



Strategies to Strengthen the Global Competitiveness of Master of Management Graduates: A SWOT Analysis of X University

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Abstract

Competition among higher education institutions and rising demands regarding graduate competencies have positioned global competitiveness as a strategic priority for master's degree programs. The Master of Management (MM) Study Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB), X University aims to enhance the competitiveness of its graduates at the regional (ASEAN) level and achieve global recognition. This study aims to identify the internal and external factors influencing the enhancement of graduate global competitiveness and to formulate strategic alternatives using the SWOT matrix within a strategic management framework. A qualitative descriptive approach utilizing document analysis was employed, using 2024 Self-Evaluation Documents (DED) of the MM Study Program as main source of data. The results indicate that basically, the MM Study Program possesses a strong internal foundation, particularly regarding faculty quality, a responsive curriculum, academic-practitioner learning, networking, and international capabilities. However, certain areas require strengthening – specifically English language proficiency, international support, the integration of internationalization efforts, and the measurement of global graduate outcomes. These strengths and weaknesses, combined with opportunities and threats, were analyzed using a SWOT matrix to generate various strategic alternatives, that were synthesized into four priority strategies: global learning internationalization, global graduate competitiveness measurement, academic-industry differentiation, and efficient internationalization and learning pathways.

Keywords: *Global Competitiveness, Higher Education Internationalization, Master Of Management, Strategic Management, SWOT Matrix.*

INTRODUCTION

Competition among higher education institutions and rising demands regarding graduate competencies have positioned global competitiveness as a strategic agenda in higher education. Qiang (2003) views internationalization as a process that encompasses the entire range of a higher education institution's functions; that is not merely a collection of isolated international activities. According to de Wit et al. (2015), the internationalization of higher education is an evolving phenomenon that takes various forms and involves diverse approaches and rationales. International experiences can be gained through curricula, instruction, academic interactions, networking, the use of learning resources, virtual activities, and cross-cultural experiences, among others.

These perspectives aligns with the initiatives of the Master of Management (MM) Study Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB), X University, where a global orientation has become integral to the program's strategic direction. The program's objectives include developing professional graduates to become future leaders or entrepreneurs capable of applying global business management practices and utilizing scientific reasoning in decision-making (Universitas X, 2024).

The MM Study Program currently demonstrates an international orientation, it can be seen in its various international activities and collaborations with external networks. This indicates that

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the MM Study Program possesses relevant international assets capable of serving as a foundation for further internationalization efforts. However, it is important to note that these international activities and networks do not automatically translate into global competitiveness for the program's graduates.

This study aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the MM Study Program at X University, as well as the opportunities and threats it faces that are relevant to fostering globally competitive graduates; analyze the interrelationships among these factors using a SWOT Matrix; and formulate priority strategies. Although this study focuses on issues faced by the MM Study Program at X University, these issues may be relevant to other higher education programs with similar international goals, so, the results could potentially be applied by other institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationalization of Higher Education

[Qiang \(2003\)](#) views the internationalization of higher education as a process that must encompass the entire range of university functions, rather than merely a collection of fragmented, standalone international activities. Organizational elements need to operate in an integrated manner for internationalization to become a central part of the organization, be successfully implemented, and remain sustainable.

[De Wit et al. \(2015\)](#) distinguish between internationalization abroad (encompassing various forms of cross-border education, including student or faculty mobility) and internationalization at home (which focuses on developing international and global understanding as well as intercultural competence through curriculum and teaching within the domestic learning environment). Internationalization at home enables international learning experiences to be shared with all students, rather than being limited to those who have the opportunity to go abroad. Consequently, institutions need to pay attention to the curriculum of internationalization programs, particularly regarding content, pedagogical approaches, learning outcomes, assessment tasks, and support services. They also criticize the tendency to view internationalization as a series of isolated activities. Furthermore, they note that many internationalization practices provide experiences to only a small fraction of the student body.

[Knight \(2011\)](#) establishes a basis for not equating the volume of international activities with successful internationalization. The focus should not merely be on the number of international students, foreign faculty, partnerships, cross-border programs, research projects, foreign accreditations, or branch campuses. The key issue is whether these activities genuinely foster academic engagement, cross-cultural experiences, and quality outcomes – as well as benefits – for all students.

Strategic Management in Higher Education Internationalization

Internationalization of higher education requires a strategic approach because higher education institutions have limited resources. [David & David \(2017\)](#) view strategic management as a sequence of activities involving strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation. The initial step involves identifying the organization's strengths and weaknesses (internal conditions), as well as the opportunities and challenges (external conditions) it faces. This data is then incorporated into the strategy formulation via a "matching" process (aligning internal conditions with external conditions) to generate strategic alternatives using a SWOT Matrix.

