

Law, Strategy & Execution in Startup Ventures

Instructor:

Mohammad Sohaib Saleem

Course Type:

Elective (Cross-listed for Law, Entrepreneurship, and Business Strategy tracks)

Duration:

14 Weeks (1 hour 15 minutes per session)

Delivery Method:

In-person or hybrid

Assessment: Project-based (No midterm/final exam)

Course Description:

This course prepares students to build scalable, legally sound businesses by combining practical startup strategy with foundational legal tools. It focuses on real-world startup execution—from formation and funding to branding, compliance, and global scaling—using case studies from leading startups like Airbnb, Stripe, Reddit, and Allbirds.

Students will draft legal documents, negotiate mock deals, build their own founder toolkits, and simulate decision-making from the founder's chair. Law is treated not as a barrier, but as a strategic tool for growth, protection, and long-term success.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify key legal issues founders must address from day one
2. Structure startups legally and strategically for scale
3. Draft core legal documents like founder agreements, IP plans, and contracts
4. Analyze real startup cases for decision-making and risk mitigation
5. Integrate legal, brand, and market strategy into a founder's playbook
6. Present and defend a startup strategy aligned with law, values, and growth goals

Weekly Topics & Deliverables

Week	Topic	Key Deliverable
1	Startup Mindset & Founder Strategy	Startup Idea Plan (1-pager)
2	Structuring the Startup (Entities & Equity)	Founder Agreement Draft
3	Early-Stage Funding & SAFE Notes	Cap Table + Funding Simulation
4	Brand Law & IP Protection	Trademark Search + Brand Audit
5	Hiring & ESOPs	ESOP Clause Draft
6	Compliance (SECP, FBR, Cross-border)	Startup Compliance Checklist
7	E-Commerce & Terms of Service	Website Terms & Policy Draft
8	Midterm Submission	Legal Startup Dossier
9	Contracts, Trade & Global Sales	International Trade Deal Simulation
10	Global Scaling & Free Zones	Structuring Map for Global Scale
11	Negotiation & Deal-Making	Redlined Term Sheet Exercise
12	Legal Ops, Delegation & Automation	Founder-Optional Org Chart
13	Exit Strategy (M&A, Buybacks, IPO)	Exit Strategy Memo
14	Final Submission & Presentation	Legal Strategy Pack + Pitch Deck

Assesment Structure

Component	Weight
Startup Legal Toolkit (Founder Docs, IP, Contracts)	25%
Class Participation	25%
Final Project & Presentation	50%

Reading Material

Core Texts:

- Venture Deals – Brad Feld & Jason Mendelson
- The Startup Lawyer – Ryan Roberts
- SECP Startup Guidelines (Pakistan)
- YC SAFE Note Templates
- Cooley GO Docs (Employment, IP, ESOP)

Supplementary Readings:

- Airbnb Early Legal Challenges
- Stripe Atlas Incorporation Guide
- Reddit's Platform Governance and Legal Issues
- Allbirds Brand/IP Strategy Case