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Case Analysis Writing

Case Analysis

Case analysis is a problem-based teaching and learning method that immerses students in complex organizational scenarios, requiring them to apply critical thinking and reflection to develop appropriate solutions or actions. Originating at Harvard, this method is widely recognized for its effectiveness in bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application.

In education, case analysis assignments typically involve examining written cases, live cases with guest lecturers or site visits, and multimedia cases that simulate real situations. Case analysis challenge students to identify core problems, analyze stakeholder behaviors and motivations, and propose actionable solutions. The method usually is guided and scaffolded by instructor-provided questions as students explore the relationship between facts and incidents described in the case.

Case analysis also emphasizes the importance of strategic thinking, evidence-based analysis, and effective communication. Students develop the ability to analyze data, apply relevant frameworks, and articulate their findings clearly and effectively. This method is revelatory in various applied social sciences, including education, social work, public relations, business, and public administration, preparing students for leadership roles by fostering practical, evidence-based problem-solving skills.

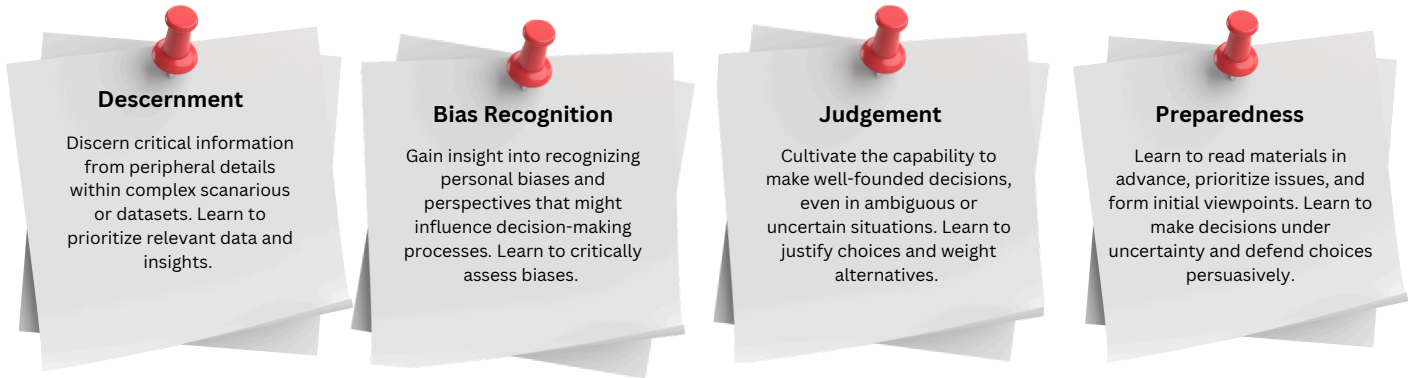
What is the purpose of a case analysis?

Case analysis is a structured method to analyze and respond to real-life scenarios, demonstrating an ability to apply theoretical concepts to practical problems. Case analysis place students in “real world” situations, prompting them to apply reflection and critical thinking skills to contemplate appropriate solutions, decisions, or recommend courses of action. Case analyses are considered to be more effective than in-class role-playing or simulation activities. This method emphasizes the relevance of abstract thinking and practical application within a specific area of professional practice.

