

## Syllabus

### Course description

<b>Course title</b>	Scaling-up
<b>Course code</b>	25572
<b>Scientific sector</b>	ECON-07/A (former SECS-P/08)
<b>Degree</b>	Master in Entrepreneurship and Innovation
<b>Semester and academic year</b>	1st semester, a.y. 2025-26
<b>Year</b>	2nd study year
<b>Credits</b>	6
<b>Modular</b>	No

<b>Total lecturing hours</b>	36
<b>Total lab hours</b>	Not foreseen
<b>Total exercise hours</b>	Not foreseen
<b>Attendance</b>	Suggested, but not required
<b>Prerequisites</b>	Not foreseen
<b>Course page</b>	<a href="#">Course Offering - Enrolled before 2025 / Free University of Bozen-Bolzano</a>

<b>Specific educational objectives</b>	<p>The course refers to the typical educational activities chosen by the student and belongs to the scientific area of Business Administration.</p> <p>A venture that successfully navigated the start-up and survival phases of company development and has significant growth rates, turn-over and capital raised can be considered a scale-up. A scale-up generally aims to continue its development and expand its market, often with strong international ambitions. It is easy to agree that this growth phase brings many opportunities, but also challenges for the company, including setting strategies for sustained growth, evolving the organization, attracting, hiring and managing more employees, and scale processes profitably.</p> <p>By exploring the what, how and why, this course provides a general overview of the characteristics, theories, chances, and challenges of scale-ups.</p> <p>Moreover, the course is designed to apply the acquired skills and knowledge. Following the idea of turning threats into opportunities, it develops a practical understanding of managing the transition from a successful startup to a scale-up—examined from multiple stakeholder perspectives, including the scale-ups themselves (and their members) as well as other ecosystem actors. Given the multifaceted nature of company development, the</p>
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	<p>course addresses challenges related to strategy, processes, innovation, leadership, and organizational culture.</p> <p>The course combines three didactic approaches to convey its content. First, essential knowledge is delivered through frontal teaching, based on both mandatory and supplementary readings. Second, this knowledge is discussed, reflected upon, and deepened through class discussions, case analyses, and, where possible, guest speaker sessions. Finally, students apply their knowledge in a case-based exercises, conducted in groups, which serves to translate theoretical insights into practical application.</p>
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<b>Lecturer</b>	<p>Dr. Benedikt Unger <a href="mailto:Benedikt.Unger@unibz.it">Benedikt.Unger@unibz.it</a> <i>Link to teaching staff profile is coming soon</i></p>
<b>Scientific sector of the lecturer</b>	ECON-07/A (former SECS-P/08)
<b>Teaching language</b>	English
<b>Office hours</b>	please refer to the lecturer's web page
<b>Lecturing assistant</b>	Not foreseen
<b>Teaching assistant</b>	Not foreseen
<b>Office hours</b>	18
<b>List of topics covered</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition and Characteristics of Scale-ups</li> <li>• Relevant Theories in the Context of Scaling-up</li> <li>• Strategies for Survival and Growth in Startups</li> <li>• Key Challenges and Drivers Throughout the Scaling Process</li> <li>• Methods and Tools to Manage Scaling Processes</li> <li>• Leadership, Culture, and Team Development for Scaling</li> <li>• Ecosystem Perspective on Scale-ups</li> <li>• Scaling in Collaboration with Corporates</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching format</b>	Frontal lectures, exercises, and team-based project work

