



Course Overview

Ideation:

Developing and Evaluating Startup Ideas
Fall 2025 v1

Course Code: KTH: ME2814, SU: FE6604, SSE: 8061, KI: 2XX050, KFK: SSES03
ECTS Credits: 7.5

Course Director and Instructor:
Professor Terrence Brown
Director, SSES Center@KTH
KTH-Royal Institute of Technology
Indek, Lindstedtsvägen 30, Room 655
Terrence@kth.se
@AskDrBrown

Course Assistant:
Masayuki Kobayashi
masayuki.kobayashi@sses.se

Non scholae sed vitae discimus.
("We learn, not for school, but for life.")

Welcome

"Ideation" is not just about coming up with ideas—it's about learning how to *build* them into opportunities. This course is the first of the four core courses at the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship (SSES), and we recommend that you take it before the others.

In this course, you'll develop the micro-skills that form the building blocks of entrepreneurship: reframing problems, spotting weak signals, testing assumptions, creating prototypes, and shaping bold visions into opportunities. Instead of learning these only in theory, you'll practice them through hands-on activities and immersive AI-enhanced learning.

- With our custom GPT-powered simulations, you'll experience lifelike conversations with customers, co-founders, and investors—learning how to persuade, adapt, and make decisions under pressure.
- With AI teaching assistants, you'll have on-demand support: reminders, course guidance, and answers to common questions whenever you need them.
- With AI coaches, you'll get personalized feedback, reflection prompts, and skill-building advice to help you strengthen your entrepreneurial toolkit.

Entrepreneurship is about action under uncertainty. That's why every class combines short lectures with experiential exercises, blending human creativity with AI-powered practice.

You'll also draw on insights from design thinking, strategy, psychology, and innovation research—but no prior business knowledge is required.

By the end of Ideation, you'll leave with more than concepts. You'll have a personal toolkit of entrepreneurial micro-skills, lived experiences, and AI-supported methods—a foundation you'll carry into the rest of the SSES core and into your own ventures.

Special Announcement

This course will combine face to face session with virtual session over ZOOM.

Intended Learning Outcomes. Upon completing the course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze and explain entrepreneurship and innovation and their significance in today's economy and society
2. Generate and develop innovative new venture ideas
3. Evaluate the attractiveness and feasibility of new venture opportunities
4. Analyze industries, markets, and competitors
5. Assess appropriate markets to enter with new products or services

Course Philosophy. We seek to develop entrepreneurship and innovation practitioners and scholars and to equip students to pursue their entrepreneurial interests (e.g., business startups, intrapreneurship, social ventures, and/or life design). Clarify your own aspirations, and focus your efforts accordingly. If you immerse yourself, you may find that this course opens up new vistas for your life and work.

Expectations for All Students (ABCs):

1. Active learning: constructive participation and meaningful engagement, every class
2. Best work: entrepreneurs astonish, they don't settle
3. Character: behave with integrity and demonstrate respect and good faith
4. Development: build your capacities proactively and stretch yourself
5. Entrepreneurship: seize opportunities and take responsibility for your learning
6. Fun: work hard and play hard ("If you're not having fun, you're doing something wrong." - Groucho Marx)

Assignments and Grading

This is an intensive 7.5-credit course with a heavy workload, including several assignments and a very full reading list. Given that this course is about the understand the opportunity development process, *each graded assignment* is designed to give you practice in developing potential business opportunities. In developing this knowledge and skill, repetition and experience is crucial.

There are two sets of assignments –

Individual

- Weekly Diagnostics (Pass/Fail)
- Simulations (Graded)

Group

- Startup Decision Lab – Post Mordem (Graded)

The student's overall grade in the course is determined by these 2 tasks – one individual and one group.

What is a weekly/module diagnostic?

The objective of each exercise or quiz is for the student to demonstrate that they have mastery of the course content for that module. These exercises take the form of an objective exercise made up of 20 multiple choice and True/False questions.

Each student must successfully PASS (80% or above) each and every exercise. The student may do the exercise multiple times, but after the student fails the exam twice, s/he must speak with the professor before continuing to the third attempt.

Look at the specific assignment for details.

What is The Startup Decision Lab Project?

Startups rarely fail from lack of effort—they often fail from misjudging the opportunity. In this project, you will analyze a failed (or pivoted) startup through the lens of ideation, identifying what went wrong before product launch or growth. This is not a “blame” exercise but a forensic analysis of idea-stage decisions.

This is a group or team task. Your groups will be created by you.

Look at the specific assignment for details.

See the **Important Document folder** for detailed instructions for these assignments.

