

Writing a case study

There are two different approaches to case studies. This guide focuses on the problem-oriented method. Always check with your lecturer to confirm if this is the type required.

A successful case study analyses a real-life situation where existing problems need to be solved. It should relate the theory to a practical situation; for example, apply the ideas and knowledge discussed in the coursework to the practical situation at hand in the case study.

1. Identify the problems.
2. Select the major problems in the case.
3. Suggest solutions to these major problems.
4. Recommend the best solution to be implemented.
5. Detail how this solution should be implemented.

There are usually eight sections in a case study:

1. Synopsis/Executive Summary

- Outline the purpose of the case study.
- Describe the field of research.
- Outline the issues and findings of the case study without the specific details.
- Identify the theory that will be used.
- Note any assumptions made (you may not have all the information you'd like so some assumptions may be necessary e.g.: "It has been assumed that...", "Assuming that it takes half an hour to read one document...").

2. Findings

- Identify the problems found in the case by:
 - analysing the problem, supporting your findings with facts given in the case, the relevant theory and course concepts.
 - searching for the underlying problems
- This section is often divided into sub-sections.

3. Discussion

- Summarise the major problem/s.
- Identify alternative solutions to this/these major problem/s.
- Briefly outline each alternative solution and evaluate its advantages and disadvantages.
- There is no need to refer to theory or coursework here.

4. Conclusion

- Sum up the main points from the findings and discussion.

5. Recommendations

- Choose which of the alternative solutions should be adopted.
- Briefly justify your choice explaining how it will solve the major problem/s.
- This should be written in a forceful style as this section is intended to be persuasive.
- Here integration of theory and coursework is appropriate.

6. Implementation

- Explain what should be done, by whom and by when.
- If appropriate include a rough estimate of costs (both financial and time).

7. References

- Make sure all references are cited correctly.

8. Appendices (if any)

- Attach any original data that relates to the study but which would have interrupted the flow of the main body.