



A BSc or MSc thesis at the Research Institute for International Management (FIM) can be pursued: (a) in the subject areas of International Management under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Winfried Ruigrok; (b) in the subject areas of the Competence Centre for Top Teams (CCTT) or Sino-Swiss Competence Centre (SSCC) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Tomas Casas i Klett; or (c) in the subject areas of the Asia Connect Centre (ACC) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Roger Moser, or Prof. Dr. Tomas Casas i Klett.

## BA or MA Thesis in International Management

### Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Winfried Ruigrok

1. A thesis in international management has a distinctly international focus, either by looking at processes of internationalisation, by adopting a comparative perspective, or by addressing a trend that emerged in another part of the world and that subsequently affects firms and people in the German-speaking countries.
2. A thesis always combines an empirical and a theoretical perspective, on the one hand by discussing the relevant literature, and on the other hand by collecting new data or by interpreting existing data in a novel manner.
3. Actual supervision will take place by a FIM assistant, who is in direct touch with Prof. Dr. Ruigrok. Students typically have three meetings with a FIM assistant: (1) to discuss and finalise the topic; (2) to discuss the table of content, research model, and methodological approach; and (3) to provide further feedback approximately halfway through the process.
4. As a rule, the thesis will be written in English. At FIM the working language is English, since most FIM staff originate from outside the German-speaking area.
5. Thesis topics are currently offered in the following subject areas:
  - a. Team diversity, processes and performance at multinational corporations
  - b. CEO characteristics and firm outcomes at multinational corporations
  - c. Corporate governance in multinational corporations
  - d. The link between internationalisation and performance
  - e. The link between digitalization and internationalization

6. Master theses at FIM typically contribute to and benefit from a large-scale Director Database developed at FIM over the past ten years. This database includes biographical and career related data on members of the Top Management Team and/or Board of Directors of the 100 largest companies based in Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and the U.S.
7. As part of their Master thesis project, students will collect new data and in return will gain access to data collected by FIM staff and former students. Put together, this allows students to explore key aspects of international strategies (e.g. to what extent and how does international experience or nationality diversity help companies to access foreign markets more effectively, or show better financial performance?).
8. In exceptional cases, own topics presented by students are admissible.

## BA or MA Thesis at the Asia Connect Centre (ACC)

Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Roger Moser,  
or Prof. Dr. Tomas Casas i Klett

A thesis in the Asia Connect Center (ACC) focuses on emerging markets either by adopting a comparative perspective, by addressing a trend that emerged in Asia or another emerging market, or a study on the special characteristics and challenges of business models in Asia.

1. A thesis in ACC can be quantitative or qualitative in nature, on the one hand by discussing the relevant literature, and on the other hand by collecting and analysing new data in a novel manner.
2. Actual supervision will take place by **Prof. Dr. Moser** or **Prof. Dr. Casas i Klett**.
3. As a rule, the thesis will be written in English

Subject areas under the supervision of **Prof. Dr. Roger Moser** are the following:

### INDUSTRY & CLUSTER INTELLIGENCE

- Studies in Asia / Application of the Institutions-Resources Matrix – ideal when you spend a semester in Asia

### PROCESS INTELLIGENCE

- Studies in Asia / Application of the Critical Incident Technique – to evaluate good practices of market entry and other operations in Asia

### (INTER)CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

- Studies for Europe resp. Asia / Application of the Critical Incident Technique – to evaluate good practices of intercultural process design between an Asian and a European culture

### BUSINESS MODEL DEVELOPMENT for LOW-INCOME GROUPS in INDIA

**Note:** Subject areas under the supervision of **Prof. Dr. Roger Moser** mainly focus on **Asia** (e.g. **India** and **China**). In selected cases, BA and MA Theses in **Latin America**, **Middle East** and **Africa** are also supervised.

Subject areas under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Tomas Casas i Klett are the following:

#### CHINA/JAPAN/RUSSIA MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Documenting the nature of Asian Management and Entrepreneurial practice, including organisational issues, stakeholder relationships, governance and ethics.

#### ESSENTIALIST CHINA/JAPAN/RUSSIA MANAGEMENT THEORIES

- Explore the appropriateness of general (Western) theory versus theories specifically grounded in distinctly China/Japan/Russia sociologies, philosophies and religions for explaining management and entrepreneurship in Asia. We welcome thesis topics that rest on thought-provoking essentialist assumptions.

#### PERFORMANCE COMPARISONS AND LESSONS FOR THE OTHER

- Studies of the 'other' can highlight the nature of the self. In the third theme, observations and theorising grounded in China/Japan/Russia management and entrepreneurship theory and practice are used suggest policy and practice guidelines (to improve performance) for European practice and European business engagement with Asia.

