

LINKS Global Competition FAQs



LINKS FAQs are accessible via the LINKS website (<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com>) and, for instructors, instructor FAQs are accessible within the Instructor Resources link on the LINKS website. The following FAQs are specifically for the LINKS Global Competition.

About the LINKS Global Competition

About “Global”: *“Why ‘Global’?”* The LINKS Global Competition is open to students in academic degree-granting programs in colleges and universities worldwide.

Advice To Students: *“What’s the best advice to students in a LINKS Global Competition?”* (1) Read and re-read the LINKS manual. (2) Use the LINKS FAQs. (3) Share “toys” (share insights with your teammates; teach each other about the LINKS things that you know best). (4) If your team has a second team meal together on the same day, your team is probably not well-prepared for and well-organized during your team meetings. (5) Have fun!

Hardware and Software Requirements: *“What are the hardware and software requirements to participate in a LINKS Global Competition?”* Since LINKS is web-based, all that’s needed to participate in a LINKS event is internet access and a web-browser (and, presumably, access to a printer, since the main LINKS results file after each game run is a lengthy Word doc file). There’s no software to download or install. Since LINKS results files are in Word and Excel formats, local PC access to standard Microsoft Office software is required to participate in LINKS simulations events.

Several Groups Vs. Whole-Class Participation: *“Can one or two groups from my class choose to participate in a LINKS Global Competition rather than complete the course’s required corporate-client project even though my whole class isn’t participating in the LINKS Global Competition?”* Yes, as long as the LINKS groups are coached by their instructor throughout the LINKS Global Competition.

Voluntary Opting-In: *“My class will have about 10 simulation teams. Is it possible to offer my students the option of participating in either the LINKS Global Competition or in my own within-course LINKS event?”* Yes ... so you could announce the LINKS Global Competition opportunity in your class. And, then, some student teams might subsequently choose to opt-in to the LINKS Global Competition while others might prefer to participate in your traditional local-course event. So, you have maximum instruction flexibility.

Voluntary opting-in to a LINKS Global Competition would have to be completed no later than the official signup/payment deadline for the LINKS Global Competition.

Eligibility For LINKS Global Competitions

Eligibility: *“Who’s eligible to participate in a LINKS Global Competition?”* Students compete in a LINKS Global Competition as part of an academic degree-granting program, either in a regular instructor-led course or in an independent-study or directed-study course at the student’s academic institution. The LINKS portion of the course forms part of each student’s course grade, presumably including written assignments, written reports, and presentations that the student’s instructor includes in the course within which LINKS simulation participation occurs.

A LINKS Global Competition is open to upper-level undergraduates and all MBAs who have not previously participated in an academic course or competition with the same LINKS simulation.

An individual student may **not** participate in a LINKS Global Competition (as a single-person team) unless the student meets the eligibility requirements specified above.

Repeat Participation Eligibility: *“Is it possible for a student to participate in a second LINKS Global Competition?”*

- **Previous Usage of Any LINKS Marketing Simulation:**

- Students who have previously used the LINKS Marketing Tactics Simulation in an academic course may participate in a LINKS Global Marketing Competition with the LINKS Marketing Simulation.
- Students who have previously used **any other** LINKS marketing simulation in an academic course or in a LINKS Global Competition may **not** participate in a LINKS Global Competition with the LINKS Marketing Simulation.
- Students who have previously used any LINKS marketing simulation may participate in a LINKS Global SCM Competition.

- **Previous Usage of Any LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation:**

- Students who have previously used the LINKS Procurement Management Simulation in an academic course may participate in a LINKS Global SCM Competition with the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation.
- Students who have previously used **any other** LINKS supply chain management simulation in an academic course or in a LINKS Global Competition may **not** participate in another LINKS Global Competition with the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation.
- Students who have previously used any LINKS supply chain management simulation may participate in a LINKS Global Marketing Competition.

Instructors and the LINKS Global Competition

Instructor’s Role: *“What is the local instructor’s role in a LINKS Global Competition?”* Instructors teach with LINKS. LINKS Simulations runs the simulation and provides on-going technical support to students and instructional support to instructors.

General advice to instructors: “build the LINKS Global Competition into your course and include LINKS as an element of your course’s grading system.” The LINKS Global Competition might involve 25%-50% of your total course grade for a traditional semester-length course, depending on the number and “size” of written reports, written assignments, and presentations that you include as part of your “local-institution” within-course event.