Aligning Human Resources with Management Strategy

[Armstrong \(2025\)](#) places alignment between institutional strategies and human resources capabilities. All human resources (including lecturers and administrative staff) involved in the

process of implementing this strategy must have several required capabilities, such as language, program management, cooperative coordination, digital capabilities, and other capabilities that can support this internationalization. If capabilities do not match what is required, then strengthening is needed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach utilizing the document analysis method. According to [Bowen \(2009\)](#), this method is applicable when institutional documents serve as the main data source. These documents are used to gain insight into organizational conditions, policies, processes, and documented achievements. [Owen \(2014\)](#) further notes the relevance of document analysis for examining policies within higher education institutions.

Data Sources

The main data source for this study is the 2024 Self-Evaluation Document (DED) of the MM Study Program at X University. The information obtained encompasses the vision, mission, strategic objectives, governance, human resources, finance, facilities and infrastructure, education, research, community service, partnerships, students, alumni, outputs, and achievements related to the “Tri Dharma” (Three Pillars of Higher Education).

Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis is conducted in four stages. First, information regarding the MM Program’s activities written in the document is identified. Second, the information is classified into internal factors (consisting of strengths and weaknesses – or areas requiring further strengthening) and external factors (consisting of opportunities and threats). Third, internal and external factors are then matched using a SWOT matrix based on [David & David \(2017\)](#). Fourth, the resulting strategic alternatives are interpreted based on the higher education internationalization perspective of [Qiang \(2003\)](#), [Knight \(2011\)](#), and [de Wit et al. \(2015\)](#). This study does not apply quantitative weighting to the SWOT factors. So, the research output consists of strategic alternatives rather than a quantitative ranking of strategies.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Profile of the MM Study Program, X University

The 2024 DED analysis indicates that the MM Study Program possesses a relatively strong internal foundation for producing graduates with global competitiveness. A key strength lies in its academic human resources; the MM Study Program has 22 permanent faculty members (DTPS), all of whom hold doctoral degrees. Among them are three professors, 13 associate professors (lektor kepala), and the remainder are assistant professors (lektor). All DTPS hold educator certifications as well as national competency certifications from the BNSP, with 72.73% also holding international certifications. This composition provides a robust base of expertise to effectively support the delivery of the master’s program and facilitate the development of academic networks ([Universitas X, 2024](#)).

This capability is also complemented by lecturers’ involvement in research, publications, community service, and other professional activities. The lecturers’ research areas relate to marketing management, financial management, human resources management, operational management, and strategic management, with diverse themes, include: green strategy, green economy, green finance, SDGs, climate change, green supply chain, etc. In these studies, some lecturers also involve students. Some research also connects with several partners, both domestic

and international (Universitas X, 2024).

In the education sector, curriculum updates involve stakeholders, both internal and external. For example, in 2024, the curriculum redesign involved alumni, graduate users, professional associations, students, and academics from UTeM Malaysia. Several learning methods were implemented, including case-based learning, project-based learning, and hybrid learning for ICT. The Master of Management (MM) program has distinctive courses: Leadership with a National Defense Perspective, Agility, Clean Management Practices, and Service Improvement. This is a differentiation effort to connect management competencies with the changing needs of the business environment (Universitas X, 2024).

The MM Study Program also develops external networks as strategic capital. According to the DED report, nine international MoAs related to the implementation of study program activities were recorded. This collaboration involved international partners from three countries: Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. In addition to international partners, the Master of Management (MM) Program also collaborated with various national partners. These collaborations encompassed various areas, including teaching, ICT, student exchange, mobility, research, publications, community service, and joint degree initiatives. This demonstrated that the MM Study Program had built a relationship infrastructure that could serve as a foundation for developing global engagement (Universitas X, 2024).

Student and graduate outcomes showed positive signs. Between 2021 and 2024, 235 scientific papers were produced by students and lecturers. Twenty students presented or conducted colloquia abroad. Fourteen international achievements were also recorded in various fields. The average GPA of graduates in the reporting year ranged from 3.81 to 3.85, exceeding the target of 3.6. During that same year, the Master of Management (MM) study program graduated 109 students, of which 74 were employed in positions relevant to their competencies. A tracer study tracked 92 graduates, 12 of whom were found to have multinational work operations (Universitas X, 2024).

However, the capacity to support this internationalization is not yet fully balanced with the academic resources available. The capacity of the teaching staff still needs to be improved, particularly to support the development and management of international classes. The English language skills of lecturers and students also need to be improved. Support for internationalization related to students remains limited, for example, funding for international student mobility programs and accommodation facilities for international or inbound students. Understanding this gap is crucial, given the increasing number of international activities. These activities require organizational capabilities to manage services, coordinate, and consistently manage the student experience (Universitas X, 2024).