<u>Intended Learning Objectives (ILOs)</u>	<u>Simulation</u>	<u>Post Modern Project</u>
1. Analyze and explain entrepreneurship and innovation and their significance in today's economy and society	X	X
2. Generate and develop innovative new venture ideas	X	X
3. Evaluate the attractiveness and feasibility of new venture opportunities	X	X
4. Analyze industries, markets, and competitors	X	X
5. Assess appropriate markets to enter with new products or services	X	X

Grading Rubrics

Simulations

Each simulation will be graded on 5 criteria: 1. Effort and engagement, 2. Quality of questions, 3. Active Listening and follow-up, 4. Insight discover, and 5. Connection concepts AND at three level: incomplete (0), partial (1), and full (2). However, the final simulation graded will be awarded on the cumulative sum of all four simulations.

Criteria	Incomplete (0)	Partial (1)	Full (2)
Effort & Engagement	Minimal/no attempt	Attempted but shallow/awkward flow	Fully engaged; natural, purposeful conversation
Quality of Questions	Mostly closed/irrelevant	Some relevant open questions	Multiple strong, adaptive open questions probing depth
Active Listening & Follow-Up (Evidence Required)	No follow-up examples	One vague example	2–3 clear examples of follow-ups tied to what was said
Insight Discovery	No useful insights	Some, but generic/incomplete	Specific, actionable insights on needs, drivers, and barriers
Connection to Course Concepts	No links	One–two weak links	Strong, specific links to multiple relevant concepts

Cumulative Simulation Grades	
40-36	A
35-32	B
31-20	C
< 20	F/Fx

Only grades, A, B, C or F/Fx will be given. To PASS the simulation portion of the course, a student **must** “successfully” complete and submit each simulation and received a cumulative score of 20 or above. If a student receives a F/Fx and resubmits, the only grade available to her or him is PASS (E).

Simulation Personas

1. Alex (*B2B Customer*) **or** Sam (*B2C Customer*)
2. Taylor (*Co-Founder*)
3. Riley (*Industry Expert/Mentor*)
4. Jordan (*Investor*)

Due Date

Sept. 12
Sept. 19
Sept. 26
Oct. 17

You have access to the simulations from Sept 1, but they all are due on or before October 17.

The Startup Decision Lab – Post Mordem Project

This final assignment will be done in small groups or teams of 5. See the **Assignment** for details. The Project must be uploaded by - October 24, 23:59.

Only grades, A, B, C or F/Fx will be given. To PASS or get an E, a group must complete “successfully” a complete project. If the project is not successful in completing a project (Fx), the group may revise the submission within two weeks of receiving notification. The highest grade for any resubmission is Pass (E).

Grading Rubric (Assessment Criteria)

- Use of ideation-phase decision tools and frameworks (30%)
- Insightfulness of root cause analysis (30%)
- Creativity and clarity in visuals or narrative (20%)
- Team participation and completeness (20%)

Overall Grading Matrix

	Cumulative Simulation Grade				
Startup Decision Lab – Post Mordem Grade		A	B	C	Fx
	A	A	B	B	Fx
	B	A	B	C	Fx
	C	B	B	C	Fx
	Fx	Fx	Fx	Fx	Fx

Here are all the assignments and their respective grading weights and the resulting Final Grading Matrix:

Assignment	Grading Weight	Type
1. Idea Kernels	4.0 points	Individual
2. Ideation Project	3.5 points	Group

Grading scale

A, B, C, D, E, F, Fx

Examination

- PRO2 (Simulations) - Project, individual, 4.0 credits, Grading scale: A, B, C, FX, F
- PRO3 (Decision Lab) - Project, group, 3.5 credits, Grading scale: A, B, C, FX, F

You must PASS both assignments in order to pass the course. With a Fx, further work is required before credit is possible¹. You will also receive a Fx, if you fail to submit ANY assignment.

Customer GPTs

In addition to the simulations, this course has several customized GPTs that act as coaches, teaching assistants and advisors. The simulations and these custom GPTs use ChatGPT in the background. All are accessible for free; however, I would strongly suggest using at least a Plus account. The course does not require you to purchase and textbooks or other course materials, which would be far more costly than a ChatGPT account. Additionally, you are free to use other LLMs like Gemini, Claude, etc.

Prof. Brown's Ideation Coach

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-685d19eed4b88191919efba171fc6797-prof-browns-ideation-coach>

Prof. Brown's Creativity Catalyst

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-685d6d744aec819181b157b2034bb03f-prof-browns-creativity-catalyst>

Prof. Brown's Marketing Mapper

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-685d9090b01881918f5be5193c5d6762-prof-browns-marketing-mapper>

Prof. Brown's Model and Framework Matchmaker

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-685d22bac7d48191badb07728734d9b8-prof-browns-model-and-framework-matchmaker>

Prof. Brown's Bonus 3 - Team Dynamics Debugger

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-685d48093a688191aefa7bccd40f7171-prof-browns-bonus-3-team-dynamics-debugger>

Prof. Brown's Prompt Bot

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-685d46fb27e081919fccdeaf183c3654-prof-browns-prompt-bot>

Prof. Brown's Writing Feedback Assistant

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-685d351014548191a4eb50ed5ba19c0e-prof-browns-writing-feedback-assistant>

¹ **Fx Grade:** Students who earn a grade of Fx for the course are eligible to re-do an assignment. If students meet the instructor's standards on that make-up assignment(s), they can earn an E for the course but not a higher grade. In this course, the deadline for submitting that make-up assignment(s) is 1 weeks after the last class or notification whichever is later. The grades of students who not do the make-up work on time change automatically from Fx to F.