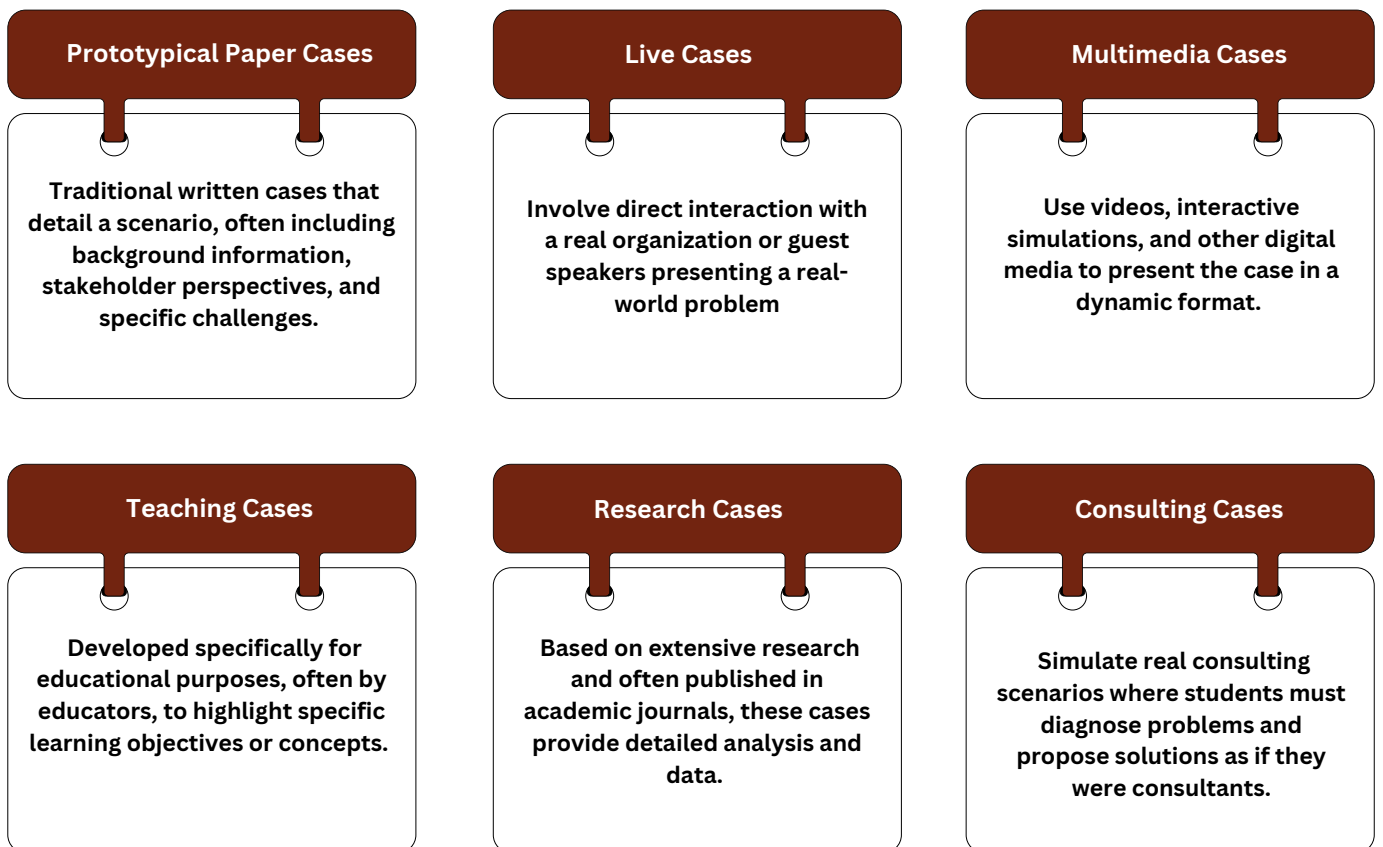
Why are you being assigned a case analysis?

In completing case analysis, students are encouraged to develop a range of critical skills essential for professional growth and decision-making. These include preparedness in reviewing materials, effective collaboration in group settings, curiosity in exploring diverse perspectives, and the cultivation of self-confidence through the process of tackling challenging roles and problems.

Here are a few **key reasons** for a case analysis assignment:



Types of Cases Used in Education



Example Teaching Case 1: [Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist](#)

Understanding the Genre

The case analysis assignment typically involves a written response to specific questions about a case, focusing on management issues, dilemmas, and decisions within organizations, especially nonprofit. It can be assigned individually or as a small group assignment and may include an in-class presentation.

