Teaching a case-based course

From a single session to a full course

'If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else.' – *Yogi Berra*

It is important to understand that preparing an entire case-based course is different from preparing a standalone case-based session. There are several additional factors to consider, and to ensure success you will have to do some careful designing. Basically, this is like taking case teaching to a meta level, e.g., you move from orchestrating a single session to orchestrating a whole semester. While the kinds of questions remain the same – for example, questions around the audience, the learning objectives, or flow of the session – you now have to think with a longer time horizon and have therefore other opportunities and constraints. In this chapter we will therefore highlight some of the questions that you have to ask yourself but also some of the tools and concepts that you might want to use. First, we will talk about some fundamental ideas about designing a case-based course, like considering the overall course setting within the larger program, case selection, additional materials, and the like. Then we will talk about managing the learning contract and introducing participants to the case method. Next, evaluating and grading your course are key and we will discuss how the case method can be used. We will close this section of the book by highlighting some key ethical considerations you should take into account when using the case method to deliver a course. This is very important and something that you have to think about upfront.

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Designing the course

'Plans are of little importance, but planning is essential.'—Winston Churchill

In the paragraph on 'objectives, context, and case study selection' in the case teaching chapter, we expressed our belief that effective case teaching starts long before your class begins and often goes well beyond it.

And this is even more true when preparing a whole course. As with the preparation of a single session, you have to start thinking about who it is that you will have in your course, the teaching objectives that you want to reach by the end of the course, how you will assess the participants, and the kind of materials that you want to use over the whole course. The following five questions are a good guideline for preparing your case-based course:

1. Who will do the learning?
2. What are the course specifics and their relation to the overall program?
3. What is the content that you plan to cover through cases?
4. How do you want to structure the flow of the sessions?
5. What kind of methods/materials do you want to use that you feel comfortable with and that will support the achievement of your learning objectives (e.g., textbook, pre- and/or pos-treading, online courses, web-based training…)?

Who will do the learning?

We already covered this question extensively in the previous chapter on 'How to Teach a Case-Based Session' (page 27). Please go back and quickly check. It all starts here and cannot be emphasized enough.

What are the course specifics and their relation to the overall program?

The learning context and specifically the overall course setting and the position of the course in the overall program are very important and require the facilitators to prepare accordingly. After defining the learning objectives, you should start thinking about the learning context. When thinking about a whole course, a couple of questions or different settings come to mind. This is in no means a complete list of different settings; it just represents typical settings that we have encountered while discussing this topic during our case teaching workshops.

Core versus elective

Whether the course is a core course or an elective might have a number of implications regarding the preparation and actual delivery of the course. In general, your degree of freedom will be a lot bigger for an elective than for a core course. Often core courses, at least in bigger schools, will run in parallel and have therefore to be aligned carefully. At ESCP Europe, for example, the strategy core course has about 12 sections in the fall semester. And, while we do not impose the number of cases that have to be taught or the exact cases itself, the school expects the instructors to align. This alignment is in general achieved through the learning objectives. But the school offers time for the instructors to meet in good time before the course starts and one of the topics that is regularly discussed is the cases that could or should be used. During my time as the coordinator for the strategy course, we have developed an overview of the different cases that we regularly use per session or learning objective and update this document after each semester with new material.

In elective courses the possibilities to experiment (one of our core teaching beliefs) are typically greater. Electives are often very close to the facilitators' research agenda and teaching an elective is therefore a great chance to test but also develop new material.

From theory to practice with Martin

In my electives I typically invite more external speakers to come and share their point of view than in a core course. These speakers can be both research collaborators but more frequently executives. Therefore, the number of living cases, basically executives bringing their actual problems and cases to class, is higher. This is a great way to test ideas and materials and to see which problems and stories stick with students and might be worth developing further.

Weekly vs blocked courses (part-time vs full-time)

The main difference between weekly and blocked courses is the time between the single sessions. In general, so-called executive programs like an executive MBA or other executive master's programs are organized in very intense blocks of several days of up to one, two, or three weeks. Even in regular, full-time programs, certain courses might be offered as a block course, for example in two consecutive days (12–15 hours) or one whole week (up to 30 hours). Therefore, a whole course of 12, 15, or even 30 hours might be taught in a single block. This will mean that there is little or no time between each single session.

The time between sessions is an important element in the planning of the course as it influences the amount of preparation that participants can dedicate to each session. While preparation is a difficult topic in itself, making participants prepare for example four cases for a whole day of teaching is to say the least challenging. But blocked courses also offer a lot of opportunities as it is easier to escape the strict boundaries of, for example, 75-minute sessions. In the section 'Teaching Plan Development' in the chapter on 'Teaching a Case-Based Session' we introduced the Lancaster model of learning and proposed that facilitators should actively design the learning experience for the participants by making participants' experience the whole learning cycle. For blocked courses, this would mean that the facilitator has more freedom to choose the amount of time they want to take to actually complete a whole cycle. In a weekly course, the facilitator has to bring each session to an end and therefore close a learning cycle. In a blocked course the facilitator has more freedom in choosing the appropriate time to complete such a learning cycle.

Position in the overall program

The position of your course in the overall program is also very important. Is your course at the very beginning of the participants' program or more toward the end? This will have an influence on how acquainted participants might already be with the case method (or even overexposed) or the potential danger that they might have already had the same or a similar case study. It is therefore always good to check these things before designing the course.