<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<p>The following learning objectives will be met by the course:</p> <p><i>Knowledge and understanding:</i> The students grasp the most important and practice-relevant knowledge of companies in the scale-up phase and the ongoing transition and the associated chances and challenges. The students have a systematic understanding of this content, are able to integrate this knowledge and are familiar with</p>
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	<p>the current state of research and industry development on the subject.</p> <p><i>Applying knowledge and understanding:</i> Students are able to critically apply theoretical frameworks and practical tools to real-world scale-up challenges. They work in teams to analyse complex scaling scenarios, identify core issues, and develop context-specific solutions. They are able to motivate their choices, explain trade-offs, and communicate the rationale behind their solutions in a structured and compelling way, based on the learned frameworks and practice insights.</p> <p><i>Making judgments:</i> The students can deal with the complexity of the challenges in managing scale-ups. They can assess company strategies in a qualified manner and reflect on them critically, also ethically.</p> <p><i>Communication skills:</i> Students will be able to communicate their knowledge of scale-ups to both lay and professional audiences. In doing so, they can logically and coherently weigh up, argue about, and explain their decisions.</p> <p><i>Learning skills:</i> Students know the most important sources of reliable and up-to-date knowledge on scale-ups. This enables them to learn new things independently and to consider the transition from a startup to a more mature company less as threat and more as an opportunity. The knowledge acquired in the course is organized in such a flexible way that they are able to link new contents and trends in this field to the existing knowledge and thus comprehend and apply them.</p>
<p><b>Assessment</b></p>	<p>For attending students: The achievement of the learning objectives is assessed through three outcome measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written exam (45%): A written exam is designed to measure the knowledge of the contents and their deeper comprehension</li> <li>• Project work (45%): Students will directly apply the knowledge and skills learned to an given task (opportunity or challenge induced by facing the scale-up phase; presented in form of a case-study). The rigors of this team-based project work go beyond mere application of what has been learned and require the development of a new mix of activities, course prepared but now self-directed learning of tools and their application, and critical judgment of various approaches. The results presented (powerpoint-based).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class participation (10%): Assessment of participation in class and accompanying project units will relate to oral and written (e.g., team discussions) contributions by students. This includes critical reflection, guided discussion, synthesis, and further development of course content.</li> </ul> <p>For non-attending students: The achievement of the learning objectives is assessed through a single outcome measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written exam (100%): A written exam is designed to measure both the knowledge of the contents and their deeper comprehension as well as the application of what has been learned.</li> </ul> <p><i>NOTE: Project work and classroom contributions are valid for 1 academic year and cannot be carried over beyond that time-frame.</i></p>
<b>Assessment language</b>	English
<b>Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks</b>	<p>For attending students: The final grade results from the addition of the following partial achievements (1) Written exam (45%), (2) Project work (45%), (3) Class participation (10%)</p> <p>The following evaluation criteria are essential for the assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctness and reliability of the statements</li> <li>• Structure and clarity of the statements</li> <li>• Logic and coherence of the statements</li> <li>• Integration and interconnectedness of the learned content</li> <li>• Quality and extent of the research</li> <li>• Choice and application of the learned content</li> <li>• Quality, applicability, and innovativeness of the results</li> <li>• Activity and proactivity regarding the contributions</li> </ul> <p>For non-attending students: The final grade results from the (1) Written exam (100%).</p> <p>The following evaluation criteria are essential for the assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctness and reliability of the statements</li> <li>• Structure and clarity of the statements</li> <li>• Logic and coherence of the statements</li> <li>• Integration and interconnectedness of the learned content</li> <li>• Choice and application of the learned content</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality, applicability, and innovativeness of the results</li> </ul>
Readings (organized per lecture)	<p><b>1. <u>Lecture: Definition and characteristics of scale-ups</u></b></p> <p>Mandatory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nambisan, S., Patzelt, H., Autio, E., Coviello, N., &amp; Thomas, L. D. (2024). Organizational scaling, scalability, and scale-up: Definitional harmonization and a research agenda. <i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>, 39, 106419.</li> <li>Belingheri, P., Lechner, C. (2025). Transitioning from Startups to Scaleups. In: Venture Builders and the Creation of Scaleups. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-95536-5_2">https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-95536-5_2</a></li> <li>Coad, A., Bornhöll, A., Daunfeldt, S. O., &amp; McKelvie, A. (2024). <i>Scale-ups and high-growth firms: Theory, definitions, and measurement</i>. Springer Nature.</li> <li>Jansen, J. J., Heavey, C., Mom, T. J., Simsek, Z., &amp; Zahra, S. A. (2023). Scaling-up: Building, leading and sustaining rapid growth over time. <i>Journal of Management Studies</i>, 60(3), 581-604.</li> <li>Monteiro, G. F. A. (2019). High-growth firms and scale-ups: A review and research agenda. <i>RAUSP Management Journal</i>, 54(1), 96-111.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. <u>Lecture: Relevant theories in the context of scaling-up</u></b></p> <p>Mandatory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. <i>Organization Science</i>, 2(1), 71-87.</li> <li>O'Reilly III, C. A., &amp; Tushman, M. L. (2013). Organizational ambidexterity: Past, present, and future. <i>Academy of Management Perspectives</i>, 27(4), 324-338.</li> <li>Zimmerman, M. A., &amp; Zeitz, G. J. (2002). Beyond survival: Achieving new venture growth by building legitimacy. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 27(3), 414-431.</li> <li>Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., &amp; Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. <i>Strategic Management Journal</i>, 18(7), 509-533.</li> </ul>