Elements of a Case Analysis

Case Summary	
Purpose	Content
Provide a clear and concise overview of the case, setting the context for the analysis. This section should briefly outline the main events, stakeholders, and the environment or setting in which the case takes place.	Include a brief description of the organization or individuals involved, the main events or issues at hand, and the timeline. Focus on the relevant facts and background information necessary for understanding the case. Avoid detailed exposition and stick to essential elements that frame the analysis.

Problem Identification	
Purpose	Content
Clearly define and articulate the core problems or issues that need to be addressed. Hone in on the central challenges faced by the organization or individuals in the case.	Identify the root causes of the problems rather than just symptoms. Use techniques such as the 5 W's or <u>Root Cause Analysis</u> to get down to the fundamental issues. Ensure that the problem are framed in a way that is actionable and relevant to the analysis. Discuss how these problems impact the organization or individuals and the implications they have.

Analysis	
Purpose	Content
Apply relevant concepts, theories, and frameworks to critically examine the case. This section aims to provide a thorough understanding of the situation through various analytical lenses.	Use established models and frameworks such as <u>SWOT Method</u> or the <u>PESTEL Analysis</u> , depending on the nature of the case. Analyze the case data and information in the context of these frameworks to uncover insights. Discuss patterns, trends, and the relationships between different variables. Incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data to support your analysis.

Recommendations	
Purpose	Content
This section should provide clear, feasible, and strategic recommendations grounded in the analysis. It should be persuasive and supported with logical reasoning and analytical thinking.	Develop specific, actionable, realistic recommendations based on the insights gained from the analysis. Consider the feasibility, potential impact, and implementation challenges of each recommendation. Use evidence and data from the analysis to justify your proposed solutions. Address any potential risks or drawbacks associated with the recommendations and suggest ways to mitigate.

Conclusion	
Purpose	Content
Summarize the key points of the case analysis and discuss the broader implications of the findings and recommendations. This section aims to reinforce the main arguments and provide a closing perspective.	Recap the primary issues, insights from the analysis, and the recommended solutions. Highlight the significance of the findings and their potential impact on the organization or individuals involved. Discuss any broader implications for the industry or field, and suggest areas for further research or exploration. Ensure that the conclusion ties together the analysis and recommendations in a coherent and persuasive manner.

Approaching the Case Analysis

Embarking on a case analysis involves navigating complex and multifaceted scenarios that require a strategic approach. This task is not merely about reading a case and providing solutions; it demands a meticulous breakdown of the work into manageable parts to ensure thorough preparation and effective time management. The process includes understanding the case, identifying key issues, applying relevant frameworks, and generating actionable recommendations. Each step requires deliberate attention and detailed analysis; it is essential to allocate sufficient time and resources.

This section offers guidance on *how* to approach your analysis and ways to break down each part to ensure thorough preparation, and support more effective time management for this complex task.

Preparation and Meta-Skills Development

Preparation is key to a successful case analysis. It involves several steps to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the case, critical thinking skills, and effective time management. This section provides guidance on how to approach your analysis and develop necessary meta-skills.

1. Thorough Reading and Understanding

Initial Review

Get an overall sense of the scenarios, identifying the main issues, key facts, and stakeholders. Quickly read through headings, subheadings, introduction, and conclusion. Look for keywords and phrases that stand out. Pay close attention to summaries, any highlighted or bold text, and introductory and concluding paragraphs of sections. Here are some tips for note-taking:

Note-Taking Tips

- Use a color-coding system to highlight different types of information (e.g., yellow for key facts, green for stakeholders, pink for main issues).
- Write brief notes in the margins to summarize points, ask questions, or note initial thoughts.
- Consider using digital tools like Evernote, OneNote, or Google Docs for organized and easily searchable notes.
- Develop a consistent note-taking format with sections for key facts, stakeholders, issues, and personal insights.

Note-Taking Techniques

- Divide your notes into three sections – a narrow left column for cues or questions, a wider right column for notes, and a summary at the bottom. This helps in organizing thoughts and identifying key points.
- Use mind maps to visually organize information. Start with the central theme and branch out into main issues, stakeholders, and key facts.
- Use bullet points for quick and efficient note-taking. Create categories for different types of information to keep your notes structured.

