Welcome to this short guide to the case method.

We hope you’ll find it helpful if you’re new to the case method or about to embark on a course of study that includes learning with cases. It’s an exciting and inspiring way to study and one that continues to stand the test of time.

As well as a brief explanation of the case method and what will be expected of you, we’ve also included some useful links for further information.

Good luck with your studies and contact us if you have any questions or need more information.

Best wishes

The Case Centre team
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Learning with cases

Learning with cases is exhilarating, inspiring and fun. Case teachers frequently hear from students years after graduation who still remember the cases and case method sessions that provided the philosophical, theoretical and practical bedrock for their subsequent management careers.

What is a case?

Cases describe real-life business situations usually involving a tricky challenge or decision being faced by the main character or characters in the case (usually referred to as the ‘protagonist(s)’).

Traditionally, cases are written documents and can be anything from a single page to dozens of pages plus supplementary materials. However, cases can take many forms including online games, fully immersive online worlds, and various digital formats.

What is the case method?

During a case session, you will usually be asked to ‘step into the shoes’ of the protagonist to discuss possible solutions and analyse the pros and cons of various approaches to the problem set out in the case. Your fundamental beliefs and assertions will be challenged and you will learn to think differently and more effectively.

This process of real-life decision-making will enable you to take on board new ideas and concepts, learning business and management theory while at the same time developing a wide range of vital professional and life skills.

Learning with cases: what’s involved?

No two case sessions are exactly the same, which is part of what makes the case method so exciting. You will be expected to read the case before the session and make yourself familiar with it. The better you prepare, the more you will be able to contribute in class. A great discussion can be an unforgettable experience so make sure you’re part of it.

A case session may also involve activities such as group work, role play and simulations.

A word of warning: you will often find that a case does not have a single neat solution. This is an accurate reflection of life in the world of business where problems and challenges rarely have an easy answer.
Learning with cases

Interviews and beyond

Learning via the case method is great preparation for your management career. But it doesn’t stop there. You can use cases to research the industries, market sectors and companies you are interested in working for and make sure your application and interview really stand out from the crowd.

Many cases are written by the best management brains in the world and will be an invaluable source of business best practice throughout your career.

Resources

- Explore our collection of management materials including cases, articles and book chapters: www.thecasecentre.org/studentmaterials
- Discover books and articles about learning with cases: www.thecasecentre.org/resources
- Watch case sessions in action and find out why you should take charge of your education: www.thecasecentre.org/video
- Find out about preparing for interviews: www.thecasecentre.org/interviews

A little history

The case method has its roots in the ancient techniques of Socratic dialogue or questioning, as well as Aristotelian logic and the method of argument and counter-argument. The case method was adopted at Harvard Business School in the early twentieth century and is now widely used at leading business schools across the globe.

‘I believe MBA students can use case studies for career development and professional advancement—for example, in preparing for a job interview.’
Rodney G. Alsup, Founder of MyeEMBA