As part of #WorldCaseTeachingDay 2021 The Case Centre invited business and management educators worldwide to share their experiences of moving case teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report, published on 5 February 2021, shares the findings of the survey.

www.thecasecentre.org/survey2021
Survey demographics

Respondent numbers

282 educators
212 institutions
56 countries

Geographic spread of respondents

- 41% in Europe
- 32% in Asia
- 15% in North America
- 6% in South America
- 5% in Africa
- 1% in Australasia
Teaching formats and delivery

It’s no surprise that, across the board during the pandemic, the majority of programmes have moved rapidly from in-person to online or blended/hybrid delivery.

Overall, amongst the people surveyed, in-person programmes accounted for 83% before the pandemic, and now they total just 6%. Online programmes have grown from 7% to 66%, while blended/hybrid programmes have increased from 10% to 21%. 7% of programmes are now ‘not applicable’ suggesting that they may have been cancelled or postponed.

These patterns are mirrored across undergraduate, postgraduate and executive education programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programmes combined</th>
<th>Undergraduate programmes</th>
<th>Postgraduate programmes</th>
<th>Executive education programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before the pandemic</td>
<td>Since the pandemic</td>
<td>Before the pandemic</td>
<td>Since the pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended/hybrid</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Online case teaching survey 2021: results [www.thecasecentre.org/survey2021](http://www.thecasecentre.org/survey2021)*
Frequency of case use

Before the pandemic many educators around the world were already embarking on the online case teaching journey. Read about some of their experiences in part 1 and part 2 of this online case teaching series.

With the rapid shift to online programmes, instructors have been forced to quickly rethink how they achieve their learning objectives throughout a programme.

Cases continue to be a main-stay in the online business education classroom, and amongst our survey participants case use (occasional and regular) on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes has grown since the pandemic began. Case use on executive education programmes has fallen slightly. Read about the experiences of educators in this article about the rapid shift to online case teaching.

### Frequency of case use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Executive education programmes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before the pandemic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Since the pandemic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technology and course design

Platforms used for online case teaching

The choice of platforms for online case teaching is wide. Many institutions were well set up prior to the pandemic with a chosen solution, others had to make decisions quickly about the best way to move forward.

Balancing teaching tools, security, integration with existing institutional systems and teacher preferences has been a challenge.

Among our survey respondents Zoom is the most used platform for online case teaching (38%), with Microsoft Teams (20%) and Blackboard (12%) taking the next largest shares.

Use of educational designers to develop online programmes

The involvement of educational/learning designers can be a real asset to the development of successful online programmes.

Indeed, 42% of survey respondents used an educational designer to support their work during the rapid shift to online programmes.

However, not all institutions, especially those without an established online presence, had specialists in post in this area at the beginning of the pandemic. We expect that this is an area that many schools will be looking to resource more heavily going forward.
Moving case teaching online

Effect on educator workload

The rapid move to online case teaching has dramatically increased educator workloads. 82% of respondents agreed.

Educators made huge time investments to ensure that the move online was as successful as possible. Each case session needed to be reviewed to decide how best to teach it online.

Educators, many with little prior experience, have had to become fluent with using digital platforms for online case teaching. They’ve also had to carefully consider how to adapt their own teaching techniques to get the maximum from cases in the digital classroom.

While the switch to online has increased workloads, it remains to be seen whether the trend continues after the initial outlay of time and effort required to make the change.

Effect on student engagement

One of the key strengths of the case method is that it encourages interaction between all parties engaged in the learning experience. Harnessing this strength in the online classroom can lead to the increased engagement of students, as 43% of our survey participants agreed.

However, some educators have found translating highly interactive in-person case sessions to online delivery challenging. 30% of respondents reported a reduction in student engagement.

Many factors can potentially contribute to reducing student engagement and participation, including students who don’t wish to turn cameras and microphones on, intermittent internet connectivity, and unfamiliarity with how to get the best from the digital platform that is being used for the case session.
Techniques used for teaching cases online

How to get the best out of teaching cases online has long been explored by educators worldwide. Replicating a rich, interactive, fluid discussion in the online space can seem like a daunting task. However, many educators were making it work successfully long before COVID-19. In part 1 and part 2 of this online case teaching series educators discuss their experiences and techniques.

