

# Preface

This text arises from the responsibility that the Accounting Department assigned to me several years ago for the direction of financial and managerial accounting pre-courses, delivered by Bocconi University during the summer that separates the end of the Undergraduate and the beginning of the Master of Science Programs.

These courses are aimed at students from different universities and different degree programs, entering a wide range of MSc for which a mastery of fundamental accounting topics is considered useful. Structuring such a pre-course has therefore led me over time to make a selection of topics and concepts that a future manager, even if not in a financial role, should have in order to more comprehensively fulfill the role assigned by the company. Although over the three decades in which I have been teaching at Bocconi University I have had the opportunity to teach both financial and managerial accounting disciplines, it is certainly managerial accounting that engages me the most as a teacher, researcher and consultant. This contribution focuses on that discipline.

Many students in the three-year period have dealt with managerial accounting topics, albeit embedded in differently named and differently structured programs. A significant number of students is tackling accounting topics for the first time. Both types of students will find in this work a reasoned selection of the fundamental topics of the discipline, as well as a proposed approach to gradually built knowledge on cross-cutting impact issues, useful for future managers working in different functions. Those interested in pursuing further studies in accounting will also find some project-based reflections and useful insights.

Rather than being a list of topics, it is a journey that cannot help but start from corporate objectives and gradually unravel to discover the mechanisms and methodologies of management accounting that help achieve them. It is a journey in which proposing a solution to a managerial issue opens up new areas of insight and new options, bringing to light new aspects to be addressed.

As in any trip, not all interesting places can be visited, but the students with prior knowledge will hopefully find in this contribution a tool for reviewing and self-checking their mastery of the fundamentals of the subject. Students without prior knowledge of accounting will find a path of progressive approach to the subject, described in essential but hopefully clear and non-trivializing language, maximizing the usefulness of attending the pre-course or engaging in independent study.

I hope that non-financial managers may find in this work some inspiration for understanding their own reality and the design choices made by their company.

This book does not claim to have any pretensions towards a controller or financial manager. However, during its drafting, I could not help but reflect on how the set-up of management accounting systems in many realities has long been consolidated. The era of grand design projects for control models has probably passed and affected the majority of mid and big companies in past decades. In some forward-thinking occasions – such as the adoption or the revamping projects of ERP systems – it has been brought back to life. However many of those firms are too complex for there to be opportunities for a comprehensive design, and the controllers working in them have often not experienced the original design process, its motivations, the set-up choices and alternative evaluations that were undoubtedly made at the time. This risks in some ways impoverishing the controllers' professionalism, at the very moment as it is enriched with technological content and new managerial models, making them less confident when the evolution of strategy and organization requires making decisions that involve the fundamentals. It is my hope that this text, by recalling and sequencing some foundations, can partly help in this regard.

Finally, to my colleagues responsible for undergraduate and postgraduate managerial accounting courses who wish to peruse this text, I hope they appreciate its synthesis, the selection of topics and their sequencing, but above all the wide margin left for the integration of cases, exercises, and in-depth readings, depending on the slant they would like to give to their teaching. This is especially important in an increasingly complex universe where student learning requires the dynamic integration of different resources, and where fortunately no work can claim to delineate clear boundaries or let alone be exhaustive.

To everyone, have a safe journey.

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The printed volume is complemented by the digital version with the iconographic part available in color and enriched with tutorials.