- Greiner, L. E. (1972). Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow. *Harvard Business Review*, 50(4), 37–46.
- Greiner, L. E. (1998). Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow (25 Years Later). *Harvard Business Review*, 76(3), 55–68.
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120.
- Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and Effectuation: Toward a Theoretical Shift from Economic Inevitability to Entrepreneurial Contingency. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 243–263.
- Crawford, G. C., Aguinis, H., Lichtenstein, B., Davidsson, P., & McKelvey, B. (2015). Power law distributions in entrepreneurship: Implications for theory and research. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(5), 696–713.

#### Supplementary

- Kassotaki, O. (2022). Review of organizational ambidexterity research. *Sage Open*, 12(1), 21582440221082127.
- Jansen, J. J., Heavey, C., Mom, T. J., Simsek, Z., & Zahra, S. A. (2023). Scaling-up: Building, leading and sustaining rapid growth over time. *Journal of Management Studies*, 60(3), 581–604.
- Berends, H., Jelinek, M., Reymen, I., & Stultiëns, R. (2014). Product innovation processes in small firms: Combining entrepreneurial effectuation and managerial causation. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 31(3), 616–635.
- Moedt, K., Lechner, C., & Khapova, S. (2024). Growing pains during scale-up hypergrowth: Integration and future research agenda. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 209, 123779.

### **3. Lecture: Strategies for (Survival and) Growth in Startups**

#### Mandatory

- Gans, J. S., Scott, E. L., & Stern, S. (2018). Strategy for Startups. *Harvard Business Review*, 96(3), 44–52.
- Piaskowska, D., Tippmann, E., & Monaghan, S. (2021). Scale-up modes: Profiling activity



configurations in scaling strategies. *Long Range Planning*, 54(6), 102101.

- Clarysse, B., Bruneel, J., & Wright, M. (2011). Explaining growth paths of young technology-based firms: structuring resource portfolios in different competitive environments. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 5(2), 137-157.
- Siota, J., Kowszyk, Y., Prats, M. J., & Neckebrouck, J. (2024). European Deep-Tech Scaleups: Go-To-Market Strategy. Scaleup Series. <https://doi.org/10.15581/018/77865>

#### Supplementary

- Begimkulov, E., & Darr, D. (2023). Scaling strategies and mechanisms in small and medium enterprises in the agri-food sector: a systematic literature review. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 7, 1169948.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2021). Four ways to scale up: smart, dumb, forced, and fumbled. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2101.11104*.

#### **4. Lecture: Key Challenges & Drivers throughout the Scaling Process**

##### Mandatory

- Mula, C., Zybur, N., & Hipp, T. (2024). From digitalized start-up to scale-up: Opening the black box of scaling in digitalized firms towards a scaling process framework. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 202, 123275.
- DeSantola, A., & Gulati, R. (2017). Scaling: Organizing and growth in entrepreneurial ventures. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(2), 640-668.
- Gulati, R., & DeSantola, A. (2016). Start-Ups That Last. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(3), 54-61.
- Moedt, K., Lechner, C., & Khapova, S. (2024). Growing pains during scale-up hypergrowth: Integration and future research agenda. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 209: 123779
- Lange, F., Tomini, N., Brinkmann, F., Kanbach, D. K., & Kraus, S. (2023). Demystifying massive and rapid business scaling—An explorative study on

driving factors in digital start-ups. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 196, 122841.