From theory to practice with Martin

For several years I taught a course called 'Strategic Innovation and Creativity' in an MBA program. This was a 20-hour course, delivered in 10 sessions of two hours each. I was using seven case studies over the whole course. The first two years I got really good evaluations from the students and also the atmosphere in class was very good with lively discussions. The third year was much more difficult. Participants seemed less enthusiastic, discussions were sometimes lingering on, and the overall level of attention seemed lower. What I had not realized was that the MBA program director had shifted my course from the beginning of the MBA program toward the end of the program, and this changed the whole dynamic. At the beginning of the program, participants were quite new to the case method and engaged very easily with the cases and the discussions. Also, the level of preparation was very good. When the course was moved toward the end of the program, the dynamic was different. Students were much more used to the case method, maybe even a little tired of it. Preparation was not as good, maybe because some colleagues had either overdone it with required preparation work or not followed up closely. What I learned from this was to make sure to get as much information as possible from the program director to be prepared or at least to be aware of these issues.

What is the content that you plan to cover with cases?

The degree of freedom that you have with regards to using the case method is obviously much higher when designing a whole course than with just a single session. Within a whole course you have multiple sessions and therefore a lot more time overall. You have to decide what content you want to cover with cases versus other methods and also reflect upon your overall learning objectives.

As we already described in more detail in the 'Case Method in the Spotlight' chapter, we are quite undogmatic about case studies and the use of case studies for education. We believe that facilitators should choose from a wide range of teaching formats like classical lectures, group work, role-play, simulations, and so on. In our opinion, skilled facilitators mix and match formats according to the educational objective but also to increase engagement through a plurality and diversity of methods. The traditional text case study used in a full-class case discussion is only one of many combinations possible. We think that this is important to keep in mind.

When it comes to designing a course, this plurality and diversity becomes even more important and you also have more room to maneuver. It is therefore important to think through all the sessions and then decide which content in which session you will develop with the case method or other methods.

It is helpful to go back to the functions of a case study. We have dealt with this point in more detail in the 'Case Study in the Spotlight' chapter. Taking from the long lists of functions, especially those where we see differences and sometimes advantages over other methods, it is mainly the ability of cases to infuse reality into the classroom, to enable participants to apply their knowledge and experience, to have controversial debates, and to link academic content to an intriguing story that is key. Looking at your course from this perspective, you can now ask yourself for which parts of your course you would like to use cases, how many you want to use, and at what point in time.

Structure and flow of the course

When designing a case-based session, you have the choice between a convergent and divergent flow of the session (see for more detail the sections on 'Teaching Plan Development' and here specifically the 'Flow of the Session'). This decision is based on the specific subject of the session. When designing a course, you cover several subjects and topics, some of which might be convergent in nature and some more divergent. If you have the freedom, you might want to make sure that you first have a good balance, and second that you change between the two options several times over the whole duration of the course.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the learning cycle. We then discussed learning cycles and introduced the Lancaster model of learning (see the section ‘Learning Cycles’). When designing a whole course, the question of learning cycles has at least three aspects.

First, you have the choice to keep one specific learning cycle per session but to switch between different learning cycles from session to session. As in the example graphic below, you could, for example, have a first session with the learning cycle case discussion–reflection–closing lecture. For the next class you could ask the students to read an article before the session, start with a reflection, and end with a case discussion. A third session could again start with a case discussion, followed by a reflection, and then the participants would have a postreading.

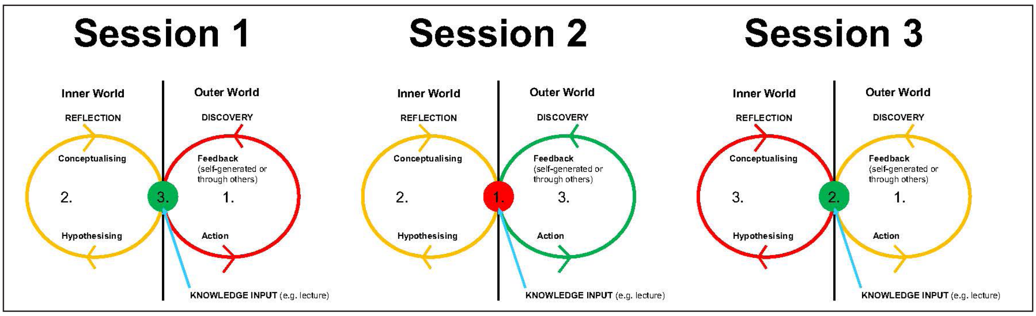


Figure 16: Structuring the flow of sessions within a course.

But designing a course gives you even more options. You can also think about using several sessions to complete one single learning cycle. So, instead of closing one learning cycle per session, you could extend the learning cycle over several sessions. You could, for example, use a whole session for a case discussion, followed by a whole session used for a reflection on the case study. The third session you would use for more theoretical input. But you are of course not restricted to using three sessions to close a learning cycle; you can also do it in two or, at the long end, maybe four or five sessions.

You should think about the whole course as one learning cycle. This change in perspective will make you think about orchestrating different learning modes throughout the whole course.

