzes FC Barcelona as a leading case in professional sports marketing, focusing on governance, strategy, and global brand development. Students examine the club's member-owned structure and its implications for decision-making, financial management, competitive performance, and stakeholder relations. Through targeted case studies and strategic analysis, the course explores FC Barcelona's revenue streams, sponsorship deals, media footprints, and international fan growth alongside the economic rules governing the sport. The course also addresses the club's cultural and political significance, assessing how history, identity, and cultural values influence organizational strategies and global brands. By the end of the course, students gain a nuanced understanding of how elite soccer clubs build and monetize a global brand without losing their cultural identity.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Explain FC Barcelona's governance structure and member-owned organizational model, and their implications for decision-making and stakeholder relations.
- Analyze FC Barcelona's business model, revenue streams, and financial strategy within the economic and regulatory environment of professional football.
- Evaluate the club's marketing, sponsorship, media, and fan engagement strategies in building and monetizing a global sports brand.
- Examine how FC Barcelona's history, cultural identity, and social and political significance influence its organizational strategy and market positioning.
- Compare FC Barcelona's strategic and organizational model with other professional sports organizations and ownership models in an international context.
- Apply business, marketing, and strategic management frameworks to assess the challenges and opportunities facing FC Barcelona as a global sports organization.

Requirements

This course follows an active learning model in which class discussions, case studies, strategic analysis, and group activities play a central role. Active participation is essential for students to maximize their learning experience. Each week, students are expected to complete approximately

30-40 pages of assigned readings and come prepared for all class activities and assignments. Attendance is required as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Because a significant portion of course content is explored through in-class activities, case discussions, guest lectures, and field study components rather than readings alone, regular presence is critical. Field studies and guest lectures are an integral part of the course, allowing students to observe course concepts in practice and to connect classroom analysis with the real business, governance, and cultural environment in which FC Barcelona operates, using Barcelona itself as a learning environment. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise indicated.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation**: Students are expected to contribute actively and consistently to class discussions, case analyses, group activities, guest lectures, and field study components, connecting course concepts and readings to FC Barcelona and the broader professional sports industry.

- **Strategic team project**: In groups of 3–4, students complete a consulting-style project applying the business, marketing, and strategic management theories and frameworks studied in the course to a significant challenge or opportunity faced by FC Barcelona. Each team works on a different challenge identified during the course and assumes the role of a strategic advisory team responsible for analyzing the issue and developing evidence-based recommendations. Strong projects demonstrate analytical depth, original research, strategic thinking, and the ability to apply theory to practice.

    - **Deliverables**:

    Teams develop their project progressively throughout the semester through five written deliverables. Deliverables 1-4 are 6-8 pages each and serve as graded checkpoints that allow teams to receive feedback and refine their analysis as the project develops. Deliverable 5 is the final written report (25–30 pages), which integrates the previous deliverables.

    1 – Strategic Challenge and Context: Identification and analysis of the selected challenge or opportunity, its strategic context, and the key stakeholders involved.
    2 – Business and Financial Analysis: Analysis of the business model, financial implications, revenue considerations, and relevant economic or regulatory factors related to the selected challenge.
    3 – Brand and Market Analysis: Analysis of the club's brand, relevant markets and audiences, fan engagement, and the international and commercial dimensions of the selected challenge.
    4 – Strategic Options and Preliminary Recommendation: Development and comparison of alternative courses of action, including their potential benefits, risks, and trade-offs, leading to a preliminary strategic recommendation.
    5 – Final Strategic Project: Submission of the complete project, integrating and refining the previous analyses based on feedback received throughout the

semester and presenting the team's final evidence-based strategic recommendation.

  - **Mock Press Conference**: The project culminates with a 10–15-minute mock press conference. Each team presents its final strategic recommendation and responds to questions from classmates and instructor, defending its analysis, proposed course of action, and strategic decisions using evidence and concepts from the course.

- **Midterm exam**: An individual exam covering the first half of the course. The exam assesses students' understanding of key concepts and their ability to apply course frameworks to FC Barcelona and the professional football industry through essay and short-answer questions.