Internal Strategic Factors

Based on the results of the document analysis, MM Study Program's internal factors can be formulated as seen in Table 1. The strength factors are primarily based on conditions and achievements documented in the DED, whereas weakness factors are considered as 'areas requiring further strengthening' rather than a lack of capability or a failure on the part of the study program.

External Strategic Factors

Based on the results of the document analysis, MM Study Program's external factors can be formulated as seen in Table 2. The opportunity factors represent external conditions that indicate areas for growth. The MM Study Program can use these opportunities to support internationalization and enhance graduate competitiveness. Meanwhile, threats are external

conditions that require attention and anticipation; the organization can respond to them by using its existing strengths. Although these external factors are not entirely within the organization's control, they must be considered when determining strategic direction.

SWOT Matrix

Based on the identification of internal and external factors – and the matching of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – a number of strategic alternatives were formulated. These alternatives can be utilized to strengthen the internationalization and global competitiveness of the MM Study Program.

Table 1. Internal Strategic Factors

Category	Strategic Factors
Strengths	S1. Highly qualified and reputable permanent faculty members S2. Curriculum responsive to stakeholder needs S3. Academic–practitioner collaborative learning S4. Research, publication, and student achievement S5. Alumni and external networks S6. Digital learning infrastructure S7. Existing internationalization capabilities
Weaknesses	W1. International support capacity of administrative staff is not yet optimal W2. English language capability needs strengthening W3. Limited mobility funding W4. International student support and accommodation are not yet optimal W5. Scale and integration of student internationalization are not yet optimal W6. Global graduate outcomes are not comprehensively documented

Table 2. External Strategic Factors

Category	Strategic Factors
Opportunities	O1. Expansion of Asian networks O2. Joint degree, ICT, exchange, and international class O3. Demand for digital, agile, and globally oriented managers O4. International accreditation O5. Expansion of alumni and professional networks O6. Hybrid and global collaborative learning
Threats	T1. Competition T2. Higher graduate competency expectations T3. Rapid technological change T4. Rising internationalization and global recognition standards T5. Pressure for shorter study duration

The SWOT matrix presented in Table 3 summarizes the strategic alternatives derived from four approaches: S-O, S-T, W-O, and W-T strategies. S-O strategies aim to use internal strengths to capitalize on external opportunities, whereas S-T strategies utilize strengths to counter threats. W-O strategies focus on exploiting external opportunities to overcome internal weaknesses, while W-T strategies aim to minimize weaknesses while simultaneously avoiding or mitigating the impact of threats.

Strategies Priorities

Global Learning Internationalization

This strategy focuses on integrating international activities to create a systematic global learning experience. It is primarily derived from SO2, WO4, WT4, supported by SO1. The MM Study Program already conducts several international activities, but these activities need to be integrated into a more systematic global learning experience. International activities are not isolated, standalone endeavors but rather integrated ones. This is reinforced by [de Wit et al. \(2015\)](#), who state that internationalization is not solely linked to mobility (internationalization abroad) but can also be pursued "at home" (internationalization at home) - specifically through the curriculum, teaching, the learning environment, and the development of intercultural or global competencies.

Global Graduate Competitiveness Measurement

This strategy focuses on measuring and documenting the global competitiveness outcomes of graduates. It is primarily derived from ST4, WT4, then supported by S7 and W6. The MM Study Program already demonstrates the following activities: international publications, international achievements, student presentations abroad, alumni employment in multinational companies, etc. However, the MM Study Program needs to find ways to demonstrate the global competitiveness of its graduates in a more measurable manner.

This strategy aligns with [Knight \(2011\)](#), who argues that the success of internationalization cannot be gauged merely by the volume of international activities undertaken. A strategy for measuring global competitiveness needs to be devised to link international activities to competency or learning outcomes – which, ultimately, also relate to graduate outcomes. In the context of the MM Study Program, such a measurement system could serve as a tool to determine whether the various activities conducted thus far genuinely contribute to the graduates' ability to work and compete in a global environment.

Table 3. SWOT Matrix

	Opportunities	Threats
Strengths	SO1. Develop learning based on global competencies and industry needs by strengthening collaborative teaching, case/project-based learning, and practitioner involvement. $SO1 = S1 + S3 + O3$	ST1. Differentiate the program through academic quality and faculty expertise, particularly in management fields relevant to global needs. $ST1 = S1 + T1 + T2$
	SO2. Convert external networks into a global student experience through student exchange, ICT, mobility, international guest lecturers, and cross-border collaboration. $SO2 = S5 + S7 + O1 + O2$	ST2. Strengthen curriculum agility to respond to technological changes and industry needs. $ST2 = S2 + S4 + T2 + T3$
	SO3. Strengthen graduate positioning as agile, digital, and adaptive managers, rather than merely graduates with conventional management competencies. $SO3 = S2 + S4 + O3$	ST3. Build a distinctive value proposition based on academic-industry integration that is difficult to replicate through curriculum structure alone. $ST3 = S3 + S5 + T1$
	SO4. Leverage academic strengths to accelerate international accreditation	ST4. Develop a graduate global competitiveness measurement system

