

Guide to the UZH course Negotiation and Conflict Management

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Foreword

This document provides an overview of the course's most important aspects, particularly the tasks to be completed.

It also contains the course's assessment criteria as well as references to additional sources of information.

Therefore, it is essential to read this guide carefully before the first day of the course. The document outlines the course structure, expected workload, graded assignments, deadlines, and key policies, allowing you to plan your semester accordingly.

Workload transparency: Note that this is an intensive 6-ECTS course. In addition to attending all scheduled course days, plan for substantial work between sessions. This includes mandatory readings, preparation tasks, four meetings of your personal working group, a group research paper and presentation, and an individual negotiator's journal. Mandatory readings and assignments will be clearly marked on OLAT, while additional materials will be marked as optional.

1. Background Information on the Course 'Negotiation and Conflict Management'

Being an effective negotiator is an indispensable skill in any professional or personal life situation. For example, candidates are usually required to participate in a group negotiation exercise as part of the assessment process for a job contract. Negotiation skills are crucial not only for your own professional success, but also for resolving critical international challenges and conflicts, of which there are currently more than enough.

Successful negotiation is based on skills that are not innate but can be acquired and improved through intensive and practical study. It is not just about presenting arguments convincingly but also about analyzing complex situations, managing emotions (especially your own), focusing your attention in order to ultimately achieve measurable results, and, in particular, engaging in continuous practice.

Some **course testimonials**:

"To me, this course was about more than just grades, which is not something I can say for a lot of courses." (Maimuna Jobarteh, course participant, UZH 2022)

"I realized that this course would be about more than just learning new concepts. It is much more about getting to know oneself better in order to optimize oneself on this basis. In contrast to a normal course, it's not about optimizing my learning strategy, but about optimizing myself." (Janick Elsener, course participant, UZH 2023)

"Regardless of their field of study, I would recommend this course to anyone who is ready to participate in a provoking, «out of the comfort zone»-course which encourages you to be self-aware, to optimize yourself and therefore prepares you in all aspects of life." (Emilie Brunner, course participant, UZH 2025)

Course objectives

This course may change your perspective on planning, structuring, and conducting effective negotiations. It introduces key aspects of negotiation and conflict management, moving deliberately beyond theory toward experiential learning, practical application, and critical self-reflection. The course focuses on resolving conflicts of interest in an interest-based, future-oriented manner.

This course requires active and sustained engagement both in class and between course days. It is designed for master's students who want to:

- learn how to resolve conflicts of interest in an integrative manner;
- develop practical negotiation skills through simulations, case studies, and exercises that mirror real-world challenges;
- experience negotiating under pressure and stepping out of their comfort zone;
- cultivate the ability to critique negotiation outcomes, identify areas for personal improvement, and engage constructively in peer feedback;
- apply what they learn to real-life personal and professional situations.

Participants can expect to leave the course with strengthened negotiation skills, increased self-awareness, and a robust foundation for effective negotiation in private, professional, social, and international contexts. The course supports continued personal development and lifelong learning in negotiation and conflict management.

Please note that the course begins with practice before theory. You may therefore make mistakes before learning the relevant concepts. This is intentional because experiencing a negotiation first creates a stronger basis for reflection, theory, and subsequent improvement. Be prepared to step outside your comfort zone, reflect critically on your behavior, and learn from both successful and unsuccessful choices.

Participation

The course is open to master's, doctoral, and post-graduate Mono 90 or Minor 30 students (including ERASMUS participants) enrolled at the UZH Faculty of Law. Admission is intended for those highly motivated to achieve course objectives and committed to full engagement through the completion of the program.

This course is a traditional classroom-only course (no online teaching). It is an interactive learning-by-doing experience, combining theory and concepts with substantial preparatory reading and hands-on training methods to promote sustainable learning outcomes. Methods include role-play, mock negotiations, case analysis, class discussion, and self-assessment exercises.

Attendance is available exclusively to students who received formal acceptance.