- **Final exam**: An individual exam covering the second half of the course while also requiring students to integrate key concepts from across the semester. The exam includes essays and short-answer questions focused on the analysis and application of course concepts.

Grading
The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation *(see rubric below)*	20%
Strategic team project	40%
Deliverables: (5 at 4%): 20%	
Mock press conference: 20%	
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%

Class Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	**B – 80-89% Proficient**	**C – 70-79% Developing**	**D – 60-69% Unacceptable**	**F – 0-59% Missing**
Frequency of class participation	Actively contributes 2+ times per meeting	Actively contributes at least 1 time per meeting	Actively contributes at least half of the time during term	Actively contributes less than half of the time during term	Does not contribute
Quality of class participation*	Contribution is always thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, frequently interacting with peers	Contribution is mostly thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, usually interacting with peers	Contribution is somewhat thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, sometimes interacting with peers	Contribution is rarely thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, rarely interacting with peers	Does not contribute or interact with peers

Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared and not on task

Readings / Resources

Textbook:

Chadwick, S., Parnell, D., Widdop, P., & Anagnostopoulos, C. (Eds.). (2019). *Routledge handbook of football business and management*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351262804

Recommended Readings:

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management, 17*(1), 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108

Chadwick, S. (2022). From utilitarianism and neoclassical sport management to a new geopolitical economy of sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 22*(5), 685–704. https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2022.2032251

Deloitte Sports Business Group. (2026). *Deloitte Football Money League 2026: Driving home advantage*. Deloitte. https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/services/consulting-financial/analysis/deloitte-football-money-league.html

FC Barcelona. (2021). *FC Barcelona statutes* [Modification passed by the Ordinary General Assembly on 23 October 2021]. https://www.fcbarcelona.com/fcbarcelona/document/2021/12/09/ff6a6d19-dd14-4d0a-8c9e-eb0f5b3998c1/202112-Estatuts-FCB-A5-3-ENG_01.pdf

FC Barcelona. (2025). *Annual report 2024/25*. https://www.fcbarcelona.com/fcbarcelona/document/2025/10/20/a50c257f-0ea4-4a92-b6b0-cacf189801fc/MEM_2024_25_ENG_web.pdf

Franck, E. (2010). Private firm, public corporation or member's association governance structures in European football. *International Journal of Sport Finance, 5*(2), 108–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/155862351000500204

Ginesta, X. (2017). The business of stadia: Maximizing the use of Spanish football venues. *Tourism and Hospitality Research, 17*(4), 411–423. https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358416646608

Ginesta, X., & de San Eugenio, J. (2014). The use of football as a country branding strategy. Case study: Qatar and the Catalan sports press. *Communication & Sport, 2*(3), 225–241. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513486886

Hamil, S., Walters, G., & Watson, L. (2010). The model of governance at FC Barcelona: Balancing member democracy, commercial strategy, corporate social responsibility and sporting performance. *Soccer & Society, 11*(4), 475–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/14660971003780446

Hoehn, T., & Szymanski, S. (1999). The Americanization of European football. *Economic Policy, 14*(28), 204–240. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0327.00048

LaLiga. (n.d.). *Límite de coste de plantilla deportiva* [Squad cost limit]. Retrieved September 26, 2026, from https://www.laliga.com/transparencia/gestion-economica/limite-coste-plantilla

Parganas, P., Anagnostopoulos, C., & Chadwick, S. (2015). "You'll never tweet alone": Managing sports brands through social media. *Journal of Brand Management, 22*(7), 551–568. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2015.32

Richelieu, A., & Pons, F. (2006). Toronto Maple Leafs vs Football Club Barcelona: How two legendary sports teams built their brand equity. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, 7*(3), 79–98. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-07-03-2006-B009

Shobe, H. (2008). Place, identity and football: Catalonia, Catalanisme and Football Club Barcelona, 1899–1975. *National Identities, 10*(3), 329–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608940802249965

Storm, R. K., & Nielsen, K. (2012). Soft budget constraints in professional football. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 12*(2), 183–201. https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2012.670660