Last but not least, you will also need to consider how your course will adapt over time to meet your students’ needs as they become more confident and knowledgeable. For example, case difficulty is likely to increase throughout the course, while your input as teacher should ideally decrease as students are enabled to think independently and learn from each other. The diagram below shows how this might work over a 10-session course:

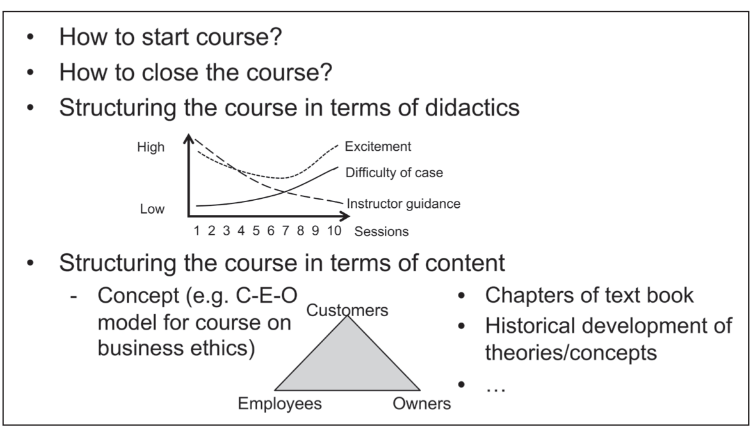


Figure 17: Thinking about a course as one learning cycle.

Methods and materials: case selection and mix for an entire course

When selecting cases for your course, you will need to take into account a number of factors to ensure that the case selection will support your overall learning objectives for the course, the content you need to cover, and also take into account the specific context of the course. While the first two are quite obvious, the last is especially important to remember when designing a course. Depending on the overall program that the course is part of, in your case selection criteria you will need to consider (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- industries,
- geographical locations,
- functions,
- company size,
- current state of the business covered (for example, is it a startup, turnaround, or expansion story?),
- ownership structure.

Other factors will include:

- If the case will require your students to come up with a plan of action to deal with a problem or challenge, or if it is designed to provide key background information. A mix of the two may work well in your course.
- If the case is fictional or based on fact. Again, you will need to decide which combination will work best on your course.
- The age of a case. A mix of tried and tested classic cases and new cases may be most effective.

From theory to practice with Martin

For several years Urs and I taught a strategy course in an MBA program in Portugal. After the second year we received the feedback that our cases were too focused on large multinational companies, often employing several hundred thousand people and operating globally. At the time, the largest Portuguese company employed roughly 60,000 people and was operating in a few European and African countries. This gave us the opportunity to rethink our material. We started by listing all cases and then grouped them according to different criteria. We started to look for better-suited cases and also wrote some new ones. After this overhaul, our case portfolio looked like this:

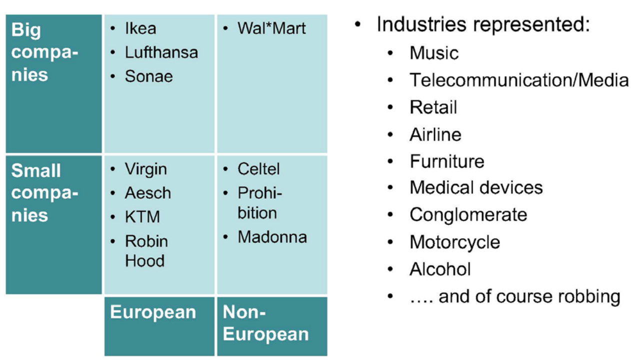


Figure 18: Example of case study selection for EMBA strategy course in Portugal.

(Continued)

Our main criteria were company size (big/small) and location (European/non-European). Additionally, we also looked at the industries covered. In total we covered music, telecommunication/media, retail, airline, furniture, medical devices, conglomerate, motorcycle, alcohol, and of course robbing (the Robin Hood case).

Course preparation

– Teaching a case-based course is very different to teaching an individual case session.
– Create a detailed plan to cover every aspect of your course from start to finish.
– Use a mix of teaching methods to ensure deep learning.

Opening and running a case-based course or program

In this section, we focus on, in our opinion, two important aspects to think about when designing a course that uses cases. First, you will have to think about the learning contract that you want to have with your participants and how this learning contract reflects the use of cases and, second, you have to make sure to set the right expectations regarding the use of cases and you have to potentially introduce your participants to the case method.

Learning contract

'We don't need to share the same opinions as others, but we need to be respectful.'
– Taylor Swift

A *learning contract* sets (implicit or explicit) expectations for yourself and your participants, and specifies behaviors and habits for success. A learning contract is formed at the beginning of a semester, course, or session, often within seconds or minutes. It should ensure that everyone is treated with respect, good relations are maintained, and a positive learning atmosphere is created.

Whether you actively design and communicate a learning contract or not, there will always be a learning contract between the facilitator and the participants as learning contracts can be implicit or explicit.

Implicit

An implicit learning contract is created mainly by your own behavior and by how you react to the behavior of your participants without explicitly referring to a learning contract. If you come to class prepared and on time, if you ask challenging questions, if you treat your participants with respect etc., this will create an implicit learning contract as you will implicitly expect the same behavior from your participants. The same is true if you come late and unprepared, ask superficial questions, and are rude.

Explicit

An explicit learning contract is best created at the end of the first session or during sessions two or three. By this time, you can reflect upon observed behavior and integrate these observations into the way you want to talk about the learning contract and into the contract itself.