In-Depth Reading:

- Read the case thoroughly, paying close attention to details. Highlight important information such as critical events, decisions, outcomes, and data.
- Take detailed notes, summarizing each section of the case. Note any patterns, contradictions, or surprising elements. This helps in building a structured overview.
- Look for recurring themes, trends, and relationships between different variables. This can provide deeper insights into the underlying issues and dynamics of the case.

Reading Note: *Not all assigned readings are equally important. Prioritize those that align with your research or are directly relevant to assignments and exams. Use course syllabi and key deadlines to guide your focus. Quickly review abstracts, introductions, and conclusions to determine if the reading is crucial. This way, you can skip or skim less relevant materials. Be strategic and make plans.*

Identifying the Core Issues:

- Determine the primary problems and challenges faced by the organization or individuals in the case. Differentiate between symptoms and root causes.
- Apply problem-identification frameworks such as the 5 Whys or Root Cause Analysis. These tools help identify the underlying issues and ensure a thorough understanding of the core problems.
- Consider the broader context in which the issues occur, including the organizational, cultural, and external environment. This helps in understanding the case more holistically.

2. Analytical Thinking

Framework Application:

- Select relevant theoretical frameworks and models to analyze the case. Common frameworks include SWOT Analysis, PESTEL Analysis, Porter's Five Forces, and the Balanced Scorecard.
- Explain why you chose these frameworks and how they help in understanding the case. Apply them systematically to dissect different aspects of the case (see resources for analysis tools)
- Bridge theoretical concepts with practical application. This demonstrates a comprehensive understanding and the ability to apply academic knowledge to real-world scenarios.

Data Interpretation:

- Examine qualitative data for trends, patterns, and insights. This can include narrative descriptions, interview quotes, and observational notes (if applicable).
- Analyze quantitative data for statistical trends, correlations, and anomalies. Use charts, graphs, and tables to visualize data and support your analysis (if applicable).
- Interpret data critically, considering potential biases, reliability, and validity. Reflect on how data supports or challenges your initial assumptions and understanding of the case.

3. Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

Generating Solutions:

- Generate multiple potential solutions to the problems identified. Use brainstorming techniques to explore a wide range of options. This could include talking with a peer or peer tutor.
- Assess the pros and cons of each solution. Consider feasibility, impact, risks, and alignment.

- Encourage creative and innovative solutions. Think outside the box and consider unconventional approaches that could provide effective solutions.

Decision Criteria:

- Develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of proposed solutions. This may include cost, time, stakeholder impact, and alignment with organizational goals.
- Justify your recommendations based on these criteria and the evidence from your analysis. Ensure that decisions are grounded in logical reasoning and supported by data.

4. Time Management

Prioritization:

- Prioritize tasks based on their importance and deadlines. Focus on high-impact activities first, ensuring that critical components of the analysis are addressed thoroughly.

Incremental Progress:

- Establish clear milestones and deadlines for each phase of the analysis. Track your progress against these milestones to stay on schedule.
- Regularly review and revise your work. This helps refine your analysis and recommendations, ensuring a high-quality final product.

5. Developing Meta-Skills

Critical Thinking:

- Continuously question your assumptions and the information presented in the case. This fosters a deeper and more critical analysis.
- Develop logical reasoning skills by constructing clear, coherent arguments supported by evidence and data.

Communication Skills:

- Focus on clear, concise, and well-structured writing. Ensure that your analysis and recommendations are communicated effectively and with audience consideration.
- If required, prepare for in-class presentations. Practice articulating your findings and recommendations succinctly and professionally.

Collaboration:

- Collaborate with peers to gain diverse perspectives and insights. Group discussions can enhance the depth and quality of your analysis.
- Lead or facilitate group discussions, ensuring that all viewpoints are considered. This helps identify more comprehensive and balanced solutions.