Within these broad themes, a variety of topics may be addressed, including:

- ODI from China and Russia: Characteristics and Performance
- Top Teams in management, entrepreneurship and other areas: Characteristics and Performance
- Asian Management and Entrepreneurship: Differences with, and consequences for European Theory and Practice
- Questions of practice and conceptualisation of business practice
- Varieties of capitalism (VoC): Modelling the Systems of China/Japan/Russia
- The Financial Crisis: Strategies for Recovery from China/Japan/Russia.
- National Business Models: Unique Mercantilism, export-orientation and trade surpluses as destabilizing factors for markets and firms.
- Business Models at Firms: Description and Innovation
- National Innovation Systems in China, Japan and Russia
- Japan's 'lost decades' and its impact on firms in Asia and the World.
- Country and regional specialisation, such as the China IT sector, Japans robotics or Russian mineral processing industries, and their Western counterparts: cooperation and competition.
- China/Japan/Russia consumers and their impact on manufacturing and the service sector

- The role of the state in shaping managerial and entrepreneurial practice
- Made in Europe, Made in Japan and Made in the US vs. Made in China and Made in Russia vs. Made Together.
- Factor based growth vs. efficiency based growth vs. innovation based growth at Chinese/Japanese firms.
- The modus operandi of Chinese Diasporas, the value of family, social and political networks.
- How does the European market (and its economic and monetary union) affect strategy formulation of old and new Chinese/Japanese/Asian firms?
- Institutional elements and the structure of opportunity in Chinese and Russian entrepreneurship, and in Japanese non-entrepreneurship.
- Entrepreneurship of last resort: images, myths and metaphors of Chinese and Russian entrepreneurs.
- Japanese and Chinese conglomerates and family firms: reorganization, governance, decentralization, minority shareholders, international partnerships and transparency.

**\*\*Note 1:** Thesis topics that are currently offered under the supervision of **Prof. Dr. Tomas Casas i Klett** are specialized in **China**, or **Japan**. Thesis topics on **Russia** are also a possibility.

**\*\*Note 2:** Topics provided herein are consistent with the Call for papers for the EIASM (European Institute for Advance Studies in Management) “ASIAN MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKSHOP” co-chaired by Prof. Casas. You are encouraged to submit your thesis to this Asia themed workshop, as well as other workshops related to Asia.

#### Key references

- Tsui, A. S. (2006). Contextualization in Chinese Management Research. Editorial. *Management and Organization Review* 2:1 1–13.
- Burton, G. D. & Lau, C. M. (2008). Asian management research: Status today, relationship to the management domain, & future direction. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45: 636-659.

## BA or MA Thesis at Competence Center for Top Teams (CCTT)

Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Tomas Casas i Klett

Teams are modes of organizations. In the future you might wish to work for a Team rather than for a Firm. Teams can have capabilities that individuals cannot possess. Our assumption is that there are synergies among individuals in Teams. At CCTT we are pursuing two research approaches. First we try to achieve a deeper and grounded understanding of Teams and their Performance. Then we bridge theory and praxis to build a normative approach to form and manage teams.

1. At CCTT we define Top Teams as top management teams (TMT), top venture teams (TVT), boards, military teams, sports teams, science and art teams and teams from other areas such as medical teams or movie production teams. Within this broad definition the common characteristic is that the teams we research are top teams.
2. The top of Top Teams has a dual meaning. First from a taxonomical perspective, we look at the hierarchy and at responsibility levels. The apex and the key tasks of the organization, from a strategic value creation perspective, are considered to be the mandate of top teams. The second perspective is high, or top, performance. That is, teams achieving and exceeding the objectives of the high-responsibility task for which they were constituted.
3. A thesis in Top Teams will combine an empirical and a theoretical perspective, on the one hand by discussing the relevant literature, and on the other hand by collecting new data or by interpreting existing data in a novel manner.
4. Actual supervision will take place by Prof. Dr. Casas. For more details about the supervision discipline please contact us.
5. The thesis should have the potential for derivate works, which might be completed and co-authored with the thesis supervisor. Derivate works might include academic papers, practitioner papers or case studies.

Below you can find a list of possible thesis topics within the applicable subject areas

## TOP TEAMS: TEAMNESS AND MODELLING

- Teamness: Factors that make a team a top team (e.g., collective work, fighting teams, shifting leadership, rituals, etc).
- Top Team rituals; description, purpose, measurement, effectiveness
- Top Team narratives; description, purpose, measurement, effectiveness
- Top Team member replacement: Do teams remain at the top after the original members/cohort departs? (Other topic related to top team succession)
- “Is there a ‘tipping’ point beyond which the percentage of member replacements becomes so high that teams cannot sustain their performance effectiveness?”\*
- Newly constituted teams vs inherited teams: characteristics and performance differences
- Voluntarily formed vs non-voluntary formed teams: characteristics and performance differences
- Ego vs Teamness: Factors that erode the top team, its cohesion, performance and teamness
- “How can teams guard against or deal with the influence of negative team members?”