When it comes to the case method, several aspects are specifically important regarding the learning contract. As cases set out to enable a joint learning journey, the degree of preparation, the interaction during class, and the individuals' participation are extremely important.

For case-based courses it is very typical that participants are expected to read and prepare the cases before coming to class. But what do you do when participants come unprepared? In the previous section on teaching a case-based session, we have a whole chapter on dealing with participants that are not prepared (page 81). But here it is not so much about your immediate options around how to react but what the effect on the learning contract is and how to deal with that. A learning contract, even when set up explicitly at the beginning of the course, will change over time based on the actual behavior in class and more importantly on your reactions to the behavior. So, whatever tactics you choose when dealing with participants who are not prepared, also think about the long-term consequences and the consequences for the learning contract. We therefore believe that preparation should be part of an explicit learning contract and should be revisited in the case of problems.

The interaction between the facilitator and the participants, and – equally important – the interaction between the participants themselves, is crucial for the success of the case method. After all, the case method sets out to enable not only one-directional learning from educator to participant but should also enable participants to learn from each other. How participants treat each other, listen to each other, and engage with each other is therefore important and will be an important element of the learning contract (implicitly or explicitly).

And, last but not least, when designing a case-based course, you need to think about how you envision participants will participate. This will of course largely depend upon the overall setting of the course (face to face, online, synchronous, asynchronous). Depending on the setting, you need to make sure that you have thought about the way you want your participants to participate. You will also need to be clear about how issues such as late submission of assignments and nonattendance at sessions will be dealt with.

The importance of the learning contract

- Class relations depend on contract.
- Contracts are implicit and explicit.
- Implicit contracts in particular are done within minutes (not only over sessions).
- Contracts can change over time (external environment).
- Mechanics are important (first/last question, transition, time-outs…).
- Explicit contract might be best at end of first, in second or third session (after first experience with case method and teacher).
- Cover the 4 Ps: preparation, presence, promptness, participation.
- Create a safe environment: respect and protection.

Introducing the case method to the students

'They know enough who know how to learn.' – Henry Adams

It is vital to remember that many participants will either have no knowledge of the case method or inaccurate preconceptions about it. Newcomers to the case method may be disconcerted by the lack of definite information and answers of the type usually given in traditional lectures. The idea of participating in a case method session may seem a daunting prospect and there may be little understanding of the benefits of doing so.

However, there are a few steps you can take to introduce the case method to your participants before the course starts; this will help to ensure that they come to the first session in a positive and receptive frame of mind.

You can then build on this in the first couple of sessions to consolidate their understanding and encourage them to get the most from the case method. A little careful planning should ensure you will soon have a class of enthusiastic 'case method converts.'

Before the course starts

Students who have never previously participated in a case discussion may find it very useful to watch a case class in action. There are many excellent examples online that can be found via a Google search. It might be a good idea to find case sessions that cover similar topics to those you will be covering in your course. You may even have video clips of your own teaching that would be helpful to share with new students before the course starts.

At the start of the course

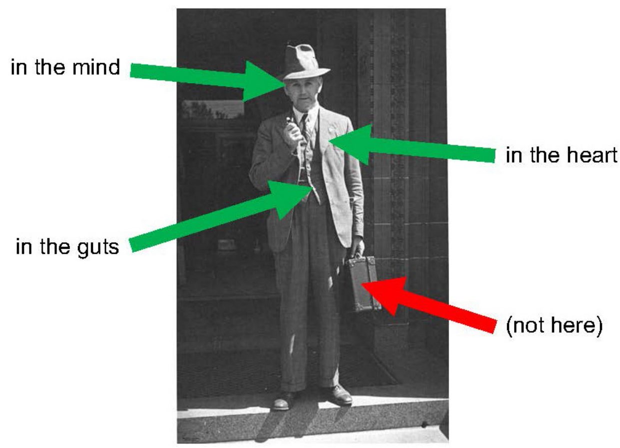


Figure 19: Where learning sticks.

You may wish to offer a brief introduction to the case method when you first meet your students at the start of the course. We have developed a short presentation to introduce the case method. It starts with highlighting the fact that learning actually takes place on several dimensions: The mind (cognitive), the guts (intuition), and the heart (emotional). There are a lot of ways to describe these dimensions, but for the sole purpose of introducing the case method we feel that these three dimensions and their easy visual representation work very well and are convincing.

We then immediately turn to the common complaints about the case study method. This is described in detail in the 'Case Method in the Spotlight' chapter (page 1) of this book if you want to go deeper. The case method is often described by its critics as lacking clear answers, having ambiguous and contradictory information, having redundant and irrelevant information, and being inefficient, just to name the most important ones. We think that it is important to start with the common complaints and to actually give participants the possibility to also voice their concerns.

Then we discuss the best ways and principles of how to learn from case discussions. We focus on the following points:

- Prepare and force yourself to commit to your personal answer!
- Learning does not (mostly) come from the instructor but is rather an effect of the class discussion.
- Participants contribute to the discussion from different points of view.
- For all really interesting issues: Different perspectives are possible and important – controversy is good! Only simple problems have simple and one-sided answers/solutions.

