Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Venture Creation in Berlin

June 28 - July 18, 2026

Prerequisites:
Advanced undergraduate students of all fields (after two years of study) and graduate students with good standing. Proof of English proficiency required.
Across both modules, students are introduced to the responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence as a supportive tool, without requiring prior technical or programming knowledge.

Module 1, Entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship in Berlin

Learning Outcomes
The first week introduces students to entrepreneurship as a structured yet iterative process of opportunity recognition, experimentation, and value creation. The module combines conceptual foundations (entrepreneurial mindset, startup phases, and business models) with the exploration of the Berlin startup ecosystem. Students discuss early-stage business models, talk to founders and assess their own entrepreneurial competencies and potential roles within an innovation project.

Upon successful completion of this module the student will be able to:

- Explain entrepreneurship as an iterative, opportunity-driven process of value creation rather than a linear business planning exercise
- Analyse success factors and risks in early-stage ventures, including team composition, problem–solution fit, and assumptions about the market
- Using generative AI tools to explore market trends, customer pain points, and unmet needs
- Reflect critically on their own entrepreneurial mindset, strengths, and development areas within a team-based startup context

Lecturers:
Prof. Dr. Hannes Kübel, Prof. Dr. Sven Ripsas, Christian Klang

Day 1	• Welcome Day
Day 2	• Introduction • Entrepreneurial identity & mindset • Myths of entrepreneurship • The art of the start
Day 3	• Phases of a startup • Startup simulation
Day 4	• Lean Startup • Problem solving & ideation • Video prototyping
Day 5	• Lean canvas • Pitching • Assessment: Written test

Literature

- Bygrave, William/Zacharakis, Andrew (2014): Entrepreneurship, 3nd ed., Wiley
- Maurya, Ash (2012): Running Lean, 2nd Edition, O´Reilly
- Osterwalder, A./Pigneur, Y. (2010): Business Model Generation. A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers. Self-Published

- Ries, E. (2011). The Lean Startup - How Constant Innovation Creates Radically Successful Businesses. London: Portfolio Penguin

Study Visit
- Startup Incubator Berlin, German Startup Association or similar

Assessment
- Written test (multiple choice, 30%)

Module 2, Design Thinking:

Design Thinking in Early Stage Startup Development

Learning Outcomes

This module builds on the foundations of Module 1 and focuses on human-centered innovation through design thinking and AI tools. Students work in interdisciplinary teams on real-world challenges. The course emphasizes deep user understanding, deep problem analysis in the market, experimentation and prototyping, and financial modelling. Through interviews, ideation workshops, prototyping, and testing, students experience how Design Thinking supports evidence-based product development in uncertain environments.
By the end of the module, teams synthesize their insights into a first prototype, develop a financially sound business model and present their outcomes in a final project presentation. They pitch their project to a jury.

By the end of the module, students will be able to:
- Conduct qualitative user research to generate actionable insights and build empathy Formulate clear problem statements and points of view based on user needs, real-world problems, and opportunities
- Generate and assess a broad range of solution ideas using structured ideation techniques
- Design, build, and test prototypes, in part with the help of AI, to validate assumptions and reduce product development risks
- Analyse the market and formulate assumptions about willingness to pay, competing solutions and cost structure to develop a business plan

Lecturers:
Prof. Dr. Hannes Kübel, Prof. Dr. Sven Ripsas, Christian Klang

Day 1	Kick-Off: Intro, Orga, Startup Challenges, Team building
Day 2	Problem statement, Persona
Day 3	Problem interviews, Point of view
Day 4	Opportunities, Ideation
Day 5	Competitive positioning
Weekend	
Day 6	Prototyping with AI
Day 7	Testing
Day 8	Formulating assumptions about pricing, competition, and value creation
Day 9	Business modelling and financial modelling
Day 10	Presentation of project work

Literature

- Brown, T. (2009). Change by design: How design thinking transforms organisations and inspires innovation. Harper Business.
- Plattner, H., Meinel, C., & Weinberg, U. (Eds.). (2009). Design thinking: Understand – improve – apply. Springer.

- Lewrick, M., Link, P., & Leifer, L. (2018). The design thinking playbook: Mindful digital transformation of teams, products, services, businesses and ecosystems. John Wiley & Sons.
- Martin, R. L. (2009). The design of business: Why design thinking is the next competitive advantage. Harvard Business Press.

Study Visit:
- Startup Incubator Berlin / other berlin-based incubator / startup

Assessment:
- Presentation of project findings / team pitch presentation to a jury (70%)

Additional Module:

German Culture & Society: Intercultural Perspectives

15 hours of German Culture & Society (study visits and class)

Topics & Learning Outcomes

This module will deal with German culture and society through many different site visits, and explore topics such as the Berlin Wall and Cold War era, Nazi-Germany, Prussia and its kings, German stereotypes, German university system, German politics, contemporary art or pop culture in Germany. In reflective papers, the students will have the opportunity to contemplate and highlight the differences and similarities between the students' home cultures and their new host culture/the cultures of their classmates. This module will help students to reflect upon and their intercultural experience.

Study Visits
- One visit per week; sites may include: Schloss Charlottenburg, Park Sanssouci, Sachsenhausen concentration camp, Berlin Wall Memorial, Dark Worlds: bunker tour, Reichstag (German parliament) Urban Nation (street art museum) and Pergamon Museum.

Assessment
- Reflective papers (one per week). Pass or fail grade.

Grading

Grades will be based on active participation and regular attendance in class and class excursions, on self-study and homework assignments, and on the official assessments. If students miss more than two classes, their final grade may be downgraded. If students attend and pass all the assessments they will be issued a certificate of attendance including a transcript of the grades received. Students with less than 80% attendance will not receive a certificate of attendance. Grades are awarded according to the German university and ECTS grading systems.

Credits

75 contact hours in total:
- 60 contact hours business programme including study visits (6 ECTS credits)
- 15 contact hours German culture & society (1 ECTS credit)

Up to 7 ECTS credits

* Please note that all course content and teaching staff may be subject to change