

CASE TEACHING ESSENTIALS

ASYNCHRONOUS CASE TEACHING

Asynchronous teaching materials are carefully chosen and sequenced to allow students to move independently through lessons in a course. But the role of asynchronous teaching varies from course to course.



Blending Synchronous + Asynchronous

Some online courses include a blend of live, synchronous sessions and asynchronous materials. This requires careful consideration of which aspects of the case lesson particularly lend themselves to discussion, and which might benefit from individual or offline work.



Asynchronous + Small Group

Some online courses include no synchronous sessions with an instructor. They are essentially all asynchronous, but some of them enroll students in cohorts with the expectation that students will meet together in small groups for online discussion via videoconference.



Asynchronous Only

Still other online courses have no synchronous sessions or small group discussions. Students move through the asynchronous materials entirely independently. For case teaching, this format poses a challenge. But, with careful preparation, it is still possible to teach cases in such classes.

ADAPTING TO ASYNCHRONOUS

If you are adapting an in-person class to a blended or an asynchronous online class, how do you approach case teaching, which is traditionally a “live” discussion-based model? Ideas below.



Scrutinizing your in-person class plans, to decide which pieces of your case teaching to shift to asynchronous instruction, can be a valuable exercise. For example, more upfront analysis of certain aspects of the case, done asynchronously, may lead to a better-informed and better-prepared live discussion.

Similarly, in an asynchronous/small group model, some aspects of case-based learning can be done as independent work, and some aspects can be done as small group work in line with broader learning goals.

A few ideas are listed below to help you decide which parts of your case teaching plan to shift to asynchronous instruction, in which individual students or small groups can take on learning activities.



Are you using the case to introduce complex concepts or frameworks? Asynchronous allows self-pacing. Your students may prefer the chance to learn this material independently. Some students may find the lessons relatively easy and move through the material quickly. Others may find the lessons more difficult and appreciate the chance to move at their own pace.



Is there a type of analysis or skill that you would like students to have mastered prior to the class discussion? Asynchronous supports pre-discussion learning.



Do certain lessons from the case lend themselves better to quiet reflection?



Would certain cases benefit from students’ tapping into additional resources, such as related journal articles, podcasts, videos, blogs, or websites? Asynchronous adapts to different learning materials.



Would an asynchronous approach allow students to pursue aspects of a case lesson that are more personally relevant to themselves?

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CASE ANALYSIS COMPANION

At HKS, a learning design team has created a simple, customizable template called a “Case Analysis Companion,” which can scaffold students in the preliminary asynchronous analysis of the case. A Case Analysis Companion can be assigned with other synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. [Click here for link to editable template.](#)

Case Analysis Companion: Case Title		
Name (First, Last)		
Date		
Assignment Description Instructor provides an overview, placing the case in the context of the class session and the course as a whole and identifying the broad learning task.		
Part I. Topic or Umbrella Question? Instructor adds in additional information or terminology needed to complete the exercise that maps to Pasture 1. Instructor follows this with specific questions or tasks. If the task is to respond to one or more short-answer questions, a space is included for student comment on each question, as below.		
First Question?		
Type here		
Second Question?		
Type here		
Part II. Topic or Umbrella Question? Instructor adds in additional information or terminology needed to complete the exercise that maps to Pasture 2. Instructor follows this with specific questions or tasks. If the task is to populate a table or chart, a blank version of the table is included, as below.		
	Variable A	Variable B
Situation 1		
Situation 2		

DON'T FORGET THE WRAP!

Whether case teaching synchronously or asynchronously, it is important to consolidate and underscore the generalizable lessons from your case instruction. In person or synchronously, you might make a brief set of remarks during the last few minutes of class. In an asynchronous setting, the wrap can take several forms, for example:

- ◇ You might give students a handout that identifies the lessons.
- ◇ You might video record your wrap or narrate a slide show that does so.
- ◇ You might record a podcast-style conversation with a colleague, subject-matter expert or an individual featured in the case to underscore the main points.



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