- Active participation of all participants is key: the learner is not a sponge but an active element of a joint learning process – 'Share your experiences.'
- Imperfect information and the role of assumptions play an important role – just as in 'regular' life.
- There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers or contributions. Whatever adds a new aspect to the discussion is helpful. The same is true for business, management, and leadership: they are not exact sciences – 'telling the truth as a set of clear rules' is impossible.
- Draw your own conclusions (e.g., for your business).

We often end the presentation by asking the participants to come up with their own rules for the course, typically with a focus on case discussions. We capture these rules on either a slide or a flipchart. It is important to capture these rules and to have them to hand for later sessions if participants start to break the rules or the learning atmosphere is degrading. The following screenshot is from an actual session that Urs did with an EMBA class.

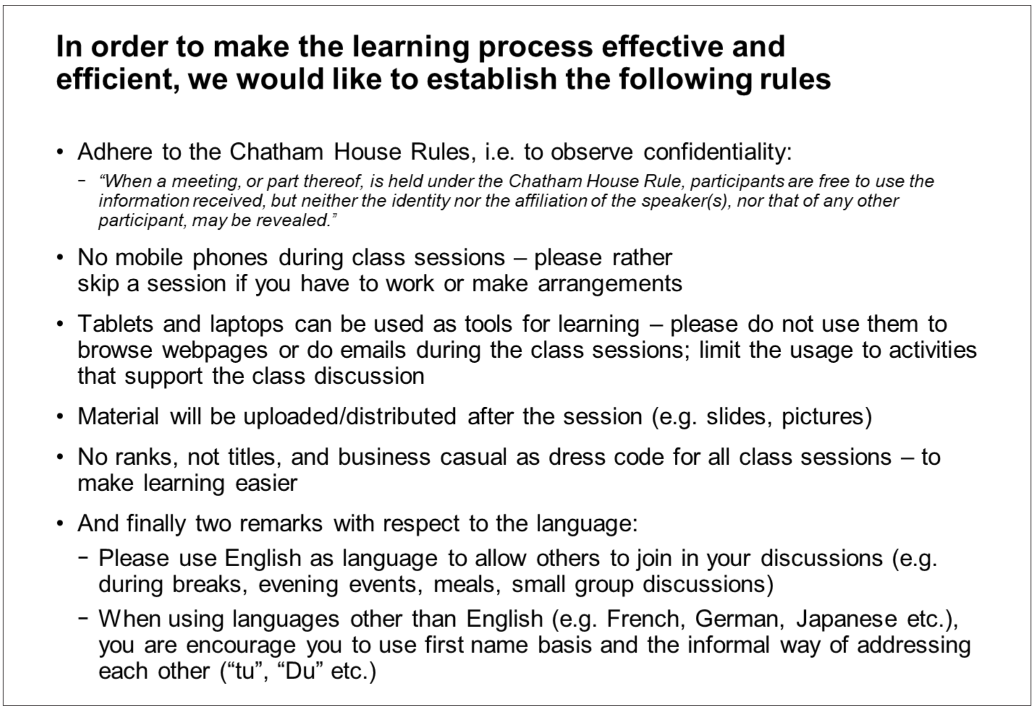


Figure 20: Screenshot of slide with rules for an EMBA class.

Please note that the 'rules' go both ways. Some clearly address the participants ('No mobile phones'), others the facilitator ('Material will be uploaded'), and others go both ways ('No ranks,' language).

The beginning of the course might also be the right time to introduce the short cycle case screening approach, which we have already introduced in the 'Case Method in the Spotlight' chapter (page 1) of this book. Please go back to the 'Introducing the Case Method to the Students' section for more information.

During the course

Once the course has started, the selection of your cases will have a great impact on how your participants will adapt to the case method. Thinking about the best sequence of cases is critically important. The content of the cases is less important than their complexity and length, for example. If possible, it may be a good idea to select shorter cases for your first couple of sessions. There are many excellent cases of five pages or fewer that will appear less intimidating to students who are new to cases. (The Case Centre, for example, lists these shorter cases as 'compact cases.')

You could also kick off the first session with a 'caselet' to introduce students to full-class discussion. Caselets are short summaries, perhaps a paragraph or two, of a tricky workplace problem or challenge that needs to be addressed. These do not require preclass preparation by students and can be used as initial 'icebreakers' at the start of the course.

Over time you can then increase the complexity of the cases. We talk about materials and the flow of the sessions in more details above in the 'Structure and Flow of the Course' (page 116) and 'Methods and Materials' sections (page 118).

Introducing students to the case method

- Remember: many new business students will be unfamiliar with the case method.
- Prepare them in advance with video clips of case sessions.
- Offer a brief presentation about the case method at the start of the course.
- Make sure your students understand how to approach a case; explain the 'short cycle reading' method.
- Consider using caselets to introduce your students to case discussions.
- Consider using shorter cases at the start of your course.

Grading of a case-based course

Grading is a very important and often difficult topic. In general, it is very important to be specific about your approach to grading. You should be transparent from the start about how you will grade your students, so they have a clear understanding of what to expect and what they need to do to ensure good grades. Clarity and openness will result in fewer (if any) complaints from puzzled or disgruntled students. And, if individuals raise any queries, you will be able to refer back with confidence to your established grading criteria and justify the grade you have given. Your students should have no doubt that they will all be treated equally.

But this of course is true for any kind of grading, not only for grading of case-based courses. The specificity of case-based courses is the participant-centricity and the typically increased interactivity. And your grading should reflect this.