The survey shows that the majority of educators (72%) are choosing to teach cases online synchronously, with only 37% delivering case sessions asynchronously.

To get the case discussion flowing educators are employing the tried and tested techniques of open questioning (65%) and cold-calling (33%). When teaching cases online it is important to consider how the session is structured to allow for different forms of interaction. This helps students (and educators!) maintain energy, focus and interest. For this purpose, breakout rooms (60%), polls and surveys (55%), discussion forums (38%) and role play (26%) are all important tools in the case teacher’s toolbox.

When teaching cases, many educators use boards to capture and structure the case discussion. Doing this successfully online has been more intuitive for some than others. 33% of the educators we surveyed opted to use a digital whiteboard, while 9% preferred to use a more traditional whiteboard or flip chart in the camera shot (9%). How easy it is for students to read the board is an important consideration when making this decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synchronous sessions</th>
<th>72%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open questions</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakout rooms</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polls/surveys</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion forums</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous sessions</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital whiteboards</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold calling</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional whiteboards in camera shot</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increasing the use of cases online

We asked our survey respondents to let us know what would help them increase the use of cases in the online classroom.

54% asked for teaching notes that address how to teach a case online. Currently few teaching notes do this. The Case Centre will be contacting all authors to ask them to revise teaching notes for cases that they have taught online.

Class sizes vary by institution, but 36% of survey participants indicated that they would be more comfortable teaching cases online with classes smaller than their current size.

Even experienced case teachers can feel daunted by the prospect of online case teaching. 34% of respondents believe that training in this area would be beneficial. The Case Centre runs workshops that address this topic, and recordings of a series of webinars about online case teaching can also be accessed for free.

34% are looking for more relevant cases in their subject area, and 24% believe that their schools could provide extra support for their online case teaching.

To be a successful online case teacher instructors must embrace the technology. 22% of participants stated that more confidence in using the technology would increase their case use online, and for 21% knowing that the technology is reliable is an important factor.
Challenges of case teaching online

Survey respondents were asked to reflect on the challenges created by moving case teaching online rapidly during the pandemic. A representative selection of the challenges reported are included below.

- Increasing student engagement and participation.
- Understanding how case discussion dynamics change in online teaching, especially when dealing with hybrid classroom case discussion.
- Motivation of myself and the students. We have so many competing demands.
- Time to rethink the pedagogical mechanisms within each class.
- Keeping a balance between the attention paid to students in class and the ones online, and ensuring that the contributions from students in class are well understood by the students online.
- Technology problems - students often have problems with cameras or microphones.
- It’s a challenge to have students turn on their cameras, but seeing them helps me notice their reactions and I miss that.
- Reading the class and its level of engagement.
- How to deliver as high quality a student experience. I believe that we have largely succeeded in this, to my surprise.
- Managing my work time vs personal time - caring for students and caring for myself.
- Preparing graded exams with the right tools/technologies.
- Learning the technology and making the needed changes in the teaching plans.
- Replicating my highly interactive sessions online (especially for larger classes), by bringing in more structure.
- Adapting material and timing to the online teaching and rhythm.
- Workload - having to redesign every single activity.
- Working out how to sustain engagement during an online case discussion.
- Rethinking the whole course syllabus.
- Maintaining student engagement. Zoom fatigue is real, and an ever-present component of all my courses.
- The biggest challenge is bringing learners onboard who were used to in-person teaching. This was due to the fact that 3/4 of learners did not have the ICT equipment to facilitate their learning.
- Ensuring most of the class are following the discussion.
- Making the online transition very quickly and learning as we go along.
- Figuring out how to replace whiteboards and how to change the line of questioning.
- Maintaining energy and focus during the session and managing class participation.
- Most of my classes have been asynchronous - which makes case discussion very challenging.
- It took a lot of energy and time to adopt and adapt.
- Prepping systems for case teaching (polls, whiteboards etc.).
- Slow and sometimes intermittent internet connections.
- Missing out on the personal contact and technical limitations of digital platforms in supporting teaching styles and options.
- Not being able to see students face to face at all times.
Opportunities of case teaching online

Survey respondents were asked to reflect on the opportunities created by moving case teaching online rapidly during the pandemic. A representative selection of the opportunities reported are included below.