Electronic module registration must be completed before the end of August. As part of the application, a one-page motivation letter (in English) must be uploaded, including:

1. your background information (name, nationality, home university, field of study, and experience related to negotiation or conflict resolution);

2. your goals for attending the course and your reasons for pursuing these goals.

Module places are assigned during the allocation period, with notification delivered via the UZH Student Portal.

Important: Attendance for the entire course – including all scheduled class days and, if required, the extra day at the beginning of December – is mandatory. Schedules must be arranged to prevent absences. **Unexcused absence or delayed submission of any assignment will result in a grade of 1.0.**

ECTS credit value

This course is worth 6 ECTS credits for UZH students pursuing a master's degree (Mono or Minor) in Law. Students in other programs or faculties must verify individual requirements with their dean's office prior to course start, as conditions may differ.

2. Course Assessment

Enrollment in the course "Negotiation and Conflict Management" requires attendance at all course sessions. Preparation for each course day is essential. Required readings and preparation tasks will be identified in advance on OLAT.

Grades for the course are based on three distinct forms of assessment, weighted equally:

- i. a **research paper** in English written in a group of three students on a selected negotiation-related topic, with a length between 8 and 15 pages, excluding the cover page, table of contents, list of abbreviations, references, signed statement of authorship, and any appendices deemed useful (33% of the final grade). Further details are set out in Chapter 6 below.

Submission deadline: November 24, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.

Submit one Word document per group to serena.delia@uzh.ch, with a copy to felix.addor@uzh.ch.

Serena will upload all papers to OLAT in order to make them available to all course participants.

- ii. a personal **negotiator's journal** (33% of the final grade), written in English, **consisting of a minimum of four reflective entries**, each approximately three pages in length. Entries should be written after
 - o course day 1;
 - o course days 2 and 3;
 - o course days 4 and 5; and
 - o after course days 6 and 7.

The completed journal must be submitted electronically in Word format to yvonne.buehler@ipi.ch (cc: felix.addor@uzh.ch) by December 4, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Further details are set out in Chapter 5 below.

- iii. **your in-class performance throughout the course** (33% of the final grade), based on the quality of all your contributions throughout the course, your active participation in negotiation exercises and individual and group presentations, particularly those related to your research paper on course day 6 (further details on the latter are set out in Chapter 6 below).

3. Key Policies

It is **important** to note that

- You never get a second chance to make a first impression. This is especially true in negotiation situations – and in this course as well. Approach every interaction with professionalism and care.
- You must submit your group paper and your negotiator's journal no later than the stated deadline. There is no possibility to negotiate for a later submission. **If you hand in one of your papers late, you will receive a grade of 1.0.**
- Both the group research paper and your individual negotiator's journal must have a complete and proper title page, as well as the signed, official UZH Declaration of Authenticity ("Selbständigkeitserklärung"). You may use generative AI tools in accordance with UZH's AI guidelines (see, for example, <https://www.uzh.ch/en/explore/basics/ai.html>), especially those of the Faculty of Law. However, if you do so, you must clearly disclose which generative AI tools you used. Specifically, you must state precisely which AI tool you used for which type of work (read <https://www.uzh.ch/en/explore/basics/ai/recommendations.html> on citing and referencing AI-generated content and how to formulate the Declaration of Authenticity when using generative AI tools).
- In addition, please ensure that your entire written assignment is logically structured, clearly formulated, free of linguistic errors, concise, and easy to understand, and that it is supported by a well-founded analysis.
- Good written work does not simply reproduce known facts or course materials. The group research paper should critically analyze relevant research and translate the findings into implications for negotiation practice (see Chapter 6). The Negotiator's Journal should demonstrate your personal learning, critical reflection, and application of course insights to your own negotiation experience (see Chapter 5).
- You will receive detailed feedback on your oral and written performance, along with your final grade and a confirmation of successful completion of the course by February 2027. If you have an exceptional and compelling need for a grade before February, please, contact yvonne.buehler@ipi.ch before the end of October with your reasons, to check if an earlier submission date of your grade confirmation is possible.