Depending on your school context, your participants may have no previous experience of being evaluated on the basis of their contribution in class, so you will need to be crystal clear about what is expected and what they can do to ensure the best possible grades. It is therefore even more important that you explicitly define and communicate your evaluation criteria, especially for participation and contribution.

If your students are not used to case-based courses, we recommend reminding them regularly of the importance of class contribution. We have had good experiences with directly contacting participants who are not participating in the first two or three sessions. As we explain in more detail below, we suggest taking notes immediately after each session. These notes will help you to spot these students early on. If possible, find out why they are not doing well and if there is anything more you can do to help and support them in class.

Resistance to using the case method frequently often comes from the fear that grading case-based courses is more difficult and can actually never be really specific and ultimately objective. The argument is that cases aim at controversy and good cases do not have a single 'correct' answer or solution. But this is in our opinion are rather short-sighted point of view. So, let's look at the different ways to grade in case-based courses. The main elements are:

- grading participation/contribution,
- grading assignments and submissions,
- grading case-based exams.

Grading participation/contribution

General ideas for grading participation/contribution

While grading in general is difficult and requires a lot of rigor from the facilitator, in the case of grading participation in a case-based course it can actually be a good way to stimulate the case discussion. It forces students to prepare, it forces students to contribute, and it allows you to specify and incentivize certain types of contributions (e.g., not quantity but contribution to class learning).

If you chose to integrate grading of participation in your case-based course it is important that you follow some ground rules:

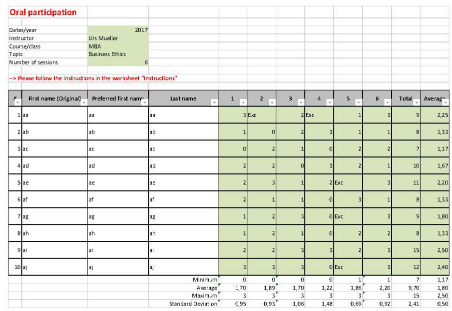
- Make sure all students are aware participation/contribution is graded.
- Explicitly define and communicate what and how you evaluate/grade (activity, participation, contribution, progress etc.)!
- Put emphasis on fair opportunity to contribute (beware of calling patterns [left/right] and blind spots in seating).
- Make selective use of methods that give more introvert students options to contribute (e.g., cold-calling, reports from individuals).
- Prepare yourself about the class and each individual student:
  - Try to remember all names.
  - Ask students to have (readable) name tags in front of them or, if online, ask them to add full names.
  - If possible, use a class map (ideally with photos!).
  - When you do not have a class map or a student booklet with pictures, make one – have students hold up name tags and take a picture (see Anderson & Schiano 2014: 43) – or take screenshot in an online setting.
  - Take pictures of class/screenshots at the beginning of each session as proof of absence/presence when starting.

On a more general note, we would advise you to always evaluate participation directly after each class, either still in the classroom if possible or back in your office if students are still around or the classroom is already booked for the next class. While it is in our experience very important to have notes for every single session, the depth and breadth of these notes do not have to be very detailed. We have had good experiences with simple scales such as:

- −1: comments that hindered the discussion,
- 0: not present,
- 1: present,
- 2: participated,
- 3: good comments,
- Exc: excused.

A small but important point: always make a note of any nonattendees. A quick way of doing this is to take a photograph at the start of the class. In this way you will have proof if a student claims they were present on a date you have down them as absent.

- Evaluate participation **directly after each class** (go to your office)!
  - Use a scale such as: -1: comments that hindered the discussion, 0: not present, 1: present, 2: participated, 3: good comments, Exc: excused
- Consider additionally collecting **self-assessment** or **feedback from class-mates** (e.g. cross-participant feedback/assessment)



Oral participation

Dates/year	2017
Instructor	Urs Mueller
Course/class	MBA
Topic	Business Ethics
Number of sessions	6

--> Please follow the instructions in the worksheet "Instructions"

#	First name (Original)	Preferred first name	Last name	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Average
1	aa	aa	aa	3	Exc	2	Exc	1	3	9	2,25
2	ab	ab	ab	1	0	2	3	1	1	8	1,33
3	ac	ac	ac	0	2	1	0	2	2	7	1,17
4	ad	ad	ad	2	2	0	3	2	1	10	1,67
5	ae	ae	ae	2	3	1	2	Exc	3	11	2,20
6	af	af	af	2	1	1	0	3	1	8	1,33
7	ag	ag	ag	1	2	3	0	Exc	3	9	1,80
8	ah	ah	ah	1	2	1	0	2	2	8	1,33
9	ai	ai	ai	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	2,50
10	aj	aj	aj	3	3	3	0	Exc	3	12	2,40
			Minimum	0	0	0	0	1	1	7	1,17
			Average	1,70	1,89	1,70	1,22	1,86	2,20	9,70	1,80
			Maximum	3	3	3	3	3	3	15	2,50
			Standard Deviation	0,95	0,93	1,06	1,48	0,69	0,92	2,41	0,50

See also excel template for grading oral participation

Figure 21: Grading participation/contribution.

Consider additionally collecting self-assessment or feedback from classmates (e.g., cross-participant feedback/assessment). We collect the notes in a straightforward Excel table like the following one.