## TOP TEAMS: EFFECTIVENESS AND PERFORMANCE

- Synergy /dis-synergy identification, modelling, quantification
- Case studies / anthropological surveys of top teams, performing at the top
- Specific team synergies derived from deep-level diversity and diverse KSAs (i.e. knowledge, skills, and abilities)
- Top entrepreneurial teams: value creation associated to specific teamness variables
- “What team diversity factors are related to which team processes and outcomes, and under what circumstances?”\*
- “Can we define a threshold beyond which diversity is harmful to team performance? Does this depend on the attribute measured?”\*
- “Do teams converge, diverge, or remain stable in terms of performance over time (i.e., what will happen to initial differences over time)?”\*

## NORMATIVE MODELS OF TOP TEAMS

- A promising and relevant topic will always be one that turns empirical findings and theoretical insights into normative recommendations and models for top teams aiming at high performance.

## TOP TEAMS: CONTEXT AND LEADERSHIP

- Highly contextual, rich description / performance analysis of top teams in a specific industry or domain
- Top Teams in China / Russia / Other: Cultural and institutional factors
- Roles of the leader/CEO/Entrepreneur in affecting Teamness / Team performance / Other variable
- “What factors are associated with the disproportionate influence of individual members in teams?”

### Key references:

- Mathieu, J.E., Tannenbaum, S.I., Donsbach J.S., and Alliger, G.M. (2014). “A Review and Integration of Team Composition Models: Moving Toward a Dynamic and Temporal Framework”, Table 8, Selected Research Questions for Future Investigations, *Journal of Management* 40: 130.

## MA Thesis at Sino-Swiss Competence Centre (SSCC)

Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Tomas Casas i Klett

### *Where international business meets economic reality: Free Trade and Rent-Seeking in the Global Arena*

For international business and investment, it is essential to understand the structure of global opportunity and risks across countries. There exists a variety of frameworks and indices that allow to assess such risk and opportunity, yet one of the most important aspects of the international playing field is ignored: the rent-seeking behaviour of incumbents. Hence, this research stream will look at rent-seeking in different economies and understand how this behaviour impacts foreign investment and international trade. Trade frictions and trade levels below their potential are often part of a business and wealth transfer model.

Students who are interested in writing their master's thesis on this subject will take both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. They will work at the intersection of economics and management science. A strong statistical background is needed as is the ability to identify and interpret large amounts of data. An understanding of economic indices and surveys, both technically and conceptually is essential. That includes how indices and surveys are constructed in economics and management science. Most importantly, students should be trained in - and eager to improve their skills with respect to - the interpretation and visualization of results. Below you can find a list of possible thesis topics within the applicable subject areas. Note that all the above thesis themes will be structured by an international perspective. In some cases, this implies a global multi-country perspective while in other the subjects it can be more specific and bilateral like the Sino-Swiss FTA.

## FREE-TRADE AGREEMENTS (FTA)

1. Measuring utilization rates in FTAs: What are the reasons why firms use (do not use) tariff reductions provided by an FTA?
2. Case studies of business using/not using FTAs, obstacles and barriers documentation and related management strategies.
3. Survey in cooperation with business associations (Swiss, Chinese, HK and others) to understand expectations and existing behaviour of member firms in regards to trade, free trade agreements, as well as trade frictions.
4. Digital Free Trade Zones: How can the Alibaba frontier-free global trade plan be institutionalized? Will the concept spread and how?

## RENT-SEEKING (As barriers to international trade)

1. Labour markets: How to measure rent seeking in labour markets? What lessons can be drawn from phenomena like unemployment and insider-outsider conflicts? How can free labour markets - from the perspective of rent-seeking - enable international investment and national competitiveness?
2. Rents: What are the rent-seeking mechanisms and their impact on rental income? How does regulation of land increase real-estate prices? Who are the winner and losers? What lies behind international housing affordability indices? What is their impact on international investment?
3. Profits: How much profits in the economy result from new *wealth creation*, how much result from *wealth transfer* and rent-seeking across the world / across industries?
4. In what way is the establishment of barriers to trade a rent seeking activity and how much rent does protectionism generate (by country, industry, etc.)?
5. Interest income: Is interest rate repression a form of rent-seeking? How to measure rent seeking in finance by looking at interest income?

If you are interested in any of the subjects or other related ones, please send an e-mail to:

Prof. Dr. Thomas Casas (tomas.casasiklett@unisg.ch ) requesting a meeting appointment.