Practice the Process of Problem-Solving: [Solving a Teaching Problem, Carnegie Mellon University](#)

Writing the Case Analysis

Understand the Case

- **Deep Dive into the Case:** Begin by thoroughly reading the case study. Familiarize yourself with the educational context, key stakeholders, and the central issues. Take note of important details such as policy implications, institutional challenges, and any educational theories or frameworks referenced.
- **Identify Core Educational Issues:** Pinpoint the main educational dilemmas or questions the case presents. These issues will be the focus of your analysis, often relating to school leadership, instructional strategies, policy implementation, or equity and inclusion.

Conduct a Situational Analysis

- Use relevant educational theories or models to analyze the situation.
- Recognize all parties involved, such as students, teachers, and policymakers. Understanding perspectives and interests of stakeholders is crucial for a balanced and insightful analysis.
- Review provided data, such as student performance metrics. Analyze data within the context of educational settings, considering factors like resource allocation and policy constraints.

Develop Your Analysis

- Clearly articulate the primary educational problem or question that your analysis will address. This should be specific, concise, and aligned with the educational context.
- Investigate the root causes of the identified problem(s), considering factors such as leadership practices, instructional methods, policy barriers, or socio-cultural dynamics.
- Identify potential solutions or strategies for addressing the problem. Evaluate the pros and cons of each, considering educational outcomes, feasibility, risks, and potential impact.

Propose Recommendations

- Offer recommendations grounded in educational research and theory. These solutions should be actionable and directly address the core issues identified in your analysis.
- Explain why your proposed solutions are the most effective. Support your rationale with evidence from the case, educational research, and best practices in the field.

Plan for Implementation in Educational Settings

- Develop a detailed plan for how your recommendations could be implemented in an educational context. Consider timelines, resources, stakeholder buy-in, and potential challenges, such as resistance to change or resource limitations.
- Discuss alternative plans or adjustments that could be made if the initial implementation faces obstacles. This demonstrates realistic understanding of the complexities of educational contexts.

Conclude the Analysis

- Provide a concise summary of your analysis and recommendations, reinforcing the importance of addressing the identified educational problem.

- Consider the broader impact of your analysis on educational practice and policy. What lessons can be drawn? How does this case contribute to a deeper understanding of educational leadership, policy, or instructional strategies?

Review and Revise

- Ensure that your analysis is clear, concise, and accessible. Avoid jargon and focus on making your writing understandable to a wide audience, including educational practitioners and policymakers.
- Make sure your arguments are logical and consistent throughout the analysis. Each section should build on the previous one, leading to a cohesive and compelling narrative.
- Carefully review your work for grammatical errors, typos, and formatting issues. High-quality writing reflects your attention to detail and professionalism.

Expectations and Evaluation

Sample Rubric

A027 Case Analysis Rubric - Spring 2024	
Criteria	Ratings
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Quality of Strategic Thinking and Decision-Making Advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies the key strategic decision(s) and focuses on essential strategic finance issues, questions, and dilemma(s) of the case. <input type="checkbox"/> Examines key strategic decisions and associated consequences in the case <input type="checkbox"/> Offers recommendations for informed and strategic decision-making for leaders 	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Quality of Analysis/Reasoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Locates essential data in the case narrative and exhibits. <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzes the case using data, evidence, and examples to support arguments <input type="checkbox"/> Applies nonprofit financial management concepts and principles effectively and accurately. 	.
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Quality of Communication and Writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conveys arguments and recommendations via clear and error-free writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Structures one’s thinking in a well-organized paper <input type="checkbox"/> Follows word and page limit guidelines 	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome General Comments</p>	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Grade</p>	

Your case analysis will be evaluated on strategic thinking, analysis, and communication. Identify key strategic decisions, focus on essential finance issues, and offer practical recommendations. Analyze the case using relevant data, evidence, and relevant principles. Ensure your writing is clear, well-

organized, and within word and page limits. Assessors will provide feedback and a grade based on these criteria. As you work through your case analysis, be sure to refer back to the rubric frequently.