Readings and Videos. The readings have been carefully curated to include scholarly and practical articles to expose you to new ideas and deepen your knowledge. They are an essential part of the course and will be instrumental to your learning (and your grade). Some of the readings are mentioned only briefly or not covered in class. You are responsible for doing all the readings and keeping up with them as we go. The readings are extensive, so set aside enough time for them and review them again (e.g., notes or key points). Students who fail to do this will miss a big part of the intended learnings and will struggle to pass the Diagnostics.

Attendance. Attendance is an important prerequisite to learning, especially since classes go beyond the readings, include active learning activities in groups, and prepare students for all the assignments; however, it is not required.

Email the course assistant in advance only if there is a problem (e.g., serious illness or hospitalization) that may cause you to miss more than one class and be prepared to bring documentation (e.g., doctor's note). If there is a good reason for requesting to arrive late or leave early, ask me in advance. You may not fake attendance for a classmate or ask a classmate to do so for you. Such attendance violations may be referred to the university disciplinary committee.

Class Participation. We work hard to create an open and welcoming environment where different viewpoints and scholarly debates are encouraged. We expect all students to participate actively in class, thereby enhancing learning. Read the material in advance and come to class prepared to discuss it. You may be called on by the instructor during class to discuss the readings or reflect on in-class learning activities. The keys are engagement and participating for learning, not feeling you have to be right or have brilliant ideas to speak up.

Class participation: quality and quantity of comments and questions in class, active and focused participation in classroom learning activities, demonstrated effort on pass/fail assignments, participation in team work, and your focused attention to class discussion without distraction from devices. Dedicate your time in class wholly to learning.

Notebook. Use a notebook to keep track of important ideas, in and out of class. I upload slides after each class so you can focus on learning and participating in class.

Team Work. For much of the course, you will work in teams, and team members will provide feedback on each other's assignments. All teams must consist of students from multiple SSES universities (see the Team Charter assignment for details.) Students are responsible for forming teams. There is a team assignment due at the end of the course. Using the Team GPT may be helpful in organizing and managing your team.

SSES Canvas. The SSES Canvas is a mandatory learning management system (LMS) used for the course (with all course documents, and where all assignments must be submitted).

Submitting Assignments. Use the assignment templates provided. Assignments must be submitted as PDFs in the SSES Canvas on or before the due date (ideally earlier). It is the student's obligation to track whether or not the assignment was submitted properly and timely.

Late Assignments. They can only be submitted by the deadline. Late submissions result in a zero. You assume total responsibility for submitting assignments on time, no excuses. Submit assignments early to avoid problems. If there is a technical glitch with Canvas, email me and the Course Assistant right away and send screen shots if possible.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is not acceptable. This includes:

- passing off the ideas or words of another as your own
- using another's work or ideas without crediting the source
- presenting an existing idea or product as new and original and not crediting the source
- using so many words or ideas from other sources such that your work is not sufficiently original
- Review the KTH Web for more specifics and details.

Ensure that your work is original and referenced properly. Plagiarism suspicions will be handled appropriately, leading to potential referrals to the university disciplinary committee and possibly resulting in suspension of studies.

Feedback. Despite the large size class size, I have the ability to provide feedback on assignments (beyond the grade). Keep in mind, as in the real world, the focus is on market feedback, not instructor or advisor feedback. It doesn't matter if I like the idea or not.

Language. This course is in English. Let me know if you are having a hard time following. If you struggle with English or are new to the world of business, consider bringing the Glossary with you to class each night and referring to it often to help you follow key terms.

Questions. Ask me if you have questions about the course structure, content, assignments, readings, lectures, deadlines, grading, attendance, or groups. Ask the Course Assistant if you have questions about registration or Canvas.

Your Input. This course is for you. We encourage you to provide feedback on the course, express concerns, and make requests. After the course, SSES will distribute an online evaluation survey. Please complete it so we can improve the course in the future.

Confidentiality and NDA Policy. There are no Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) for startup ideas in this course. By participating, you agree to act with integrity and discretion, and you agree not to disclose or distribute information received from other students unless you receive explicit permission from them to do so. You should be able to complete all assignments without disclosing any sensitive intellectual property for your startup idea(s).

Examination adapted to students with special needs

- The following applies for students with functional variations who have a statement from KTH's FUNKA unit on recommended support measures during examination:
 - Support measure under code R (i.e. adjustments relating to space, time, and physical circumstances) are granted by the examiner
 - Support measures under code P (i.e. pedagogical measures) are granted or rejected by the examiner after the examiner has been contacted by the student in accordance with KTH's rules. Normally, support measures under code P will be granted.

We look forward to working with you!