- EIC Scaling Club. (2025). Market roadmaps for ten European deep-tech market groups. Retrieved from <https://eicscalingclub.eu/news/market-roadmaps-10-market-groups> (only homepage, not individual linked resources)

## 5. **Lecture: Methods & tools to manage scaling processes**

### Mandatory

- Ries, E. (2011): *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*. New York : Random House. (selected chapters)
- Appelo, J. (2019): *Startup, Scaleup, Screwup: 42 Tools to Accelerate Lean and Agile Business Growth*. Hoboken: Wiley. (selected chapters)
- Accelerating cash flow & driving profitability: Harnish, V. (2014): *Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It...and Why the Rest Don't*. Charleston: ForbesBooks. (selected chapters)

## 6. **Lecture: Leadership, culture and teams for scaling**

### Mandatory

- The founder's dilemma. Wasserman, Noam. *Harvard Business Review*, 2008-02, Vol.86 (2), p.102
- Gulati, R., & DeSantola, A. (2016). Start-Ups That Last. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(3), 54–61.
- DeSantola, A., & Gulati, R. (2017). Scaling: Organizing and growth in entrepreneurial ventures. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(2), 640-668.
- Strengers, J., Mutsaers, L., van Rossum, L., & Graamans, E. (2022). The organizational culture of scale-ups and performance. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 35(8), 115-130.
- Birkinshaw, J., & Gibson, C. (2004). Building Ambidexterity Into an Organization. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 45(4), 47-55.



- Siota, J., Kowszyk, Y., Prats, M. J., & Shaughnessy, A. (2025). European Deep-Tech Scaleups: Leadership and Talent Development. Scaleup Series.  
<https://doi.org/10.15581/018/78602>

#### Supplementary

- Ghoshal, S. & C.A. Bartlett. 1994. Linking organizational context and managerial action: The dimensions of quality of management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 15: 91-112.
- Wasserman, Noam. The Founder's Dilemmas: Anticipating and Avoiding the Pitfalls That Can Sink a Startup. Kauffman Foundation Series on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Princeton University Press, 2012.

### 7. **Lecture: Ecosystem perspective on scaleups**

#### Mandatory

- Isenberg D., Onyemah V. (2017). Start-ups won't save the economy. But "scale-ups" could. Retrieved July 26, 2025, from  
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/03/start-ups-entrepreneurship-scale-ups-latin-america/>
- Isenberg, D. J. (2010). How to start an entrepreneurial revolution. *Harvard Business Review*, 88(6), 40-50.
- Isenberg, D., & Onyemah, V. (2016). Fostering scale up ecosystems for regional economic growth. In *Global Entrepreneurship Congress* (Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 71-97). Tagore LLC.
- Isenberg, D. (2011). How to foment an entrepreneurial revolution. *The Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Project*, 781(7).
- Mason, C., & Brown, R. (2014). Entrepreneurial ecosystems and growth oriented entrepreneurship. *Final report to OECD, Paris*, 30(1), 77-102. (model page 6)
- European Commission (2025). The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy: Choose Europe to Start and Scale. COM(2025) 270 final, Brussels, 28 May 2025.
- Siota, J., Kowszyk, Y., Prats, M. J., & Shaughnessy, A. (2025). European Deep-Tech Scaleups: Building an Ecosystem. Scaleup Series.  
<https://doi.org/10.15581/018/78605>

## **8. Lecture: Scaling with corporates**

### **Mandatory**

- Weiblen, T., & Chesbrough, H. W. (2015). Engaging with startups to enhance corporate innovation. *California Management Review*, 57(2), 66–90.
- Pahnke, E. C., Katila, R., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (2015). Who takes you to the dance? How partners' institutional logics influence innovation in young firms. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60(4), 596-633.
- Jeon, E., & Maula, M. (2022). Progress toward understanding tensions in corporate venture capital: A systematic review. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 37(4), 106226.
- Schückes, M., Unger, B., Gutmann, T., & Fels, G. (2025). Innovation at the interface: A configurational approach to corporate venture capital. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 40(1), 106438.

### **Supplementary**

- Skade, L., Wenzel, M., & Koch, J. (2024). "Do as we say and you'll be successful": Mundane power in corporate entrepreneurship. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 41(3), 623-643.
- Ahlfänger, M., Kohut, M., & Leker, J. (2020). Reconciling competing institutional logics in corporate venture capital units. *International Journal of Innovation Management*, 24(08), 2040004.

## **X. Lecture: Student Case Presentations**

For attending students only – all details will be communicated during the course.