Understanding the Evaluation Criteria

1. Quality of Strategic Thinking/Decision-Making Advice

This criterion evaluates your ability to identify key strategic decisions within the case and focus on essential strategic finance issues, questions, and dilemmas. It also assesses your ability to examine these decisions and their consequences and offer recommendations for informed and strategic decision-making for leaders.

Specific Expectations

- Identify key strategic decisions. Be sure to clearly recognize and outline the critical strategic decisions that need to be addressed.
- Focus on strategic finance issues (or what is applicable in your case). Concentrate on the main strategic financial (or other) issues, questions, and dilemmas presented in the case.
- Examine consequences. Be sure to analyze the outcome of the key strategic decisions and discuss their implications.
- Offer recommendations. Provide well-informed and practical recommendations for leaders to make strategic decisions.

2. Quality of Analysis/Reasoning

This criterion assesses your ability to locate essential data within the case narrative and exhibits, analyze the case using data, evidence, and examples to support your arguments, and apply relevant concepts and principles effectively and accurately.

Specific Expectations

- Locate essential data. Identify and extract key data points from the case narrative and exhibits.
- Analyze the case. Use data, evidence, and examples to build strong and logical arguments.
- Apply concepts and principles. Demonstrate a deep understanding of relevant concepts and principles (or those in your case) and apply accurately to the case.

3. Quality of Communication/Writing

This criterion evaluates your ability to convey arguments and recommendations clearly, structure your paper in a well-organized manner, and follow the word- and page-limit guidelines provided.

Specific Expectations

- Ensure your writing is clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors. Seek feedback.
- Organize your paper with effective headings and transitions to maintain a logical flow.
- Follow the word- and page-limit guidelines to ensure your paper is neither too short nor too long.

Case Analysis Revision Checklist

Quality of Strategic Thinking/Decision-Making Advice

- Have I identified all key strategic decisions within the case?
- Are these decisions clearly outlined and defined?
- Do they address the core strategic issue?
- Have I focused on essential strategic financial issues (or other), questions, and dilemmas?
- Have I explained why these issues are critical to the case?
- Have I examined the key strategic decisions and their consequences?
- Have I discussed both short-term and long-term impacts?
- Have I provided evidence from the case to support my analysis?
- Have I offered informed and strategic decision-making advice for leaders?
- Are my recommendations practical, feasible, and aligned with the organization's goals?
- Have I justified my recommendations with evidence and logical reasoning?

Quality of Analysis/Reasoning

- Have I located and highlighted essential data from the case narrative and exhibits?
- Is the data relevant to my analysis?
- Have I used data, evidence, and examples to support my arguments?
- Is my analysis thorough and logically sound?
- Have I applied relevant concepts and principles accurately?
- Have I demonstrated a deep understanding of these concepts?
- Have I used these concepts effectively in my analysis?

Quality of Communication/Writing

- Is my writing clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors?
- Have I used appropriate academic language and tone?
- Have I organized my paper with effective headings and transitions?
- Is there a logical flow from one section to the next?
- Have I followed the word and page-limit guidelines?

General Evaluation

- Have I addressed all the questions or prompts from the case?
- Have I provided comprehensive answers?
- Is my analysis free from personal bias and subjective opinions?
- Is there a logical flow from the introduction to the conclusion?
- Have I ensured all sections are interconnected?
- Have I proofread my paper multiple times to eliminate errors?
- Have I used tools like spell check and grammar check?
- Have I ensured my analysis meets the expected standards comprehensively?
- Have I reviewed the rubric to ensure all criteria are met?

Additional Resources

[Case Analysis Writing, HGSE](#)

[The Case Method, Harvard Business School](#)

[Case Analysis Writing, University of Arizona](#)

[6 Steps of Case Analysis \(with Example\)](#)

[Case Analysis Companion Editable Template](#)

[Tips for Taking Notes in Graduate School](#)

[Note-taking Tips, Academic Resource Center, Harvard](#)

[Surviving Grad School: how to Read and Take Notes Efficiently](#)

[Root Cause Analysis Guide](#)

[What is a Pestel Analysis?](#)

[A Brief Guide to Case Writing](#)