

How to analyse a case study

Table of Contents

- Approaching a case study
- Writing a case study
- Common problems in case study analysis



University for the Common Good

Further information:

Learning Development Centre
School of Engineering and Built Environment
Glasgow Caledonian University

askldc@gcu.ac.uk
+44 (0)141 273 1230
<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/ebe/ldc/>

How to analyse a case study

Case studies offer descriptions and data of situations, from which you have to:

Firstly,

- Identify the key points or issues
- Weigh up the situation
- Consider the information you do and don't have

Before you can

- Define the problem/issues to be addressed precisely
- Outline the objectives: the desirable outcomes
- Identify resources/techniques helpful to opening up the case study
- Generate ideas or alternative solutions

Then you can

- Choose a "best fit" solution from the options
- Decide on an action plan
- Outline how to implement it
- Consider what might go wrong and how to monitor the success of the action plan

How to approach the case study

Step 1. Read the material carefully and ask yourself these questions:

- What are the main presenting issues?
- Why have these arisen?
- What would happen if nothing were done?
- What hard evidence is there that the situation needs action?

Once you have done this you can write the introduction to the case study analysis, which outlines the situation, the key issues, why these have arisen and require action. In this way you should avoid rewriting large chunks of the case study.

Step 2. Analyse the situation/issues clearly and ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the background to the case study?
- What research could I use to understand the issues?
- What solutions are desirable/possible?
- What solutions are suggested/supported by research?
- What are the legal and ethical considerations?
- What would be my role?

Step 3.

Use the note taking sheet provided by ELS (back page) to record your ideas/analysis.

How to write the case study

An effective case study report should

- Clearly identify the core problem(s)
- Analyse the issues underlying the problem
- Discuss and justify alternative solutions using theory / experience
- Present feasible recommendations
- Be presented in an appropriate format.

The report format

Introduction

Overview of the situation and identification of key issues underlying the problems identified in the case study

Main body

Present and analyse the issues.

Consider and assess possible solutions in terms of theoretical grounding, strengths and weaknesses and possibly risk factors.

Draw from both literature and experience

Conclusion

Summarise main findings

Identify and justify strategy proposed

Recommendations

Recommendations should be in line with your analysis. May be separate or within conclusions

Appendices – A compilation of supplementary and illustrative material.

Do not include items that are not mentioned in the report.

Bibliography - A list of sources consulted or referred to in alphabetical order

Tables, charts, graphs and diagrams - may be included within the report or added in the appendices. Used in the appendix, they avoid cluttering up the main text and do not add to your overall word count.

All illustrations should be clearly labelled and numbered, and referred to in the report

Common problems in case study analysis

Students lose marks when their analysis fails to:

- Identify the real problem, focusing on describing the case study situation and missing the underlying issues
- Separate the strategic management issues from the operational issues
- Identify for whom the issue is a problem
- Examine possible alternatives
- Present a realistic implementation plan
- Address the specific issues
- Support their ideas with evidence from research, studies or theories

Note Taking for Case Study Analysis

Level	Main Issues	Related Problems	Relevant Theories	Possible Solutions / Recommendations
Staff				
Management				
Operational				