



Case study purpose

The general purpose of a case study is to:

- describe an individual situation (case), e.g. a person, business, organisation, or institution, in detail;
- identify the key issues of the case (your assignment question should tell you what to focus on);
- analyse the case using relevant theoretical concepts from your unit or discipline;
- recommend a course of action for that particular case (particularly for problem-solving case studies).

As with reports (see [Writing](#)), there are two major kinds of case studies: problem-solving case studies and descriptive case studies.

Problem-solving case studies

Problem-solving case studies are used to investigate a problem or situation in a particular individual or group, and recommend a solution to the problem based on analysis and theory. An example of this kind from Nursing is shown below:

401006 Bioscience 2: Case Study (40%, 1200 words)

“Brian (88 years old) is a resident at a high dependency aged care facility (nursing home). He has developed infectious conjunctivitis in his right eye. On examination, his eye was found to be red and swollen with a purulent and sticky discharge. His vision was unaffected; however he did complain that his eye was painful. The doctor prescribed gentamicin eye drops which were to be administered to both eyes.”

Using the **supplied template** (to be accessed from the Assessment tab in the Unit’s vUWS site), answer the following questions [NB: specific questions are asked under each of these headings but have been omitted here for space reasons]:

- Q1. Background of the case study (Total: 5 marks)
- Q2. Mechanism of action of drug and adverse reactions (Total: 5 marks)
- Q3. Mediators of signs and symptoms (Total: 10 marks).
- Q4. Infection control issues (Total 5 marks)
- Q5. Transmission of infection (Total: 5 marks)
- Q6. Breaking the chain of infection (Total: 5 marks)
- 6.1 Describe two procedures nurses will need to undertake to prevent the infection from Brian’s eye being transmitted to another individual. Clearly explain how each procedure will effectively break the chain of infection (5 marks).

Example adapted from 401006 Bioscience 2, Spring 2015 Learning Guide.

In the above example, question areas 1-5 involve mainly description (e.g. the background, symptoms, infection control issues, and chain of infection), but question 6 asks the student to recommend procedures to prevent the spread of infection. So there is an element of problem-solving in this case study. The structure of this case study is also very specific: a template is mentioned and there are specific questions to answer.

Descriptive case studies

Descriptive case studies are used to understand a situation better. For example, identifying what happened and why by describing particular aspects of that situation and analysing it in terms of theoretical categories. A descriptive study might then be used to help people make a decision about how to do things in another case that has similar features. An example from Business is shown below:

200855 Leadership in a Complex World: Leadership Analysis – Case Study Report (50%, 1500 words)

For this assignment, you are to select an organisation of your choice that addresses an issue that you are passionate about (e.g. environmental protection, social justice). The selected organisation will be your case study, to which you will apply what you have learnt so far about leadership. You will apply the relevant theories of leadership discussed in Workshop 2, and critically examine the different dimensions of leadership at play within your organisation... While you may use your creativity to structure the case study, a template with suggested headings will be made available in the Assessments folder.

Example adapted from 200855 Leadership in a Complex World, Autumn 2016 Learning Guide.

In the Business example above, the student has to choose their own case to investigate, with two criteria: it has to be an organisation, and it has to be one that addresses an issue the student is passionate about. The case study focuses on theories of leadership discussed in the unit, so the student should investigate the organisation in terms of its leadership. Unlike the nursing example above, the structure of this case study isn't tightly prescribed. The instructions specifically state that students can use their creativity, but there is also a template with suggested headings that they can choose to use.

References

School of Business. (2016). *200855 Leadership in a Complex World* [Learning Guide, Autumn 2016]. Western Sydney University.

School of Nursing and Midwifery. (2015). *401006 Bioscience 2* [Learning Guide, Spring 2015]. Western Sydney University.