Formatting of your course papers

All written assignments must adhere to the following formatting standards:

- Font size: 11 pt.
- Line spacing: 1.5.
- Font: Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, or a similar standard typeface.
- Referencing style is at the author's discretion, provided it is complete and consistently applied throughout the paper. Commonly used styles include Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard.
- A cover page must be included, and all pages should be numbered.
- It is essential to comply with UZH's rules on proper citation, academic integrity, and avoidance of plagiarism, including the rules on the transparent and responsible use of generative AI set out above. Each paper must include an electronically signed declaration of independent authorship. For more details, please consult the UZH Information Sheet on the Treatment of Plagiarism, issued by the UZH Teaching Committee on 30 April 2007: [UZH Plagiarism Information Sheet](#).

- For guidance on academic writing in English, students may refer to Adrian Leftwich, *Writing Essays: Some Guidance*, 4th Edition, 2004 (freely downloadable by searching the author and title online).

4. Sharing of experiences in your working group

"The working group was extremely valuable to me, allowing discussions on what we had learned and hearing each person's way of applying it to their own life. I also grew very close to this group as we shared personal insights into our lives and saw each other grow throughout the course. We supported each other during difficult and stressful times, provided feedback, and offered a continuous "help desk" for any questions."
(Laura Pfenninger, course participant, UZH 2025)

Meet in person with your assigned personal working group (formed on course day 1) at least four times during the course:

1. between course days 1 and 2,
2. between course days 3 and 4,
3. between course days 5 and 6, and
4. during the week following course day 7.

The **purpose** of these meetings is to benefit from the diversity of experiences and perspectives within a small group setting. Previous participants have reported that this format is both enriching and valuable for their learning.

The **task** for your working group is to:

- clarify any topics or concepts from class that have remained unclear;
- share negotiation experiences from recent course days: What stood out to you? Why? How do you plan to apply what you have learnt?
- provide each other with honest, direct, and personal feedback and negotiation tips based on your own experience;
- prepare collaboratively for upcoming course days;
- discuss tasks or assignments given by the instructor for group work.

After each working-group meeting, briefly reflect on the discussion in your negotiator's journal. Do not simply describe what happened; identify the personal lessons you learned and how they may affect your future negotiation behavior.

5. Negotiator's Journal

"I realized that this course would be about more than just learning new concepts. It is much more about getting to know oneself better in order to optimize oneself on this basis. In contrast to a normal course, it's not about optimizing my learning strategy, but about optimizing myself." (Janick Elsener, course participant 2023, UZH).

The individual Negotiator's Journal offers an opportunity to reflect on the ideas developed during the course, your experiences in negotiations inside and outside the classroom, and your own development. It must include at least four entries, each approximately three pages in length (typed; see the formatting guidelines above).

The purpose of the journal is to demonstrate what you have learned from class, the core negotiation book, selected required readings, and other relevant materials. More importantly, it should show how you have applied and critically tested this knowledge in negotiation exercises and in real-life discussions or negotiations. Your goal is to analyze your experiences in order to understand when and how your insights may help you in future negotiations.

Instead of simply describing what happened in class, your journal should thoughtfully engage with topics such as:

- The specific reflection questions provided at the end of each course day;
- Your personal questions or reactions related to the readings and class discussions, including outcomes from your personal working group conversations;
- Points of agreement or disagreement with concepts or viewpoints presented in class or the reading materials, including your rationale;
- Key takeaways from the course: How did these ideas impact you? How do you plan to apply them, or how have you already applied them in negotiations or discussions outside of class? What were the results?
- Your successes and failures in negotiations inside and outside the course, with critical reflections and personal learning moments or out-of-the-box insights;
- Follow-up discussions you engaged in within or outside your personal working group, including observations of colleagues' behaviors (e.g., body language, learning channels, communication styles, core values);
- Applications of course concepts to your personal or professional negotiation situations, past or future.

Including footnotes with additional references is encouraged, as this demonstrates a thorough engagement with both course and supplementary literature, and highlights your ability to integrate and extend your understanding.

Optional appendices may include background notes, illustrations, or detailed accounts of practical negotiations. However, you are not expected to cover everything. Your journal should be a personal, purposeful reflection focusing on what matters most to your learning journey. That is what makes your journal unique.

