Mastering Venture Capital: Early-Stage Startup Investing

2027 □□□□□□ 29 – 25
Kigali (Rwanda)



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Ref: 20222616_208725 Duration: Kigali (Rwanda) Fees: 4200 GBP

Why This Course

Venture capital plays a critical role in funding innovation, scaling startups, and shaping future industries. For investors, entrepreneurs, finance professionals, and ecosystem builders, understanding how VC works is essential for making better investment decisions and supporting high-potential companies.

Early-stage investing is both exciting and challenging. Startups often operate with limited data, uncertain markets, evolving business models, and high execution risk. Successful VC investing requires more than capital. It requires a clear investment thesis, strong evaluation skills, disciplined due diligence, thoughtful deal structuring, and the ability to support portfolio companies after investment.

This comprehensive 1-week course provides a practical deep dive into venture capital investing for early-stage startups. Through expert-led discussions, case studies, financial modeling exercises, term sheet practice, and investment decision simulations, participants will gain the tools and confidence to navigate the dynamic world of early-stage investing.

What You'll Learn and Practice

By joining this program, you will:

- Understand venture capital fund structures, economics, and management.
- Explore the roles of limited partners, general partners, founders, and other VC ecosystem players.
- Develop a personalized VC investment thesis.
- Identify promising early-stage startups and assess their growth potential.
- Evaluate founding teams, market opportunities, business models, and product-market fit.
- Apply startup valuation methodologies and deal structuring techniques.
- Understand term sheet essentials and negotiation strategies.
- Manage cap tables and understand dilution implications.
- Conduct financial, technical, legal, and commercial due diligence.
- Build financial models for early-stage startups.
- Understand investment committee processes and decision-making criteria.
- Manage portfolio companies and support post-investment value creation.
- Evaluate follow-on investment decisions, exit strategies, and liquidity events.



The Program Flow

Day 1: Venture Capital Fundamentals

- Introduction to venture capital and its role in startup ecosystems.
- Understanding how VC differs from private equity, angel investing, and corporate investment.
- VC fund structures, economics, fees, carried interest, and fund lifecycle.
- Limited partners versus general partners.
- Fundraising, capital deployment, and return expectations.
- Developing a VC investment thesis.
- Practical exercise: Drafting your initial investment thesis.

Day 2: Early-Stage Startup Evaluation

- Identifying promising startups and sourcing quality deal flow.
- Evaluating founding teams, founder-market fit, and execution capability.
- Market analysis, market sizing, and growth potential.
- Assessing business models, revenue potential, and scalability.
- Product-market fit assessment and traction indicators.
- Understanding competitive positioning and defensibility.
- Workshop: Creating a comprehensive startup evaluation framework.

Day 3: Deal Structuring and Term Sheets

- Startup valuation methodologies for early-stage companies.
- Understanding pre-money and post-money valuation.
- Term sheet essentials and key investment terms.
- Equity, convertible notes, SAFE instruments, liquidation preferences, anti-dilution, and governance rights.
- Negotiation strategies between investors and founders.
- Cap table management and ownership dilution.
- Practical exercise: Drafting and negotiating a startup term sheet.

Day 4: Due Diligence and Investment Decision-Making

- Financial modeling for early-stage startups.
- Reviewing unit economics, burn rate, runway, and growth assumptions.
- Technical, legal, financial, and commercial due diligence.
- Risk assessment and mitigation strategies.
- Preparing investment memos and presenting recommendations.
- Investment committee processes and decision-making criteria.
- Simulation: Presenting an investment case to an investment committee.



Day 5: Portfolio Management and Exit Strategies

- Post-investment value creation and founder support.
- Board participation, governance, reporting, and strategic guidance.
- Follow-on investment decisions and reserve planning.
- Managing portfolio performance and risk concentration.
- Exit strategies, acquisitions, IPOs, secondary sales, and liquidity events.
- Building a successful career and network in the VC ecosystem.
- Final activity: Presenting a VC investment thesis, startup evaluation, and deal recommendation.

Individual Impact

- Strengthen your understanding of venture capital investing and startup finance.
- Build confidence in evaluating early-stage startups.
- Improve your ability to analyze markets, teams, traction, and product-market fit.
- Gain practical skills in valuation, deal structuring, and term sheet negotiation.
- Develop stronger due diligence and investment decision-making capabilities.
- Build a more informed and strategic perspective on the VC ecosystem.

Work Impact

- Improve the quality of startup screening and investment decisions.
- Strengthen investment discipline through structured evaluation frameworks.
- Support better deal structuring and negotiation outcomes.
- Improve portfolio support and post-investment value creation.
- Enhance risk assessment and due diligence practices.
- Build stronger connections across the startup and venture capital ecosystem.

Training Methodology

This program combines venture capital theory with practical investment application. Participants will work through real-world startup cases and investment scenarios to develop hands-on skills. Learning methods include:

- Expert-led discussions and facilitated learning.
- Venture capital and startup investment case studies.
- Investment thesis development exercises.
- Startup evaluation and market sizing workshops.
- Financial modeling activities for early-stage startups.
- Term sheet drafting and negotiation practice.
- Due diligence simulations and investment committee presentations.
- Peer review, group work, and practical investment tools.



Beyond the Course

Upon completion, participants will be equipped to approach early-stage venture investing with greater clarity, discipline, and confidence. They will return ready to:

- Develop a personalized VC investment thesis.
- Create a comprehensive startup evaluation framework.
- Assess startup teams, markets, traction, and product potential.
- Draft and negotiate basic investment term sheets.
- Build financial models for early-stage startups.
- Participate more effectively in due diligence, investment committees, and portfolio management.

