



# Center for Teaching Excellence Hampton University Teaching Matters

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## Teaching Excellence Related Links

◆ Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

<http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/bloomrev/index.htm>

◆ TechLearning – Free subscription

<http://www.techlearning.com/>

## Other Useful Links

◆ Stimulus Funds from the U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/03/03072009.html>

## In the Next Issue

◆ An Interview with the Edward L. Hamm Distinguished Teaching and Provost Teaching Innovation Award Recipients

## Case Assignments: Online Teaching Tips

By Zina McGee

Case studies are often used to incorporate real world data into other assignments to expose students to realistic situations. The three most common elements of these types of assignments are (1) **real-world scenarios** in which cases are based on real world situations; (2) **supporting data and documents** which provide real world artifacts for students to analyze, such as simple data tables or links to URLs; and (3) **open-ended problems** which require students to answer an open-ended question which can range from one paragraph to a fully developed plan or proposal. Research has shown that some of the benefits to using case studies are that students not only see how the material applies to the world outside the classroom, but they are allowed to explore multiple perspectives or viewpoints. Case studies also lend themselves to critical thinking and analysis, and they allow students to synthesize the course content by integrating a variety of analytic techniques to draw conclusions.

In my online graduate statistics course, I have at times used the basic case structure to assist students with developing an analytic plan using secondary data sets. They are given a research problem, and since the course is generally comprised of nursing and counseling graduate students, the problems are designed to match their fields of study (i.e., examining gender differences on aptitude tests or assessing the relationship between prior and past blood donations). They are then expected to develop a statement of the issue to later frame as a hypothesis. The required assignment involves a data analytic plan in the structure of a formal proposal. Part of the assignment is to have students post their discussion on online message boards so that their interactions can be observed by other class members. This will allow students to learn from each other as they develop a statistical research design to answer a particular question using models built from a specific syntax. Throughout this process, they are encouraged to use authentic websites relating to a particular issue to develop a synthesized answer at the end. They are also given the opportunity to access important data and official government documents. In some instances, online data analysis using archived data sets can occur.

In order for a case assignment to be effective, it must be integral to the course objectives. To help students synthesize concepts, I have them develop a draft proposal and include a statement of what problems are raised by the case to focus on analysis or critical thinking. To observe their reactions to multiple viewpoints, I often stage an online class discussion which must be supported by arguments within the literature, particularly those addressing the most appropriate types of statistical tests needed to answer a research question. Posting a few examples online helps students to organize and analyze the material from selected documents. I start with a simple case first so that they will become comfortable with case assignments over time, and where appropriate, provide models of what the “A” assignment should look like. Once students have had time to reflect on case issues, I organize a threaded discussion for extensive analysis. One of the best ways to help them problem-solve is to ask questions of them first to facilitate dialogue about the problem. Sometimes this is more effective than answering questions directly. I give them the chance to clearly define the problem first, and then have them develop a plan to answer the question. Perhaps the best advantage to the case study assignment is that this approach includes greater learner involvement and interest in challenging cases. There is also an increased responsibility for students to research and contribute materials for the learning experience. Although case study analysis online can be quite challenging for students who are not comfortable with open-ended assignments, overall I have found that these assignments are very useful for improving analytical skills and promoting critical thinking.

## **Practical Tips for Teaching Online Groups-An Interview with author Michelle Glowacki-Dudka**

### **What is web-based or online education and who needs it?**

Web-based or online education is a method for instruction that uses the web and Internet as the primary medium for communication and teaching. It serves many people who may work full time and not be able to get to a traditional class. It also serves people who may be homebound because of illness or who have other responsibilities that don't allow a consistent schedule. During my doctoral program, we had a deaf student who could participate in the online forum much more easily than in the face to face forum because he didn't need a translator. It was very exciting to see his strong voice online, rather than through someone else's interpretation.

### **An online course curriculum needs to be designed differently from a traditional campus degree curriculum. How far is this true?**

I believe that it is very important to re-examine your learning objectives and approach to the curriculum for online courses. Since

the students are more independent in an online forum the assignments and discussion groups need to be engaging and build on the learner's experience. Those who simply put their power point and lectures online are not providing the opportunity for students to engage with the material or connect it to their other learning. Without the connection and engagement through discussion or dialogue with other students, the transfer of learning is not as successful.