6. Writing the Group Research Paper and Preparing its Oral Presentation

Purpose and organization

On day 1 of the course, you will be divided into groups of three students (plus/minus one). Then, you will have one week to select a negotiation-related research topic from the list provided by the teacher on OLAT. This topic will serve as the basis for both a group research paper and an oral presentation on day 6 of the course. You will have approximately two months to research your topic and prepare your work.

Please contact the course assistant (serena.delia@uzh.ch) with the topic you have chosen and an alternate topic (in case the first one is already taken) as soon as possible, but no later than September 27, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Topics are assigned on a “first come, first served” basis.

Note: The oral presentation and written assignment have different purposes and are evaluated accordingly. The written assignment focuses on the quality of the research, critical analysis, supporting evidence, and practical summary. The presentation is evaluated based on the selection of material, clarity, practical relevance, communication skills, and the group's ability to engage the class in meaningful discussion.

A. Group Research Paper

The paper must be written in English and be between 8 and 15 pages long, excluding the cover page, table of contents, list of abbreviations, references, signed statement of authorship, and any appendices deemed useful. As a general guideline, 8–12 pages will normally be sufficient for a strong paper. Fifteen pages is the maximum, not the expected length.

Note: This is a research paper, not a summary of course materials or teachings. It should identify the research question(s), examine the best available relevant evidence, critically assess what the research establishes and does not establish, and translate the findings into concrete implications for negotiation practice.

Unless a different structure is better suited to the specific topic, the paper should address the following six elements. They are intended as substantive requirements and guidance, not as a mandatory six-chapter structure:

- (1) Concept: Define the topic and the problems or challenges to be examined. If necessary, narrow the scope of the topic.
- (2) Evidence: Analyze the best available studies and other academic sources that are central to the topic from a negotiation perspective, including relevant organizational, legal, economic, psychological or other perspectives where appropriate. Include important contrary findings, boundary conditions, and contextual factors.
- (3) Impact on Negotiations: Explain why and how the results you describe are significant in real-world negotiations.
- (4) Practitioner Response: Highlight what negotiators should ideally do, avoid, or handle differently in light of these findings.
- (5) Make your explanations memorable. If possible, explain at least one well-documented empirical experiment from the academic literature that illustrates an important finding relevant to your topic. In addition, include a case study or other concrete example from real-world practice. If useful, develop your own figure(s), matrix/matrices, checklist(s), or other practical tool(s) that illustrate your findings in an easy-to-understand way. You are not expected to conduct your own scientific experiment.
- (6) Finally, ask yourself: What do we still not know? Identify important uncertainties, conflicting findings, methodological limitations, context-dependent factors, and open

research questions. Distinguish clearly between conclusions that are well supported by the evidence and conclusions that remain tentative.

Note: Elements (4) and (5) should receive particular attention. However, practical recommendations must be grounded in the evidence analyzed in the paper and should reflect the limitations and uncertainties identified in the research.

Practical inquiry: In addition to engaging with the academic literature, each group must include a modest practical inquiry or an equivalent practice-based application related to its specific topic. Depending on the topic, this may consist, for example, of applying the research to a documented real-world case, conducting a small number of short interviews, making a structured observation or comparison, or applying and critically testing a framework or practical tool developed by the group. Note: This is not a second research project, and you are not expected to conduct a representative empirical study. Its purpose is to apply, illustrate, question, or critically examine the academic research in a concrete setting. The specific Practical Research Challenge through which your group will carry out this practical inquiry is set out for each topic in the separate "Instructions and Topics" document that will be uploaded to OLAT after Course Day 1.

Any practical inquiry must be interpreted with appropriate caution. A few interviews, a single case, or a small comparison cannot establish how negotiators generally behave. The paper should therefore distinguish clearly between findings supported by academic research and insights derived from the group's own limited practical inquiry. If your practical inquiry involves interviews or personal cases, respect confidentiality, obtain the participants' agreement, anonymize identifying information unless disclosure has been clearly authorized, and do not collect unnecessary sensitive personal information.

