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Note on How to Write a Teaching Note

After you have completed writing a case study, the next step is to write a well thought out teaching note. A teaching note is a critical component to a case study because it:

1. Helps you check the completeness and logic of the case study; and
2. Provides a guide to other instructors on how to teach the case in the classroom.

The discipline of writing a teaching note not only helps instructors, but also enhances students' learning experience; cases have clear teaching objectives and in-class discussions are focused on specific topics. On top of this, empirical evidence shows that the most widely adopted cases at universities are those with well written teaching notes.

This note is intended to give you a basic overview on how to write a teaching note. In general, there are five major sections of a teaching note:

1. Case Overview
2. Teaching Objectives
3. Case Analysis
4. Assignment Questions
5. Teaching Plan

Case Overview

The case overview is a 1-2 paragraph executive summary of a case. Often, the case overview is what potential case users first read; therefore, it is important that the overview capture the essence of the case, the main case questions, and teaching objectives. When writing the case overview, it is important for it to be clear, concise, and to the point.

Teaching Objectives

A good teaching case is written with concrete teaching objectives in mind. Teaching objectives specify exactly what students should know after finishing a case analysis and in-class discussion. This makes it easier for an instructor to teach the case and helps prioritize class time. In the teaching note, teaching objectives should be written in bullet point. Typically, a case will have 2-5 teaching objectives.

Additionally, since cases are taught within the context of an overall course, it may be helpful to describe the course in which the case was originally written for in this section.

Case Analysis

The case analysis is the heart of the teaching note and where you should spend the most time. This section provides a roadmap on how to lead a case discussion. It also provides carefully analysis and detailed insights on the case and its associated readings.

It is often helpful to organize this section into specific learning sections (or “learning pastures”) that logically tie into the prescribed learning objectives. In each section, you should provide the detailed analysis that students are asked to perform and consider all possible follow-on questions that students may ask. You should also provide explanations for these anticipated follow-on questions.

In some instances, this section will mimic the assigned case questions; however, this may not be the case. You do not have to assign all case questions in advance to students. (It is up to you whether to do this or not). Even if you choose to assign all case questions in advance, additional questions, follow-on questions, and probing questions should be included in this section to help other instructors lead a class discussion and analysis into greater depth.

Assigned Case Questions

These are questions that you assign to students to help them prepare a case. The purpose of the case questions is to focus a student on specific challenges within the case and to perform some analysis prior to class. In this way, the class discussion can be more enriching and dive deeper into specific topics.

Teaching Plan

The teaching plan is an outline on how to allocate time within class. For most business school courses, this is 75-80 minutes. Typical components of a teaching plan are the following:

- **Class introduction:** Key points to make in the class introduction.
- **Major topics:** a listing of topics, a suggested order in which to introduce them, key questions within each topic area, and identification of items that are important to get on the board.
- **Wrap-up points**
- **Supplemental teaching components:** Some cases come with supplemental material such as video clips, audio, or in-class exercises. You should carefully plan when to use these supplemental components in class.
- **A board plan**