Make sure you discriminate between quantity and quality when awarding grades for classroom contributions. One participant may make lengthy contributions but add nothing of particular value to the debate, while another participant may offer a single sentence that leads to a vital 'ah-ha' moment for the class as a whole. A long monologue is not in itself worthy of a good grade; participants need to demonstrate that they are fully engaged in the debate: listening carefully and responding in a considered way to both the instructor and their peers in a way that moves the debate forward and increases understanding.

During class, you will have to take proactive steps to ensure everyone receives a fair grade. Here, your background reading about each participant will be invaluable as you will know in advance of any potential barriers that may prevent an individual from contributing, for example if they come from a culture where students are traditionally deferential, or if there are only a few female students, who may find it harder to make their voice heard.

You will need to place great emphasis on ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute. This means you will need to be very aware of your own classroom habits. For example, do you tend to direct questions more toward the right or the left of the classroom? If so, you will need to ensure your calling patterns are evenly distributed across the room. Are there any blind spots in the seating arrangement that make communication with some students tricky? If so, you will need to find a way round this.

You will also need to ensure that quieter and more introverted students are given the chance to shine, for example by cold-calling; warning them in advance that you will be calling on them, so they have time to prepare; or asking them in advance to prepare a report or analysis for presentation during the session.

Bear in mind that you will probably be awarding participants a final overall grade that reflects the quality of their class contributions throughout the course. At a suitable point, perhaps a third or halfway through the course, it can be a good idea to make contact with any participants who have not done well so far. If possible, find out why they are not doing well and if there is anything more you can do to help and support them in class.

Grading participation/contribution in online courses

While the general comments on grading participation can in most cases also be applied to online courses, owing to the specificity of the online context there are additional elements to be considered.

Let's first look at the specific online context of an online synchronous class where you want to grade oral participation. While this does not sound very different to a face-to-face session, there are some particularities that you need to take into account:

- Faces online look different from in pictures (as you get them in class lists). We therefore advise taking screenshots (also to capture attendance at beginning/middle/end of sessions – and students who do not join breakouts).
- Check participation by observing activity beyond talking:
  - Contributions in chat functions or online polls (some participants feel more comfortable writing, e.g., due to language issues).
  - Do participants join breakout rooms?
  - Do they have their cameras on? What do they do?
  - Do they use reaction symbols/emoticons?

And there are also a number of advantages when grading online participation. In our experience it is easier to remember names as you see the names more often as they are displayed on the picture/video. Participants sit in very different locations and have therefore different backgrounds, which often helps to memorize them. Some systems move participants with a higher level of activity higher up in the list. You can also record the session, which will give you the possibility to do a check of all contributions, for example in a fast-forward mode.

Additionally, in an online context there are more opportunities to contribute. While oral participation during a synchronous online session is in fact not very different from a face-to-face session, students have more forms to contribute, for example through chats, polls, quizzes, and forums/discussion boards.

The benefit of these types of contribution is that you will have a record of them. This will make it a lot easier to review them and to take them into consideration. We advise being very explicit about your expectations and to explicitly include contributions to chats, forums and discussion boards, etc. in your participation grading.

Grading assignments and submissions

Cases are also a very good vehicle for (written) assignments and submissions. We put 'written' in brackets because you are of course not limited to written assignments anymore. Very often we ask our participants to upload videos or audios or create website content or other electronic documents. As cases are typically handed out before class and are supposed to be read before class, a classic form of assignment is presession case writeups or targeted essays. This not only offers you another grading element in your course; it might also positively impact the preparedness of your students. When it comes to the grading criteria for such assignments, we had made good experiences with the following criteria:

- *Focus:* The issue must be defined clearly; the analysis should stay sharply focused on the issue at hand; use of evidence and scope of discussion should reflect the participant's ability to see and concentrate on what is important.
- *Structure:* The case write-up or essay should be well structured; the presentation should be a neatly arranged flow of arguments leading to conclusions.
- *Argumentative quality:* the work should reflect rigorous use of facts and logic; the essay should demonstrate the participant's shining brainpower.

- *General relevance* of essay to the specific task.
- *Language* correct and understandable (grammar, spelling, etc.).
- *Formal criteria:* Delivery within time and word limits, explicit references to all used sources.

In addition to presession case writeups, you can of course also use postsession assignments. While all of the above criteria would typically also apply to postsession assignments, there are at least two additional criteria that you could and should use after you had the case discussion in class:

- *Link to course content:* Meaningful application of tools/frameworks/theories that were introduced/used in the context of the course.
- *Multi-perspectives:* Ability to (1) include different relevant perspectives in your analysis and (2) assess stakeholder interests and the legitimacy of their claims.

Grading case-based exams

In a case-based course it might make sense to use a case study for the final exam. After all, students should be case experts by the end of the course. There are a number of different options (again, this is by no means an exhaustive list and we welcome feedback and additional experiences/ideas):

- Students can be asked to analyze a case that has not been previously discussed in class.
- They can be asked to work on a case that has already been discussed in class.

For both alternatives there are a number of general principles and suggestions to ensure a fair and transparent process and ultimately student satisfaction. Above and beyond, there are many options that you have, and we will outline a number of those below.

