

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Group Case Study Activities Build in Complexity

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

Group case studies provide students with an opportunity to apply concepts learned in class to analyze complex problems while also developing important collaboration skills. In this marketing class, students work on two group case studies per term.

For their first such assignment, students work in pairs to analyze a case study. The instructor allows each pair to choose from a short list of approved cases, which are typically less complex this first round. Because students choose from a list, more than one group may work on the same case. This first case study is completed during class time and each pair gives a short presentation at the end. Students present basic information about the case, describe any conclusions that were reached, discuss additional questions they would ask, and offer recommendations. This smaller case study introduces students to the concept of case analysis and helps prepare them for more complex work.

The subsequent case study is typically a larger, more complex study that is conducted in a group of four or five students who are randomly assigned by the instructor. The larger case study typically follows the same basic format as the first case study; however, students have a larger set of questions to consider and are allotted more time to analyze the case. For example, a more complex case study may involve

looking at an independently-owned hotel that is considering joining a national chain. In this type of case, students must consider the advantages and disadvantages, cost, earning potential, and legal implications. After the groups are formed, each group selects a team captain who is responsible for ensuring that each person on the team participates and contributes equally. The instructor allocates approximately 45 minutes of class time during three or four classes for students to work on their case analysis. Students must coordinate work outside of class if they need more time together. The group study culminates into a final 15- to 20-minute presentation and summary. Each student in the group must participate in the final presentation. During this part of the study, students outline what they learned, discuss important considerations, introduce any related articles, and make their final recommendations. At the end of each presentation, the other students in the class are encouraged to ask questions and engage with the presenters to elicit additional information. Finally, groups submit written summary reports that include much of the material covered in the presentation and specifically outline the final recommendations in more detail.

Students receive one grade for the small case study and one grade for the larger case study. Students also receive participation credit for the final presentation.