	Opportunities	Threats
	readiness and enhance global reputation. $SO4 = S1 + S4 + S7 + O4$	so that claims of global competitiveness are supported by measurable outcomes. $ST4 = S1 + S4 + S7 + T2 + T4$
	WO1. Improve English for Academic and Professional Purposes through meaningful international exposure, rather than relying solely on classroom-based training. $WO1 = W2 + O1 + O2$	WT1. Develop a structured competency development program for human resources supporting internationalization. $WT1 = W1 + W2 + T2 + T4$
	WO2. Develop more diverse and cost-efficient mobility schemes, including ICT/hybrid mobility and co-funding with partners. $WO2 = W3 + O2$	WT2. Embed English as a competence within the learning process, rather than treating it merely as an additional training program. $WT2 = W2 + T2 + T4$
Weaknesses	WO3. Build administrative internationalization capacity, including English proficiency, international student services, and the management of international documents and partnerships. $WO3 = W1 + O2 + O4$	WT3. Develop a selective but high-impact internationalization scheme, prioritizing activities that generate reputation and measurable outcomes. $WT3 = W3 + T1$
	WO4. Integrate internationalization into the curriculum through international cases, joint classes, virtual exchange, collaborative projects, and joint research. $WO4 = W5 + O1 + O2 + O6$	WT4. Shift internationalization from an activity-based approach toward an outcome-based strategy. $WT4 = W5 + T4$

Academic-Industry Differentiation

This strategy focuses on academic quality, practitioner/alumni involvement, and curriculum responsiveness as a distinctive value. It primarily stems from SO1, SO3, ST1, ST2, ST3. Here, recurring elements can be observed: academic excellence, practitioner exposure, and curriculum responsiveness. These three elements form the basis for differentiation. This strategy aligns with [de Wit et al. \(2015\)](#), who state that an internationalized curriculum must address content, pedagogical approaches, learning outcomes, assessment, and support – going beyond mere English-language instruction or the volume of international student participation. The MM Study Program's initiatives on curriculum responsiveness and practitioner involvement can serve as a foundation for ensuring that international and global competencies are cultivated through learning experiences relevant to the professional world. Academic excellence, practitioner involvement, and curriculum responsiveness must be linked not only to conventional management competencies but also to competencies relevant to a dynamic work environment and the realities of globalization. Thus, differentiation is achieved through the quality of the learning experience and the alignment of competencies with global workplace needs, rather than through international activities alone.

Efficient internationalization and learning pathway

This strategy emphasizes that internationalization and the learning process must be designed for greater efficiency without compromising the quality of graduate competencies. It

primarily stems from WO2, WT2, WT3, and ST2. An efficient internationalization strategy aligns with de Wit et al. (2015), who argue that "internationalization at home" can provide international or intercultural experiences without requiring all students to engage in cross-border mobility. Crucially, while the approach takes place "at home," prioritizing high-impact outcomes remains essential. For the MM Study Program, this approach is particularly relevant given funding constraints for mobility, alongside the growing demand for global competencies.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusion

Fundamentally, the Master of Management (MM) program possesses a strong internal foundation, particularly regarding faculty quality, a responsive curriculum, academic-practitioner learning, networking, and international capabilities. However, certain areas require strengthening – staff assistance for internationalization programs, English language proficiency, mobility funding, and support or accommodation for international students. The external environment presents opportunities through Asian networks, student exchange programs, the demand for digital/agile/global managers, and alumni and professional networks; conversely, it poses threats such as intensifying competition among study programs, rising expectations regarding graduate competencies, technological shifts, and increasing pressure to build a global reputation.

These strengths and weaknesses, combined with the identified opportunities and threats, were analyzed using a SWOT matrix to generate strategic alternatives: strategies using strengths to seize opportunities (SO), strategies using opportunities to overcome weaknesses (WO), strategies using strengths to mitigate threats (ST), and strategies minimizing weaknesses while avoiding threats (WT).

These alternatives were subsequently refined into four priority strategies: global learning internationalization, measurement of global graduate competitiveness, academic-industry differentiation, and efficient internationalization and learning pathways.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The limitations of this research are mainly related to the use of a single main source in the form of institutional documents. Researchers did not conduct interviews or primary surveys to validate the perceptions of stakeholders. Apart from that, the researchers did not give quantitative weight to the SWOT analysis, so the results are still alternative strategic priorities, not mathematical priorities.

Future research could combine DED with other more detailed measurements, conduct interviews with alumni and graduate users, etc. Analysis can also be developed using the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) to compare the relative attractiveness of the proposed strategies.

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