- You can decide whether or not you will allow preparation time before the exam, for example time to read the case and background material.
- They can be set an 'open book' exam, meaning they have access to various materials that can be used to support their arguments and analyses.
- You can set exams to be taken on an individual basis or as a group.
- Exams can be written or take the form of a presentation to the rest of the group. You may choose to include peer evaluation of presentations as part of your grading.

The advantage of using a case for the exam is that it is a very versatile instrument. When you developed the course and decided to make it case-based, you already reflected upon the learning objectives of the course. We previously mentioned at several points the broad categories of learning objectives: knowledge, skills, and behaviors. When designing a case-based exam, you need to come back to the learning objectives and think about the right kind of questions and activities that your students are supposed to work on regarding the case study, so that you can actually evaluate if the learning objectives are achieved. We have found the following formats good examples for achieving the different overarching learning objectives:

- Closed questions that can be used to validate knowledge, for example: The protagonist thinks about entering a new industry. What kind of analysis should he perform to assess the attractiveness of the industry?
- Open questions to validate skills (for example the application of a specific framework), for example: Please perform a five forces analysis for the transportation industry in Germany at the time of the case.
- Open questions to validate behavior, for example: What would you do if you were in the shoes of the protagonist?

Make sure your suggested exam questions are not just duplicates of the assignment questions for the case that you plan to use for the exam:

1. If the exam case is quite long and you decide to hand it out before the exam, the participants might just google the assignment questions and standard responses.
2. The suggested participant assignment questions are written with class interaction in mind. They will frequently be very open-ended, whereas good questions for exams should include some closed questions to ease the grading process.

Grading

Grading oral participation in class

- Make sure participants understand that their contributions in class will be graded.
- Be clear and transparent about your grading criteria.
- The quality of contributions is more important than the quantity.
- Familiarize yourself with your students' background and experience in advance.
- Encourage and support students who are not doing well.
- Record grades immediately after class while everything is fresh in your mind.
- For online classes think about integrating additional elements like chats, polls, quizzes, and participation in breakout rooms.

Grading assignments and submissions

- Define your grading criteria and apply them consistently when marking work.
- Assignments can be presession and postsession.

Grading case-based exams

- You can use a new case or a case that you already discussed in class.
- Design the exam questions with your learning objectives (knowledge, skills, behaviors) in mind.

Ethical considerations for a case-based course

Ethics and ethical consideration in teaching could fill many books. There is abundant literature on ethical dilemmas in educational contexts and we do not want to review or just repeat these elements. In this chapter we want to only focus upon some specific ethical considerations when using the case method. In 'The Case Method in the Spotlight' we already outlined criticisms of the case method and acknowledged their arguments and point of view. Here we want to add some of our own observations of potential ethical dilemmas that a case teacher can run into. The following list is based on our own experience and by no means exhaustive:

- Pretention of participant-centricity,
- Unfair allocation of airtime,
- Disrespectful treatment of participants,
- Hindsight bias,
- Not evaluating the learning objectives.

Pretention of participant-centricity

At the heart of the case method lies participant-centricity. If you do not truly believe in participant-centricity, then you should not use the case method in your course, because that would give participants the false expectation that the course will be participant-centered when in reality this is not your interest. The following questions are a good test to probe your own take on customer-centricity:

- Do you try to get to know your participants already ahead of your course?
- How much flexibility does your course and your teaching plan offer?
- What are specific questions or exercises used to find out what your participants are interested in?

As mentioned before, we do not want to force you to be participant-centered and there are many great teaching formats that are not participant-centered by default. But you need to believe in the participant-centered philosophy – that does not mean that you cannot or should not steer the process but you need to allow for some leeway, i.e., do not fake an interest in the contributions of your participants if in reality you only want to bring across your point.

Unfair allocation of airtime

Almost as a consequence of being participant-centered, the case method also calls for a strong involvement of the participants in the learning process. It is therefore very important that all participants get an equal opportunity to contribute. You should make sure your calling pattern is not influenced by factors such as:

- seating order,
- introversion versus extroversion,
- gender,
- cultural background,
- previous education,
- conformity with your own opinions,
- ease of pronouncing names,
- liking

Disrespectful treatment of participants

You should be aware of the potentially devastating effects of negative, belittling, sarcastic, or humorous reactions to contributions by students. One single negative experience can lead to the complete disconnection of a participant from the session or even the entire course. Additionally, this might affect the overall learning atmosphere and trust between the facilitator and the participant group.

Hindsight bias

Case studies typically deal with events from the past. It is important to acknowledge to ourselves as facilitators and to the students that the 'real' events do not necessarily reflect optimal decisions and that luck might have played a significant role.

Ethical issues of grading

Grading on the basis of case studies requires particular attention. Cases aim for controversy and good cases do not have a single right answer/solution – accordingly you should not grade participants by their recommendations but by their ability to base a recommendation on sound analysis and the application of theories, concepts, and tools discussed in class. We give some advice on good practice when grading in a case-based course above in the section 'Grading of a Case-Based Course.' But we decided to mention this point here too when discussing ethical considerations, as it is easy to fall for biases like confirmation bias, where we value answers that confirm our own opinion higher than answers that go against our opinion. Of course, case-based discussions should not be based only on opinions but also on knowledge and analytical skills, but the case method is certainly much more prone to also including opinions in the discussion.

Reference

Anderson, E and Schiano, B 2014 *Teaching with cases: A practical guide*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.