Union of European Football Associations. (2025). *UEFA club licensing and financial sustainability regulations* (2025 ed.). https://documents.uefa.com/r/UEFA-Club-Licensing-and-Financial-Sustainability-Regulations-2025-Online

Content

Topic 1 – FC Barcelona and the Global Business of Football

- The distinctive economic and organizational characteristics of professional football
- The global football industry and its principal stakeholders
- European football structures and comparison with North American professional sports models
- FC Barcelona's position within the international football business ecosystem

Topic 2 – From Local Club to Global Institution: History, Identity, and "*Més que un Club*"
- The historical development of FC Barcelona and its relationship with the city of Barcelona and Catalonia
- The origins and evolution of "*Més que un Club*" (More Than a Club)
- Cultural, social, and political dimensions of the club's identity
- The strategic implications of balancing local identity with global growth

Topic 3 – Governance, Ownership, and Stakeholder Relations
- FC Barcelona's member-owned governance model and the role of the *socios*
- Elections, leadership, and decision-making within the club
- Stakeholder interests and organizational accountability
- Comparison with privately owned, publicly traded, investor-backed, and other professional sports ownership models

Topic 4 – Strategy and Competitive Advantage in Professional Football
- Strategic analysis in the professional sports industry
- Resources, capabilities, and sources of competitive advantage, including talent development and La Masia
- The relationship between sporting objectives and business objectives
- Strategic trade-offs between sporting performance, financial sustainability, and long-term organizational development
- FC Barcelona's strategic positioning within an evolving competitive environment

Topic 5 – Football Economics, Regulation, and Financial Strategy
- The economic structure and financial dynamics of European professional football
- Cost structures, financial sustainability, and the relationship between sporting and financial performance
- UEFA and LaLiga financial and economic regulation
- FC Barcelona's financial crisis and recovery strategy
- Strategic implications of financial constraints and regulatory requirements

Topic 6 – FC Barcelona's Business Model and Revenue Architecture
- Matchday and stadium-related revenues
- Broadcasting and media revenues
- Sponsorship, commercial partnerships, merchandising, and licensing
- Membership and other commercial revenue streams
- Revenue diversification and the evolution of the club's business model

Topic 7 – Brand Strategy, Sponsorship, and Commercial Partnerships
- FC Barcelona as a global sports brand: positioning, differentiation, and brand equity
- The relationship between organizational identity and brand strategy
- Sponsorship strategy and the commercial value of club assets
- Strategic fit between FC Barcelona and commercial partners
- Brand monetization and the risks of commercial dilution

Topic 8 – Globalization, Media, and Fan Engagement
- Internationalization strategies in global football markets: market selection, entry modes, and standardization versus adaptation
- Local supporters, international fans, and different forms of fan identification
- Media, broadcasting, and content as drivers of global reach
- Digital platforms, social media, fan data, and direct-to-consumer engagement
- The strategic challenge of global expansion while maintaining local relevance and authenticity

Topic 9 – The Stadium as a Strategic Asset: Espai Barça and the Fan Experience
- Stadiums and sports venues as strategic and commercial assets
- Non-matchday use of the venue and year-round commercial activity
- Investment, financing, and long-term value creation in major venue projects
- Fan experience and experiential marketing
- Espai Barça as a case in strategic transformation and stakeholder management

Topic 10 – The Strategic Future of FC Barcelona
- Technological change and innovation in the professional football industry
- Women's football and the development of the club's broader sports portfolio
- Changes in competitions (including the European Super League project), regulation, media, and the global football ecosystem
- Emerging international growth and commercial opportunities
- Long-term tensions among sporting success, financial sustainability, global growth, governance, and cultural identity

Field study and experiential learning components may include:
- Barça Museum and Spotify Camp Nou Visitor Experience
- FC Barcelona Women's Football or Handball match (Estadi Johan Cruyff or Palau Blaugrana)
- RCDE Stadium (RCD Espanyol) guided tour
- Guest speakers:
  - Football finance, governance, or regulatory professional
  - International commercial, media, or digital fan engagement professional

Syllabus of Record is subject to minor changes in Term-specific Syllabus at faculty's discretion.