Key instructor activities in a LINKS-based course include: (1) introducing LINKS in-class; (2) coaching local-institution student teams along the way; and, (3) evaluating written assignments, written reports, and presentations that the instructor builds into the local-institution course.

Please access the Instructor Resources part of the LINKS website to see all of the web-based resources to support instructors in their use of LINKS.

LINKS Global Competition Participation Compared To Having My Own LINKS Event:

“Can I still have my own-course LINKS event with my preferred LINKS simulation variant and with a LINKS game run schedule of my own choosing?” Yes, absolutely. The LINKS Global Competition is an alternative offering by LINKS Simulations. Current and new LINKS instructors may freely choose between having an own-course event or joining a LINKS Global Competition.

Participating in a LINKS Global Competition is an alternative instructional/learning opportunity to the traditional usage of LINKS within a single instructor’s course (i.e., an event with students from a single course conducted according to the course instructor’s preferred scheduling). The LINKS Global Competition notches up the competitive aspect of LINKS substantially but with associated scheduling constraints (everyone adheres to the common game run schedule in a particular LINKS Global Competition).

For instructors with very small classes, the LINKS Global Competition is an attractive alternative to an own-course only event with a couple of teams. Larger and fewer teams may be formed and then included in the LINKS Global Competition, to provide a much richer and more realistic team management and competitive experience.

Role of LINKS Simulations: *“Does LINKS Simulations teach my students about LINKS?”*

No, LINKS Simulations runs the LINKS Global Competition and provides support via extensive LINKS web resources. We don’t substitute for or replace the local instructor. We’ll answer technical support questions submitted via e-mail from students and instructors, but we’ll usually refer such questioners to the LINKS FAQs when the answer already exists there.

Instructors with students participating in a LINKS Global Competition will be provided with the access parameters (username and passcode) to the Instructor Resources on the LINKS website (<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com>). LINKS Instructor Resources supports instructors in their use of LINKS in their courses. For example, the LINKS Instructor Resources includes sample course syllabi, multiple-choice test questions, and PPT presentations.

Simulation Setup and Competition Design

Comparability Across Multiple Industries: *“With multiple industries in a LINKS Global Competition, I understand that the five student-teams in my course would be placed in separate, non-competing LINKS industries. How can performance be compared across separate, non-competing LINKS industries?”* Based on the number of registered teams in a LINKS Global Competition, multiple separate, non-competing LINKS industries will be created (to a maximum of eight teams per industry). All LINKS industries in a particular LINKS Global Competition are based on the same underlying scenario file, so your multiple student teams (placed in different industries) would face the same underlying market and

competitive environment. Of course, teams would face different competitors in their particular LINKS industry.

Grading within your course for LINKS should be primarily based on traditional written assignments, written reports, and presentations ... with only a minority of the LINKS portion of your course grade being based on actual performance in a LINKS Global Competition.

Another within-LINKS grading system for your multiple student teams would involve re-normalizing the grades of your student teams in the multiple LINKS industries in a LINKS Global Competition to a common grading scale (with, say, 85% as the re-scaled average). So, for example, if all of your teams finished below average in their respective LINKS industries, this re-scaling would create "local-institution" above-average teams.

Post-Event Results Access: *"After the last scheduled game run of a LINKS Global Competition, how long will our firm's results be accessible on the LINKS website?"* LINKS industries remain on the LINKS web-server for one month after the completion of an event's game-run schedule.

Team Membership Changes After LINKS Begins: *"Is it possible to change team membership after LINKS begins?"* Yes, team membership changes are possible after LINKS begins ... but, of course, team size is limited to a minimum of three students and a maximum of six students.

Team Size: *"Can a team of three students participate in a LINKS Global Competition?"* Teams of size three are not prohibited. However we recommend teams composed of "about" four students. Maximum team size in LINKS Global Competitions is six members.

Team Expulsion: *"Are there any conditions under which a team could be expelled from a LINKS Global Competition?"* LINKS teams are presumed to be competing in an "honorable" and profit-seeking fashion throughout a LINKS Global Competition. "Honorable" describes firms adhering to normal competitive business practices. Anti-competitive behavior (such as colluding with others) is grounds for expulsion from a LINKS Global Competition.

Continuing unprofitable performance is also grounds for expulsion from a LINKS Global Competition. Unprofitable performance in successive rounds in a LINKS Global Competition automatically places a LINKS team on probation. If a LINKS team on probation doesn't make steady progress toward profitability, expulsion results.

Expulsion decisions are at the sole discretion of Randall G Chapman PhD, the LINKS author. There is no appeal from an expulsion decision by Randall G Chapman. In the rare case of an expulsion, the expelled LINKS team members are not entitled to a refund of their LINKS Global Competition registration fees.