Detailed supporting material, such as interview guides, anonymized interview notes or summaries, detailed case documentation, observation sheets, or comparable material, should normally be placed in an appendix. The main paper should include only the key insights that are relevant to the research question and integrate them with the academic evidence.

Within these requirements, you are encouraged to develop your own analytical approach and to use creative ways of making your findings practically useful and memorable.

The paper should primarily rely on high-quality, academic sources. Depending on the topic, popular books, media reports, and websites may be helpful in identifying practice-relevant questions and illustrative examples to integrate into the text. However, these sources do not replace engagement with the underlying research. Sources must be cited precisely and consistently. If an empirical claim is significant to the argument, trace it back to the original study or another authoritative source whenever possible.

Provided you adhere to the AI guidelines outlined in Chapter 3, you may use generative AI as a research tool. However, using AI tools does not relieve you of your responsibility to conduct original research, evaluate evidence independently, develop your own arguments, and verify and quote every source and factual claim. Never use AI-generated citations or quotations without verifying them against the original source.

Individual contributions: Because this is a group paper, include a short contribution statement identifying clearly which group member made which contributions to the overall paper (for example, literature research, practical inquiry, case analysis, development of a framework or figure, drafting, integration, and final editing). Division of tasks is encouraged, but the submitted paper must read as one coherent group product, and all group members remain responsible for the paper as a whole. The contribution statement is intended to make the division of work transparent; it does not result in individual grading of the paper. Consequently, all group members will receive the same grade for the group research paper.

B. Oral Group Presentation on Course Day 6

Each group will present the central findings of its research on course day 6. The presentation is part of the in-class performance assessment. It will be assessed in class by the instructor and the teaching assistant.

Each group has 15 minutes for its presentation, followed by 10 minutes of class discussion. Groups are responsible for ensuring that these time limits are respected. The presentation should not be a mere summary of the written assignment. Instead, the group should present the most important, surprising, or practically useful findings in a clear, engaging, and memorable way. Where useful, the presentation may draw on your practical research 'challenge', but it should select only those insights that help the class understand and apply the research. Groups are encouraged to use a practical case study, findings from a well-documented empirical experiment, a brief demonstration, a decision-making problem, a visual model, or any other interactive element that will help the class better understand and apply the research findings to real-world negotiation scenarios and spark meaningful discussion. The presentation should conclude with a clear answer to the following practical question: "Based on what we've learned, how should a negotiator approach the next negotiation differently?"

7. Further sources of information on the Olat course page

The OLAT course page contains mandatory materials and additional resources related to course topics. To clarify the expected workload, the materials are labeled as "mandatory" or "optional." You are expected to read the mandatory materials and complete all assigned preparatory tasks. Optional resources are intended to provide further insight and do not constitute required reading. You are encouraged to report any useful new resources or broken links to yvonne.buehler@ipi.ch. Thank you.

8. Some further feedback from previous course participants

«I think what reality separates this course from the conventional one's is the extent of active participation and the active discussion between the professor and the students. This reality entourage the students to make statements, to be challenger, to get out of the comfort zone and to apply what has been learned.» (Luca Schärer)

«It was a course that was completely different from an other course I have taken so far in my university career. It was provoking, out of the ordinary and possibly the most relevant university course in preparing us for the life 'out there'.» (Carina Waser)

«If I would do the course again, I would have paid more in depth attention to all the literature provided in the course site. Specifically, I would read each article or text and try to really think how using this information could improve my performance in the practical cases.» (Adele Tanhuanpää)

«If I did the course again, I would write down my notes by hand. I usually do well with computer notes, but in this course I recommend to take analog notes.» (Anaïs Hefti)

«If I did the course again, I would ensure to have more possibilities to negotiate besides the course days.» (Alexander Michael Scott)

«The impact of the two colleagues from my working group has been greater than I could have anticipated. I found the meetings to be so interesting and valuable. I think that my course mate's contributions in class and their opinions and questions were as important an beneficial to me as were the course materials.» (Melanja Mattig)