- Getting students engaged.
- Developing skills to utilise online teaching technology.
- Opportunity to rethink the pedagogical mechanisms within each class (surveys, shape of ppts, speed of group work, style of questions for the case discussions).
- Reaching out to larger numbers of students.
- High engagement of students.
- Simplifying my syllabus and assignments, experimenting with new tools and techniques.
- Documenting of questions asked, instant polls/surveys, record of student's participation.
- Learning something new to add to my teaching arsenal (previously I was not a great believer in teaching with cases online).
- Teaching many MBA students in different locations.
- Developing new skills using technology and more access to resources.
- Innovating teaching methodologies and investing in new cases.
- Breakout rooms give students a private place to talk with their assigned group.
- Using asynchronous learning for sessions that are not really interactive.
- Saving on travel time.
- Students feel involved in something new and cool.
- Developing and publishing cases to specifically teach online.
- Engagement like never before. If planned properly and executed well it is more interactive and energetic than classroom teaching.
- Electronic recording of attendance and class participation.
- Easier to arrange international guest speakers.
- More introverted students participating comfortably.
- Reviewing all my teaching material.
- Flexibility.
- Students contribute more with examples, videos and their own experience.
- This is an opportunity for the academic world. Now students can access the best of teaching from world renowned instructors online.
- More consciousness among the students on cold calling and poll questions.
- Rethinking the teaching approach to make it even more interactive.
- Conducting polls and quizzes and evaluating responses is much easier in the online mode.
Online case teaching tips

Survey respondents were asked to share any tips for online case teaching. A representative selection of comments is included below.

- Do not digitise your old in-person teaching, transform to a new design and way of teaching that uses the power of the technology.
- Organise smaller classes, use breakout rooms, use polls.
- Allow students to ask questions or respond to questions via the chat function.
- Encourage students to switch their videos on.
- If teaching asynchronously, consider reducing the number of discussion questions. Focus on the main learning objective and ask only directly related questions.
- Prepare, prepare, prepare!
- Always keep the camera mode on and random cold calling with questions helps.
- Have something that is personal in the first two minutes so the participants feel that it is a safe place.
- Take more time to prepare yourself and also set aside more time for the students to work on the case in an online class.
- Use a good digital whiteboard with a digital pencil and make a plan of how the discussion will develop through it. Participants need to see where the case discussion is going, what the main topics are, and see their comments registered when they are relevant.
- Keep it dynamic and remain open to not following your plan. Be ready to adapt.
- Include more group work whenever possible.
- Reorganising sessions and having a Teaching Assistant in class can facilitate the learning process and allow a focus on the ‘core’ while having someone taking care of any technical issues.
- Synchronous works best, don’t mute anybody and use silence to solicit responses. Less content and breaks at least every hour. Use distractions (dogs, kids etc) to alter the energy in the room.
- Multimedia support for cases is awesome. It helps in on boarding even students who were ill prepared for the session.
- Don’t hesitate to cold call students.
- Everything takes longer on line so reduce your expectations as to how much you can cover.
- Use the chat functionality. It gives the students who are hesitant to speak a way to engage.
- To ensure that students read the case ask, them to submit a response to a questionnaire on the case before the class.
- Bring in remote visiting speakers to enhance the discussion of the cases.
- Online case teaching needs to be more deliberate. While face-to-face you can improvise a lot, in online you need to prepare more carefully as changing pace, using breakout rooms etc., needs to be planned.
The future

Keeping elements of online/hybrid programmes

There is no doubt that moving case teaching online during the pandemic has been a challenging task in many ways. However, there have also been huge opportunities for case teachers to exploit.

We asked survey respondents if they’d like to retain some elements of online/hybrid programmes when the dust settles. The answer was overwhelmingly yes (78%).

There will always be some who prefer in-person programmes, but many educators are excited by the opportunities that online teaching offers.

Popular elements of online/hybrid teaching

Survey respondents reported which elements of online/hybrid teaching they’d like to retain.

Delivering appropriate content asynchronously was considered to be a real success, allowing students to control the pace and time at which they learn.

Surveys, quizzes and polls, and online tests and exams have also proved popular.

Online case discussions and flexibility were also stated as key elements worth retaining.

We can’t wait to see what happens next!