Winning Team Determination: *"How are winners determined in a LINKS Global Competition?"* Performance is assessed via the multi-factor, balanced-scorecard performance evaluation system described in the LINKS manual.

Based on past experience with the number of entrants, multiple (independent) LINKS industries will normally be used within a LINKS Global Competition.

- In competition industries with six or more student-managed firms, the top two teams in each LINKS competition industry are designated equal (unranked) co-winners ("Gold Medalists").

- In competition industries with five or less student-managed firms, the top team in each LINKS competition industry is designated the winner (“Gold Medalist”).

To be a co-winner or a winner, a LINKS team must also have positive cumulative profitability in a LINKS Global Competition (from round #4, when teams assume managerial control of their LINKS firms, through to the end of the competition) and a LINKS team must have positive cumulative profitability in the second half of a LINKS Global Competition.

Game Runs

Delaying Game Runs: *“If my students have last-minute internet access difficulties through my institution’s network, it is possible to delay the processing of a scheduled game run to permit them to complete their inputting?”* No, game runs must occur as per the official published schedule, since multiple teams in a LINKS industry at educational institutions worldwide are included in LINKS Global Competition industries.

Best advice to LINKS students in a LINKS Global Competition: don’t wait until the last-minute to complete your inputs!

Missing LINKS Inputs: *“What happens if a team doesn’t submit new inputs by the scheduled game run submission deadline?”* All decisions (except research study orders) are permanent standing orders in LINKS. So, with missing inputs, the previous inputs of the team continue to be in effect. But, no research studies would be reported for a team with missing inputs because research study orders must be submitted in each LINKS decision round. And, teams with missing inputs don’t receive the \$300,000 Consulting Fees bonus for on-time submission of each round’s decision inputs.

Results Availability Timing: *“After a scheduled game run input deadline, when will the new LINKS results be available?”* LINKS doesn’t run automatically. When the LINKS staff completes a game run (downloads inputs, runs LINKS, checks LINKS results, and uploads new results to the LINKS web-server), everyone will be e-mailed a “new results available” e-mail message. Game run processing takes about 20 minutes for a single LINKS industry, but turnaround time will be longer than 20 minutes when multiple LINKS industries are scheduled to run at the same time.

The expectation is that there will be multiple LINKS industries included within LINKS Global Competitions. We routinely use multiple PCs to run LINKS when large numbers of LINKS industries are scheduled to run at the same time. So, generally speaking, you can expect to be able to access new LINKS results within two hours of a scheduled game run input deadline. Watch your incoming e-mail for the “new results available” e-mail message after a game run has been processed by the LINKS-simulations.com staff.

Payments

Competition Cost and LINKS Usage Fees: *“Does the per-student cost of the LINKS Global Competition cost include the usual per-student LINKS usage fee?”* Yes, the LINKS Global Competition cost includes all costs of participating in a LINKS Global Competition.

Late Payments: *“What happens if I pay for a LINKS Global Competition after the signup/registration/payment deadline?”* The published per-student cost of participating in a LINKS Global Competition is the discounted price for early payment by the official signup/registration/payment deadline. Payments received after the official signup/registration/payment deadline for a LINKS Global Competition are at the regular undiscounted cost, which is 25% higher than the early-payment discounted price.

The moral about paying for participation in a LINKS Global Competition: please pay early and, in particular, before the official signup/registration/payment deadline.

Paying For LINKS Global Competition Participation: *“How do I pay for my LINKS Global Competition participation?”* To pay for participation in a LINKS Global Competition using a credit card, follow these steps:

1. Access the LINKS website (<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com>).
2. Click on the “Pay For LINKS” link.
 - a. For a LINKS Global Marketing Competition: Input “instructor’s last name”
chapman
to pay for participation for one student in a LINKS Global Marketing Competition (USD\$38).
 - b. For a LINKS Global SCM Competition: Input “instructor’s last name”
chapman
to pay for participation for one student in a LINKS Global SCM Competition (USD\$49). Reminder: The LINKS Global SCM Competition includes an 8-round event with the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation.

PayPal will e-mail the payee confirmation of payment.

Refunds: *“Is a refund possible for a payment made by a student who won’t be able to participate in a LINKS Global Competition after all?”* On request from the original person who paid, we’ll issue refunds for student withdrawals up to the official signup/payment date for a LINKS Global Competition. After the official signup/payment date of a LINKS Global Competition, refunds are not possible.