**Lack of face-to-face interaction between students and teachers in online education hampers the learning process. What are your thoughts on this?**

Learning in a fully online setting provides a different experience than a face to face classroom setting. Students have to be active to be present in the online forum, and teachers have to be present as well to provide some comfort and feedback to the process. If either group is not present, then the level of trust and enthusiasm drops and the learning diminishes. I enjoy a mixed or blended method of teaching when possible, so that students can build some physical connection and then be more able to connect online.

**What qualities are essential in a good online teacher?**

A good online teacher needs to have a strong classroom structure with clear expectations. They need to be present, although this doesn't mean responding to every posting. They should be willing to be a co-learner and facilitator of knowledge rather than being the center of the course. By acknowledging that the students have power in the class, the relationship is much more reciprocal and worthwhile.

**What role does technology play in teaching online groups?**

Technology is the medium for this teaching, so it needs to be effective and consistent. There should be a contact for technical help if and when problems arise. And all the learners need to be able to access the technology in order to participate.

**Are there any shortcomings of online or distance education?**

Like any medium for teaching, online or distance education is only as useful or effective as the instructor lets it be. In our book, we provide a framework that guides the development of an effective online classroom. I have used it effectively and know of many other people who take bits and pieces from the model in their own teaching. Certainly online teaching takes more effort than a face to face course, but the in depth responses and opportunity for reflection on teaching and content make it satisfying.

## Resources

### Active Learning - Case-Based Learning

Quick Tips for Case Writing. Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence. ... Strategies for using case studies in teaching and learning. ... Family Medicine On-Line Case Studies. Penn State College of Medicine. ...  
[cte.umdj.edu/active\\_learning/active\\_case.cfm](http://cte.umdj.edu/active_learning/active_case.cfm) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

### Teaching with Online Case Studies

Teaching with Online Case Studies. University of KY ... Case Studies: Explorations in Instructional Technology & Design ...  
[www.uky.edu/~halesr/case.html](http://www.uky.edu/~halesr/case.html) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

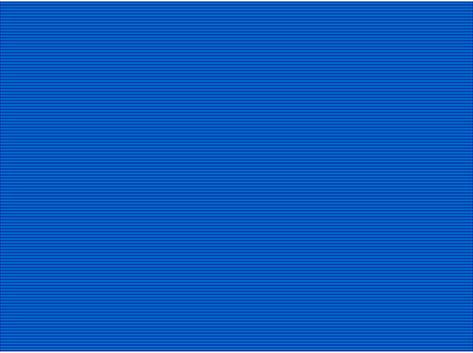
### Contemporary Online Teaching Cases

Study level. Online-ness. Online features. Other tools. Fellowship cases. About this site ... Welcome to our Contemporary online teaching case site. [www.deakin.edu.au/itl/teach-learn/cases/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/itl/teach-learn/cases/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

## Announcements

*Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: Undergraduate Research In and Across the Disciplines*, November 11-13, 2010, Durham, North Carolina. Call for Proposals Deadline: April 8, 2010 *Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: Undergraduate Research In and Across the Disciplines*, will showcase promising models of undergraduate research. The conference will also help participants address issues related to the sustainability and evolution of this veteran practice—including aligning undergraduate research with broader student learning goals; integrating research preparation and practice into departmental curricula, courses, and capstone requirements; assessing students' undergraduate research to see if they have achieved essential learning outcomes; supporting faculty innovation and leadership for these efforts; institutionalizing undergraduate research in and across the disciplines; strengthening offices of undergraduate research; and broadening participation in undergraduate research, especially among underserved students. Learn more about this conference and the call for proposals. For more information, please call 202-387-3760 or write to [network@aacu.org](mailto:network@aacu.org).

The Grant Writing Workshop will be hosting the “Fundamentals of Grant Proposal Writing” Workshop at the Wingate by Wyndham in Columbia, South Carolina on May 21, 2010. Registration is open online at [www.TheGrantWritingWorkshop.org](http://www.TheGrantWritingWorkshop.org). As a response to increased demand and competition for funding support and training, as well as the high cost of many programs, the Center is offering this one day survey course of the proposal writing and development process. Focusing on the format and structure of the successful grant proposal, this course provides attendees with an overview of each part



of the grant proposal, avenues for researching available grant programs, and concludes with fundamental proposal writing techniques. This workshop is an excellent introduction for the beginning fundraiser, those requiring a refresher, and those required to write their own grant proposals. Those interested in attending must register at [www.TheGrantWritingWorkshop.org](http://www.TheGrantWritingWorkshop.org). Registration will remain open until the maximum amount of registered attendees has been reached. For more Information about this training, please call at (888) 814-6912.